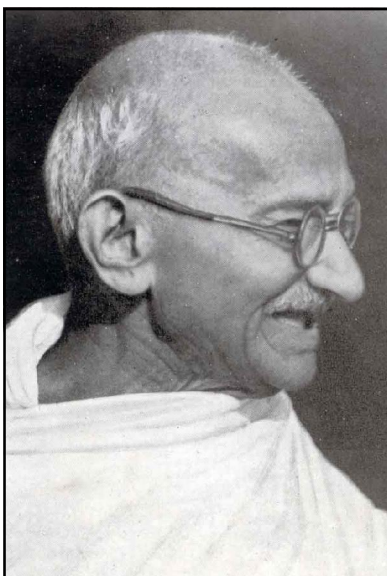


## Contributions of Mahatma Gandhi to Orissa: A historical Analysis

*Dr. (Mrs.) B.K.Sarma*

It is well known that Gandhi fought not only against colonialism or imperialism, but also against casteism, superstitions, social oppression, economic exploitation, religious hatred etc, with equal vigour and dynamism. The mission of Gandhi i.e. the fight for independence was a part of the struggle of suffering humanity against oppression. To achieve the goal of his mission through mass based support Gandhi paid visits to different parts of the country and Orissa was one such region.

Contributions of Gandhi to Orissa can be studied in its better perspective by analyzing the content and impact of his various visits to Orissa, which started in 1921 and continued as long as 1946. Since his first visit to the last for about seven times (despite his busy involvement in national programmes and problems) he came always with a definite objective and he did not take rest till the purpose was fulfilled. He had a special place and concern for Orissa, because of the special socio-economic political backward condition of the people, which is being reflected in most of his speeches and writings. In this paper an attempt



has been made to analyse and highlight the special contributions of Gandhi to Orissa in the light of the then political, socio-economic condition of the province, the response of people and to identify the causes responsible for the success of Gandhi in his mission.

### **Gandhi and National Movement in Orissa**

Gandhi's role in popularizing the Congress movement in Orissa is quite significant. His contribution to the freedom movement in Orissa can be known in its right perspective in the light of the political situation and activities in Orissa prior to the advent of Gandhi.

Orissa participated actively in the deliberations of the Indian National Congress right from the beginning. But the problems of Orissa never found a place in the Congress agenda for discussion before 1920, i.e. the emergence of Gandhi. During that time the great national leaders of the Congress had no concern for Orissa.<sup>1</sup> This apathy of the Congress was the main reason for which the National Congress could not become popular in Orissa till 1921. The fact that from 1885 to

1900 only a small number of 14 delegates from Orissa attended only 6 sessions of the Congress clearly indicates the lack of interest of the Oriyas in the Congress and the national movement. Of course there is no denying that Orissa played an important role in the Swadeshi Movement (1905-06) under the leadership of Madhusudan Das.

After realizing the futility of the Indian National Congress as a forum, a forum of Oriya under the leadership of Madhusudan Das formed a regional organization known as Utkala Union Conference in 1903. Thereafter the Oriyas diverted their attention to regional problems and tried to seek redressal of their grievances through the goodwill and blessings of the British government instead of the National Congress.

It was again in 1921, with Gandhi's visit (first) to Orissa that the interest of the Oriyas in the National Congress and national movement was revived. His first visit gave a tremendous impetus to the freedom movement in Orissa. It once again stimulated the people's zeal and enthusiasm for the cause of national movement. The Gandhian ideas, programmes and techniques were highly appreciated and widely accepted by the people.

In that context the 'Utkala Dipika' the leading newspaper of that time wrote: "Mahatma Gandhi now stands higher and higher having scored a triumph which was seldom attained by any Indian politician".<sup>2</sup> Further it wrote, "Orissa has accepted the principle of non-violent non-cooperation creed preached by Mahatma Gandhi".<sup>3</sup> It urged the Oriyas therefore to plunge into the national movement without fear.

Gandhi's maiden appearance on the land of Orissa in 1921 drew large crowds, wherever he went. About his first tour the government reported. "In this land (Orissa) of Hindus, Mr. Gandhi was considered as an Avatar of the

deity and a worker of miracles".<sup>4</sup> In fact the places where he halted and held meetings became places of pilgrimage. He was looked upon by many people as their saviour. After a long time the people of Orissa felt that it was only through Gandhiji that their cause could be projected in the all India level. Therefore all that Gandhi wanted to accomplish relating the freedom struggle were carried on in right earnest by the people who had developed faith and confidence in him.

The Gandhian freedom movement with its political programme of non-cooperation, Civil-Disobedience and Quit India spread far and wide in Orissa. After a lapse of several years Orissa again responded to the call of Indian National Congress. Thus the Congress movement was brought to Orissa by Gandhi and was popularized by his followers like Gopabandhu Das and others". In fact the advent of Gandhi in Orissa politics in general and freedom movement in particular assumed a kind of dynamism which was not known before.

### **Gandhi's Response to the Oriya Movement**

Though Gandhi brought the Congress Movement to Orissa, he also favoured the movement of the Oriyas for the creation of a separate province. Prior to 1921 there was no place for Orissa and Oriya problems in the Indian National Congress. In 1920 Gandhi reshaped the Congress for the ensuring struggle for independence. Thereafter the Congress accepted the principle of forming provinces on linguistic basis and since then Orissa found a place in the annals of the Congress\*.

Referring to the question of amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts he wrote; "Orissa has a good grievance, the authors of Oriya Movement have described that Orissa has been vivisected for political purposes.<sup>5</sup> As the Telugus in some areas were in majority and the Oriyas were

minority, he advised them that the stronger should accept the claim of the weak. He wrote in that context; "I have ventured to suggest some simple rules for their guidance. One golden rule of universal application that we must learn from our present struggle is that the stronger must yield to the weaker. In case of doubt the weaker. In case of doubt the weaker must have the verdict".<sup>6</sup> It goes without saying that Gandhi was in favour of the union of Oriya speaking tracts and their formation into a separate unit\*.

In fact the favourable views of Gandhi on the formation of linguistic province interested the Oriyas all the more in Gandhi.<sup>7</sup> Regarding a separate Orisa he said: "I have always raised the issue in the discussion with the Congress authorities. I shall press for it myself as representative of Orissa at the Round Table Conference".<sup>8</sup>

Gandhi always tried to bring the problems of Orissa to the notice of others. He reflected on the political situation in Orissa by maintaining that much has been left to be done for the region which is exposed to natural calamities causing great disadvantages.<sup>9</sup>

He also made it known that Orissa's feeble voice was got drowned (prior to 1920) in the presence of more influential members inside the Congress organization. In view of that he remarked that the minority opinions should not be ignored. Moreover his recommendation\* for the Orissa leaders and Orissa problem helped them win support from various other quarters.

In fact his sympathetic and considerate views and reports on the genuine Orissa problems and grievances proved beyond doubt his concern and commitment for the people of Orissa. All this helped to generate a feeling of goodwill among the Oriyas for him. They rightly realized that through him their cause could be better projected

in the all India level.<sup>10</sup> Thus due to the concern of Gandhi for Orissa, the faith in Congress was again generated, and that encouraged the leaders to launch the non-cooperation movement in a big way in Orissa, which was just the beginning of the end.

### **Social Services and Social Welfare Activities of Gandhi in Orissa**

Gandhi's advent brought not only radical change in the political atmosphere and activities of Orissa but also helped in a significant manner the all round development of Orissa. Though he visited Orissa in 1921 with a view to baptizing the people in the new creed of non-cooperation movement but subsequently and consequently he paid many more visits for the love and deep concern which he developed for the poor and suffering masses of the region which he saw personally.<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi was convinced of the need to get familiar with the regional problem and their intricacies, after he took charge the leadership of Congress. In 1918 and 1919 severe drought and flood in Orissa brought great misery and suffering for the masses which Gandhi came to know, and immediately he decided to act. The main purpose for which he visited Orissa in March 1921 was to see the condition of the people and to do something for them. He wrote an article in *Navjivan* underlying the need for urgent and generous help for the famine stricken people of Orissa.<sup>12</sup> Realizing that the region was unknown to the outside world, he quoted Rabindra Nath Tagore in this write-up to inform the people that 'Utkala' was a famous land and place of great pilgrimage for the Hindus. He deputed one of his associates Thakkar Bapa first to camp in Orissa and conduct relief work there in 1920 with Rs.50000/-<sup>13</sup> collected from the people of Gujarat for the flood affected people of Puri.

After his return from Orissa many a time he narrated "Orissa as the epitome of India's poverty" in his speeches. He also wrote two articles captioned "My Orissa Tour" and Orissa and Andhra" in *Navjiban* and *Young India* respectively. Referring to the condition of the peasants he said that the Oriyas were poorer than the peasants of Champaran.<sup>14</sup> At Puri the victims of famine wrung his heart, so much so that he wrote "it was my first visit to Orissa, I would like to put on record some of the ineffaceable scenes and memories of this province". Because of this situation in Orissa he believed and advised those people who wanted to serve the poor to go to Utkala or Orissa. On a number of occasions he said that he felt a deep urge to settle down in Utkala and serve the poor people of the province. He felt and believed that Orissa's condition could be ameliorated by selfless and full time dedicated workers with missionary zeal and spirit.<sup>15</sup> Therefore whenever any sincere and dedicated person sought his advice as to where to work he advised him to go to Orissa. At his instance the Christian missionary C.F. Andrews stayed in Orissa for some months to render service to the needy, particularly the flood affected and poverty stricken people.<sup>16</sup> Similarly Jivaramji Kalayanji Kothari, a follower of Gandhi dedicated his life and property to the service of Orissa. In 1927 along with his wife he established an Ashram at Bhadrak. Ishwarlal Vyas and his wife Purubai being inspired by Gandhi set up an Ashram at Soro.<sup>17</sup> As has already been mentioned, at the root of Thakkar Bapa's dedication and commitment to Orissa, it was only Gandhi's inspiration, that guided them.

Not only that he was worried about the flood or other problems of Orissa, but also he was equally bothered as to how to seek solution for the same. To control the flood problem in Orissa, he invited Vishweshraiya, the most famous

engineer of that time to come to Orissa. At his instance he came and stayed for about 12 days, made intensive investigation of the problem by touring extensively. Though at that time his fees per day was Rs.10000/- he did not take a single pie not even his travelling expenses because of Gandhi's special love for Orissa.

### **Gandhi's Role in improving the Economic Condition of Orissa**

Gandhi rightly realized that in Orissa apart from natural causes there is a human factor, i.e. the indolent habit of the people responsible for their poverty. He severely criticized the people and seriously thought of how to deal with this problem. His feeling was that the only remedy for eradication of poverty lay in the promotion of Charkha and Khadi work in the villages. His strong conviction was that the spinning wheel is the only means that can provide food and work to the poverty-stricken people.

Therefore on his advice hundreds of Charkha centres were poened in Orissa. He exhorted the Congress workers and leaders to make Orissa "the Khadi store of India".<sup>18</sup> Accordingly Gopabandhu Das, Niranjan Pattanayak and some other leaders tried their best to make Khadi an efficient vehicle for the relief of poverty and flood-stricken people of Orissa. The extension of Charakha centres, production and sale of Khadi undoubtedly helped to solve the problem of unemployment and improve the economic condition of the people. To some extent it also taught the people the ideas of Swadeshi, self-reliance and self-confidence.

In accordance with the instruction of Gandhi a scheme was drawn up to start centres to promote self-sufficiency in Khadi. Spinning wheels were distributed\*. With this the Congress workers were able to create love for Swadeshi among the Oriyas. That was a great achievement

of Gandhi. Apart from all this in meetings in his speeches time and again he said; "Orissa in the poorest province in India and this can be easily removed if evenly one uses Khadi."<sup>19</sup> Wherever he went he exhorted his audience to use Khadi only, instead of mill made cloth. At his instance Khadi and spinning exhibitions were organized at different places. During his visits he devoted specific time for the propagation and popularization of Khadi and Charakha.

Not only he professed, propagated, popularized, exhorted and appealed for the use of Khadi to improve the economic condition of the people, but also he arranged funds for the same. The amount which was raised for the All India Spinners' Association in Utkala was quite inadequate. Moreover sometimes Khadi work in Orissa suffered losses. As per rules laid down by the Central Organization such centres were to be closed down. However, the rule was relaxed in case of Utkala on the advice of Gandhi.<sup>20</sup> At the instance of Gandhi Jivaramji Kalyanji Kothari also contributed one lakh rupees to Gandhi Seva Sangha for Khadi work.

Thus his programme of Charakha and Khadi implemented for the purpose of economic salvation of the province deserves praise and appreciation. It was meant for the employment and general welfare of the masses. Moreover due to his efforts the village industries and handicrafts were revived and developed through the support of the Orissa Government (Congress Ministry).

### **Gandhi's efforts for the removal of untouchability**

Gandhi's relation with Orissa deepened gradually because of his emphasis on his constructive work. He launched his constructive Programme for the socio-economic regeneration of the country. Though Gandhi was an astute politician, he was a social reformer too. At times

he remained aloof from politics and preached the idea of eradication of untouchability, emancipation of women, elimination of drink, protection of cow, popularization of cottage industry, promotion of Charakha Khadi etc.

The Harijan movement which he started in Orissa occupies a special place in the social history of modern India.<sup>21</sup> His contributions for the uplift of women and other depressed classes in Orissa was also quite noteworthy.

During the freedom struggle the people of Orissa accepted the Gandhian ideal of social reform. The Harijan movement was one such ideal which helped in the transformation of the Orissa society during the first half of the 20th century. During his third visit to Orissa in 1927 he spoke highly in favour of temple entry of the so called untouchables. He made a settlement with the trustees of the Raghunath temple and entered into it with the untouchables. Earlier in 1925 during his second visit to Orissa at the Utkala Tannery of Madhusudan das, in order to make Gandhi feel happy, the address was presented by the untouchables. As desired by Gandhi during his visit to different places and meetings, he was mostly garlanded by untouchables. At several places he invited the untouchables to dine with him and engaged the Congress and Harijan workers in taking classes and cleaning the Harijan colonies. He personally went to the Harijan colonies and interacted with them. He instructed the upper caste Hindus to maintain contact with the Harijans at personal level. At his instance there were intercaste marriages between the Brahmins and Harijans.<sup>22</sup>

His fifth visit to Orissa in 1934 is most memorable as at that time he undertook the main mission of his life, i.e. Harijan uplift and removal of untouchability. Incidentally this mission was meant for the whole of the country which he

started from the holy land Jagannath Dham Puri in Orissa. This sacred mission he started through Padajatra or foot march with two fold objectives, i.e. (1) removal of Untouchability, (2) collecting money for the Harijan fund.<sup>23</sup>

Addressing a big gathering at Kabirpur during the foot march he said that God could not live in a temple where Harijans were not allowed to enter. On another occasion when he was invited to visit the famous Sakhigopal temple where Khadi was exclusively used by the deities, though he was impressed but he declined to go as free access to the temple was not given to the untouchables. However at Baliana he was able to open the Kunjabihari temple to the Harijans. Being inspired by him many Congress workers and leaders opened some temples in their respective areas for the Harijans.

Through various means and methods he collected money for the Harijan Fund. It was because of Gandhi's interest and insistence that Utkala got the larger share than the normal quota from the central fund for the Harijan Sevak Sangha. It was in the interest of Gandhi that the First and Second Congress Ministry in Orissa passed Various Acts for the welfare of the Harijans and removal of untouchability.

The Harijan movement of Gandhi in Orissa was the first step in his programme of breaking down all barriers whatever which divided and distanced man from man.

### **Gandhi's Impact on Women**

Gandhi's visits and contacts in Orissa had tremendous impact on the female community also. A good number of women being influenced by him and his programmes gave up *purdah* and their secluded life and not only they actively participated in the political programmes and movements but also dedicated their lives to social work in the

villages. There was remarkable degree of awakening among them. The most noteworthy among them were Rama Devi, Sarala Devi, Malati Devi who took the lead role under the guidance of Gandhi for the mass awakening of women in Orissa.

There is no denying that Gandhi succeeded to some extent in bringing the problems of Orissa to the attention of others and in generating their goodwill and support for the Oriya people. His considerate and sympathetic views on the Orissa problems, i.e. socio-economic and political proved beyond doubt his genuine concern for Orissa. It was out of his genuine love and sympathetic sympathy for the poverty-stricken people of Orissa, which he described as "the land of sorrows and tears" that he made trip after trip to the land that was "dearest to him in the whole of India". During his several trips to Orissa Gandhi undertook extensive tours even long *padajatras*, held numerous public and private meetings. At that time apart from explaining the people and convincing them about his programmes and ideologies, his objective was to know and comprehend the grievances of the common people. Moreover through his writings, his speeches, contacts and example of his personal life he won the hearts of the people of Orissa.

### **Conclusion**

Gandhi because of his special concern for Orissa received tremendous support and cooperation from the masses in his political programme of national liberation and his constructive programme for socio-economic regeneration. More particularly the first and second Congress Ministry (1937-1039 / 1946-47) initiated and implemented a number of social and educational welfare programmes according to the ideals of Gandhi and as desired by Gandhi.<sup>24</sup> These programmes included the removal of

untouchability, prohibition scheme and uplift of backward classes, and women and development of basic education. In the light of the above mentioned discussion it may be concluded that Gandhian Contributions to Orissa's socio-economic and political life was immense and most remarkable. It was due to his inspiration that there was general awakening social and political among the masses. It was due to him that the Orissa people began to take greater interest in national problems in politics. Under his leadership Orissa played a vigorous role in the national movement. He made the problems and genuine grievances of Orissa people known to others at various forums and quarters. Through various means and methods he tried to solve the linguistic, cultural and economic problems of Orissa. His leadership qualities and techniques brought the Oriya women from Purdah to public platform. In course of time women played an effective role in the social and political movements of contemporary India.

#### Notes and References :

1. Two Bachelors of Arts, Oriya Movement, Aska, 1919,p.31.
2. Utkala Dipika, 18 September 1920
3. Ibid., 25 September 1920.
4. Orissa Review, October 1997,pp.1-2.  
\* . On the success of the Salt Satyagraha Movement in Orissa guided by Gandhi Jawaharial Nehru wrote: "My greetings to the people of Utkala. I Have heard of their sacrifice and sufferings in the national struggle for freedom. I congratulate them and trust they will carry on the good fight till our motherland is free". Samaj, 4 March 1931.  
\* . In the Nagpur Congress Session it was agreed to have a separate Congress Committee known as the Uktala Pradesh Congress Committee (at that time when Utkala or Orissa was not a separate province).
5. Young India, 26 December 1928.
6. Prajatantra, 19 January 1928.  
\* . When Gandhi visited Rangoon, there also he was presented a memorandum by the Oriyas

- residing there. He justified the faith expressed in him by his remark that " like the head of king Charles I the Oriya problem reappears before me and haunts me in my sleep". Asa, 7 January 1931.
7. Asa, 7 June 1929.
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\* . On his recommendation Nilakantha Das was considered to be a member of the Parliamentary Board of the Swaraj Party.
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  11. Choudhury Gopabandhu, Gandhi and Utkala, Cuttack, 1951.
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  17. Choudhury Gopabandhu.op.cit.
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\* . At the instance of Gandhi by 30 June 1921 Utkala P.C.C. collected Rs.21,000/- for the Tilak Swaraj fund; 39,000 people as Congress members and introduced 16,000 spinning wheels in Orissa. Samaj, 16 July 1921.
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## Gandhiji and Hindu-Muslim Unity

*Balabhadra Ghadai*

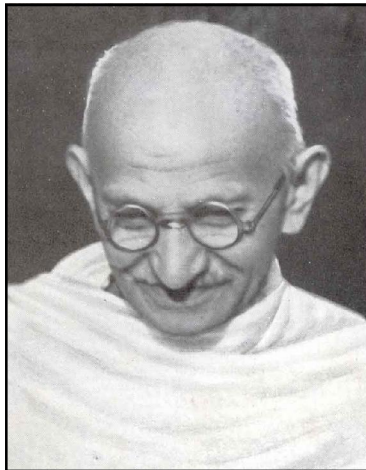
One of the greatest contributions of Mahatma Gandhi was his unparalleled attempt at Hindu-Muslim Unity. Although he could not accomplish this task at the end still he fought for its realisation throughout his life. His saying "Even if I am killed, I will not give up repeating the names of Ram and Rahim, which mean to me the same God. With these names on my lips, I will die cheerfully."

It may be recalled that Gandhiji's first-ever struggle was against racial discrimination and he rightly saw himself as the "Servant" of all humankind. Every Indian, however small, poor illiterate or insignificant, mattered to him. He believed all religions to be true but not fallible. He made it quite explicit. "After long study and experience I have come to the conclusion that all religions are true, all religions have errors in them ... I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe the Bible, the Quran, the Zend Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept each and every verse as divinely inspired."

Gandhiji not only taught such noble ideas but also practised them in real life and at his prayer

meetings select portions were read from the Gita, the Quran, the Bible and the Ramayana.

On the Khilafat issue, Gandhiji felt unhappy at the British attitude towards Turkey and the Caliph. He showed full respect for the sentiments of the Muslims with regard to the Khilafat question. Through his speeches and writings he supported the cause of the Muslims wholeheartedly. Calling Muslims as his brothers, he left no stone unturned to see that their religious sentiments were not injured by the severe British attitude towards the Caliph.



To Gandhiji Hindu-Muslim unity means unity not only between Hindu and Muslims but also between all those who believe India to be their home, no matter to what faith they belong. What is non-essential to a Hindu may be an essential to a Muslim. And in all non-essential matters a Hindu must yield for the asking.

It is criminal to quarrel over trivialities. The unity we desire will last long if we cultivate a yielding and charitable disposition towards one another. The cow is as dear as life to a Hindu, the Muslim should, therefore, voluntarily accommodate his Hindu brother. Silence at his prayer is a precious



thing for Muslim. Every Hindu voluntarily respects his Muslim brother's sentiment.

Gandhiji was of opinion that religion and politics could not be separated. But by religion in this case he meant morality, for religion was to him the fountain head of morality. But when he saw communalists using religion to fan hatred against followers of other religions, he completely changed his formulation and said, "Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics."

It is noteworthy to mention one significant point here that Gandhiji's message of peace and tolerance had stopped the mutual slaughter between Hindus and Muslims in Calcutta and people of both the communities came together in a lorry to Bapu, with sky-rending shouts of 'Hindu Muslim Bhai Hain' (Hindus and Muslims are brother), 'Hindu Muslim Ek Ho' (Let Hindus and Muslims Unite), at 11.30 P.M. i.e. just half an hour before the clock ushered in the day of freedom. This noisy atmosphere of warm fraternization continued for the whole night. Bapu could not get a wink of sleep, not only men but also women and children of both communities came together. It seemed as if they came for Darshan of the Father of the Queen of freedom, begging forgiveness for their misdeeds and taking a vow not to behave so in future.

The clock struck twelve mid-night and a day unlike any other dawned. It was August 15, 1947. India had become independent after 190 years of British rule. Millions upon millions of

Indians celebrated the wonderful victory won without firing a bullet. There were illuminations and decorations all over the land, parades and processions and music and dancing. And there were thousands of flag-hoisting ceremonies. From the majestic ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi, the saffron, white and green flag fluttered proudly. The Red Fort had once again become the focal point of living history. Slogans in praise of the leaders echoed and re-echoed from thousands of throats. But Gandhiji did not join in, sent no message to the nation. In the midst of all the festivities, he was sad. He closed his ears to all the noise and tumult of the celebrations, for his work of 32 years had come to "an inglorious end". He had struggled for retaining love between Hindus and Muslims; but one portion of the country had become Pakistan, a Muslim nation. So he fasted all day, prayed and continued spinning.

Gandhiji's love for the Muslims had angered some people and it was on the 30th January, 1948 that he died as a victim to a Hindu's fury. The last words he faintly uttered were most probably 'Ram Rahim' and not 'He Ram' which prove his concern for bringing about Hindu-Muslim Unity. Let us remember his prayer "Thy name is both Ishwar and Allah; pray, show everybody the right;" and send our respects to Bapu through the prayer.

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*Arnapurna Devi*

The women of Orissa played a significant role in all phases of national movement. They had made momentous contribution to the freedom struggle by demonstrating their indomitable courage and unflinching patriotism. But Gandhiji was the chief architect of women's participation in the National Movement. Because he, for the first time, involved women in the freedom struggle which gave a new dimension to the movement.

During pre-Gandhian era, barring a few ladies of royal, aristocratic and political families, Oriya women in general were not taking part in politics. But Gandhiji's leadership aroused self-reliance and self-confidence amongst them and they came out of their seclusion to join the



*Malati Choudhury*

Gandhiji visited Orissa, for the first time, on 23rd March 1921. Before addressing a public meeting in Cuttack City on that day, he spoke to a small gathering of

movement despite opposition from the family. This mass participation of women in the freedom struggle provided renewed impetus and vigour to the movement.

## Oriya Women in National Movement

*Prabhukalyan Mohapatra*

Oriya women at Vinod Vihari. That was the first public meeting Oriya women had ever attended and that was also the first occasion where a great political leader of Gandhiji's stature addressed them separately. Never before Oriya women had this kind of experience nor had they been given so much importance by any other leader earlier.

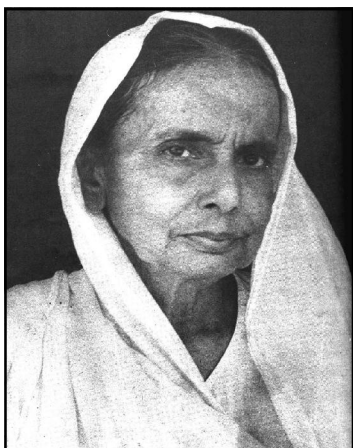


*Kuntala Kumari Sabat*

The Gaya session of Indian National Congress was held in 1922. Prominent Oriya women luminaries like Rama Devi (wife of Gopabandhu Choudhury who resigned from the post of deputy magistrate to dedicate himself to the nationalist movement), Hiramani Devi (mother of Nirajan Pattanaik, the prominent Congress leader of Ganjam district) attended the same. Likewise, Calcutta session of National Congress in December 1928 was represented by Rama Devi, Sarala Devi (wife of Bhagirathi Mohapatra, the first Secretary of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee), Sarojini Choudhury (daughter of Fakir Mohan Senapati and wife of Munsif Gagan Bihari Choudhury), Janhavi Devi and Kokila Devi

(daughter of Choudhury Bhagabat Prasad Mohapatra, M.L.C., Bhadrak and sister of Kantakavi Lakshmikanta Mohapatra) and Rasamani Devi. On the other hand, Karachi Congress held in March 1931, was attended by fourteen women delegates from Orissa. Gandhi was extremely pleased to see such an appreciable number of women delegates from Orissa.

The Salt Satyagraha marked the beginning of a true political career for Oriya women, bringing into lime-light a large number of lady luminaries.



*Rama Devi*

Inchudi of Balasore district and Kujanga of Jagatsinghpur district were the two important centre of salt satyagraha when women played a vital role. Women leaders like Rama Devi, Sarala Devi, Malati Devi (wife of former Chief Minister Nabakrushna Choudhury), Janhavi Devi, Kokila Devi, Kiranbala Sen, Bhagyabati Pata Mahadei (Rani of Kujang), Sarojini Choudhury, Laxmi Devi, Arnapurna Devi, Binapani Devi, Sunamani Devi, Chandramani Devi, Subhadra Mahatab, Maina Devi, Prafulla Kumari Devi etc. made immense effort for the active participation of women in the Satyagraha. They organised women's gatherings and enlightened them about various progressness of the movement. The first batch of women satyagrahi led by Rama Devi, Malati Devi, Kironbala Sen joined Inchudi Satyagraha on 20th April 1930. Thousands of women followed them in a long procession defying government law. The women leaders persuaded the rural women folk to break the salt law. The

response was so overwhelming that, illiterate women of the lower strata of society came out of their static indoor life resisting the opposition of the family. Hence the mass participation of women in the freedom struggle provided a new dimension to the movement. A large number of women collected salt in places like Kasaba, Basta, Bhadrak, Astaranga, Marichpur, Rusulpur, Laxmipur, Pallibondha, Ganjam, Humma etc. More than fifteen hundred women took part in the salt satyagraha at Inchudi on 20th April 1930 under the leadership of Rama Devi. Towards the middle of May 1930, more than five hundred women joined the Salt Satyagraha of Kujang at the call of Bhagyabati Pata Mahadei (Rani of Kujanga), Rama Devi and others.

While Rama Devi, Malati Devi, Kiranbala Sen, Binapani Devi, Sarojini Choudhury, Arnapurna Devi mostly worked for the movement in Cuttack district, Janhavi Devi, Kokila Devi, Subhadra Mahatab (wife of former Chief Minister H.K. Mahatab) mobilised women for the civil disobedience movement in Balasore district. In 1931 Janhavi Devi and Kokila Devi organised a well-attended meeting of women at Balasore over which nationalist poetess Dr. Kuntala Kumari Sabat presided. Sarala Devi strenuously worked in Ganjam district for mobilising both men and women for the



*Pravabati Devi*

Satyagraha. Besides, Sunamani Devi (Krupasindhu Hota's younger brother's wife), who spent some months in Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram, actively mobilised women for the civil disobedience movement in Puri district. Moreover, Malati Devi played a conspicuous role

in boycott and bonfires of foreign clothes. In Sambalpur district, Jambubati Devi, wife of noted freedom fighter Bhagirathi Pattanaik led a procession during Quit India Movement despite her illness. In addition to breaking salt law women were also engaged in delivering fiery speeches, felicitating the law-breakers, criticising the government, spinning cotton, anti-untouchability work etc. during different phases of movement.

Sarala Devi had the distinction of being the first lady of Orissa to court imprisonment participating in the National Movement. In the first phase of civil disobedience movement six ladies including Sarala Devi, Rama Devi, Malati Devi, Chandramani Devi, Sunamani Devi and an old lady of Balasore district were jailed. However, during Quit India Movement more than twenty Oriya women were imprisoned.

Harijan movement began towards the end of 1932. Rama Devi played a pioneering role in the Harijan movement and about fifteen ladies carried out the anti-untouchability work under her leadership. During this phase Rama Devi realised that as mother, woman has a great role to play in the society and awakening of the country was impossible without arousing the maternal force. Rama Devi along with eleven ladies took part in Gandhiji's Harijan Padayatra which began from Puri on 9th May 1934. Gandhiji highly appreciated the activities of the Women Padayatris and said, "I have marvelled at the manner in which Smt. Rama Devi and her girls have discharged themselves during the tour. These ladies have not known what fatigue is. There was a naturalness about all they did which show that they have been trained to bear hardship life simply. As soon as the party reached its

destination, these ladies allowed themselves no rest. They immediately went out among the Harijans fearlessly with great freedom. I have had the privilege of mixing with tens and thousands of Indian women. But nowhere I have seen anything quite like what Smt. Rama Devi and her little band have been found to do so gracefully and so naturally."

The sense of commitment among Oriya women was so strong that they were not scared or discouraged by fines, summons, trials, arrests, imprisonment and atrocities by British police in different programmes of the movement. About twenty Oriya women undertook constructive work in the rural area responding to Gandhiji's "Back to the villages" programme. Rama Devi took up rural reconstruction work at Bari, Malati Devi carried on Congress socialist movement at Baji Rout Hostel of Dhenkanal. Sarala Devi became a member of first Orissa Legislative Assembly from 1937-44. A Laxmibai who was also elected to this assembly from Berhampur women constituency became the first lady Deputy Speaker of the House. While Malati Devi was elected to constituent Assembly of India in 1946, after independence Rama Devi, Malati Devi, Sunamani Devi, Arnapurna Devi (Moharana) etc. joined Sarvodaya movement started by Binoba Bhave. Oriya women, by and large, exhibited greater determination and courage during different phases of freedom struggle as expected by Gandhiji.

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## Pandit Nilakantha : His Role and Achievement as Speaker

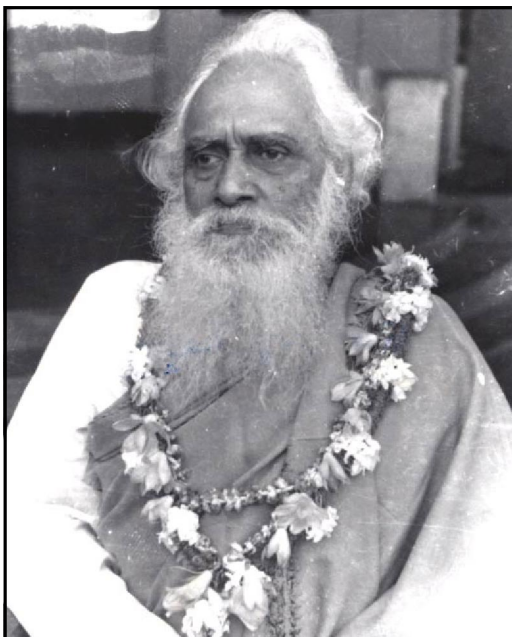
*Dr. Shridhar Charan Sahoo*

Pandit Nilakantha was a multi-faceted personality of rare caliber. He evinced traits of this caliber right from his school days and has left behind him his mark of achievement in different walks of life. He was a social reformer and educationist, a patriot and parliamentarian and an activist and fighter for formation of Orissa as a separate province. Over and above, he was a scholar par excellence and a versatile litterateur.

Apart from his contribution in those areas, he has his contribution in the realm of parliamentary democracy at the state level as a Speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly. Functioning from that position, he has strengthened, in a way, the foundations of parliamentary democracy in the post-independence period. What is memorable and remarkable is that he fought a sustained battle to ensure an independent status for our Vidhan Sabha and free it from Government control apart from elevating the prestige and dignity of Speaker's Office. Over

and above, he has left behind an ideal legacy and heritage of values and ideals which he upheld and actualized as Speaker.

Any Oriya with 'swabhiman' would feel immensely proud of Pandit Nilakantha who played such a memorable and significant role at that point of time in carrying forward our nascent democracy in the right direction.



Pandit Nilakantha was elected on May, 27, 1957 as the Speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly and functioned in this capacity till 1st, July, 1961. He was the right man at the right place and position. Apart from age, he had behind him a rich fund of parliamentary experience as a member of Central Legislative Assembly having already enjoyed a long tenure of nearly two

decades along with his five years tenure as a member of Orissa Legislative Assembly (1952-1957). Age, scholarship, wisdom and experience all taken together made him the best choice of the time for the office of the Speaker.

Nilakantha after being elected was warmly welcomed by Members cutting across parties and groups. Even Nityananda Mohapatra who contested him felt proud of having been defeated by so outstanding a personality like Nilakantha.

As the Speaker, he discharged his duty and responsibility without fear or favour upholding with utmost respect Parliamentary rules and procedure.

It is significant to note that after being elected as Speaker, he resigned forthwith from the Congress Party which elected him to Orissa Legislative Assembly. By this significant act, he as Speaker set a healthy tradition like that of Britain where the Speaker is politically neutral and a non party man.

### **Nilakantha : His Style of Functioning as Speaker**

The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Legislative Assembly. Smooth and orderly conduct of the business of the house is his primary responsibility. Independence, impartiality and neutrality are the attributes of a Speaker. His role-performance demands patience, maturity and wisdom to manage both the Government and opposition side on the floor of the Assembly. Over and above, a thorough knowledge and grasp of parliamentary norms and procedure help a Speaker to interpret rules and give his rulings when required.

Regarding how a Speaker should act it has been said: "God has given man two ears and one tongue having a definite purpose so that he keeps both his ears open to hear more but speak less. And that he should speak only that which is proper and reasonable. Those words are very aptly applicable to the Speaker of a Legislature who has to speak less but hear more from both the Government and opposition side and then give a ruling that is just, reasonable and impartial. Those

words are like necessary principles of parliamentary management for the successful discharge of a Speaker's role.

Pandit Nilakantha as the Speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly was the brilliant embodiment of those afore-said principles and ideals. He acted every inch like an umpire with utmost impartiality and could win the respect and admiration of both the treasury and opposition benches. It was according to many a pleasure and privilege to work under his speakership. Sri Banka Bihari Das, a senior most member of our Assembly speaks of the way Nilakantha gave a patient hearing to everybody's argument with due respect to everybody's opinion. May be at times, some members got a little dissatisfied with him and his ruling but finally at the end they had to bow down before his personality and wisdom.

Nilakantha respected democratic values and norms. Sri Harihara Bahinipati who was an opposition member underlined this trait of Nilakantha's character. Once when he stood up again and again to demand an adjournment motion after question hour, Nilakantha in a commanding and decisive tone directed him to sit down. Mr. Bahinipati left the house as a mark of protest followed by all other Members of the opposition who decided to quit. Consequently Nilakantha adjourned the house with a statement that smacks of his respect for opposition and democratic values. In his statement he said: "it was improper and unreasonable to continue the work of the Vidhan Sabha in the absence of the opposition members".

As a Speaker, he gave many important rulings and decisions. The main thrust of some of those rulings which deserve mention are the following:

- (a) The question of Governor's salary can not be brought under the range and jurisdiction of Assembly debate.

- (b) Taxation policy of Government of India being a central subject can not be discussed in the house.
- (c) Once budget is supplied to Members, it no longer remains a secret.
- (d) The Members of the Vidhan Sabha can speak either in English, Oriya or Hindi as per their convenience and suitability.

As a speaker, Nilakantha was at times very strict and stern on matters of Parliamentary procedure for the smooth regulation of Legislative Business. Regarding raising of points of order once he very sternly conveyed his view to an honorable member. He said to him that no point of order is to be raised on a past issue.

Two important and remarkable achievements of Nilakantha were with regard to his battle for ensuring independent status of Orissa Vidhan Sabha and on the question of the status of the Speaker in the event of dissolution of the Legislative Assembly.

In view of their importance, a detailed discussion is made below.

**The battle for freedom of the Vidhan Sabha from Government control and giving it an independent status and Nilakantha as the foster-father**

When Nilakantha became the Speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly, it was under the joint control of the Finance and Home Department. The status that Speaker enjoyed at the time was that of a mere departmental head like any other Government Department.

Nilakantha was a Speaker with a difference. A person of sturdy independence with almost a revolutionary mind, he critically analyzed this state of affairs with regard to the subordinate status of Orissa Legislative Assembly and its implication.

From day one, he directed his efforts to free the Vidhan Sabha from Government control with a rationale of his own for its independent status. As has been said, the fundamental question that seriously engaged his analytical and critical mind was: "Is it reasonable for a Government department which only publishes and carries out laws to control the Vidhan Sabha which is the creator of such laws ? If that is so, it may so happen that for some reason or other the Government or any Minister of a Department unwilling to implement certain laws might cause unnecessary delay by withholding publication of such laws. In that case laws passed by Vidhan Sabha might turn out to be only laws in pen and paper". This amounted to defeating the will of the representatives of the people manifested in laws.

This was the rationale which made him determined to free the Vidhan Sabha from the control of the Home department and give it a separate and independent status.

Our Constitution under Article 187 (1) recognizes the independent status of a State Legislature when it says "the house or each house of Legislature shall have separate secretarial staff". The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha also acted as independent entities as regards their status. Dr. Ambedkar, the father of the Indian Constitution was also in favor of this independent status for the Legislatures of States. The Government of Orissa, however, was opposed to this demand which was spearheaded by Speaker Nilakantha.

Nilakantha who had the courage of his convictions with tremendous self- confidence in him and his struggle went on having a lot of correspondence with Government of Orissa which however had little impact. A privilege motion was also moved against Government's indifference and callousness on the issue by Sri Harihar Bahinipati,

the then Member of Vidhan Sabha. Following this Nilakantha formed a Committee under his chairmanship with Dr H.K.Mahatab, the Chief Minister and Sri R. N.Singdeo, the leader of the opposition and some other members. The Committee after having discussed the issue threadbare in six Sessions during January, March and April, 1958 submitted its report on 16.04.1958.

**Some of the important recommendations were:**

1. A separate and independent Secretariat free from executive control of Government will be formed under the administrative control of the Speaker.
2. As per necessity, the Speaker will determine the number and strength of employees of the Legislative Assembly.
3. The employees of the Assembly Secretariat will be appointed under Speaker's authority and direction.
4. Their appointment and service conditions will be regulated and controlled as per the rules and laws prepared under Article 187(2) and (3) of Indian Constitution.
5. With the consent of the Finance Department, the budget will be prepared by the Vidhan Sabha Secretariat.
6. The Secretary will directly send proposals to Finance Department and the Finance Department will accord formal approval. In case of difference, it will be resolved by the Speaker.
7. Within the budgetary grants of Vidhan Sabha, the Speaker will be empowered to sanction expenditure.
8. The Secretary of the Vidhan Sabha will issue orders and notifications regarding

employees of the Vidhan Sabha on behalf of the Governor. As per direction of the Speaker, the Secretary of the Vidhan Sabha will manage and regulate the administration of the Secretariat. In case of any disputes regarding any law and rules, the decision of the Speaker will be final.

In spite of the favourable report to free the Vidhan Sabha from the control of the Home Department, the then Home Minister who was also an ex-Chief Justice of High Court was strongly opposed to this change. The Government even then slept over the matter delaying any action on the issue.

Nilakantha was unperturbed. Even now he remained equally uncompromising in his stance. It is said that he issued a note of warning at this stage to Dr Mahatab, the then Chief Minister of Orissa. As he said to him: "The key of the Assembly is with me. Unless this question is resolved, I will lock up the Assembly."

Possibly, the warning worked. Nilakantha's dream came true when Dr Mahatab read out the Home Department order issued on September 26, 1958. As per the order the Vidhan Sabha instead of being subordinate to the Government acquired the status of a separate and independent wing. The Speaker of Vidhan Sabha and its Secretary acquired the status of a Cabinet Minister and Secretary of the Government respectively. All the employees of Vidhan Sabha were freed from Government control and came under the administrative control of the Speaker. Orissa Vidhan Sabha Secretariat was also to prepare its own budget. It was to be included as a separate head in the general budget.

With the Home Department order, the struggle of Nilakantha to give a separate and independent status to the Orissa Legislative Assembly came to a victorious conclusion. It



shows how uncompromising was Nilakantha when a question of principle was involved.

### **Speaker's Tenure Does Not End With Dissolution Of The Legislative Assembly And Nilakantha's Struggle To Establish This Principle**

Nilakantha will be remembered in the history of Vidhan Sabhas in India and that of Orissa in particular for his determined and successful struggle in upholding a constitutional principle as regards the position of the Speaker in the event of its dissolution (dissolution of the Legislative Assembly). That constitutional principle was to the effect that the Speaker's tenure does not end with the dissolution of the Assembly and that he remains in office until the new house meets and a new Speaker is elected.

The question of upholding these principles arose when the Orissa Legislative Assembly was dissolved in Feb, 1961 by the orders of the Governor. It was then argued that a person continues as Speaker only when his membership of the Assembly continues. Since Orissa Legislative Assembly has been dissolved and has ended the membership of all its members including that of Nilakantha it ipso facto ended his tenure. The Speakers of Kerala and Punjab had also lost their Speakership under exactly the same situation which Nilakantha faced. What deserves specific mention is that, that was the existing tradition and ruling norm in the state level.

Pandit Nilakantha who was well-versed in parliamentary rules and norms with a thorough study of constitutional provision was hardly prepared to accept this Government interpretation.

He cited article 179(c) of our Constitution which read: "--- whenever the Assembly is dissolved the Speaker shall not vacate his office until immediately before the first meeting of the assembly after the dissolution".

Over and above, he argued that even if the assembly is dissolved, the Speaker needs to continue in office to exercise administrative control over the Assembly Secretariat which he heads as Speaker until a new Speaker is elected to take over the reins of control.

In this connection Nilakantha not only tried to convince the concerned authorities of Orissa; he even sought a clarification from Central Government to bring round the Orissa Government to his point of view. That apart, he firmly put forward his views and arguments in established and reputed newspapers like "The Statesman" of Calcutta and "The Hindu" of Madras.

This issue regarding Speaker's continuance or non-continuance in the event of dissolution which Nilakantha brought to the center-stage engaged the earnest attention of the Law Department of the Government of India and the Constitution experts in the Central level. Nilakantha drew also the attention of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal and Chief Minister Bidhan Chandra Ray of West Bengal. The vital question which he raised and brought to Consideration was: "whether tradition will stand or constitution has to be honoured? If tradition is to be adhered to, then Constitution has got to be amended. If Constitution has to be honoured then tradition has to be demolished." Finally, the Government of India realized the justifiability and reasonableness of Nilakantha's stands and decided to follow the provision of Constitution overriding existing tradition. In this connection, a letter was finally sent by the Government of India to the effect that Nilakantha's stand was justified being based on law and Constitution. This was undoubtedly a remarkable victory of Pandit Nilakantha in his constitutional struggle.

What prompted him in this connection to fight a battle with Orissa Government to the extent

of going up to the Central level? There appears to be nothing personal in it. He was in fact fighting for the prestige and honour of the Vidhan Sabha and that of the Constitutional office of Speaker. In a way, he was a past master in parliamentary norms and a constitution expert. He had courage and tremendous self-confidence in him to uphold and establish this constitutional principle.

As per reigning tradition, the Speakers lost their tenure immediately after dissolution of an Assembly. Nilakantha changed this trend by his victorious constitutional struggle and made Orissa the trend-setter. From then onwards, the dissolution of the Vidhan Sabha or the State Legislative Assembly was not accompanied by vacation of his office by the speaker. He remained in office until the new house met and a new Speaker was elected.

#### **Conclusion :**

Nilakantha was a fighter to the core of his being. He was a revolutionary at heart. Like a revolutionary, he was ever prepared to fight whenever he found something wrong unjust and unreasonable. That was the story of his life and struggle either in the social domain or political arena.

As the Speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly, he led almost an uncompromising struggle to free the Vidhan Sabha from Government control and give it an independent status of its own.

His sustained and dedicated battle with regard to the position of the Speaker in the event of dissolution of the Assembly deserves recognition for him as a Constitution expert- "a Pandit of our Constitution. But he was a Constitution Pandit or expert with a difference. He was not an arm-chair pandit delivering only academic discourses on politics and Constitution.

But he was a fighter in reality in matters involving and affecting Constitution. It was his determination to see that constitutional sanctity remains in tact- that constitutional provisions get honoured.

He will be definitely remembered in the history of Orissa Legislative Assembly and in the history of the evolution and working of our Constitution in the provincial level for what he did and fought for.

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## Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Crusader Against Caste and Untouchability of Hindu Social Order

*Tofan Bernal*

The various socio-religious reform movements, which took place in India during the British rule, were the expression of the rising national consciousness and spread of the liberal ideas of the West among the Indian people. These movements interestingly tended to have a national scope and programme of reconstruction in the social and religious spheres.<sup>1</sup> In the social sphere, there were movement of caste reform or caste abolition, equal rights for women, a campaign against child marriage and ban on widow remarriage, a crusade against social legal inequalities.<sup>2</sup>

In the religious sphere, there sprang up movements which combated religious superstitions and attacked idolatry polytheism and hereditary priesthood. These movement in varying degrees, emphasized and fought for the principles of individual liberty and social equality and stood for nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

The new society which was developing in India since the advent of the British rule had distinct needs differing from those of the old society.

The new intelligentsia, which imbibed the liberal Western culture, recognized the needs and launched movement to reform or revolutionized social institutions religious outlooks and ethical conception inherited from the past since they felt

that these were obstacles to national advance. They were convinced that the new society could politically, culturally, and economically develop only on the basis of liberal principles such as the recognition of individual liberty freedom of human personality and social equality.<sup>4</sup>

The reform movements represented the striving of conscious and progressive sections of the Indian people to democratize social institutions and remodel old religious outlooks to suit the new social needs.

It was the grievances of the Indian Social reformers that the slow advance of social reform was due to the insufficient support to it by the British government, which, they asserted, did not actively assist them in the work of storming the citadels of social reaction and injustices in the country. The rate at which the social reform legislation was enacted was too slow and generally undertaken under the pressure of the advanced opinion in the country. It is true that in the first half of the nineteenth century, the British ruler themselves initiated such progressive legislation as the abolition of slavery, Suttee and infanticide. However their attitude suffered a change later on. In fact the age of consent act passed in 1891 was the only important social reform legislation enacted by government during many decades prior to that date. This only strengthened the determination of

the leader of the Indian national movement to secure political power so that they could use it to accelerate the tempo of social and religious reform in India.<sup>5</sup> The caste system of Hindus, which divided the Hindu community into a multitude of almost hermetically sealed groups, hierarchically graded and based on birth, was one of the principal target of Socio-religious Reform Movement.

The caste system was "steel flame of Hinduism". It was ancient than the Veda, which recorded its existence at that time. Originally, the Hindu society seems to have been differentiated into three or four castes. Subsequently however, as a result of the operation of such factors as racial admixture, geographical: expansion and growth of crafts which brought into existence new vocations, the original caste (Varnas) broke up into various smaller castes (Jatis).<sup>6</sup>

While Hinduism made for cultural unity of all Hindus in the past, the caste system socially disintegrated them in to an ever increasing number of groups and subgroups. In all vita ! Social matters such as marriage, vocation and dining each such group or sub groups was an exclusive unit.

The caste system was undemocratic and authentarian in the extreme. The castes constituting the series were hierarchically graded, each caste being considered inferior to those above it and superior to those below it. The status of a man born in a particular caste was determined by the rank of that caste in the hierarchy. Once born in that caste, his status was pre-determined and immutable. Thus birth decided his status, which could not be altered by any talent he might show or wealth he might accumulate.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the caste in which a man was born predetermined what vocation he would pursue. He had no choice. Thus birth decided the occupation of a man. The rule of endogamy

governed every caste or sub-caste. A person belonging to one caste could not marry a person of other caste. Thus birth restricted the zone of selection in the matter of matrimony.<sup>8</sup>

Since caste system was hierarchically graded, it was based on social and legal inequalities. For example, at the apex of this social pyramid stood the caste of Brahmins who had the monopoly right to officiate as priests with exclusive access to all higher religious and secular learning and knowledge while, at the base swarmed the mass of Shudra together with the untouchable and even unapproachable whom the scheme of Hindu society, sanctified by the Hindu religion and enforced by the coercive power of Hindu state, had assigned the duty of serving all other caste and constrained to follow, under the threat of severest penalty, such low vocation as those of scavengers, tanners and others.<sup>9</sup>

The uniqueness of caste system did not consist in that it was based on the difference of functions. Its specificness lay in the fact that it made birth as the basis of social grouping. It implies not only the negation of equality but the Organization of inequality exclusively on the basis of inheritance. Difference there will be in an imaginable society, difference of functions at all events. It is not in recognizing their inevitability that caste is peculiar, it is in the method it adopts to systematize and control them.

Since each caste had its own conception of the norms of conduct which it forced on its members, it became culturally separated from other castes which had other conception of ethics. Each caste thus became a separate socio cultural group.

Further the caste system was sanctified by the sanction of religion. Its very genesis was attributed to God Brahman. If a member of a caste infringed the caste rules, he did not merely commit a crime against the caste but perpetrated sin

against religion. Thus, religion fortified the hold of the caste over its members in fact, the basic demand of Hinduism on its followers was that he should gladly accept the social position in which he was born, i.e. his caste since it was divinely ordained and should fulfill meticulously the duties which the caste assigned to him.

Since caste controlled his life including such vital personal affairs as marriage, vocation and social intercourse. Such as eating with others and since behind the imperatives of the caste stood the sanction of religion, the coercive power of Hindu state as well as the penal authority with which the caste itself was armed, the individual was almost completely shorn of personal liberty. He could not choose his profession he could not marry to whom he desired; he could not eat with whom ever he likes. And, further, the rank of the caste in which he was born, in the finally graded caste hierarchy determined his social status and position in the eye of law of the state which was not uniform but varied awarding to the caste a person belongs to.

Hierarchic gradation, social and other inequalities, endogamy, restrictions on dining and the lack of freedom regarding the choice of vocation, were the principal feature's of the caste system.

The caste system became an obstacle both to the development of the contemporary economy established during the British rule, in India as also to the national unity so vital to win national freedom. For the growth of Industries, it was necessary to have of labour supply. The rigid rule of caste forcing its every member to follow the hereditary occupation came in the way of the plentiful labour supply for industries.

The caste, demanding the fore-most allegiance to it, came also in the way of the paramount need of the subject people subordinate every allegiance to the supreme allegiance to

nationalism. The ruination of the artisans and the impoverishment of farmers made it economically necessary for them to take to other vocations. The spread of democratic ideas such as individual liberty kindled urges to revolt against caste distinctions and inequality among the educated Indians.

It was the educated section of the Indian people who launched attack on caste. It sensed the anomaly of the caste in the new India. For national freedom and advance, political, social, economic, cultural, the caste structure had to be reformed, or even eliminated. The social reformers propagated national progress as the objectives of men.

The social reformers attacked inequalities and separatism and stood for equality and co-operation. They attacked the heredity as the basis of distinction, and law of *karma* as which supplied the religio-philosophic defence of the undemocratic authoritarian caste institution. They called on the people to work for the betterment in the real world. In which they lived rather than strive for salvation after death. The branded the caste system as the powerful obstacles to the growth of national unity and solidarity.<sup>10</sup>

There were different angle from which caste was attacked by different social reform groups, Raja Ram Mohan Ray the founder of Brahma Samaj invoked the authority of Mahanirvana Tantra, an old religio-sociological work of the Hinduism, to support his view that caste should no longer continue. The Brahma Samaj opposed the rigid social divisions which caste implied.

Rabindra Nath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen, who succeeded the Raja Ram Mohan Ray as successive leaders of Samaj, were more critical of Hindu scriptures than Raja Ram Mohan Ray. It was Keshab Chandra Sen, who is most unambiguous categorical term, repudiated the caste system without invoking any scriptural

authority. The spirit of social revolt, which the Raja inaugurated, reached a climax in the history of the Brahman Samaj under the guidance of Keshah Chandra Sen.<sup>11</sup>

The pioneering work of the anti caste movement first started by Brahman Samaj was continued by other organizations which were subsequently formed in the country.

The Bombay Prarthana Samaj carried on the propaganda of the repudiation of caste practically on the same lines of the Brahma Samaj. Both Brahma Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj under the democratic cultural influence of the west denounced the caste as an institution itself in contrast to this attitude, the Arya Samaj started by Swami Dayananda Saraswati preached not to repudiation of the caste system. But the revival of the Hindu society of Vedic period based only on the four castes. The Arya Samaj, while crusading against the minute's dissection of the Hindu society into countless sub-castes, aimed at reconstructing it on the original four fold division. Further, it stood for extending the right to study scripture even to the lowest caste Shudra.

Thus, while both the Brahma Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj were iconoclastic movement with regards to caste, the Arya Samaj stood for reforming caste by eliminating all sub-castes. In addition to Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Arya Samaj, there was other movement, which also carried on a campaign against caste.<sup>12</sup>

Telang Ranade, Phooley who founded the Satya Sadhak Samaj (1873), Malabari poet Narmad and other were crusader against the caste system. In the south, the self respect movement, attacking the humiliating disabilities from which the non-Brahmin communities suffered, was organized.

Though Indian nationalism reached the conclusion that political power was vital promise

for a fundamental reconstruction of Indian society on a democratic basis, it did not relax its campaign against social evils. However social reform was given auxiliary place in the scheme of its work.<sup>13</sup>

The movements of the lower castes of Hindu society suffering from social, religious, and legal disabilities, as a result of the undemocratic caste system, had two aspects; (1) progressive and (2) the reactionary and anti-national. When a lower caste organized even on a caste basis and fought for democratic freedoms, its struggle helped the general struggle for the unity of the Indian people on a democratic basis. Communalism thrived on privilege on one side and disabilities on the other.<sup>14</sup> When democratic liberties were won and all social and legal inequalities based on the hierarchic structure of society were abolished, communalism itself would vanish. There would survive no distinction between the member of one community and those of other. It would be the democratic merging of all individuals, only to be subsequently classified into social groupings based on their real role in the existing socio-economic structure and therefore, historically valid. Communalism would end only when the democratic freedom were extended to the unprivileged social groups.

But when a lower caste organized itself for securing a specific weight in the constitution of the country, when it demanded separate electorate, it acted in a reactionary and anti-national manner. Separate electorates would only perpetuate communalism. Lower caste would be right in demanding the removal of special obstacles put in their way for the manifestation and development of their talent as a result of hierarchic structures of society. This would be a progressive democratic demand and would help to increase the creative vitality of the people. But if a caste asked for special rights, it acted in an undemocratic and anti-national way. The member

of a submerged caste and only common negative interest in as much as they were interested in the removal of disabilities imposed on all of them. But when, due to the establishment of a new economic system, the vocational basis of every caste was disorganized, when every caste was composed of individuals pursuing different vocations and having even conflicting materials interests, there could be no common positive interest of all its members.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly non-Brahmin bloc of caste had no common positive interests. These castes were composed of artisans, land labourers, landlords, factory workers, tenants and others. The interest of these groups were widely divergent, within the same caste of this bloc too often there were groups pursuing different occupation.<sup>16</sup>

The non-Brahmin movement was valid and progressive only so far as it struggled to remove legal and social disabilities. Special representation aiming at serving common positive interest had no meaning, since there were no common positive interests of the different castes comprising of non-Brahmin bloc.

The role of nationalist, movement in weakening the caste should not be underestimated. It is true that the basic pillar of the caste, viz. endogamy practically remained intact, but increased collaboration of the members of different-caste in economic, political, and secular cultural movements, steadily grew. The national movement, which already secured a mass basis, affected the narrow caste bonds. Again, the national movement was essentially democratic in principle and based its programmes on equal right of individuals and groups. As such, it was objectively and indirectly in irreconcilable conflict with the hierarchically graded caste, conserving inequalities based on birth. The national movement unified the people while caste kept them divided. The national movement proclaimed the principles

of individual freedom and self determination as much as national freedom and national self-determination. So the growth of the national movement weakened the caste.<sup>17</sup>

The social organization of Hindus inherited from the Pre-British period had many oppressive and undemocratic features. The segregation of a section of the Hindus as untouchables, who were prevented from such elementary rights as the right of entry to public temples or of the use of public well and tanks, and the touch of whom contaminated a member of higher castes, constituted a most in human form of social oppression.<sup>18</sup>

The untouchables were the outcaste of the Hindu society. Though belonging to the Hindu society, they were its prescribed parts. Historically, untouchability was the social fruit of the Aryans conquest of India. In the process of social interaction, a portion of the indigenous conquered population was incorporated into the Aryan fold. The most backward and despised section of this incorporated population, it appears, constituted the hereditary caste of untouchables.

For centuries, untouchability persisted in the Hindu society. Even extensive and profound humanitarian and religious reform movements such as started by Buddha, Ramanuja. Ramanand, Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak, Tukaram and others, hardly affected the inhuman and age long institution of untouchability. Hallowed with tradition and sanctified by religion, it continued to exist in all its barbarous vigour for centuries.<sup>19</sup>

History has known hierarchically graded societies of various types in different epochs and among different peoples. All these societies were based on social privileges and inequalities. However, no hierarchically graded society can compare with the Hindu society in its extreme gradation of ranks and inequalities of right.

Hardly any society condemned its section to physical segregation as the Hindu society did in the case of its untouchables. The mere physical touch of the untouchable was a sin, an abomination.

In the Hindu society, the hereditary untouchables were assigned such low function as those of scavengers, of remover of dead cattle and others. They are socially and legally, debarred from any other profession. They had no right to study or enter the temple. They had to in a separate area in the village or town and had no freedom to use public wells and tanks which the caste Hindu used. As untouchable was punished for crime, by the law of the Hindu state or village tribunal composed of the caste Hindu, more drastically than a caste Hindu who committed the same crime.<sup>20</sup>

The social oppression of the untouchables had religious sanction. As such, it was more firmly entrenched.

Thus, under institution was man so deeply humiliated and crushed as under that of untouchability. The outraging of human personality and human dignity reached its high watermark under it.

It was but natural that the elimination of such as atrocious social phenomenon as untouchability became one of the main plank of the platform of all social reform movement in India.

Though different motive and consideration prompted various group of social reformer in their campaign against untouchability, all recognized it as an institution to be destroyed. It is true that a good proportion of the Hindu community, its numerically strong orthodox section, tenaciously opposed the abolition of untouchability and general disabilities from which these depressed classes of the Hindu society suffered. However, the tendency was towards its increasing elimination.<sup>21</sup>

The socially submerged classes formed about one fifth of the whole Hindu population. The problem of their emancipation, therefore assumed vital importance in any scheme of national freedom and social reconstruction of India.

Among the depressed classes themselves, there were social gradations. There were socially superior and socially inferior group among these victims of social injustice themselves. This made the problem further complicated and difficult.

Again the extent of untouchability and other disabilities varied from place to place.

Inspite of this, the depressed classes were demarcated from the upper caste Hindus by certain fundamental social oppression and disabilities common to them.

The removal of untouchability and all disabilities from which the depressed classes suffered, formed an important item in the programmes of all social and religious reform movements that sprang up in India during the British rule.<sup>22</sup>

The Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the social reform conference, even political organization like the Indian Congress led by Gandhi and all India Harijan Sangh, a non-political body founded by Gandhi, strove by propaganda, education, and practical measures to restore equal social, religious and cultural rights to the untouchables. There was a stirring among depressed classes themselves. The spread of education among them brought forth a group of intellectual such as Dr. Ambedkar, who became the spokesman of their suffering and disabilities and passionate fighter for their elementary human rights. The All India Depressed Classes Association and All India Depressed Federation were the principal organization of these classes. The latter was founded and led by Dr. Ambedkar.



In addition, there were numerous local and sectional organizations of the various castes comprising the depressed classes.

The Arya Samaj, Brahman Samaj and other religious reform movement of Hindu had for their aim at consolidation of Hindu society on a reconstructed, rational basis. Their leaders strove in the direction of the democratization of Hindu social system. They stood against the gross social injustice from which the depressed Hindu were suffering and generally preached their abolition in the very name of the Hindu Sastras by reinterpreting them.<sup>23</sup>

The non-religious social reform movement condemned untouchability and other social injustice in the name of individual liberty and equality of human right without trying to secure any favourable verdict of the Vedas on their side.

Even those Hindus, who like Savarkar, stood for the Hindu Raj, advocated the elevation of the status of the depressed classes. This was due to the fact that they felt alarmed at the numerical loss which the Hindu community had been experiencing due conversion of untouchables to Islam and guaranteed them more social equality.<sup>24</sup>

Gandhi, the all India Harijan Sevak Sangh founded by him in 1932, and other bodies were doing extensive work of social reform and educational character for the depressed classes. The Sangh started numerous schools for including residential vocational schools. In addition scavenger's union, cooperative credit society and Housing Society were formed.<sup>25</sup>

A number of Satyagraha movements of the Harijan also took place wherein they disobeyed the ban on their temple entry and strove to enter the temple. Those movements reinforced by growing popular sympathy for their democratic

demands, secured for the untouchables and the rights to temple entry in to number of place.<sup>26</sup>

The Indian nationalist stated that the British Government did not energetically and enthusiastically work for the restoration of the rights of the depressed classes and that it did not exercise its power to strike at the undemocratic denial of elementary human rights to untouchables.

Even Dr. Ambedkar who was not irreconcilably hostile to British government while addressing the untouchables remarked.

"Before the British were in a loathsome condition due to your untouchability. What has the British government done to remove your untouchability? Before the British, you could not draw water from the village wells. Has the British government secured you the rights to the well? Before the British you could not enter the temple can you enter there now? Before the British you were denied entry into the police force. Does the British government admit you to the force?"<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar considered that unless the Indian people secured the political power and that power did not concentrate in the hands of the socially suppressed section of the Indian society. It was not possible to completely wipe out all social, legal and cultural disabilities, from which that section suffered.<sup>28</sup>

This was a strong structure on the neutrality policy of the British government in India in social and religious matters, which objectively tend to perpetuate reactionary and oppressive social custom and institution. It was true that or orthodoxy resented and resisted all progressive social measures, but the leaders of Indian nationalism and depressed classes argued that the British government ought not to have evaded its state duty to stamp out social inequalities and injustices. It was true that the British government had intervened in social matters and introduced

reforms like the abolition of Sati, equality before law of all citizens touchables or untouchables alike and others.<sup>29</sup>

The democratic awakening of the depressed classes, their increasing consciousness of their basic human rights was a part of the general national democratic awakening which had taken place among the Indian people during the British rule during that period, a new economic and political system was established all over India. This system was based on the principles that all Individual of society were equal units having equal individual liberty and treatment before law. It dealt a heavy blow to the ideas of heredity and status on which the pre-capitalist medieval Indian society was based.<sup>30</sup> An individual had the equal right and freedom to follow what vocation he liked. He was treated on the whole at par with other fellow citizen before law. This had kindled among the specially submerged classes the urge to break through all Shackles imposed on that freedom for centuries. Their humanitarian activities of the member of the upper caste reinforcing the rebellious struggles of the submerged section constituted the socio, religious reform movement in India.

Thus a movement to elevate the depressed to improve their miserable economic condition, to spread education among them, to extend to them the freedom to use public well, schools and roads and enter public temples, also to secure for them special political representation, steadily grew in the country and gathered momentum. The Mahad Satyagraha for the right to water led by Dr. Ambedkar was one of the outstanding struggles of untouchables to win equal social rights.

There was string among the depressed classes themselves. The spread of education among them brought forth a group of intellectuals such as Dr. Ambedkar who become the spokesman of their suffering, disabilities and

passionate fighter for their elementary human right through the All India Depressed Class Federation (AIDCF).

The Mahad Satyagraha for the right of water led by Dr. Ambedkar was one of the outstanding struggles of the untouchables to unequal social rights. So he stood against gross social injustice from which the Depressed Hindu were suffering from.<sup>31</sup>

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar from the case of his heart fought relentlessly to establish a society based on the democratic idea of liberty, equality and fraternity. Echoing the philosophy of Lord Buddha, Ambedkar said that the main evil plague the life of mankind is "Dukha" (sorrow). But unlike Buddha who sought solace in Nirvana, Ambedkar endeavoured to eradicate sorrow (in other words injustice and exploitation) from the human life through the reconstruction of social and economic order which rendered the majority of people as sufferer veritable servitude in economic prosperity, which could be made available to every human being progressively releasing him from want and fear the cause of Dukha.<sup>32</sup>

A pragmatist to the care Ambedkar believed that in the absence of economic and social justice, political independence would not bring about either social solidarity or the national integration; therefore he laid emphasis on the liquidation of hierarchical structure of society on the basis of Chaturvarna. He advocated the abolition of privileges on the basis of caste status and vigorously fought for the liberty and dignity of the individual. At the same time he was equally forceful in his advocacy of the unity of the nation.<sup>33</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar was a towering figure of an astonishingly uncarry foresight, who many times lasted out against social and economic inequality and wretched Varnashrama system in this country. He believed in the conscious of the Hindus to bring home to them their sins in keeping all the Shudras

and Untouchables in perpetual degradation. Luckily all that stormy dust has now settled down and our people are now seeing him in his true light as a great patriot. Ambedkar has tried to uplift the depressed classes. He has dealt at length with his crusade to save the integral unity of the country.<sup>34</sup>

Ambedkar has taken social reform approach at low level. One at the level of the Hindu family and other at the level of Hindu society. Because, he endeavoured to reconstruct the Hindu society from the grass root level. The problem regarding the child marriage, widow remarriage, cremation of Sati and post cremation (Sati) relate to the reform of the Hindu family. The problem of the untouchability and the caste system and the modification of the laws of adoption, marriage and succession related to the reform of the Hindu society.<sup>35</sup>

Dr. Ambedkar has spoken and written against the Hindu social order which is based on graded inequality with the superiority of the few and degradation of many. To him this can not continue for long and if this ambivalent state of society continues those who suffer from inequality will blow up the "Structure of Political Democracy". Politics can not be the monopoly of a few and other can not remain either beast or burden of prey.<sup>36</sup> He vehemently criticized the theory of birth, death and reincarnation which according to popular Hinduism is bound up with the development of caste system. The capacity of man to shape his own destiny is not recognized in this system. Such inequality can not establish a healthy society. There can not be the real unity in this country unless the caste system is annihilated.<sup>37</sup>

The caste system according to Babasaheb Ambedkar is an integrated part of the Hindu civilization and culture and therefore there are

always fend and conspiracy of caste to enslave the weaker section. According to him to get economic equality, it is necessary to complete, bargain to fight, but caste prejudices, ultimately result in conflict and conspiracies to suppress the weak. They result in vested interest and monopoly of only one or two higher castes. The unity of the country is therefore blown up by the caste system and there is no coherence.<sup>38</sup>

Providing special safeguard to the minorities and certain classes, who are socially and educationally backward. Through these safeguards he sought to instill in the minority the spirit of nationalism and tolerance, to accept the rule of the majority even though the majority in India is a communal majority and not a political majority.<sup>39</sup>

The untouchables and other backward classes in India have been enabled to make some improvement in their social, economic and educational situation because of the special safeguard, provided in the Constitution on a preferential basis. Such safeguard are necessary in order to remove the age old disparities existing between the upper caste majority and outcaste minority in India, so that the progressive assimilation of latter into the mainstream of social and national life would ultimately lead to the liquidation of minority.<sup>40</sup>

A statesman, scholar, crusader of downtrodden and above all a spiritual guide, Dr. Ambedkar has left an indelible impression on the Indian History. His contribution to uplift the downtrodden made him a cult figure among the depressed classes. He now lives in the heart and mind of the million of the suffering people. They now look at him as immortal soul whose memory will even guide the nation on the path of social justice, liberty and equality.<sup>41</sup>

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## British Raj in Tributary Mahals of Orissa

*Dr. Janmejaya Choudhury*

After the Paika Rebellion of 1817, a new office of the British Commissioner in Cuttack was established by the regulation of V of 1818 for better reign of Orissa. The Commissioner was entrusted with the duties of the Superintendent of tributary Mahals which was so far exercised by the Judge-cum-Magistrate of Cuttack.<sup>1</sup> The Rajas of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar rendered some good services to the British during the period and subsequently, they were conferred with the title of 'Maharaja' by the government.<sup>2</sup> Edward Impey, the first Superintendent of Tributary Mahals had introduced the new system for Tributary Mahals. Robert Ker, the first Commissioner under the new regulations, took keen interest in the affairs of the tributary Mahals. He immediately discontinued the submission of the monthly statements of crimes and offences in the tributary Mahals by their respective Rajas. Because he did not like to uphold 'a system of deception'. In 1817-18 Ker had to order the sale of six Mahals at the Collector's office for recovery of arrears. In order to realize the tributes regularly, Ker framed a set of rules and enforced them strictly. Then system was perfect and in 1818-19 not even a Rupee was in balance in any of the 16 tributary Mahals.<sup>3</sup> Ker desired that the tributary Rajas who were enjoying the privilege of exemption of the operation of British regulations

must remain confined to their own territories and should not intrude 'on an order of things of which they form no part'.<sup>4</sup>

In 1820 William Blunt became 'The Commissioner in Cuttack' and the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals. He was also much interested in the affairs of the Garjats. He desired that the operation of criminal laws should be extended to the Mahals. The court of Nizam Adalat had no objection regarding Blunt's proposal for the regular cognizance of crimes and misdemeanours in the Mahals. But the Governor -General in Council took a different view of the matter and decided to continue the policy of non-interference in their internal management. The Superintendent's proposed measures for the introduction of police and criminal regulations into the Mahals were considered as matter of great risk and inconvenience. Thus, the Governor - General in Council viewed the whole situation in a broader context of imperial policy and repudiated the suggestions of the local officer.<sup>5</sup> In order to improve administrative relations with the tributary Mahals, Blunt suggested that the Joint Magistrates stationed at Balasore and Khurda, should be empowered to officiate as assistants to the Superintendent with regard to certain Mahals nearer their headquarters. The kings of Nayagarh, Khandapara, Ranpur and Banki, whose territories

were on the border of Khurda and similarly the tributes from Mayurbhanj and Nilgiri could be deposited in the treasury of the Joint Magistrate - Cum-Deputy Collector at Balasore. This proposition was accepted by the Government and the Commissioner was directed to issue immediate orders for carrying that arrangement into effect.<sup>6</sup> They were fully independent in the management of their territories.

In 1829, George Stockwell succeeded Blunt as the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals. A boundary dispute occurred between the Rajas of Ranpur and Nayagarh during this year. The government took stern action by imposing a heavy fine of Rs.10,000/- on the Raja of Ranpur. The Raja of Ranpur immediately paid the said amount out of which Rs.5,000/- was given to the king of Nayagarh for the damage done to his property.<sup>7</sup> Stockwell desired that the regulation 10 of 1793 should be extended to the tributary Mahals which provided for bringing the territories of every minor Raja into the jurisdiction of the court of wards.<sup>8</sup> The government felt that although it was not considered advisable to extend the code of regulation to the Tributary Mahals and although the Rajas were averse to any unnecessary interference, yet there was no objection to empower the Commissioner to assume the temporary charge of the Mahals of the Minor Kings. It was considered as a desirable step in order to preserve peace in those Mahals to realize the government tributes regularly and to protect the interests of minor Kings.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it was decided to take over the management of the Mahals for a temporary period during the minority of the Rajas.

The vital issue of George Stockwell's administration of Tributary Mahals was the disturbances in Bamanghati of Mayurbhanj. The disputes between the King and the Sarbarahkar turned in great measure upon their relative rights

and privileges with respect to those peeds (Praganas). On 2 April 1832, Stockwell reported to the government that he anticipated disturbances in Bamanaghati.<sup>10</sup> As the government decided against the views, he persisted for the acceptance of his resignation. He was relieved of his duties on 12 June 1832. Capt. Wilkinson was directed to restore order. That being effected the Raja of Mayurbhanj was permitted to retain Bamanghati, subject to his assigning sufficient amount to Madhab Das for the maintenance of his family in Singhbhum.

In 1836 Henry Ricketts became the Commissioner of Cuttack and as such assumed the charge of the Tributary Mahals. Ricketts drafted extensive penal and civil rules for the management of the Tributary Mahals and submitted them for consideration and approval of the Government. In 1840, A.J.M. Mills succeeded Henry Ricketts as the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals. His administration signaled the beginning of a period of vigorous action in the affairs of the Tributary Mahals. He adopted strong measures against some of the Kings.<sup>11</sup>

The confiscation of Banki was a striking example of the powers of paramountcy of the British Government in their relation with the tributary Mahals. Though the government had abstained from the formulation of definite rules and the extension of British regulation to those Mahals, yet it became obvious that it was determined to take severe action against the tributary Kings, even to the extent of confiscation of their possessions, in case of their misconduct. Mills submitted a set of rules to the government for management of the Tributary Mahals soon after the Banki incident.<sup>12</sup> Mills' suggestion for the appointment of a special officer was accepted and Captain Hicks was appointed as an assistant to

the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals for suppression of Meriah Sacrifice. In 1844 Captain Hicks proceeded to the territories of Daspalla and Baud with necessary instructions from Mills to liberate Meriah victims.<sup>13</sup> Captain Macpherson, who was already engaged in the task in the territories under the Madras Government, was selected to become the agent of the Government of India in the special Meriah Agency. Baud and Dasapolla, two tributary Mahols of Orissa, were placed under the jurisdiction and superintendence of Macpherson. He entered upon the duties of his new office of December 1845. The Meriah Agency worked with unabated success till its abolition in December 1861 when it was considered no longer necessary.<sup>14</sup> Besides the suppression of Meriah sacrifice in tributary mahols, another humanitarians undertaken by British government was abolition of 'Sati' system.

In 1842 Engagements, were executed by the chief officers of the tributary kings for preventing the practice of 'Sati' in their territories. Some of the kings demonstrated against the prohibition, and Mills apprehended that 'Sati' might take place in those haunts of superstition though he believed that the terror of punishment would check its frequency.<sup>15</sup> During the stormy days of the revolt of 1857, the tributary mahols of Orissa remained remarkably calm.

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## The Death of a Wonderful Craft

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Her Excellency, the President of India, Smt Pratiba Patil Singh took her oath of office and secrecy on 25th August 2007 clad in a simple, yet elegant spotted mulberry silk saree. The saree in question was a traditional one, with tie-and-dye design, woven by a weaver of Bhulia community of village Hardokhol, near Sonepur.

The Bhulias of Western Orissa, in fact, are the acclaimed weavers of celebrated tie-and-dye textile fabrics, popularly known as "Sambalpuri Cloth". For centuries, they have practised and perfected the local tie-and-dye technique of designing and weaving and zealously guarded the secret from being passed on to others. Sonepur district, being the cradle ground of tie-and-dye textile, nourishes many a great craftsmen of excellence and fame. Many of them have been honoured and awarded prizes, both at national and international level. One of the greatest maestros of the community Sri Chaturbhuj Meher of Sonepur was conferred

with "Padma Shree" for his adroit workmanship and innovative skill in tie-and-dye textile designing. Late Krutartha Acharya of Bargarh too was conferred with "Padma Shree" for his unique and monumental contribution in the field of tie-and-dye textile designing.



The Bhulias have a distinct identity and tradition of their own. In early part of twentieth century, the Imperial Gazetteer of India writes, "the flower-bordered saris of Sambalpur are called phullia; and peculiar to the district are the saris known as hansabali, bordered

or striped with fantastic animal designs. The hansabalis are perhaps the most artistic product of Central Provinces" Philips Zealey writing in early post-independence period noted that "Among the many styles and techniques of handloom weaving in India, one of the most highly skilled and attractive is the tie-and-dye weaving of Bhulias in Orissa, most of whom are centered in the Sambalpur district. It is said that there are



only two places in the world where this tie-and-dye technique has been perfected, i.e. in Orissa and in Thailand. The Thai weavers are supposed to be descendant of the Bhulias as a result of some long by-gone emigration."

"The Samaj" in its dt.12.09.07 edition reported about the woeful living conditions of 40 thousand Bhulia populations of Sonepur district. However, the report did not focuss on the problem of sizeable exodus of weaving population of the district to other informal occupations under the stress of persistent problem of unemployment, low wages and distress sale of hand woven cloth. In fact, all the skilled craftsmen of Bhuliapara of Sonepur town have bundled up their looms and are vending vegetables, pulses and grams in the daily market. Some others are engaged in preparing the delicacy of 'pakodas', 'samosa' and other eatables. Few well-to-do households have trading establishments in the municipal market. Most of them are under the grip of middleman traders, eking out a miserable and precarious living. The problem is not limited to few urban pockets. Many households, predominantly of Bhulia villages, like Sagarpali, Baidyanath, Hardokhol, Lachhipur, Menda, Nimna, Chaidaipank, Kandupali have too felt the heat of shrinking employment opportunities. Many of them have left for Rourkela, Sambalpur and other important urban centres.

Beyond the highly skilled Bhulia caste group, other weaving communities of Orissa are also in desparate condition of wants and miseries. The Dhera, the Kuli, the Mahara, the Ganda, the Kusta communities of Sonepur town symbolize the great upheaval that has swept the handloom sector of Orissa. Their looms have ceased to flutter and crinkle long since. Most of these unfortunate households are engaged now in petty

trading, cultivation, agricultural labour, earth digger, rickshaw-puller, vegetable vendors and other myriad informal occupations. Some of them have migrated to Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal and have been working in powerlooms and spinning mills as labourer. Thus, the once prosperous, flourishing, vibrant and lively handloom sector of Orissa is now in a state of ruin and shamble. Some of the village weavers, however, are still plying their traditional looms as a testimony to a glorious tradition of great craftsmanship.

The unprecedented economic hardship the handloom sector endures in Orissa and the Bhulia community in particular calls for urgent attention of the policy makers. It is very important to commend the great genius and ingenuity of the Bhulia community who successfully thrawted the competition of mighty British textile Mills in 19th century and domestic textile industry in 20th century. A part of the explanation could be found in the depressed living conditions of the well-to-do households on the one side and the growing economic clout of the dalit and poor on the other.

The Government in many States, after 90s, have adopted a slew of measures under Budgetary reforms and Financial restructuring. It impacted the state enterprises leading to closure of many weak industrial units. The strong ones were subjected to bouts of retrenchment and lay off Under disinvestment drive, some of these units are being sold out to private operators. Workers engaged in these industrial units, no doubt, suffered from loss of wage income. Besides, many of them are yet to be duly compensated for. Downsizing the work-force has become the norm, both in the Govt. and private sectors. Some Government departments were closed. Many posts in the existing government departments were

abolished. Fresh recruitment into govt. sector is banned. Some of the benefits admissible to the existing Government employees are forcibly held up. Govt. grants-in-aid too are freezed. The limited employment opportunities created in both govt. and private sectors are of 'low paid' category. Contractual appointments with low wages are being encouraged.

Agriculture-the dominant sector of the economy, is again hard hit by frequent droughts and floods. Distress sale of paddy is a recurrent problem affecting production and productivity. Agricultural research has practically failed to yield any breakthrough either in dry-land farming or high yielding seed. Agri-extension services are largely paralysed. The well-to-do section of the society-the chief patron of Bhulia's tie-and-dye products, thus confronts with low level of purchasing power and low level of effective demand.

There are also severe supply constraints. The weaver's co-op Society, the Handloom Development Corporation, the apex marketing society etc. connected with the sale of handloom cloth and ensuring regular employment to weavers have all become sick and many have closed their shutters under the pressure of financial restructuring. Their role are being taken over by few leading middleman traders. But limited capital in their hands fail to put an effective check on the shrinking employment opportunities. On the other hand, the search for profit by them has dampened the prevailing market wage rate. Spurious and inferior handloom products mushroomed that affect the very size of Bhulia's market.

Traditionally, the poor people provide a stable market for many handloom products. But after 90's, this section of the population has

registered an appreciable upward movement in their economic strength. One should not however, mistake it as the boon of economic liberalisation, Rather, it is the consequence of a built up hedging mechanism placed in order to safeguard the interest of the poor in the wake of second industrialisation, referred to as inclusive growth . As such, the market wage rate, both nominal and real, has almost been doubled under the influence of minimum wage policy of the Govt. They are assured of regular employment throughout the year under various Govt. sponsored development programmes. They also benefited directly from many Govt. sponsored welfare programmes like mid-day meal, old age pension, Antodaya, Kutira Jyoti Yojana, PDS commodities at concessional price etc. Some of the agricultural labour households have Government land under forcible possession too. Self Help Group and micro credit have practically transformed their life styles. The living condition of rural middle class household has significantly altered the clothing habits of these poor people, In fact, the coarse and medium count handloom cloth has practically disappeared from the market.

The textile policy of the Central Govt. provides the other part of the explanation for the ailing handloom sector. The National Textile Policy 2000, formulated on the recommendation of the Satyam Committee Report single mindedly promoted the case of composite textile mills to augment the export earnings of the country. In fact, the international cloth market is dominated by countries like China, Malayasia, Hongkong and Korea under the regime of multifibre agreement (MFA) concluded between the exporting and importing countries. However, under WTO arrangements, MFA regime has ceased to guide the export trade of cloth between

countries after 2005. Now, the international cloth market is open to all exporting countries. Since Indian cloth is viewed as 'dirty cloth', there is an urgent need to strengthen and improve its competitive strength. The National Textile Policy 2000 has exactly done that. Hence, the handloom sector is substantially less likely to gain out of it. The financial restructuring process of the State Government has already killed the Handloom Export Promotion Corporation. To integrate the Bhulia's tie-and-dye product with the international market is a tall order. It begs more questions than there are answers.

The textile policy generally defines the extent of competition between the organized textile mills and the decentralized textile sector. In the present scenario, there is hardly any competition between them as only a meagre 5 per cent of total production of cloth in the country comes from the composite textile mills. The products are mostly superior cloth meant for export. The decentralized textile sector comprising the powerloom and the handloom meets the domestic need of cloth. Hence, there exists cut-throat competition between them in spite of "Handloom Reservation of Articles of Production Act, 1985."

Secondly, the power loom imitates the design and motif of handloom cloth and sells them cheaply in the market. Thus, the competition

between them is largely unfair. On the other hand, many welfare and developmental programmes have been initiated to improve the economic plights of the weavers. But all the benefits of these have been usurped by the office bearers and employees of the implementing agencies.

Thus, the handloom sector of Orissa has already lost its pre-eminence of yester years. You may call it the wonder of 9 percent growth rate. The higher the economy moves in its growth trajectory, the sharper shall be the disappearance of handloom weaver. This is the dynamics of growth and development. We are fortunate that no weaver in Orissa has yet committed suicide as in Andhra Pradesh and Maharastra. The backwardness of Orissan economy have certainly saved them ! However, those who will continue to produce ornamental and attractive fabrics will survive to serve the top political class, the bureaucrats, the industrialists and the show industry. Promoting few powerlooms in pockets of concentration of weavers may possibly often a solution.

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## Pipili as a Rural Tourism Destination

*Abhisek Mohanty*

Pipili, the heart of the colorful art work called appliqué, is located at a distance of 20 km from Bhubaneswar on the NH 203 connecting Bhubaneswar with Puri. Pipili is located at 20.12° N 85.83° E. It is at Pipili that one takes a turn and moves eastward to proceed to Konark, the site of the Sun Temple. At an average elevation of 25 metres (82 feet), Pipili is a Notified Area Council (NAC) and has 16 wards under jurisdiction of Puri district. It is famous for designing beautiful appliqué handicrafts. As of 2001 India Census, Pipili had a population of 14,263. Males constitute 51% of the population and females 49%. Pipili has an average literacy rate of 70%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 77%, and female literacy is 63%. In Pipili, 12% of the population is under 6 years of age. As a legend would have it, the Pipili derived its name from Pirs (holy Muslim saints), many of whom lived in this area.

Appliqué', which is a French term, is a technique by which the decorative effect is obtained by superposing patches of coloured fabrics on a basic fabric, the edges of the patches being sewn in some form of stitchery. It is distinct from what is known as patch work in which small pieces of cut fabrics are usually joined side by side to make a large piece of fabric or for repairing a damaged fabric. Though the form is not unknown in other parts of India, it is in Orissa and especially

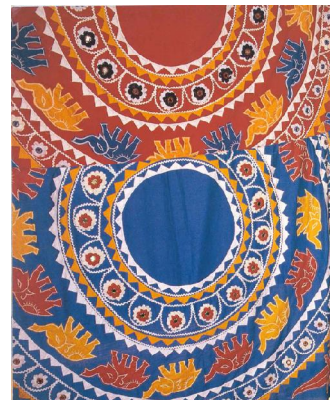
in Pipili that the craft has a living and vibrant tradition continuing over centuries. While most appliqué craftsmen are concentrated in Pipili, there are quite a few in Puri and Khallikote, Parlakhemundi and Boudh.

Appliqué works of Pipili is also known as patching cloth design. The local name of this handicraft is Chandua. As with many other handicrafts of Orissa, the roots of the applique art/craft form is intertwined with the rituals and traditions of Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of the Puri temple. The appliqué items are mainly used during processions of the deities in their various ritual outings. Items like Chhati, Tarasa and Chandua are used for the purpose. However, the appliqué work in its colourful best is most prominent in the cloth cover of the three chariots of the presiding deities in which they travel every year during the Ratha Yatra or Car Festival. As per tradition, the colour scheme of the three covers is predetermined. The chariot of Balabhadra known as Taladhawaja has a cloth covering of bright green and red, while that of Subhadra known as Padmadhwaja or Darpadalana has a cover of bright red and black. The chariot of Lord Jagannath called Nadighosha has a cover of bright red and yellow. The basic design of all three is similar being a combination of narrow and wide stripes while on the four sides above the openings, there are appliqué mythical motifs like Rahu,

Chandra as well as motifs from nature like flowers etc. It is these colourful appliqué covers which identify the chariots of the three deities from far away by the millions of pilgrims thronging the Badadanda or the Grand Road of Puri in which the Lords make their annual sojourn during the Car Festival. Seats and pillows in appliqué are also made for ceremonial use by the deities during the annual ritual of bathing festival (Snana Jatra) and is locally known as 'Chakada Kama' with motifs of 27 stars and geometrical forms in appliqué work with motifs of fish, frog etc. on black cloth is used in the ritual dress of the Deities of Puri temple, locally known as the 'Gaja Uddharana Vesha', incarnation of Rescuer of Elephant. Applique cover is also made for caparisoning the dummy horses in the 'Horse Dance' or Ghoda Nacha during Chaitra Festival in Puri and other places. The craft is traditionally practised by a caste of professional tailors, known as 'Darjis'. As with others services of the Lord, Darji Seva or the supply of appliqué items is rendered by the caste members in return for which they receive certain portion of the daily offering, 'bhog' from the temple. All this is regulated by the Record-of-Rights of the Jagannath Temple. The Darjis have their own headman or Sardar who has a higher share in the 'bhog' of the Jagannath Temple. It is interesting to note that the craftsmen are socially well organised and there are close family relationships between the craftsmen of Puri and Pipili. Their organisation can be very well compared to the craftsmens' guilds of medieval Europe. They also have annual meetings of craftsmen to resolve social and related problems.

The traditional items made of applique patterns and associated with religious functions are canopies, locally called 'chanduas', Chhati, a sort of big umbrella with a long wooden handle. Tarasa, a heart-shaped wooden piece covered by appliqué cloth and supported by a long wooden pole, both these items being carried

before the deities in their ceremonial processions. 'Jhalar' another popular item is a sort of frill which is used as a border to canopies and also independently used as decorative pieces.



An interesting secular and popular item is 'Batua', a unique Orissan cloth pouch which has usually a semi-circular shape with the top being straight. There are various layers of cloth providing pockets for storing different items of use and the mouth is closed by pulling strings attached to the sides. It is very popular among village folk for keeping the materials for 'pan', like betel leaf, areca nut, lime, etc., as well as for keeping money. Another traditional item is 'Sujnis' or embroidered quilts. The basic material for applique is cloth. The process is fairly simple and has been succinctly summarized by Mr. B.C. Mohanty in his monograph on Applique Craft of Orissa: Study of Contemporary Textile Crafts of India as under: 'Flat motifs are first cut from cloth and specially prepared motifs are made separately. If more than one of the same cut motifs is required, a stencil is used. These cut and specially prepared motifs are then superposed on a base cloth in predetermined layout and sequence. The edges of the motifs are turned in and skillfully stitched onto the base cloth or stitched by embroidery or without turning as necessary. The specially prepared motifs may be coloured or white. The base cloth is usually coloured. Some of the specially prepared motifs have exclusive embroidery work and some have mirror work. In heavy canopies, the base cloth is additionally supported by a back cloth for strength. The stitching process varies from item to item and

come under six broad categories, namely, (1) bakhia, (2) taropa, (3) ganthi, (4) chikana, (5) button-hole and (6) ruching. Sometimes embroidered patterns are also used and in a few items mirror work is also incorporated. The layout of various motifs and patterns vary according to the shape of the piece. The canopy has a large centre piece which may be a square. This centre piece is then bounded by several borders of different widths, one outside the other, till the edge is reached. In the umbrella and Chhati the inner field is arranged in circles, each circle having patches of one motif placed side by side. Patterns are laid in the same way as the shape of the Tarasa, with a large motif or two placed at the centre. The layout for covers for horses consists of a series of concentric strips in the portion which covers the neck, each strip having patches of one motif, while the portions which fall on either side of the body are plain, having border all round with or without a motif at the centre of the plain field. The motifs used are fairly varied yet fixed and consist of stylised representations of flora and fauna as well as a few mythical figures. Of the more common of these motifs are the elephant, parrot, peacock, ducks, creepers, trees, flowers like lotus, jasmine, half-moon, the Sun and Rahu (a mythical demon who devours the sun). Just as there are a few fixed motifs only a limited number of colours are used in the traditional appliqué craft. These are green, red, blue, ochre and black. The creative urge of the craftsmen however are released in the endlessly various combination of motifs as well in the mixing of these limited colours. While there has been very little change in the use of motifs, there has been a trend towards greater experimentation in colour combinations. Superimposition of coloured cloths on grey marking cloth is quite common today as the use of cloth of all colors and hues. Similarly, with the changing times the craft has also adopted itself to the needs of modern man. Among the more

popular appliqué items today are garden umbrellas, a variant of Chhati with wooden or aluminium stands, shoulder bags, ladies hand bags, wall hangings, lamp shades, bed covers, pillow covers, letter pouches, etc. Appliqué items are also being used in combination with other handicrafts to produce composite products. An interesting use is the superimposition of appliqué on grass mats and used as partitions. Though earlier the art form was restricted to Darji caste, today it is practised by non-caste members, notably by some young Muslim boys. Unlike many other handicrafts, appliqué items are attractive artifacts of daily use apart from being decorative. They are also comparatively cheaper.

Appliqué work of Pipili is also known as patching cloth design. The local name of this handicraft is Chandua. Pipili, the heart of this colorful art work is located at a distance of 20 Km from Bhubaneswar on the Bhubaneswar to Puri road. On the main road at Pipili there are many shops selling Appliqué work products, tourist visiting Puri buy these products from Pipili. This cottage industry got encouragement from temple rituals of Orissa. This is one of the temple arts of Orissa. During Ratha Yatra time (Car Festival) many canopies of Appliqué were held aloft the Lord Jagannath and brother Balabhadra sister Subhadra. There are small and big canopies, hand bags, purses, lamp shades, wall hanging; sun umbrellas are available in attractive colours. One of the main popular products is garden umbrella of different sizes. These are designed in different colours and can be used at beaches, gardens, garden restaurants, outside lawns and many other places.

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## Relevance of Folk Theatres in Modern Times

*Indu Bhusan Kar*

If we look to origin and evolution of folk theatre, we have to admit that this theatrical tradition is interlinked with human civilization. In the Vedic period, people had developed potential artistic qualities, like songs, dances and many religious rituals to express their emotions, hopes and aspirations. 'Bharat Muni' the 1st dramaturgist codified the art of dramaturgy in his famous treatise called 'Natyasastra'. In Orissa, the historians and drama critics opine that arena theatre was prevalent in the days of Emperor Kharavela in 1st century A.D. Dhiren Das, a noted dramaturgist has deciphered the *Hatigumpha* inscription and categorically emphasized, that 'Ranigumpha' cave of Khandagiri was an arena theatre where people were staging plays from time immemorial in Orissa, the land of art and architecture. Many folk forms have been developed mainly out of celebrating religious and social ceremonies. Songs and dances are integral ingredients of these folk forms. Each folk form had its particular community, same language, area and way of life. We find some communality in each form. Religious movements like Saivism, Hinduism, Jainism and Vaishnaism have shaped thematic contents of these folk forms. The musicality is one of the greatest characteristics of these folk dramas. The musical instruments developed indigenously are peculiar features of

these folk plays. The instruments used in Daskathia are different from Lilas or Chhaus.

Lilas, Daskathia, Geetinatya of Baisnab Pani, Mughal-Tamsa, Prallhad Natak, Dandanatya, Ravanachhaya (puppet theatre), Desia-nata, Palas, Suanga and Chhau are considered to be the major forms which are still popular in rural areas on festival occasions. The royal patronage by Kings and Zamindars gave moral boosting and incentive to folk artists to develop folk theatre troupes, but after abolition of Kings and zamindars these professional folk theatre troupes started languishing and some of them are at the verge of extinction. Many talented artists are deserting troupes and migrating to cities for some other employment. There are instances where some of the theatrical folk forms are no longer in vogue. On special occasion, sporadic efforts are made to stage folk play once in a year. As for example in north Balasore district to which I belong many Palas like Lalita-Pala, Krusna-lila which were being performed earlier are no longer staged frequently. Many troupes of Jaleswar, Kamarda, Bhogarai, Deula, Baliapal and Chandaneswar of Balasore district have vanished into oblivion. Palas and Lilas are no longer in vogue due to impact of electronic media and deteriorating financial condition of traditional folk

theatrical troupes. Research scholars have restored many manuscripts of these Palas and Lilas in these areas of north Balasore.

Dr Kailas Pattanaik, Department of Oriya of Viswa Bharati University undertook an indepth study of folk form of Lalita Pala in Balasore district which has been published in 'Konark' (Oriya journal of Orissa Sahitya Akademi Vol.97, p.78, year-1995). Now time has come to make a complete survey of all such rural folk theatre troupes and identify causes of decays and decline of the professional theatre troupes. The same is the pitiable condition of folk theatre form of 'Mughal-tamsa' of Bhadrak, though it was once enjoyed and accepted by the people as the most thrilling and popular folk form.

Ideas and taste of the people are changing fast with the march of the time. The popularization of radio, TV and VCR as source of entertainment has diminished the loyalty of the people towards the folk plays. Now aggressive consumerism has mesmerized the people's mind due to advent of electronic media. At this stage one may ask the question of utility and relevance of reviving the traditional multiple streams of folk plays when cinema and TV are giving enough entertainment to the people. The folk drama has got twin purpose of both entertainment and education. Folk theatre has contributed immensely for creating social consciousness. As for example in Orissa the 'Geetnatya' of Baisnaba Pani played greater role spearheading patriotic fervour among the people during freedom-movement of India. Similarly other folk dramas like Prahallada Nataka, Danda, Palas have also enriched people's mind with religious virtues. But vulgarization of films, TV serials with overdose of sex and violence are polluting people's mind with main objective of giving sensuous pleasure. This new

trend in the field of entertainment industry causes immense sociological hazards. On the other hand the so-called absurd and experimental plays are creating boredom among the audience. After the second world war, the epic plays of Bertold Brecht' enriched modern drama with folk elements. Drama was treated by Brecht, a great pulpit of awakening people's mind. Once Brecht declared - "I wanted to take the principle that it was not just a matter of interpreting the world but of changing it, and apply that to the theatre." This Brechtian dramatic theory and practice gave new shape to epic form of theatre. Many new dramatists after Second World War were influenced by this Brechtian dramatic theory. The new experiments were made to blend the folk elements with modern innovation in order to attract greater audience. Having realizing the importance of the rich folk theatre Martin Esslin, a renowned drama critic's message on world theatre day, on 27th March 1989, is pertinent irrespective of region, race and religion. In the words of Martin Esslin - "In an age where, the world is flooded by a deluge of cheap commercially motivated material on television, the live theatre, the guardian of traditions and individuality of cultures, threatened by this avalanche of homogenized triviality has become more vital to the continued richness and variety of human culture than ever before in the history of mankind" (published in the 'Canplay', a magazine of Canadian playwrights associations vol.6, No.2, April 1989).

Kapila Vatsyayan a great authority on performing art has analyzed various forms of Indian folk plays in her book 'Traditional Indian theatre - Multiple streams'. She has opined that there is great importance in reviving Indian folk plays as these plays have contemporary relevance. In her said book, 'Traditional Indian Theatre', she



observed "The Yatra forms are an important branch of the parent tree of Indian literatures, languages and treatre forms. Its survivals appear to have thrown seeds, which have given modern Bengali theatre a new direction. Like the Bhavai and the Tamasa it has provided an Indian format to avant-garde theatre. Possibly this renowned interest in Yatra was conditioned by the advent of a new form of epic theatre from Europe. Be as it may, the European influence generated an interest in national traditions and this has been a return educational journey home-ward for the modern theatre of India" (Traditional Indian theatre - page 146, published by NBT, New Delhi, 1st Edition 1980). So it is to be admitted that folk plays of India, have played a great role in shaping Indian avant-garde plays.

In this direction, let us have a review of impact of experiments of blending rich of folk elements with modern Indian plays of three renowned playwrights viz; Vijoy Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir and Girish Karnad. Vijoy Tendulkar, a wellknown dramatist wrote a Marathi play - 'Ghasiram Kotwal'. When this play was staged, it charmed the audience, as proper blending of Marathi folk music, satire and chorus songs with thematic contents of the play gave rich entertainment to the audience with a dramatic message. This play was translated into Hindi and a repertory troupe travelled with this play to Europe to stage this play in European cities - like Berlin and London. This play could enthrall the European audiences. 'Guardian', the widely circulated journal, praised that this Indian play could satisfy the twin parameters of good play - which is aesthetic pleasure with a forceful message. 'Guardian' remarked that in comparing with the modern Indian play, the European play looks like a broken mirror. This high appraisal of success

prompted other playwrights of India to make such experiments of blending folk element skillfully with modern themes. Habib Tanvir the renowned director and actor made in-depth study of Chhatisgarh music of Madhya Pradesh and dance and he used it in his play - 'Charan Das Chor'. Once when this play was played at Paris, the noted directors from London flew to Paris to witness this Indian avantgarde drama. The critic and the spectators were charmed and praised the experiment of Habib Tanvir. This is a classic example of relevance and importance of folk plays, because in this play there was proper assimilation of elements both the traditional and the modern. Girish Karnad, a Gyanapitha Award winner and a celebrated actor dramatist, has also made similar experiment with folk element in his play 'Haybadan' which has become a popular play among the people.

It is now necessary to examine the impact of folk theatre on modern Oriya plays and to what extent playwright have been succesful in assimilation of folk elements in aveant-garde Oriya drama. Let us evaluate this trend of experimentation in Oriya modern drama.

In Orissa, Manoranjan Das, veteran playwright in his play, 'Katha Ghoda' and 'Nandika Kesari', Bijoy Mishra's 'Jane raja thile', Ramesh Panigrahi's 'Mahanatak', Subodha Pattanaik's 'Yethu Ante', Rati Mishra's 'Abatar', all these modern dramas have used Oriya folk elements and also certain forms of folk drama for enrichment of the dramatic tradition with a view to attract larger audience. In the words of Niladri Bhusan Harichandan, a dramatist "the playwrights have been successful in bringing plays nearer to the audience through this new style. He further said - "The avant-garde or modernist Oriya drama of today is enriched with an assimilation of

elements both traditional and the modern. The addition of the forms of various Oriya folk dramas even to this combination marks it off as different from similar developments in other parts of India" (Aspect of Oriya Drama, p.131). But some critics observe that this experiment in Oriya modern plays have not been successful to attract audience's attention, but in my humble opinion, though not all but there are plays which have succeeded in this experiment and got audience's clapping. I myself have taken audience's poll and came to conclusion that the majority of the spectators have liked Bijoy Mishra's 'Jane raja thile', Subodha Pattanaik's 'Yethu ante', Rati Mishra's 'Abatar'. These modern Oriya plays have been quite successful because of the proper blending of the folk elements. I am of the firm opinion the richness of Oriya folk forms should be preserved and documented. Patronage should be given to establish professional troupes in Orissa. The steps taken in this direction in other States, like Bengal, Andhra, Karnatak are really praiseworthy. In Karnatak more than a dozen folk research institutions have been established by Government Department of Culture. There the Government has taken measures to educate and develop new generation of artists. But in many states the development of folk theatre is neglected. It is pity that there are some ultra modernists in bureaucracy those who do not favour the preservation, documentation and promotion of folk theatre.

Now-a-days it has been accepted by scholars in performing art that there is great relevance in studying, knowing and preserving these treasure troves of our Indian folk theatres. If some may argue that these are old, archaic,

religious and rustic, these are to be rejected on the ground of modern secularism and they openly utter - let them die, let folk artists perish. We have got VCR, films, enough entertainment in 24 hours channels. I think, this ultra modernist's negative attitude will cause immense harm to growth of humanistic culture for allround development of human personality. So it is high time that we should not allow further vulgarization of Indian culture by inertness, indifference and indolence and swayed away by the lures of electronic media. We the art loving Indians are now facing challenges of assault on our language, literature and culture due to westernized sensate culture. Let us not waste time only in theoretical debate as to whether an art form is folk, traditional, classical and modern. Let us understand the diversity of cultural tradition, which is to be reflected in the contemporary theatre.

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## Development of Railway Transport in Colonial Orissa (1854-1936)

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From its beginning in 1853, Indian railway system expanded rapidly to become by 1910, the fourth largest in the world. This network, which covered most of the sub continent, radically altered India's transport system.<sup>1</sup> Vastly increasing the speed and availability of transport, it also cost substantially thereby permitting new opportunity for profits. Regional specialization began to occur and trade expanded. For a country of many segmented markets separated from each other by high cost of transport, India became nation with its local centers linked by rail to each other and to the world. Railway, by establishing these links, had an impact throughout Indian economy.

The railway age dawned in Orissa by the closing years of 19th century when the first train from Khurda to Bhubaneswar flagged off on 20 July 1896.<sup>2</sup> However, the history of railway development in Orissa had been a chequered one. The prospect of railway development in Orissa had been bleak for a long period of time because a politically fragmented Orissa remained under British presidency, Central Provinces and Madras Presidency. The British Orissa remained as an administrative appendage of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> Illiteracy, ignorance of the people, economic backwardness and lack of political leadership allowed the British authority to ignore the interest of Orissa.

In 1866, Orissa was visited by a famine, which was most intense and desolating in character. That famine perished one third of its population. The famine had its brighter side too.

Because the British authority realized their folly of neglecting their Orissa possession, and now came forward for economic development of Orissa. The Bengal Orissa Famine Commission of 1867, which constituted to look into the causes of the famine recommended for the development of Roads, Ports and canals.<sup>4</sup> But the Famine Commission did not recommend for the development of railway in Orissa.<sup>5</sup>

The people of Orissa also realized their folly of following the anti British attitude and their own apathy. They were awakened to their occasion and through newspapers and public meetings exerted mounting pressure on the British Government to start railway development in Orissa. The Utkal Sabha in 1874, under the leadership of Madhusudan Das demanded for railway development in Orissa. Similarly the Commissioner of Central Provinces submitted a proposal to the Govt. of India for extending the railway up to Sambalpur.<sup>6</sup> The proposal of Chief Commissioner brought high hopes in the minds of Orissa. But the proposal did not receive sympathetic consideration from the Government.

The people of Balasore in 1881 took a leading part to mobilize public opinion for the development of railways. They formed a working committee under the presidentship of Raja Baikuntha Nath Dey and mounted pressure on the authority to extend railway from Raniganj to via Bankura - Midnapur and Balasore to Puri.<sup>7</sup> But Govt. was not yet ready for such a proposal.

However, one of the potential factors contributed for the development of railway was the recommendation of Indian Famine Commission of 1881. The Commission recommended for construction of 8000 Kms. of railways in India to protect the country from famine.<sup>8</sup> Besides, the parliamentary select committee of 1884 recommended for rapid extension of railways. It pointed out that it would give protection against famine, stimulate internal trade, open up fertile tracts and coalfields and in general improve economic condition of the people.<sup>9</sup>

Another significant factor which contribute to the development of railways in Orissa that by the dawn of 20th century the neglect in Irrigation was the product of British selfishness and deep rooted proclivity of the foreign powers to sacrifice the interest of Indian people in order to placate the interest British traders, manufacturers and investors.<sup>10</sup>

Under the pressures mounting from various quarters, the Government yielded and entrusted the Bengal Nagpur Company to construct railway line in Orissa. It was formed in 1887. For the purpose of executing the contract of taking over the existing Nagpur- Chhatishgrah railways for the purpose of constructing railroads from Nagpur to Raj Nandgaon.<sup>11</sup> On 9th March 1887 an indenture was made between the Secretary of State in the council of India and Bengal Nagpur Company Limited to carry out the contract to that effect.<sup>12</sup>

In November 1892 orders were issued for a detailed survey of line from Calcutta to Cuttack.<sup>13</sup> The total length of the proposed railway was 300 miles. By the end of 1895 the Government of India sanctioned the construction of railway from Sini to Cuttack including the construction of a bridge over Mahanadi near Cuttack. The amount of Capital expenditure was estimated as follows.<sup>14</sup>

Table -1

**Capital expenditure of different section of railways.**

Railway lines	Miles	Expenditure (Rs) Cr.
Sini to Howrah via Midnapur	175	2.03
Cuttack to Midnapur	194	2.19
Rs.5.12 Crore.	454	5.12

The year 1898-99 was the most significant time for realizing the dreams of Orissa in this connection. The most vital section of railways via Sini via Kharagpur and then Kolaghat- Kharagpur -Cuttack was opened for goods as well as passengers traffic.<sup>15</sup> Survey from Cuttack to Puri was made during 1882-83. The construction of this line was called East -Coast Railway was approved in the year 1890. While East Coast Railway was under construction from Vijaywada to Cuttack, Bengal Nagpur Railway Company was authorized to construct railway from Kharagpur to Cuttack. Bhubaneswar to Khurda section was opened in July 1896, and Cuttack - Bhubaneswar section was opened on 10 February 1897.<sup>16</sup>

A railway line from Sambalpur to Khurda was first surveyed in 1891. It was estimated that the whole line of about 190 miles of length would cost about 2.77 crore.<sup>17</sup> But in 1894 the project was abandoned for want of funds.

**Railway communication in the states of Orissa****(A) Mayurbhanja State Railway**

The opening of the narrow gauge railway line between Rupsa to Talbandh was the contribution of Maharaja Ramachandra Bhanja Deo of Mayurbhanja. The total capital expenditure on this line was 17.144 and the line was opened for traffic in 1905. The extension of this line from Baripada to Talbandh in order to explore iron ore deposits of Gurumahisani was sanctioned in 1915<sup>18</sup> and the extended line was opened for traffic on 13th July 1920.<sup>19</sup> After the First World

War the Government decided to explore coalfield of Talcher. The Bengal Nagpur Railway acquired the mining right over 1000 acres of Talcher coal fields areas and commenced the construction of a railway line connecting Talcher with the Cuttack - Kharagpur railway line at Nirgundi. This line was opened for traffic on 20 January 1927.<sup>20</sup>

### **(B) Parlakhemundi Light Railway**<sup>21</sup>

Parlakhemundi estate was largest permanently settled estate in modern Gajapati district. It came under British occupation in 1768. East Coast Railway brought its Rail line to Naupada on 20.07.1884. Naupada was traditional take off point for Parlakhemundi. The Raja of Parlakhemundi decided to construct a light railway consisting of 2 feet 6 inches gauge taking off from Naupada to connect his capital Parlakhemundi and approached the Government for sanction. The sanction was granted on 1.4.1900. The rail line was built with utmost economy, sixty miles of rail line had cost about Rs.7,00,000. In 1929-31 the Raja decided to further extension of Railway. Total capital outlay shoot up from 7 lakh to 25 lakh.

### **(c) Nilgiri Light Railway**<sup>22</sup>

A wealthy Bengali firm of Calcutta was proprietor of extensive granite quarries at Nilgiri. The firm decided to construct a short 2'6 gauge railway from the mines to Balasore station on the Bengal Nagpur Railway, a distance of 13 miles. First it was decided to transport only granite. It was further decided to extend the line to the heart of Orissa and convert the line for passenger and goods traffic. But the decision of the Government did not materialize and one of the beautiful projects faced its premature death. Till now this project did not receive attention of the present Government.

The opening of Bengal Nagpur Railway was a revolution in the field of communication system in Orissa. This provided indirect communication line between Calcutta and Orissa.<sup>23</sup> The railway development system in Orissa in the last quarter

of 19th century paved the path for political and territorial integration of the Oriya speaking tracts and heralded significant economic progress. The opening of railway contribution to the expansion of trade and exploration of the natural resources. Simultaneously, it also encouraged migration of the people from rural areas to the cities of the neighbouring provinces in search of livelihood. The introduction of railway revolutionized the life of the people and symbolized the approach of Modern Orissa.

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## "Dindaghar" And the Marital Tradition of Desia Kondhs in Kondhamal District

*Chitta Ranjan Mishra*

Nearly more than a quarter of Orissa's population belong to sixty-two tribal groups, each with distinct customs and dialect. Kondhmal, which is situated at the centre of Orissa, created a special identification being inhabited by the original Kondh tribes. Like all other tribal groups, Kondhs also famous for their magnificent typical cultural heritage. According to their social traditions, customs, rituals, living style and standard Kondhs are categorised into three types in Kondhmal district.

1. Desia Kondhs
2. Dangaria Kondhs
3. Kutia Kondhs

The migrated peoples from different parts of Orissa to Kondhmal district are called as Desias by Kondhas and being influenced by the culture of Desias. The Kondhs of Phiringia, Tikabali, Raikia and G. Udayagiri region developed a mixed culture, and they are called as Desia Kondhs by Desias.

As Desia Kondhs are the successors of the original Kondh tribe, they inherited and practised the traditions, customs and rituals of their forefathers.

The marital tradition of Desia Kondha is very interesting. There are two types of marriage systems prevailing in Kondh society.

1. Khincha Biha or Tana Kania
2. Mola Biha or arranged marriage.

Before marriage the young boys of Kondha family (Dhangadas) choose their life partners from

Hatta (Weekly Market) or from Dinda Ghar or Dangari Idu. If Dhangada selects a Dhangidi in hatta and decides to marry her so that dhangidi is forceably taken away (in modern terms kidnapped) or eloped with the help of his tanes (friends). Then message is sent to Dhangid's house that "your daughter is with us" and then the marriage settlement is made with understandings of two families.

But the "Dindaghar" tradition is something different. "Dindaghar" means the house meant for young unmarried girls (Dhangidis) of Kondha family. Each and every Kondh village has a "Dindaghar". The young unmarried girls (Dhangidis) are used to spend night in these houses.

According to the local tribal people of Kondhamal, following causes are mainly responsible for the development of such culture.

1. Traditional house building of Kondhas.
2. To break the monotony of exhaustion.
3. To choose and understand their life partner.

1. The tribal Kondha houses are two rooms having two doors like front door and back door. First room is of multipurpose use as bed room, drawing room and store room and the 2nd room is used as kitchen room as well as worshipping room. There is no door in between these two rooms so when the Kondh children stepped into the adolescent age, they are not allowed to sleep inside their own house with their parents, rather they are sent to "Dindaghar" or "Dindraghar".

2. The Kondhas are very hardworking race. Throughout the day they work hard in the agricultural fields and move in the jungle to collect forest products for their livelihood. To break the monotony of exhaustion, they get together in "Dindaghar" and entertain themselves by gossiping, singing and dancing.

3. "Dindaghar" also helps hem to choose their life partner. The Dhangadas or young unmarried Kondha boys of other muthas are used to visit "Dindaghar" for merrymaking and dance with Dhangidis. The Dhangadas play Kandar (Khanjani) or sing on the eve of the dance.

Unmarried boys and girls participated in this dance. The girls dressed with their special attire, like arms, and dance to intricate Khanjani beats. The movement of the group is rather serpentine. The line of dancers coiling, uncoiling and swiftly moving away and therefore referred to as the snake dancers of Orissa. The Dhangadas first started their singing as :

Badu Badu Budi Sanderu  
Rehadai endina  
Miselugo Bajanamu  
Aanungule labenga  
Rehadai Nisaradu  
Khanjar Ahanamu  
Esepurjanaa Ganinganu  
Kaharadamu  
Jedadai Budi Sanderu  
Rehadai Andina

*Meaning :*

By this song Dhangadas invited the Dhangidies "please come, make a line and dance with us at the tune of our song and Khanjani, we are here for you.

In reply, Dhangidis started singing and dancing as :

Eseduru Dakabaja Ganajedu  
Khanjar Aahanamu Jadinisaneru  
Gani Esineru  
Uji Uji sana Dhadibo disana Rehadai endina

*Meaning :*

"Come, dear friends the Dhangadas are inviting us by singing and playing musical instruments, let us make a line and dance with them.

They express their thoughts and feelings through different songs of their Kui language and also select their life partners. Dindaghar is a centre of art and culture of Kondh society. They develop their art of singing, dancing and playing of musical instruments in this house.

Dhangadas father with the help of a Kandaria or mediator goes to the house of selected Dhangidi and settles the marriage. The marriage ritual of Kandhas has several steps.

1. Paher Kalu or Salbane Kalu
2. Buhari mola
3. Gaati Kalu (Pindhani)
4. Kani Prarg (Bata Bhoji)
5. Niju Misba (Oil Massage)
6. Bal Kalu or Bal Prarga
7. Tana Penu, Saru Penu Lakera (Worship of Earth and Mountain)
8. Bahkalak
9. Sirmispa

1. Paher Kalu or Salbane Kalu : "Kalu" means wine. In each and every rituals of Kandha family Kalu is used. After the settlement of marriage a feast is being arranged by Dhangidi's father for Kandaria and the friends and relatives of Dhangada. Chicken and chicken products are not used in this feast because of a blind belief or a peculiar belief of Kondh society i.e. "Kalu Dehengi Uddine". The Kania or Bride may fly away like hen" or marriage settlement may be disturbed.

2. On this very day Buhari Mola is fixed. Dhangadas father assures to pay for Dhangidi in the terms of cattle, goat, buffalo, rice, hen etc.

3. Gaati Kalu (Pindhani) : In order to finalise the settlement the bridegroom's father with some relatives visited the brides house with a basketful of rice, Kasta sari and with some ornaments for Buhari or bride. The date of marriage is fixed thereafter.

4. Kani Prarga (Bata Bhoji) : To strengthen their relationship the parents and relatives of both the families exchange turmeric powder. At the time of departure brides father give some rice, Kandula dal, a goat and some wine for kani prarga or Bata Bhoji or a feast on their way to home.

#### Dress of Bridegroom :

On the particular day of marriage, Dhangada, the bridegroom dressed with the traditional marriage dresses of Kondha like :

1. Kadga - Aturbain having two horns on either side.
2. Gajinga - Lenguti
3. Ahapaka Bahapaka - Bow and arrow
4. Chhati - A decorative umbrella

#### Dress of Bride :

The dress of bride or Dhangidi on the eve of marriage is -

1. Kasta sarees
2. Topperi - Necklace
3. Gubia - Bracelet
4. Phasia - Ear rings
5. Nakaputki - Nose Stud
6. Kana Putki - Ear-stud etc.

The bridegroom started his procession with his friends and relatives to bride's house with traditional drums, tamki, singa and flute. After their arrival at the outskirts of the bride's village, the Dhangadas of bride's village take the bridegroom on their shoulder to the ceremonial place with a grand procession.

After the marriage ceremony the bride departed her family weeping profusely with traditional lyrical songs like :

Marania Jongania  
Enunenjubai Loku Aati  
Esarajaide Nikalaniangi  
Nembu gelangi anjani  
Nambai Nee.

#### Meaning :

"O my dear mother and brothers I am departing from you, don't forget me and have a relationship as it is".

As there is no modern means of communication in remote villages of Kondhamal district, the bride being shouldered by her husband and by the friends of husband arrives to the skirt of the village. The newly married couple is welcomed in a grand procession to his home.

5. Niju Misba (Oil Massage) : The new couple are massaged by their friends and relatives to relax from the exhaustion of journey.

6. On the other side, the Tana Penu or Dharani Penu and Saru Penu or Mountain God is worshipped by the parents of bridegroom and arrange a grand feast for the villagers.

7. Bal Kalu or Bal Prarga: It is a typical tradition of Kondh society that a basketful of rice, a goat, some Kandul dal and some wine, are sent for the female members of bride's family for a feast on this occasion.

8. Sir Mispa : The new married couples are massaged with turmeric paste by their relatives and have a bath.

9. Bahakalaka means the new married couple will go to the outskirts of the village and will perform a ritual sacrificing a hen and pouring wine on earth then on return they start their conjugal life.

Though the life style and standard of the Kondh families of Kandhamal district have undergone a lot of changes the march of time, yet they have not given up their tradition and custom of their tradition and custom of their own. So the art, architecture and cultural heritage of Orissan tribes have made this land a paradise for lovers of culture.

#### Reference :

Collected from the Tribal Inhabitants of Kondhamal District.

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*Message of*

**SHRI M.C. BHANDARE,**

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR OF ORISSA  
ON THE OCCASION OF REPUBLIC DAY-2008.

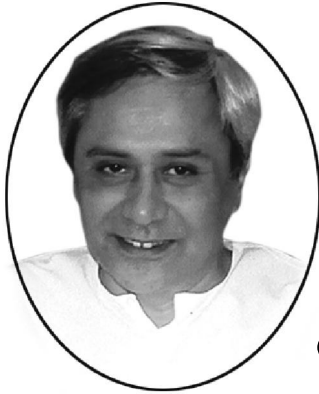
On the occasion of the Republic Day, I extend my hearty greetings and best wishes to the brother and sisters of Orissa.

2. We are all proud of our motherland. Many sacrifices have been made for making our country free from the shackles of alien rule. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, launched the biggest human struggle of the World for the liberation of our Motherland. He was assisted by other great stalwarts like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Ballavbhai Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Chakravorty Rajagopalachari and many others. Many freedom fighters laid down their lives for this great cause. Many also suffered untold miseries. We pay our respectful homage to those great patriots on this august occasion.
3. Orissa also played a significant role in the freedom struggle of our country. Many great sons and daughters of Orissa such as Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandu Das, Utkala Gouraba Madhusudan Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Godabarisha Mishra, Acharya Harihar Das, Saheed Laxman Naik, Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Nabakrushna Choudhury, Radhanath Rath, Ramadevi, Malati Choudhury and many others of our State made significant contributions to the freedom movement. Their relentless struggle has been inscribed in golden letters of our history.
4. Our valiant soldiers have also made supreme sacrifices to protect territorial integrity of our nation. We pay our sincere tributes to all of them.
5. We also pay our respect to the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution which came into force on this day in 1950 and aptly reflects the aims and aspirations of this great country and its people.
6. Orissa has a rich and vibrant culture and heritage. The people of Orissa have a long and distinguished maritime history, the impact of which is evident even today in the countries of South East Asia. Orissa was also the seat from where Buddhism spread to many of these countries.
7. The State Government has been making constant efforts for the last 8 years for an integrated development of the State in all spheres. The Government has put in place innovative schemes catering to the need of various targeted groups. Agriculture, being the main stay of our economy,

special packages for the farmers have been announced. Emphasis has been laid on increasing agricultural production by use of new methodology and technology in agriculture and horticulture. The year 2008 has been declared as the year of irrigation. The State Government will maximize its efforts to bring 35% agricultural land under irrigation for which a scheme of Rs.2000 crores has been drawn up. The State will also ensure that farmers will get water first. Water will not be diverted for industry without first meeting the requirements of farmers. Packages have also been announced for the economic development of the weavers.

8. People belonging to ST and SC constitute about 38.66% of the population of our State. My Government has taken several initiatives to bring about socio-economic development of our tribal people. Emphasis has been laid on education of the tribal girls. The Government has operationalised 1000 hostels for tribal girls to facilitate their education.
9. Efforts at effective implementation of various ongoing Central Government Programmes, like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) are being made to ensure perceptible improvement in the quality of life and strengthening of rural infrastructure. My Government shall insist on transparency, accountability and efficiency which are the key to success of any programme. Similarly, through Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan, every attempt is being made to drive away illiteracy particularly among the tribals. A suitable monitoring mechanism is being put in place to ensure optimum benefit from these schemes and programmes to the lowest and poorest in Orissa.
10. Government of Orissa has also implemented many innovative schemes of its own for the betterment of the people. Schemes like Biju Krushak Vikas Yojana, Pani Panchayat, Mission Shakti, Biju KBK Yojana, Gopabandu Grameen Yojana, Accelerated Rural Water Supply Scheme, Jala Nidhi, Madhu Babu Pension Yojana, Biju Gram Jyoti Yojana have already started to yield tangible results. By speedy industrialisation, the state is poised to take a big leap. Adopting the methodology of Single Window Clearance System and Public Private Partnership, the State is all set to become one of the major players of Indian economy. Our economic growth will be amalgamated with poverty alleviation. Culturally rich, minerally rich, Orissa cannot remain economically poor any more.
11. On this auspicious day, let us take a solemn pledge to transform Orissa into a prosperous and vibrant State driving away poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, unemployment at a fast pace and to secure to everyone in Orissa a life of dignity through inclusive and equitable economic growth.

*Jai Hind*



*Message of*  
Hon'ble Chief Minister  
**Shri Naveen Patnaik**  
on the occasion of Republic Day - 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

On the auspicious occasion of Republic Day, I extend my greetings and felicitation to all of you.

Republic Day is a significant and sacred day for all of us. The Constitution of India came into force on this day. Today our country India has emerged as one of the strongest democratic countries in the world. I pay my respectful tributes to those stalwarts who drafted the Constitution of our country.

I also salute those innumerable freedom fighters of our country, who made supreme sacrifice and showed indomitable courage under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation.

I pay my deep homage to those valiant soldiers who became martyrs while guarding our national border and maintaining internal peace.

After gaining Independence, we have achieved spectacular progress in various spheres. Today India has become a powerful and prosperous nation in the entire world. Efforts are on to expedite the pace of progress of our State. During the last 8 years my Government has been striving hard to make Orissa a prosperous State.

Most of the inhabitants of our State depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The development of the State is impossible unless agriculture sector is developed. Therefore a special package has been announced for betterment of the farming community. The State Government is observing this year as "Irrigation Year". Our target is to provide irrigation facility to 35% agricultural land of each Block in our State. A package of Rs.2,000 crores has been prepared for this purpose. For the repair of Hirakud Canal System works are being undertaken at an investment of Rs.200 crores by involving the Pani Panchayats.

My Government has been emphasising on industrialisation. Many new industrial units have started commercial production. A number of unemployed youths of our State can be provided with employment and it will generate revenue to State exchequer.

Our State is known for its excellence in the handloom sector. A special package has been declared to assist our weavers.

We have always attached due importance on the development of women. 30 lakh women of our State have been included under "Mission Shakti" programme launched by the State Government. To make women self-dependant, Mission Shakti movement is being intensified further.

My Government is committed to the development of all the Tribals and Harijans of the State. 25% population of our State belong to tribal community. Many programmes have been undertaken for development of their socio-economic status.

1,000 hostels have been constructed for providing education facility to 1 lakh tribal girls. Programmes are being implemented for providing communication, drinking water and electricity facilities to the tribal areas.

My Government has launched "Gopabandhu Grameen Yojana" for development of rural infrastructure. Special attention is being accorded to facilitate better communication, drinking water and electricity (Bijuli-Sadak-Pani) to every village.

Our important programmes include development of Highways, Railways, Ports, Rural connectivity, Bridges, Education and Health along with Information Technology and Tourism. The State Government has commenced various programmes like Gopabandhu Grameen Yojana, Biju Gramya Jyoti Yojana, Madhubabu Pension Scheme, Jala Nidhi from its own resources.

Your active co-operation is essential to make Orissa a developed and prosperous one by executing all these programmes.

You all know that Orissa is a peaceful State. Orissa has been acclaimed all over the country for maintaining peace and harmony. It is our utmost duty and responsibility to keep this fame uphold.

On this august day, let us take a pledge to carry Orissa on the path of progress.

***JAI HIND***



*Message of*  
**Shri Debasis Nayak**  
Hon'ble Minister, Information & Public  
Relations, Sports & Youth Services  
on the occasion of Republic Day - 2008

26th of January is a memorable day in our national life. 57 years ago on this day the Constitution of Independent India was adopted. Under this Constitution it has been resolved to make India a Democratic, Secular, Socialist Republic so as to provide equal privileges to each citizen in the social, economic and political spheres.

India became free from the British imperialism after a long span of 200 years. For this, countrymen had to sacrifice a lot during the freedom struggle in different phases right from the Paik Rebellion of Orissa in 1817 and Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 to Quit India Movement in 1942. On freedom fighters endured utter humiliation, oppression and pains. A number of patriots laid down their lives for the sake of the freedom of our country. They have become martyrs. There is no comparison to their sacrifice and bravery for the nation. On this sacred day, I pay my heart-felt tributes to the illustrious sons for their indomitable patriotism. Unity in diversity is the feature of Indian culture. They have kept the glorious Indian tradition intact since time immemorial despite divergent languages, religions and traditions.

On this august day we should pledge for unity and integrity of the nation for keeping the country on the path of development forgetting all our petty differences.

Orissa is still considered as a backward State in the country despite abundant natural resources. Efforts are already on to make Orissa one of the best and prosperous States by changing the scenario under the able leadership of our Chief Minister. Now time and opportunity is at our doorstep. On this auspicious day, let us resolve to fight against hunger, poverty, unemployment and make Orissa industrially developed State by harnessing all these opportunities.

*Jai Hind.*