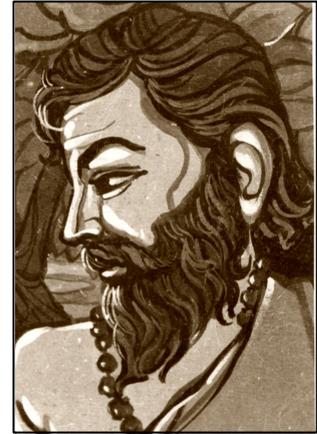




## Jayee Rajguru the Freedom Fighter

*Abhimanyu Dash*



Jaykrushna Mohapatra alias Jayee Rajguru, a great freedom fighter and Martyr of Orissa was born in the year 1739 on 29th October, in Bira Harekrushnapur, a village five kilometres away from Puri Town. His ancestors served in the court of the king of Khurda as Rajguru. The members of Rajguru family worked hereditarily as the political, military and spiritual advisors to the King of Khurda. He was appointed as Rajguru at the age of 41 during the reign of Dibyasingha Deva II, the son and successor of King Bira Kishore Deva. Unfortunately Dibyasingha Deva II died in 1798 leaving the throne and administration into turmoil. The Kingdom of Khurda became a land of race for succession. Owing to sincere effort of Jayee Rajguru, Mukunda Deva II, the minor son of the deceased King ascended the throne of Khurda in 1798. As the new king was minor Jayee Rajguru acted as regent to look after the affairs of entire administration of the Kingdom. As regent of the King Mukunda Deva II, Jayee Rajguru was assigned various important portfolios of the Khurda Kingdom such as Civil, Military and Revenue administration, religious affairs and the management of the Jagannath Temple etc. He was all in all with the King as head. Jayee Rajguru designated as Dewan, Bebartha (Minister) and Rajguru etc.

Mukunda Deva II reigned Khurda as the last great independent Gajapati King of Orissa of the Bhoi Dynasty in pre-independence era. The territory of his Kingdom extended from the river Mahanadi in Cuttack to the border of Khimidi in Ganjam. The ancestor of Mukunda Deva II was Ramachandra Deva who founded the Bhoi Dynasty in Khurda in the year 1571 and declared him as Gajapati Maharaja King of Orissa. All other Kings of Orissa were the feudatories. Ramachandra Deva established his capital at Khurda to avoid frequent foreign invasion on Cuttack, former capital of Orissa. About 12 number of Kings of Bhoi Dynasty ruled over Khurda for a period of 234 years. Mukunda Deva II inherited the Kingdom of his forefathers consisting of 129 killas (forts) subsequently reduced to 71 during his time.

In 1760 the Kingdom of Khurda faced the most unfortunate and unwanted situation during the rule of Birakishore Deva, the grand father of Mukunda Dev II. In that year Narayan Deva the King of Parala invaded Khurda to capture the throne. He claimed the throne of Khurda on the ground that he was the successor of Ganga Dynasty. Unable to face the enemy Birakishore Deva begged military assistance of Maratha ruler Shivram Sathe, the Bhonsle King of Nagpur to defeat Narayan Deva of Parala. The Maratha ruler Shivram Sathe demanded and obtained four



important parganas of Khurda Kingdom such as Rahang, Chabiskud, Serai and Lembai along with the possession of Purushottam Khetra of Puri and rupees one lakh in cash for his assistance. Loss of all these prosperous parganas and Puri was a great economic loss of Khurda Kingdom for which the King suffered and became mad. This loss of State economy continued till Jayee Rajguru's time. So he took effort to revive state economy by adopting several economic policies. He also strengthened the Khurda army by recruiting Paiks very quickly. So his reforms changed the situation of Khurda. The Khurda Kingdom became economically sound and militarily strong to face the enemy.

The Britishers defeated Siraj-ud-dula, the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa province in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 as a result of which the Midnapore area of Orissa came under the British occupation. Gradually they proceeded further and established factory in Balasore. They tried to spread their trade in Orissa. In Southern part of Orissa the Britishers were able to occupy a territory extending from the river Godavari to Chilika lake from Nizam of Hyderabad in 1765. They erected a fort near river Rusikulya in Ganjam on Southern side of the Khurda Kingdom. The Britishers intended to obtain a trade route on land from Ganjam to Balasore via Khurda for transportation of goods in connection with trade and commerce. Besides they needed a land passage for the British army to March from Calcutta to Madras which would go through Khurda Kingdom. Hence occupation of Khurda Kingdom was essential for the British administration. To fulfill their need the British utilized Shyam Sundar Deva one brother of Late Dibyasingh Deva II for negotiation with the king of Khurda for land route but failed due to stiff resistance of Jayee Rajguru in the year 1798. This is the first confrontation of Rajguru against the

British. His intention was to safeguard the interest of the Kingdom of Khurda.

In 1803 Col. Harcourt the District Magistrate of Ganjam signed the "Treaty of Deogaon" with the Marathas. According to the provisions of the treaty the parganas of Rahang, Chabiskud, Serai and Lembai were transferred from the possession of the Marathas to the British. Simultaneously Col. Harcourt sent his agent to Khurda to persuade the king to provide a land passage in between Ganjam and Balasore. The King was asked to sign a new agreement with the assurance to receive rupees one lakh, four parganas and superintendship of the Jagannath Temple of Puri in exchange. The king Mukunda Deva II agreed. In the first step the king received Rs.10,000/- in cash as per the terms of the agreement. The British refused to transfer four parganas to the King. The British violated the terms and conditions of the agreement. On the contrary the British placed a fresh proposal of another agreement before the King to sign which was ultimately rejected due to vehement opposition of Jayee Rajguru. The British now felt that Jayee Rajguru was the key person of Khurda administration behind the rejection of the agreement. The British planned to remove Rajguru from the post of King's adviser. Accordingly the British authority sent a messenger to Khurda King to bribe him of Rs.50,000/- to remove Jayee but returned unsuccessfully. In the meantime Jayee rushed to Cuttack with 2000 armed persons to collect rest part of the money. He was able to receive only Rs.40,000/-. He distributed the amount among his men as their arrear dues. But he failed to get four parganas. This refusal of parganas enraged Rajguru. He prepared his men to face the British at any situation. Open hostilities between Mukunda Deva II and the British became inevitable. Jayee Rajguru prepared to meet the British challenge. He sought the help of Bhonsle King of Nagpur. Two officers of the King



of Berar, Antaji Naik and Kanoji Naik met the King of Khurda. They promised to help him with men and arms against British. The tributary chiefs of Orissa were requested to extend their cooperation to his cause. One religious mendicant Sambhu Bharati was appointed for the purpose. The Kings of Kanika and Kujang came forward openly to protest the British. A triple alliance was formed among the Kings of Khurda, Kanika and Kujang. The zamindars of Bishenpur, Harishpur and Marichpur also joined the confederacy. Jayee Rajguru was determined to assert his right by force. In 1804 one Achuyta Bank was appointed as muquaddum to collect tax from Batgaon near Pipili. He also gave appointment to one Dharamu Harichandan to collect tax from villages in the disputed parganas. Some troops of Khurda raided some villages in that area. Jayee Rajguru took steps to take over the management of the Jagannath temple of Puri.

These were hostile acts and the British authorities decided to take stern action. They arrested Sambhu Bharati who was in charge of organizing anti-British movement. The Dulbeheras of Rameswar, Panchagarh, the Khandaits of Mendhasal, the Zamindars of Garh Haladia were ordered not to help the King of Khurda. The British authority prohibited the King of Khurda to collect revenues from parganas by issuing orders. The British also prohibited the King of his traditional right on the temple of Jagannath. In November 1804 military action was taken against the King. By a proclamation the King was deposed and his Kingdom was annexed to the British Orissa in 1804.

Jayee Rajguru sent a Paik army of Khurda to invade the British occupied territory of Pipili. The Paiks occupied Pipili. Fall of Pipili into the hands of Khurda Paiks alarmed the British authority at Cuttack. Col. Harcourt appealed the British authority of India to despatch more British

troops to confront the Khurda army. The British troops marched to Khurda from all sides. Captain Hickland defeated Paik troops and occupied Delang. Harcourt besieged the fort which was situated on the foothills of Barunei. Major Robert Fletcher also attacked and demolished the fort. The King escaped from fort with his trusted followers. From Kaipadar forest the king sent his Vakeel to Col. Harcourt for negotiation. But Vakeel was arrested. Jayee Rajguru was arrested and kept in prison in the fort of Barabati at Cuttack.

Before his arrest Jayee Rajguru very tactfully managed to escape the King Mukunda Deva II to Gangamata Math at Puri with a faithful Paik named Durga Charan Singh with a message to the Mahanta of the monastery to keep the King in secret with propele care. The King and the letter reached Puri in safe. It was the intention of Jayee Rajguru to keep the King Mukunda Deva II in safe at monastery in disguise. Unfortunately the King out of fear approached Fate Mohammed the fouzdar of Banapur for his safety who treacherously informed Col. Harcourt. Finally the King of Khurda Mukunda Deva II was arrested on 3rd January 1805. He was imprisoned in the Barabati fort at Cuttack. Subsequently Mukunda Deva II and Jayee Rajguru were transferred to Midnapore prison. From Midnapore Jail Mukunda Deva II submitted a petition to the Governor General-in-Council. In it he pleaded that "during the Mookhtyarship of Rajguru he had no power. He had been kept virtually in confinement at Khurda and that Rajguru had instigated the Paikas to raid the British territory". The British Govt. released the King from the prison in 1807. Mukunda Deva II was not allowed to stay at Khurda. His residence was shifted to Puri permanently. He lived in his Balisahi palace at Puri. Later on the King's palace was shifted to the Grand Road, Puri. The British restored his traditional right on the temple of Lord Jagannath



at Puri. He was given Malikana of Rs.1,00,000/- of the revenue of his estate by the Regulation-IV of 1809.

After the arrest of Jayee Rajguru and fall of Khurda fort the other revolutionaries surrendered before the British army. Balabhadra Bhanja the Raja of Kanika was taken as a prisoner. He was sent to Midnapore prison in 1805. Chandradhwaja Sendha the Raja of Kujanga was dethroned. His elder brother Madhusudan Sendha was recognized as the New King of Kujang.

The trial of Jayee Rajguru took place at Baghitota in Midnapore. In answer to the question of Col. Harcourt, Jayee Rajguru boldly confessed that the King was a child. What had been done was done by myself. Death sentence was awarded to Jayee Rajguru after his trial. He was brutally killed by the British soldiers on 6th December 1806. He sacrificed this life for the motherland and became a martyr. He proved him as a true son of the soil.

The failure of Jayee Rajguru in the battle field is a tragic story in the history of this land. The Paiks on whom he depended upon was in match to the British army. The British force was vast and well organized. The Paiks had no modern artillery like the British. They fought in traditional weapons. The Paiks had no modern techniques of warfare. Defeat was obvious. But Jayee Rajguru preferred defeat to surrender.

The credit of the first war of India's Independence goes to the "Sepoy Mutiny of 1857". Much earlier to this great event India had witnessed in the soil of Orissa the freedom struggle of Jayee Rajguru in the Kingdom of Khurda with a viewing to wipe out the rule of the might British in the years from 1803 to 1805. The history of India's war of Independence was written mainly

basing on the documents prepared by the British authority. The reality of the facts was intentionally overlooked and deliberately avoided. They characterized the great war of India's freedom struggle as "Sepoy Mutiny of 1857". In similar way the Britishers termed the rising of Khurda Paiks during Mukunda Deva II under the leadership of Jayee Rajguru as "Paik Bidroh". The Govt. of India is neglecting Jayee Rajguru as first freedom fighter of India in the annals of History.

### References :

1. K.N. Mohapatra, 'Khurda Itihasa', Bhubaneswar, 1969, PP-243-246.
2. A.B. Mohanty (Ed), "Madalapanji", P-82 & P-107.
3. Jayant Rath, Jayee Rajguru : The Veteran Leader of Khurda Rising 1803, in 'Cultural Heritage of Orissa', Khurda Dist, (Ed) Harish Ch Das (et.al), Bhubanesar, 2010, PP-318-322,
4. Jatadhari Mishra, 'Jayee Rajguru -The martyr', in 'Cultural Heritage of Orissa', Puri Dist. (ed) GMohanty (et.al), Vol-X, Part-1, Bhubaneswar, 2010, pp-239-248.
5. P.K. Pattnaik, 'A Great Martyr', in 'Sahid Jayee Rajguru Souvenir', Puri, (ed) Jagabandhu Padhi (et.al), 2003. pp-1-3.
6. Pandit Sadasiv Rathasharma, 'Jayee Rajguru', 'Utkal Prasang', Bhubaneswar November 2002, PP-47-49.
7. Gopal Krishna Das, 'Jayi Rajguru: The Pathfinder of Freedom Movement of India', in 'Orissa Review', Bhubaneswar, August - 2008, PP-35-39.
8. B.M. Das, 'Odisara Sakta Prusthabhumire Samarika Parampara O Jayee Rajguru', 'Utkal Prasanga', Bhubaneswar, December -2006, PP-1-6.
9. Madhusudan Rath, 'Biplabi Saheed Jayee Rajguru,'Utkal Prasang', Bhubaneswar, December - 2006, PP-9-13.
10. Jagabandhu Padhi, 'A Brave Son of the Soil', in 'Sahid Jayee Rajguru' 'Souvenir' Puri (ed), Jagabandhu Padhi (et.al), 2003, PP.15-17.

---

Abhimanyu Dash, Lecturer in History, Surajmal Saha Mahavidyalaya, Puri-752001.