

Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati's Speech in the Round Table Conference for Orissa Province

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The Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati was deputed in 1930 by the Government of Bihar and Orissa to the first Round-Table Conference held at London, to consider the Constitutional Reforms in India. Immediately after submission of the report of the Simon Commission in 1929, the British Government inaugurated the first session of the Round-Table-Conference on the 12th November 1930, in the House of Lords of London. On the fourth day, i.e. the 16th November 1930, Shri Krushna Chandra Gajapati, secured special permission from the British Prime Minister to placing his proposal for creation of a New Province of Orissa. His short speech was not only alluring but also impressive and impetuous to get wholehearted support of the members of all parties, present in the 'Round-Table-Conference'. In a meeting at Cuttack afterwards, Mr. M.S.Das in a speech of laudation to the Maharaja said, "We have all been long agitating for our cause by petitions, memoranda, deputation and resolutions. All these availed us nothing. But the personal influence of the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi over Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State and the other member of the Round-Table-Conference worked wonders as a result of which we have got the



announcement of a separate province." While moving the resolution for the formation of "Orissa Province", he delivered a nice speech which must be a monumental document in the history of the Oriya people. We quote it hereunder:-

"Sir, on behalf of ten millions of Oriyas, the subjects of His Majesty, I rise to represent their long-standing grievances on this occasion. The memorandum I have placed in your hand a few days since has been able, I hope, to give a clear insight into all the present difficulties of the Oriyas, who are placed under four different provinces. I will not tire you with the details of the history for unification of the Oriyas, agitating as they have been for the last quarter of a century and more. As one well-informed of the facts, I should lay before you all today that the formation of a separate province for the Oriyas is a life and death problem to them. They feel tortured with all the disabilities and disadvantages of on being a distant adjunct lying at the tail-end of every Province wherever they are far away from the seat of Government of the respective Province, and always in a unique minority, completely lost sight, being merged in the teaming millions of population of those Provinces.

I appeal to you all, gentlemen, to appreciate the peculiar position of the Oriyas and their demand, as recommended by several official bodies time after time. We want a Province of our own on the basis of language and race, to be ourselves a homogeneous unit with feelings of contentment and peace, to realize and be benefited by the projected reforms of India by both Indian and British politicians, who look forward to the day when the United States of India will consist of small federated States, based on common language and race. Without a separate province for the ten Millions of Oriyas let me tell you, Sir, that all your labours at this conference to develop parliamentary institutions in provinces with autonomous powers will prove on the contrary, seriously injurious to the Oriyas.

The patience with which we have waited and loyalty to the British Crown with which we have looked up to always for justice, sympathy and fair treatment have proved as Lord Curzon put in once, 'were the Orissans agitating people, which they are not, they would soon make their protest heard. As it is, they have been sacrificed without compunction'.

I am right, I think, Sir, in any presumption, that you all consider the Oriya problems as the least controversial of all the problems that this conference has had to deal with. You are aware that the Simon Commission, the Government of India Despatch and all the Provincial Governments concerned have recognized the urgent necessity for the immediate solution of the question. The question of finance, however, is evidently the only obstacle in the way of their recommending the formation of a separate province for the Oriyas. My answer to that is that finance is not, after all, a fence of such insurmountable dimensions when we have to save a great historic race with an ancient civilization and culture, from being obliterated. The old saying : 'cut your coat according to the cloth' if strictly applied, comes to the rescue to a great extent in forming the long sought after Orissa

Province and again, I am fully confident that the Central Government with the same feelings of benefaction will come to the rescue of the New Province as it did in the case of Assam, Bihar and Orissa, when first they were created. One redeeming feature, however, which I should point out to you is that we will be starting with hardly any debts; but on the other hand, with appreciably more income than Assam had to start with. At page 404 of the Memorandum, submitted by the Government of Bihar and Orissa to Indian Statutory Commission, we gather that the annual revenue of the Orissa Division of Bihar and Orissa would be about 10 millions of rupees and I am sure that with the addition of districts as recorded by the different official bodies with their gathered evidence of the people of those parts, and the people of other adjoining Oriya-speaking areas, that may be recorded by the Boundary Commission, will bring in about 20.2 millions of rupees to serve the financial difficulty. I may illustrate that the Agency tracts with their scope of excise revenue, large areas of waste land that are being developed and valuable forest produce will contribute largely to the provincial funds. In addition to this, there is an extensive coastal land, containing large sheets of salt-pans and scope of shipping between different parts of the Empire, further to increase the Provincial Revenue. I can assure you, Sir, that if circumstances so necessitate, we the Oriyas are prepared to bear the burden of special taxation to meet any financial deficit of the future Province.

Without further encroaching upon your valuable time, enough I have been able to impress you, gentlemen, with the urgency of the problem. It is for you to make or mar the destiny of an ancient race, vast in numbers, cultured and advanced, but placed under painful circumstances now, though their past was bright and full of unique interest and historical importance as those of any of the present advanced communities of India.'

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