

POPULAR HISTORY : A CASE OF PRAJA MANDAL MOVEMENT IN RANPUR

Dr. Subash C. Padhy

The post colonial analysis of modern history has taken up the center stage in comparing colonial period. It has endeavoured to cover all aspects affected by the imperial process from the beginning of colonization to the present day. Placing the analysis of diverse nations, it suggests that all of them have common experience of colonization and faced specific local struggle and our analysis would be based on cases of Orissan context, in this perspective, we are reminded of the subaltern studies, which intervene in the production of academic history by attempting a historiography that restores agency to the subaltern classes. Going beyond Colonial, Nationalist and Marxist approaches, subaltern studies offer an anti-foundationist historiography. In the analysis we have made a modest attempt at exploring the subaltern context as reflected in one of the princely states of Ranpur in Orissa.

The archival materials on this movement are available at the Orissa State Archives and West Bengal State Archives which give us a detailed information about the proceedings of movement. The contemporary periodicals of Orissa have also touched upon. Two published book on Ranpur state have also given detailed informations.

Historical Background :

When the British took possession of Orissa, there were thirty tributary chiefs. The territory of some of them constituted Garhjat. The territories of others were scattered over the Mughalbandi. The most powerful among them was the Chief of Khurda who rebelled and his territory was annexed to the Mughalbandi (directly administered areas). The territories of the remaining twenty-nine were generally called as 'Tributary Mahals'. The British entered into engagements with these chiefs. Thirteen out of the twenty-nine were subjected to the British regulations and remaining sixteen were exempted.

While the former were absorbed- in the Mughalbandi, the latter with some later addition emerged as the real tributary states of Orissa.¹ Ranpur state was one of the sixteen states. It was bounded on the north, east and south by the district of Puri and on the west the tributary state of Nayagarh (present Nayagarh district). Ranpur state had 298 villages which were divided into nineteen praganas for the purpose of revenue administration. The Raja of Ranpur enjoyed full freedom in the internal administration but as a subordinate ally under the supreme authority of the British.²

Causes of Prajamandal Movement

The feudatory states suffered from the misrule of their chiefs. Being assured of British patronage, the feudatory chief did not pay any need to the welfare of the people. Appalling economic, political and social conditions prevailed in most of the states. Peasants were oppressed and revenue and taxation were excessive and unbearable, education was retarded, health and other social services were extremely backward, and freedom of press and other civil rights hardly existed. The feudatory chiefs indulged themselves in luxurious way of life and squandered the treasury. All these led to ruination of the people's economy and promoted them to revolt against feudatory chiefs. Besides the system of taxation in the princely states was unjust and oppressive. In addition to normal tax the subjects were forced to different type of contribution, contribution of free and unpaid labour for the construction of royal palaces and beating of the drums in the jungle when the rulers were going as hunting and were denied of ordinary civil rights. The forced contribution were known as "Bethi", "Begar", "Megana", "Rasad", "Bheti", and "Kara Samagri".³

The system of *Bethi* or forced labour was in force in all the states. It had been legitimized through years of practice in tune with the temper of subservience inculcated in the progenies of tenants from their infancy. It was considered to be an obligation on part of the tenant in allegiance to his master who provided him with sustenance and conferred on him privileges that made his survival possible. Any tenant could be called upon by the ruler or his officials to contribute his labour in satisfaction of his master's demand. The master was not obliged to pay for his tenant's work since it was a part of his moral responsibility to act according to the will of his master. R.K. Ramdhyni commented, "labour is dirt-cheap" in this country and to insist upon free and unpaid labour is the height of callousness.⁴

The observations of the Orissa States enquiry committee with regard to *Bethi* system were as follows: "the amount of time cost by the peasants in doing *Bethi* is staggering. A peasant spends over one hundred days of the year in doing forced labour for the states or its officials. He is liable to be called up at any time of the day or night. He must leave his own work, however urgent it may be on pain of being beaten, fired or even imprisoned. If it is harvest season, the crops must wait. If it is sowing season, the sowing must be postponed till the returns after performing the labour forced on him. Moreover, the peasants are at the beck and call of the minor officials of the State who make them do their private jobs. Of all the exactions under which the peasant is suffering, *bethi* is the most oppressive. It keeps him grinding poverty. What is worse, it prevents him emergence from a state of seldom. It might have served a social purpose in the days of feudalism hundreds of year ago when the peasant did labour for his lord in return for protection and other rights. But today it enables the ruler and his officials to grab what otherwise they cannot afford to pay for. It is an invisible addition to the privy purse of the ruler. It has become an engine of ruthless repression".⁵

The *Bethi* system or rendering service to the king on working without wages in some projects like road construction or building of embankment and digging of canals had been

a constant means of exploiting the working people and tenants of small holdings which went on without any fear of state intervention. The king and his underlings did enjoy elaborate rights to engage the poor in any project without paying them even a scant amount for such hard toil.

Of all such measures of exploitation, three modes of occasional exaction and levy hit the peasants hard and left them emasculated without any feasible avenue for the mitigation of such miseries. Megans, Rasads, Abwais fell heavily on the tillers of the soil who had to pay without murmur and bear the burnt of exploitation without voicing a word of protest. Megan was the money demand made by the Raja on the occasion of any ceremony or celebration in the royal family - ranging from the investiture ceremony of the prince to the performance of obsequies of any of the members of the royal family. The most improper, but legitimized levy was Rasad which made it obligatory of part of the tenants to supply provisions to the government officers visiting the state, troops passing through the territory of the camping parties of the king and the princes in their outings through the domain either on hunting expedition or a pleasure trip.⁶

Abwals were the gifts and presents to be made to the palace on different occasions of feasts and festivities during the year and different classes of ryots were obliged to make over the stipulated gifts or tribute to the king.

It was the royal monopoly to levy heavy taxes on the forest products. The producer of lac never got more than his labour charges for all his troubles and the cumbersome procedure of growing lac in his own holdings, he would make reasonable profit and improve his financial position. But as the state had absolute monopoly to tax the producers, all his profits went to the state treasury and what little he earned in the bargain was not more than what he may have invested in producing lac. Kendu leaf monopoly was a similar revenue measure to benefit the king at the expense of the leaf collection who got a little over what he expended on collection of leaves.

The ruler took very little interest in the administrative of the state and his authority was used by the Diwan whose integrity was always doubted. Bribery was very common in Ranpur. Justice in the court was sold. Administration was so corrupt that people of the State became restless.⁷

The social condition of the people were in a very bad shape. They were not permitted to use double doors in their houses. The State expected marriage fees from the parties. The permission of use of Paiki and Sabari was granted by payment. Entry of newspapers was forbidden. Even for the purpose of social upliftment meetings were not allowed. Person and property were not safe. The continuous oppression had made the people morally degraded to an extent which could not be imagined in any civilised society.⁸

Thus, heavy taxation, illegal levies, forced labour, and all other modes of exaction made the lives of toiling people nearly unbearable. From time to time several uprisings in

the princely states bear testimony to such inhuman practices which were rarely stemmed by the intervention of the State. The farmers in such tracts grew poorer and more helpless, and none of their revolts brought any remedy against oppression.

The British influence resulted in strengthening the chief's cause. The standard of people by 1938 was down to lowest ebb and the chief and his family crossed all limits of extravagance. The chiefs felt secured under British rule.⁹

Awakening in the State of Ranpur

Influences from British administered areas made a slow but gradual penetration into the otherwise inaccessible but in hospitable regions. The people were being slowly but steadily awakened to the importance of organizing themselves for ending their extremely unsatisfactory circumstances.

In 1920, for the first time, the Congress meeting for the annual session at Nagpur called on the princes to grant at once full responsible government in the State. Generally Congress felt, political activities in the state should be organized and controlled by local prajamandal or state's people's conference.

The British Government formed a purely consultative body of the princes which was to standardize the relationship between the states and central government. In response to their move of the government, All India State's People's Conference was founded in December 1927. Its aim was to influence the government of the State to initiate the necessary reforms in the administration by the force of collective opinion of the people of the states and to emphasize popular representation and self-government by the elective principle in all states.

In such circumstances the Orissa States People's Conference was first convened in 1931 at Cuttack with the active cooperation of the All India State's People Conference and under the active guidance of some public spirited persons of Orissa named Radhanath Rath, Balukeswar Acharya, Madhusudan Patnaik and Govinda Chandra Mishra. The conference was presided over by Bhubanananda Das, an eminent legislator of Orissa. Its main objective was to champion the cause of the people in the States.

The cooperation of the chiefs was sought but they refused to recognize it. On the contrary, all possible efforts were made by them to wipe it out. Extraordinary circumstances owing to the salt satyagraha diverted the attention of its leaders from it. After its 1st conference, the organization became dormant for a long time.¹⁰

It was in the year 1936-37, that serious efforts were made by Sarangadhar Das and others to rejuvenate it. The second session of the Orissa State's People's Conference was held at Cuttack on 23 June 1937 under the presidency of the eminent congress leader Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramaya. It condemned the tyrannical behaviour of most of the kings and mercilessly exposed the real, exploitive character of the feudatory administration.

It demanded the radical change in the existing pattern of taxation and administration in the Ranpur state. The main objective of the conference was declared to be the attainment of responsible government by the people of the Ranpur state. It was announced that all bonafide residents of the Ranpur state above the age of 18 who subscribed to this aim of conference was eligible for membership.¹¹

The conference strongly urged upon the rulers of the Ranpur state to confer upon their subjects rights of occupancy of their holdings and fundamental civil rights. The attention of rulers who also drawn to the fact that there was increasing miseries among the vast mass of rural population mainly because of the illegal exactions like rased, magan, bethi etc. It was urged upon them to discontinue such oppressive practices immediately.

The Orissa State's People's Conference popularized among the state people the ideas of democracy and civil liberty. It created political awakening and general feeling among them to work actively to secure their legitimate rights and basic privileges. The second non-cooperation movement produced a deep impact on the mind of the people of the Ranpur state and stirred them into political activities.

The situation became more favourable to their cause, when the popular government had been established in neighbouring province after the general election of 1937. The enlightened people in the Ranpur state felt distressed to see that there was not the slightest suggestion of introducing rule of law and democratic government in this Ranpur States although the bordering region had a representative government under the 1935 Act. The introduction of a representative government in British Orissa had possible repercussion in the State under the individual rule of the prince.

But after the new constitutional changes in the provinces and the inauguration of provincial autonomy and advent of congress ministry a great psychological change came in the outlook of these oppressed people of the Ranapur state. At such a time the Orissa state's people Enquiry Committee with Sri H. Mahatab as president, Sri Balavantarai Mehta and Sri Lal Mohan Patnaik moved to hear the people that came forward in hundreds to lay their grievances before them. Many of the rulers tried to prevent such evidence being forthcoming.

The extensive enquiry by the Mahatab's committee and the publication of the contents of the report in 1939 had also profound impact on the people of the Ranpur state. In their opinion, the only solution for relieving people from oppression and moral degradation was to cancel the sanads of guarantees granted to the rulers and merge the territories in the neighbouring province of Orissa.

Meanwhile agrarian unrest broke out in all the districts of Orissa. The Congress party took up the causes of the peasants and organized Kissan Sabhas all over the provinces. Through their political meetings they carried on intensive propaganda against the alleged oppression of the zamindars and the system of Bethi and Begari. The Kisan movement

continued to expand widely specially in the north. As a result of this movement the tenants in certain estates trespassed upon the rights of zamindars and in several other places great difficulty was experienced in the collection of taxes. On September 1, 1937, there was a big demonstration of a large number of peasants at Cuttack. They paraded through the streets with placards shouting slogans such as 'rent to be refused', 'zamindari system to be abolished' and 'down with zamindari system'. In 1938 agrarian agitation assumed serious proportion and made rapid progress, especially in the districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore. The agitation also spread to Ganjam and became manifest particularly in Khallikote and Athagarh estates.

The socialist group of local congress party actively encouraged the peasants in areas bordering on neighbouring states including the state of Ranpur to rise up in protest against the illegal exactions and oppressive conduct of the kings. Their propaganda spread to Ranpur and other States. It signaled the outbreak of a major agrarian agitation known as prajamandal movement in the state of Ranpur.¹² The leadership was taken by two young sons of the soil Sri Raghunath Mohanty and Sri Dibakar Parida.¹³ Prajamandal Movement in the State of Runpur

The story of Prajamandal movement is the story of heroic democratic struggle of the people of Garajat state of Ranpur against the despotism of their chiefs. The movement forcefully highlighted the psychological torture of the people as an offshoot of political, social, economic and cultural exploitation. It brought about a new awakening among the people and provided the necessary strength to fight. The movement of the oppressed people of the state of Ranapur not only exposed the sorry state of affairs within, but also provided warning to the very existence of feudal chiefs. The Prajamandal movement in Ranpur nakedly exposed the character of feudal polity and prepared the ground for integration of princely states. It was the reflection of inner desire of the people to merge in to the main stream of nation's political, social, economic and cultural life.

The militant mass struggle directed against reactionary ruler of the Ranpur state began when Prajamandal was formed towards later part of 1938. In this Prajamandal Banamali Ram became president, Krupasindhu Mishra, Vice-President, Raghunath Mohanty, Secretary Diabakar Parida, Organizing Secretary and Agadhu Barada was in the charge of treasurer.¹⁴ The people in Ranapur state rose in revolt demanding civil liberty for them. Thus the princely state of Ranpur emerged out of darkness and entered a new era of political struggle. The people demanded their rights on forest and pond and abolition of 'bethi' and 'bheti'.¹⁵

First the agitation started by way of secret meetings and leading processions in the headquarters of the state (that was Ranpur garh where the royal family was staying) to present the grievances before the Raja and ruling chief of Ranapur. The ruling chief Krishna Chandra Bajradhar Narendra Mohapatra, a paralytic patient, knew nothing about the administration of the State and was advised by Dewan Jagannath Mohanty, a semi-

educated persons. The king was always surrounded by a band of flatterness who made him to believe that the people were living happily under his benevolent rule. When the charter of demand was placed before the Raja it was out rightly rejected and an attempt was made to suppress the people's movement. The call of valiant young leaders Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida spread like wild fire in different parts of Ranpur and aroused the oppressed masses, including the tribals and peasants who congregated and stood against the tormentors.

The administration became ruthless and aggressive. They adopted all kinds of repressive measures to suppress the movement. The houses of the local Prajamandal leaders were demolished and their properties looted and confiscated. The ruler had recourse to lathi charges and firings. In spite of such repression, peaceful resistance was continued by the people for fulfillment of their just demands.

On 2nd January 1939 the Prajamandal was declared unlawful by the ruler of Ranpur. To cope up with the situation 18 policemen arrived from Baud at Ranapur. On 4th January a contingent of police force arrived at the house of Arakhit Sahu, Ghan Mahapatra of Jamadeipur. The Prajamandal office at Chandpur was demolished and Nilakantha Behera, Agadhu Sahu of Chandpur were arrested. Several leaders of Prajamandal including Kripasindhu Mishra were also arrested and kept in custody in Ranapur jail.

The magnitude of reaction owing to this event stirred the mind of the people and created a far reaching situation. On the night of 4th January 1939, several leaders of Prajamandal went round the villages asking and in some cases ordering people to gather the next day at Ranpur to get their leaders released. Some people also induced villagers to place obstacles on the road leading to Ranapur to prevent their leader Krupasindhu Mishra being transported to a different place. An interesting piece of information can be had from the newspapers stating that the day preceding the occurrence was *Pausa Purnima*. On this occasion 'Bada Katha' (a kind of drum) was played in the temple. But people being agitated thought it to be the call of Prajamandal by beating of drums and assembled demanding the release of arrested persons. The crowd swelled the following day which is stated to 4 to 8 thousand.

Perturbed, the Raja of Ranpur sent a telegraphic message stating about the situation to major Bazelgette, who was then camping at Nayagarh, an adjoining state. It is stated in the History of Freedom Movement, edited by Dr. H.K. Mahatab that on receiving the telegram the political agent hurried to Ranapur with a small force of policemen of 30 to 40. But it goes against the reports of the press. According to them the political agent was on one of his ordinary visit and was camping at Nayagarh. He tried to come to Ranpur on the morning of 5th January unaware of the situation. Though the telegram was sent on 4th night he did not receive it. At Sunakhala Police station being met with obstructions on the way, he came back to Nayagarh ordering the police to get the road cleared. Again it refutes about the small force that accompanied him. On his way to Ranpur he took from Sunakhala only one Jamadar and two constables with him. On his way, again he found his way being blocked

by 4 to 5 carts tied together at Lodhachua some persons were standing nearby. They were asked to help in clearing the road but on the instigation of Chinta Naik they refused to do so. Two of them named Kasi Raut and Dhobi Prusti alias Bhabani Prusty were beaten by the Jamadar and constables but were intervened by the political Agent. The Political Agent on arriving at Ranpur saw the crowd, entered into the palace and then asked the leaders of Prajamandal to talk over the matter. When no body came forward he went to the crowd taking with him the Assistant Dewan Sri Chandrasekhar Mishra as his interpreter and tried to explain the mob of various concession made by the state and the reason of the arrest of the Prajamandal leaders.

While talking with the leaders he walked along a narrow road of about 200 yards. On the road there arose a hot discussion around a cart which contained the bodies of two persons and were stated to be beaten by the State police. But from the subsequent press reports it is known that the cart arrived at Ranpur while the Asst. Dewan Was discussing with the crowd. The cart was brought to Ranapur from Ladhachua on the instigation of Chinta Naik, carrying the bodies of Kasi Raut and Bhabani Prusti covered with a cloth. The persons dragging the cart raised a shout that the two persons on the cart had been killed by the Political Agent on his way to Ranpur. On this the mob seems to have been little agitated. The medical officer of Ranpur examined them and stated that the men on the cart were seriously injured. The political Agent wanted to check them personally and ordered the cart to be stopped, but the men did not care for him and dragged, the cart towards Bhandari Sahi. At the cross roads near the old Dewans house, Maj. Bazelgette managed to reach the cart. After examining the bodies he waved his hand in denial that anything serious, had happened to them. At this the mob raised a shout that the Paltania Saheb (Pol. Agent) had killed the two persons but was denying. Voices were raised saying "Maro".

Murder of Bazelgette

At this point, assault began on Major Bazalgette. Some of the people in the crowd snatched bamboos and Lathis from the houses and started assaulting him. The first blow was warded off but the second fell on his neck letting his hat to fall down. Assaults began to increase. With fear he tried to run away towards Kansari Sahi. His main intention was, as evident from the reports was to escape. On his endeavour to escape he met with obstructions and turned around in direction. A man named Arjun Raut tried to block his path. He tried to grab the Political Agent but the later to get him off his path fired with his revolver and Arjun Raut fell dead. Maj. Bezalgette then tried to seek protection in the Verandah of Bimba Padhiary's house. But the fact is that in between the time, he fired at Arjun Raut and took Shelter in the Verandah. He was followed up by the mob and was beaten on the way. The body of Arjun Raut lay at the distance of 39 feet from the Verandah. He must have undertaken by the mob and brought into the ground before he made his way to the Verandah. The evidence of Panchu Das and Gongad her Sahu as to the manner in which the pol. Agent was tripped up was further corroborated by the circumstance, that Dr. Ahmed at the post-

mortem found abrasions on both his knees. Thus Maj. Bazalgette must have been struck a number of blows by his pursuers. Major Bezalgette got on the verandah and took shelter in the narrow space between the two walls and the cart wheel and the 'tatti'. The subedar and the constables tried to protect him but were assaulted badly. After they succumbed to the assault, the mob beat major Bazelgette to death.

The death of major Bazelgette was nothing but an outburst of people's anger against the injustice and oppression being done to them for generation.¹⁶ Soon Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida realized the grave situation which aroused due to the murder of major Bazelgette and directed the Raja to release the political prisoners. Under the orders of Raja, jailor Gulab Lal released all the political prisoners including vice-president of Prajamandal movement Krupasindhu Mishra.¹⁷ The leaders advised the panic stricken people to leave Ranapur as soon as possible. The people fled for life to nearby Khasmahal area Khurda, Nayagarh, Khandapara leaving their home and everything behind. The murder of political agent major Bazelgette soon spread like lightening and was followed by a reign of terror. Military vans filled the whole area of Ranapurgarh which looked like a military cantonment. Police and military forces almost seized the state and the civil life was completely paralysed.¹⁸

The killing of political agent was condemned by the Congress leaders in the country. Gandhiji, Subash Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Biswanath Das and many others issued strong statements regretting the matter. The congress working committee passed the following resolutions:

"The working committee record their deep regret at the killing of major Bazelgette by a crowd at Ranapur in Orissa and are of the opinion that such acts of violence do great injury to the cause of freedom in the states. The committee have welcomed the awakening among the people of the states and look forward to their deliverance, but they are convinced that resort to mob violence will delay that deliverance. The committee therefore, earnestly trust that the people of the states as well as those in other parts of India strictly adhere to peaceful methods in the struggle for freedom".¹⁹

Deploring the murder Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out "it is not enough merely to condemn it we must seek to understand it. In Ranapur the crowd was fired upon and at least one person was killed before it lost control of itself and misbehaved".²⁰ Life is held cheap in the stats, when it is question of poor Indian lives. Surely it must be recognized that this standard of value can no longer be accepted nor is the movement going to be suppressed by guns and bayonets.

There was much uproar in British parliament to know about the ghastly murder of major Bazelgette. British conservative party was in power. The labour party was in opposition bench. One prominent opposition member wanted to know about the weapons by which major Bazelgette was murdered. The treasury Bench replied that by assault of bamboo

sticks major Bazelgette was killed. The opposition member wanted that the bamboo sticks should be exhibited inside the parliament and accordingly about 500 bamboo sticks were sent to British parliament from Ranapur jungles. Taking part in the discussion one opposition member remarked that, "the suppressed feeling of an oppressed nation found expression in the murder of Bazelgette".

The reprisal measures after the murder were very serious. The state administration was over-haunted. The ruler was divested of his power and authority and political department took over the administration of states. Sri Bamadeb Rath of Marthapur, Dhenkanal was appointed as new Diwan of Ranapur to run the administration on behalf of the court of wards.

The Trial

The British government became aggressive and revengeful. Police constable Hamid Khan first lodged F.I.R. in police station. The investigation to the murder of Bazelgette was taken by C.I.D. Police Inspector Manabodha Panda and was assisted by sub-inspector Gangadhara Dwivedy. People of Ranpur area were forced to become false witnesses and to depose false evidence against the persons accused in the case. Persons unwilling to become false witnesses were physically tortured and manhandled, warrant of arrests followed the revolutionaries and their family members and their movable and immovable properties were declared to have been forfeited to the government. Finally the chargesheet was prepared by the police against the accused. The accused were arrested and were charged under various sections of Indian penal code.²¹ They were produced before judicial magistrates for trial. This historical trial was conducted in a newly established court room inside Ranapur jail compound. Mr. B.C. Pattnaik, Special Magistrate, Ranapur; Mr. B. Siva Raman, I.C.S., Sessions Judge, Berhampur; Mr. S.K. Dasgupta, Sessions Judge and Mr. G.G. Shearer, Special Sessions Judge conducted the trial. Young leaders Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida were arrested by the police and they were charged under Section 120-B, 147, 302, 149, 325, 355 of Indian penal code along with other 22 persons (total 24 persons). Their cases were trailed in the court of English Judge Mr. G.G. Shearer.

A defence committee was formed in support of the patriots to fight the case in which Pranathan Pattnaik, Gangadhar Paikray and others were the members.²² Advocate Dinabandhu Jena (later on Advocate General of Orissa), Advocate Gadadhar Jena and Advocate Abdul Hafiz were pleading on behalf of the young revolutionaries. Eminent journalist N.R. Swamy was driven out of Ranapur when he tried to collect the information relating to the case matter. The advocates of the revolutionaries were not allowed to stay at Ranpur and therefore they were compelled to stay at Pichkuli Dak Bungalow and were coming to the court on case date by an old model car.

It is clear that a number of people on the instigation of several persons assaulted the political agent with the intention of killing. It is observed by the judge that two men who were

brought in the cart and the men who brought it were engaged in the conspiracy. It is further stated that conspirator's object did not extent so far as to commit murder but was to create sensation and the murder was an accidental outcome of what the conspirators did. But taking into consideration that the intention of these men had been to make a grievance one would have expected that the injuries of Kasi Rout and Bhabani Prusty to be exhibited to the crowd. But this was not done and the crowds as well as political agent were kept in dark. It is clear that Bhabani Prusty and Kasi Rout were taken on the cart to the meeting and were represented as dead and to have been killed by political agent. This cannot obviously have happened except in pursuance of a settled plan or conspiracy. Chinta Naik seems to have been the most sinister figures in the tragedy. According to the statement of Kanta Pradhan, a shop keeper, Chinta Naik was one of the first man to arm himself with a bamboo.

It is seen after postmortem that no mark or injuries were found on any part of the body of major Bazelgette except the head. On the chest several marks were found which was caused by poking of bamboos.

The defence counsels argued that the action of major Bazelgette in shooting Arjun Rout caused grace and sudden provocation to the crowd. This might have added fuel to the people who were previously infused in their minds that major Bazelgette had killed the two persons. The political agent no doubt used his revolver in pursuit of self defence but as the judge said, it intensified the fury of the people, which had already been worked up against him. The situation would have taken a different shape had there been no firing.

Judgement

Finally the verdict was pronounced Mr. G.G. Shearer, Special Sessions Judge in his judgement convicted three persons, Chinta Naik, Raghunath Mohanty (Secretary Prajamandal) and Dibakar Parida (Organizing Secretary) to death sentence. He states that these three persons were aware of the fact that the two persons in the cart were alive. Accused Hata Naik, Bhagabat Behera, Krishna Chandra Rout, Anter Kalas, Banka Swain, Bhagaban Sahu, Magi Naik and Narasingh Sahu were sentenced to transportation for life. Agadhu Barad, Chaitan Chinara, Nath Kalas, Baidhar Mohapatra, Bidya Sahoo, Achut Das, Bansidhar Pattnaik and Anand Rout were acquitted of charge. Other five persons were sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment. After this judgement, Chinta Naik, who was awarded death sentence, made an appeal in high court. High court set aside the judgement and Chinta Naik got relief from death sentence. Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida also made an appeal in high court against the judgement of sessions court. But high court upheld and confirmed the death sentence passed on Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida.

The young leaders were already in custody and were taken from Ranapur jail like hardened criminals, legs and hands both tied with hand cuffs and in dark closed military

van. Thousands of people stood motionless with tearful eyes in both sides of the road leading from Ranapur town to Kalupadaghat railway station to pay their last homage to their esteemed brave and beloved young leaders till the military van disappeared from their sight. From Kalupadaghat railway station of Puri district, Orissa, the young patriots were taken by train to Bhagalpur of Bihar. They were kept in the death cell of Bhagalpur jail under the valiant eyes of the prison guards.

It became gradually certain that Raghu and Dibakar could not be saved from the gallows. But the signs of courage patience, contentment and patriotism were writ large on their faces while they sat waiting for death in the solitude of their condemned cell. Until the last, they remained fearless and had faith in God.

Raghu-Dibakar Hanged

The day of execution drew near. The date was fixed on 4th April, 1941. All were deeply anguished, shocked and enraged. Finally it was the dawn of 4th April, 1941, when the young patriots Raghu and Dibakar stood on the gallows of Bhagalpur jail and the country lost her two illustrious sons. The jail authorities did not hand over the dead bodies of the patriots to their followers or to their kith and kins.

Martyr

Sahid Raghu and Dibkar were an embodiment of patriotism of the people of Orissa. The young patriots attained martyrdom for the Nation and for waging relentless struggle against the injustice, oppression and tyranny of Garajat rulers supported by the British government. The Indian freedom struggle saw many heroes. Raghu and Dibakar were among them just small figures. The nation can never afford to ignore their sacrifices. Their lives have become legend for the people of Orissa, particularly for the people of Ranapur. They had a dream of establishing a free and fair society, without exploitation and oppression. They did not live to see smiles in the faces of the Ranpur, but they remained indelibly imprinted in the minds of all Oriyas. They were the leader of masses as well as living symbols of selflessness. Their heroism galvanized communities and nations. India in fact has few examples of Raghu-Dibakar's combination of idealism, patriotism and forever as valiant martyr in the history of India. The message of their lives inspires as even today to fight against injustice and tyranny.

References

1. Orissa State Archives (here after OSA), Revenue Letters from Bengal 1818-19, Vol.IX, pp.106-109; B.C. Ray, *Foundation of British Orissa* (Cuttack, 1960), p.81.
2. Satyabhama Pati, *Democratic Movement in India* (New Delhi, 1987), p.110.
3. H.K. Mahatab, *Sadhanara Pathe* (Oriya), Cuttack, 1989, p.52.
4. There were 27 varieties of bethi, *State Enquiry Committee Report*, Cuttack, 1939, p. 161.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
8. Radhanath Rath, 'The Story of the Freedom Movement in Orissa State', in M.N. Das (ed.), *Sidelight on History and Culture of Orissa* (Cuttack), p.289.
9. *Land Tenure and Land Reforms in Orissa*, Government of Orissa (1962), pp.155-168.
10. L.M. Patnaik, *Resurrected Orissa*, p.329.
11. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol.1, 1937, pp.356-358.
12. J.N. Mohapatra, *Orissa in 1936-37 to 1938-39* (Cuttack, 1941), p.15.
13. C.P. Nanda, *Towards Swaraj* (Mew Delhi, 1997), p.72.
14. S. Baliarsingh, *Ranpur Itihasa* (Oriya), Pun, 1990, p.87.
15. *Ibid.*
16. S. Pati, *op.cit.*, p.110.
17. P.K. Mishra, *Amar Sahid Raghu Dibakar* (Oriya), Utkal Prakasana, August 1985,p.50.
18. H.K. Mahatab, *op.cit.*, pp.194-200.
19. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol.1, 1939, pp.308-309.
20. *Ibid.*, p.442.
21. The Statesman, March 18, 1939.
22. P.K. Mishra, *op.cit.*, p.52.

Professor of History
Department of History
Berhampur U