Ghumsar is on the North Western part of the Ganjam district. It has well watered fertile valleys, rich wild life and valuable forest resources. It’s headquarters is at Bhanjanagar which was known as Russelkunda (Russel’s Hill) after Russel, the then Special Commissioner in Ganjam\(^1\). Ghumsar has a long history since 9th Century AD. It formed a part of the dominion of the famous Bhanja ruling dynasty of the Khinjali Mandala\(^2\). The Bhanja ruled over Ghumsar till 1835 AD. When it was occupied by the British forces\(^3\). The patriotism of the people of Ghumsar during the British rule, the resistance of its rebel, tribal leaders like Dora Bisoyi and Chakra Bisoyi from 1836 to 1854 AD to the British power, proved the great sacrifice and heroic nature of the people of Ghumsar.

Ganjam district came under the British occupation in the year 1766 AD. It was placed under the charge of a Resident\(^4\). Then it was abolished in 1794 and the office of the collector was established. The collector acted as the highest judicial office of the district in respect of both civil and criminal cases.

The Ghumsar Jail system was like its English prototype, insanitary, demoralising and non-deterrent. This jail has been functioning since the time when the district of Ganjam was an administrative unit under the Madras Presidency. It was named as Russellkonda jail; originally, it was named as Hill Jail and functioning as the district jail during the year 1894 to 95\(^5\). But it was reduced to a Sub jail in the year 1908. District jails were reduced in number owing to the reduction to the status of Sub Jails of the district jail at Russellkonda under G.O. No: 927 – J dated 4th July 1908\(^6\). But during the later period it received the status of Special Sub Jail\(^7\).

Though, primarily it accommodates to the political and civil undertrials and convicted prisoners, but this was mainly for prisoners suffering from leprosy. Leper prisoners from all over the state are transferred to this prison for their medical treatment. There were separate wards in the jail for such prisoners\(^8\).

There are eight wards and two cells for male prisoners and two wards and one cell for the female prisoners in the Jail.

There was no provision for imparting any vocational training to the prisoners in the Jail. The prisoners were working in the farms and gardens inside the Jail. A trained teacher was posted in the jail school for the education of the inmates. There was a hospital attached to the jail. One

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**Freedom Fighters and their life in Prison –**

**A Study of Bhanjanagar Jail**

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Assistant Surgeon and one Pharmacist constituted the medical staff of the hospital in which ailing prisoners were examined medically for treatment.

The history of prison and its use as a place of detention for the condemned persons is not of recent origin. Kautilya, Ashok, the Jetakas, Harsha Charita, Hiuen Tsang make a mention of prison life in ancient India. Imprisonment as a form of punishment was introduced in India by the British Government in 199310. But imprisonment as a form of punishment in modern sense came to be applied on uniform basis throughout India in 186011.

In Odisha, during the early days of British rule no regular prisons were there. So also in the case of Ghumsar. The entire legal history of British period is the penumbra of Jail mal administration and prison injustice. A legal survey of undertrial prisoners at the time of British rule in India had shown illegal detention, ignoring the principles of natural justice12.

There were numerous freedom fighters of Ghumsar who had undergone prolonged durations of incarceration. They accepted the inevitability of Jail interludes in the conduct of their Satyagrahi struggle13. As a prisoner they had varied experiences of prison life. The object of the prison labour was to harass the convict. The prisoner was to be frightened and broken into blind submission. The idea was that they should carry away from prison a fear and a horror to it. So that he might avoid crime and return to prison in future.14

The internal administration and management of the jail was in the hands of the District Magistrate. In the matters of prison labour profit was made subordinate to punishment. Prisoners were sentenced to public labour. At night they were fastened by a chain passing through the rings of their fetters.

The woman prisoners also suffered a lot. There was no separate ward for female undertrial prisoners15. They were kept in the most degraded companions and often under hurried conditions16. Men do move about within the goal in going to and fro in connection with their work, they had their movement which was helpful in refreshing their minds to some extent. Women though given lighter work were closely confined in a small place and led a horrible monotonous existence.

The expenditure of the British Government on the maintenance of prison was quite negligible. A large number of prisoners were suffering every year from tuberculosis, cholera, dysentery and various epidemics. Even lavatories and bathrooms were not available for them. The diet supplied to them were of poor standard17.

Sometimes the freedom fighters had to undergo severe punishment like flogging and whipping18. For example, Dibakar Pattnayak, a leading freedom fighter of Ganjam protested against the atrocities and punishment against prisoners, he was cruelly flogged by the British authorities19. The jailer is a stern old soldier, with precise military ideas of duty and work.20

In 1920 prison was just like a hall21. The prisoners were bearing the dress of sack which was made of jute22. The system “Ghana” was there by which the prisoners were forced to stand in the place of bullocks to turn it round to squeeze out oil. This was a piece of human labour, endemic in all jails. The humiliating and provocation custom of “Sarkar Salam” was there. It required a
separate kind of salute to every jail official visitors; violation of this was followed by punishment. Better food, better medical attendance, better dress and utensils were a dream to the prisoners.

The prisoners were getting two under wearers, one Banian and a small cloth. They were not getting any oil for use. Sugar or molasses was available to them only during disease stricken period, mirror was not provided to them. Even years together they were not getting any chance to see their face on the mirror.

Each prisoner was getting two pots, made of iron. They would have their food, drink water and they also used it for latrine. Sometimes the pots were stained which was bad for health. So in order to remain in prison, the Satyagrahis underwent special rigorous training like taking half boiled rice, not to take ghee or oil in their food, sleep on the ground etc.

At that time electric light was not there. One lantern was hanging at the top of the room. In prison there was no arrangement for recreation. They were completely remaining aloof from the society.

In 1930, the prisoners were getting food three times per day. Its expenditure was limited within five Annas per a prisoner. Besides the jail superintendent would get his percentage from the contractor. So the diet system was quite poor. Instead of dal the prisoners were getting bark portion of dal. Besides small pebbles were there in the rice. So several times the prisoners were going on strikes for not taking food. But the British Government did not pay any heed to them.

The prisoners were not provided any mosquito net and they were sleeping on the ground. Sometimes they were provided a blanket. Forty to fifty prisoners were using one latrine and one urinal. The small prison room had no proper ventilation i.e., no door and windows. In the night the cells were full with bed smells. In this way the prisoners were spending twelve hours from 6 PM to 6 AM.

In the morning when they were going for latrine, a rope was bound around the waste and the prison staff drew the rope if some delay was made in the latrine. Every prisoner was given a cap where the number of prisoner was written on bold letters.

The British inflicted a very rigorous and inhuman punishment known as “Danda Bedi” Bearing this Danda Bedi they had to make jute from the leaves from the Murga tree. The juice of Murga leaves was very injurious to health. It creates wound if it falls on the body.

Many freedom fighters spent their life in Ghumsar jail. They have written their horrible life in Jails. The story of freedom movement in Ghumsar is a great saga of patriotism, sacrifice and dedication. Their heroic deeds, daring acts had puzzled and bewildered the British Raj. During freedom movement Ghumsar remained in a state of continuous rebellion and raised a standard of revolution to liberate their motherland. Many became martyrs and numberless men and women went through endless suffering for the cause of the country.

DIBAKAR PATTNAYAK

Dibakar Pattnayak was born on 6th October 1899 at Chikiti in Ganjam district. His father was Madan Mohan Dewan Boxi Pattnayak and mother was Saradhamati. He had completed his middle school education in Berhampur and Icchapur. For High School education he had
entered into Victoria High English School, Cuttack and Iswara Chandra Vidypath of Calcutta. While he was continuing his I.A at National High School of Calcutta at the call of Mahatma Gandhi he left his studies and entered into freedom movement³².

In order to make the people aware of freedom movement in South Odisha he established “Akhand Liberty” and one “Akhand Girls School” at Chikiti.³³ In 1922, the National Congress Committee decided for the disobedience of the excise rules and regulations and picketing before liquor and Ganja Shops. Dibakar Pattnayak made individual Satyagraha against the excise auction. So he was arrested and put in Berhampur jail³⁴.

At that time Government had implemented 144 at Ichhapur in Andhra Pradesh a few kilometers away from Berhampur. Dibakar Pattnayak went against the 144 declaration for which he was awarded for six months rigorous imprisonment³⁵. By that time Sarat Chandra Mahapatra and V.V. Giri the former President of India from Berhampur, Bira Raju and Jagannath Rao from Aska violated 144 and wore a peculiar dress with a iron ring in their legs. Since termed under rigorous imprisonment, they were asked to prepare rope, break stones and prepare iron works. Then Dibakar Pattnayak was sent to Kedloor jail and was released on 14th September 1922.³⁶

In 1924 Flag Satyagrah had begun at Nagapur. Dibakar Pattnayak was going to attend the meeting. But on the way the police arrested him and later on he was released.

During the Salt movement in 1930, Dibakar Pattnayak went to Jeypore of Koraput District. There he worked for the congress along with Radha Krushna Biswasroy, Sadasiba Tripathy, Radha Mohan Sahu. Hence again the British Government arrested him and sent him to Visakhapatnam jail³⁷. But after one year most of the freedom fighters were released due to Gandhi-Irwin pact. However Dibakar Pattnayak was not released. So Niranjan Pattnayak, the other great freedom fighter of South Odisha immediately communicated the matter to Mahatma Gandhi. Then Gandhi requested to Lord Irwin and he was released.

In 1932 he came to Berhampur and became the Secretary of the Congress committee. Several Congress centres were opened in Berhampur, Balipadar and Sheragada. The Congress volunteers violated 144 in Ganjam district. In the meantime Dibakar Pattnayak came to Aska. There he was arrested and was sent to Rousselkonda Jail³⁸. Then the British Government sent him to Berhampur jail. After spending three months there he was sent to the Vellore jail. In Vellore there was horrible scarcity of water. The prisoners were provided water in glasses to furnish their routine work.

In 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose elected as the President of the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi and his followers vehemently opposed it. So on moral ground Subhas Bose tendered his resignation. And he himself established “Forward Bloc”. Dibakar Pattnayak also criticized this undemocratic principle of the Congress. So he came and took the leadership of the Forward Bloc. Its main centre was at Berhampur. He became the Vice-President of the “Forward Bloc”.

Dibakar Pattnayak remained bachelor throughout his life. He was responsible for the all round developmental works in Ganjam district of
South Odisha. While he was going Chikiti to attend the land development meeting Dibakar Pattnayak met an unfortunate motor accident on 1st March 1976 and died.

**MAGUNI DAS**

Among the notable freedom fighters of South Odisha, Maguni Das is one of them. He was born on 1st January 1920 in Jagannath Prasad of Ganjam district. His father was Ananta Das and mother was Rebate Devi.

From his school career Maguni Das was attracted by the Congress activities like the Salt Movement and the boycott of foreign goods. As a Satyagrahi young Maguni entered the Congress in 1939 as an active member. His main task was to collect money for the Congress, moving from village to village.

In 1940, he became the Secretary of the Congress committee of Ganjam district. For these activities on 25th January 1941 he was arrested at Panchabhuti of Ganjam and imprisoned in Russelkonda jail for four months. Later on the famous freedom fighters of South Odisha like Uma Charan Pattnayak, Madhab Routa and Shyama Sundar Padhy also joined with him at Russelkonda Jail.

During the Quit India Movement of 1942, Maguni Das with some of his followers spread the massage of Mahatma Gandhi in the remote areas of South Odisha. During this period he tried his best to destroy the main bridge connecting from Aska to Berhampur. For that he collected dynamite and kept it secretly with R. Rammurty. But however, the British Government could know it and arrested and imprisoned him in the Russelkonda Jail. There he remained for six months, where he was flogged by the British authority.

**UMA CHARAN PATTNAYAK**

Uma Charan Pattnayak was born in 1902. His father was Abhimanyu Pattnayak who was serving as a Deputy collector under the Madras Presidency. He had completed his high school education in Russelkonda. Then he entered into the Madras Presidency College and completed his B.A degree. After this he obtained the M.A degree from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack.

He started his political career in 1931 and joined as a member of ‘Utkal Sammelini’. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1935. In 1936 he was appointed as the “First Public Prosecutor” of Ganjam district and also appointed as the Commissioner of “Boys School”.

In 1941 he resorted to individual Satyagraha at Bellaguntha which was five miles away from Russellkonda. And in consequence he was arrested. For this he was imprisoned at Berhampur and Russelkonda Jail for six months.

To achieve the Indian independence he followed the path of Gandhiji’s method of non-violence and truth. These two weapons he thought were not enough. Further he realized that violence can be adopted as a medicine to restore non-violence.
On the eve of the “Quit India Movement” in 1942 most of the National leaders were thrown into the prison. As Uma Charan was the prisoner among the freedom fighters of South Odisha he was arrested on 9th August 1942.49

He along with other leaders of South Odisha were arrested. Three political institutions of Ganjam district of South Odisha named Ganjam Zilla Congress Committee, Gurandi Sevashram and Kullada Ashram were seized.51

He took the leadership of the Non-Cooperation Movement of Ghumusar of South Odisha. So the British Government arrested him at Russelkonda and later transferred him to Berhampur Jail.52 While in the prison he wrote pamphlets against “British Raj” and preached the idea of Swaraj among the co-prisoners.53

In the freedom movement of South Odisha, Uma Charan Pattanayak was a luminous star. His zeal and sincerity to the cause of freedom movement brought him to the pinnacle of fame among political leaders not only to South Odisha but also in the nation. Further his honest and true spirit of nationalism his style of functioning brought for him an unchallenged popularity in South Odisha. This great soul passed away on 14th February 1961 in New Delhi.54

CHAMPA DEVI

The next towering personality was Champa Devi. She was a prominent woman leader of the freedom movement and famous social worker of Ghumusar. All her life she carried on the struggle to eradicate child marriage and encourage widow remarriage.55

Champa Devi was born at Dura of Ganjam district in the year 1904. From the very childhood she was very much influenced by Ramadevi, Sarala Devi, Kuntala Kumari Sabat of Odisha.56 Besides she was encouraged by Bairagi Misra of Cuttack who fought against social inequalities and untouchabilities in the society. Champa Devi also tried her level best to remove untouchability from the society. Besides she took much interest for the betterment of the backward class of the society.

In 1932 she founded an Ashram at Ichhapur to serve the helpless women in the society.57

Besides these social and philanthropic activities she had also joined the freedom movement. She raised her voice against the British Government and organized the women of South Odisha against them.

In 1942, a meeting was organized at Russelkonda (Bhanjanagar) of Ganjam District. Hundreds of people gathered round the place. In that meeting Champa Devi delivered her speech with great eloquence which inspired the people against the British Government. So she was arrested and sent to Russelkonda Jail and was imprisoned for six months.58 She was accompanied with other Freedom fighters like Maguni Das, Madhu Sudan Patra, Satrughana Behera, Raghunath Panda and Rama Chandra Behera etc.

In the jail, Champa Devi was the only woman freedom fighter. In the Jail she was not provided full meal. She was only getting sixty tolas of rice, a little of Dal and curry. Nevertheless she was happy in that dark cell of the prison.59

Champa Devi was a widow from her very childhood. So she realized the gravity of
widowhood and tried her best for the widow remarriage. She established an Ashram at Phulbani and took the care of many helpless children. Her Eventful career came to a close when she died of cancer in 3rd March 1975.  

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Dr. Sirisa Kumar Sadangi, Lecturer in History, Anchalika Mahavidyalaya, Jagannath Prasad, Ganjam.