

Banamali Das and His Times in the Princely State of Nilgiri

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Abstract

Banamali Das occupies a unique place among the leaders of modern Odisha. He was a great freedom fighter, revolutionary and an astute communist leader. An ardent believer in communist ideology, he was the champion of poor and downtrodden throughout his life. In him we find the organising ability of the great communist leader Mao-Tse-Tung and the courage and fearlessness of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. As a leader of the 'Prajamandal' movement in Nilgiri state, he was instrumental in galvanising the illiterate and half fed masses into own action against the tyrannical rule of the Raja, protected by the mighty British. As a result of his valiant efforts, Nilgiri had the distinction of being the first princely state to be merged into Indian Union in 1947. He also played an active role in post-Independence electoral politics. He exercised tremendous influence over the people of his area. This was proved by the fact that, he was thrice elected from the Nilgiri constituency in 1967, 1971 and 1974. His fearless struggle, revolutionary spirit, indomitable will power, love for human being will remain a constant source of inspiration for the coming generation.)

History deals with each and every branch of human life. Fredric Engels wrote "with man we enter history". Historical study is a great narrative. The missing narratives are incorporated to devolve greater sense of history. The latest historical research diverts the attention from macro to micro level. The subaltern approaches of History have come to command its attention the Dalits, the lower classes, the buttons, labourers, peasants, women, poverty, tribals, religious and social movements.¹ Banamali Das was a subaltern leader. He was one of the illustrious men in the soil of the princely state of Nilgiri who blossomed out of the dust, fought against the tyrannical rule of the monarchy of Nilgiri protected by the umbrella of mighty colonial master, suffered and suffered and at last rose the

panicle of glory by dint of his courage, sheer merit and undaunted leadership.

Now attempts have been made to analyse times of Banamali Das. Banamali Das was born in 1918 in the village Kadamsahi of native Nilgiri town in princely state of Nilgiri ruled by the Rajas which is the revenue sub-division of the Balasore District in modern Orissa. His Father Harihara Das was a lawyer and Mother Chintamani Devi was a pious and religious lady.

He entered into M.E. School at the age twelve where he came in contact with a patriotic young teacher Swapneswar Mishra whose house was in the village Aramala of Nilgiri state. After completion of M.E. Examination he entered into Balasore Zilla School where he was influenced by a socialist Art teacher, Gopal Kanungo.²

While Shri Das was a High School student, he became the secretary of the then British committee of Students federation. Moving on bicycle he organized patriotic units of students throughout the district from Laxmannath to Bhogorai in Balasore sub-division. This made him close to political leaders like Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, Naba Krushna Choudhuri, Bhagabati Panigrahi and others. Weekly debates in the High School was a forum for him to assert Patriotism against slavish conduct of service holders in spite of high and very high academic careers. For his political activity among the students, he was expelled from Zilla High School hostel and then from a govt. recognized Mess – Usha Mess.³

In the year 1938, he left the school with Chaitanya Mishra of Daspalla, Chakradhara Rout of Sukinda, Giridhari Panda of Mahanga and Brundabana Sarangi of Kahalia and established a political organization in a Mess named ‘Sarbaharmess.’⁴

On the advice of Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, Banamali Das decided to enter into the field of politics after passing Matriculation. Accordingly he joined a Gandhian organization functioning at village Ayodhya of Nilgiri. Its name was Yuvaksakha Samiti. Its founder was Radha Krushna Khuntia as president and Nimai Charan Khuntia and Shri Golak Nath Dey were secretary and treasurer of Yuvaksakha Samiti. Its first and foremost objective was to spread hand spinning and to propagate against untouchability.⁵ Village sanitation, tank clearing, abolition of forced labour, spinning, weaving, salt lumping, prohibition and boycott of foreign clothes, village reorganization and all other Gandhian programmes were taken by yuvaksakhasamit. After Shri Das and other patriotic young men made their entry to the public life of Nilgiri. This group constituted of persons

like Banamali Das, Giridhar Panda, Chaitanya Mishra, Brindaban Sarangi and Chakradhara Rath. These group were followed a radical Leftist approach of socialistic ideology.⁶ They started building a mass movement from the grass root level. They decided to fight against Raja for abolition of Bethi (forced labour), Magana (collection), Veti, (gift), Sikar (hunting) and Rasad. Sarangadhar Das, Secretary of the Orissa State People Conference came to Balasore in February 1938 and joined a meeting.⁷ The leaders of the Yuvak Sakha Samiti attended the meeting. Being influenced by the leaders of the Samiti conducted the annual anniversary of the Samiti in the 2nd May 1938 at Ayodhya. But the Durbar imposed 144 section and banned procession and meeting.⁸ Shri Pranabandhu Agasti of Nilgiri and Sri Chaitanya Mishra of Daspalla were arrested in Oupada side. Protesting against it there was a procession from village Patapur to Nilgiri town, though Sri Das organized the procession, he did not join it. Another procession started from Ayodhya on 29th May 1938 with tricolour flags with the song of Bande Mataram. The Durbar adopted Lathi charge. The processionists were fined. The Yuvak Sukha Samiti was declared unlawful and the socialist Newspaper ‘Krushak’ was banned. The older people in the Samiti who were the believer of Gandhian ideology wanted for ‘compromise’ with the Durbar. The younger group who was influenced by Marxism and guided by Bhagavati Charan Panigrahi wanted anti-imperialist Movement in Nilgiri. On may 1938 a congress socialistic party meeting was held at Cuttack under Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi. The radical young men of the Yuvak Sakha Samiti were influenced by him. Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab and Nabakrushna Choudhury were rival in state politics and Mahtab was not prepared to allow Choudhury to continue the movement in Nilgiri

as it was his home district Balasore. In this situation Dr. Mahtab intervened with a scheme of compromise between the ruler and Durbar. Dr. Mahtab asked to Shri Das to stop the civil disobedience movement by Yuvak Sakha Samiti. He would organize Prajamandal and that organization would do the job so Yuvak Sakha Samiti suspended the civil disobedience Movement.⁹

Accordingly Nilgiri Prajamandal came into being at Balasore on 12th June 1938. As per the compromise effected by Mahtab in the Yuvak Sakha Samiti, Kailash Chandra Mohanty of Iswarpur an elderly advocate was selected as president of the Prajamandal. Banamali Das and Hemakanta Jamadri became the Secretary and Treasurer respectively. A school friend of Sri Das-Brundaban Sarangi became the assistant secretary. Thus Yuvak Sakha Samiti was converted to Prajamandal and an office was opened in the house of a retired school inspector named Purna Chandra Nayak of Gadiamal.¹⁰ Prajamandal submitted some demands and started Civil Disobedience movement during the car festival on 7th July 1938. Satyagrahees came in batches from different villages on procession by violating the Sec. 144 and prohibitory orders of the Durbars. Anti Durbar slogans echoed on the air. The mob was subjected to severe Lathi charge on that day by the order of the police superintendent Ganga Narayan Mohapatra. More than 1500 Satyagrahees courted arrest, Jail and special camp jails were over fulfilled.¹¹ Feeding such a huge number of Satyagrahis became a heavy burden on the state exchequer. So Raja ordered the courts only to fine the Satyagrahis and release them except fifteen and twenty persons. All others were released. For collecting fine the Raja provoked the Prajamandal to

recognize the people again. Thus the movement maintained its continuity and earned for itself a place of honour due to the unprecedented Satyagraha at Patna village.¹²

Finch move for collection of fine by police force was made in village 'Patana'. Prajamandal gave a call to resist. An emergency meeting of the Prajamandal was held at Gadiamal in 1938 where Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, Sarangadhar Das, Kailash Chandra Mohanty, Banamali Das, Brundaban Sarangi, Purna Chandra Nayak attended the meeting. At the meeting Banamali Das was chosen as leader for resistance movement. Durbar sent two policemen with Fakir Mohan Mohapatra to Patna village to attach the property of Kshetra Mohan Behera and Krishan Behera. The crock party of the ruler went to crock their house.¹³ But at the clarion call of Banamali Das and Brundaban Sarangi, more than thousand resisters assembled at village Patna to resist the crockers. They arranged a high pendal and garlanded Banamali Das.

Thousands and thousands of Satyagrahees assembled the village. The police pitched tent and waited for firing order from the Raja. Instead of facing the rebels, Raja informed the political agent, (P.A) Bazalgette about the situation. After a week of this stalemate, the political agent and the Raja arrived at the spot. The gathering Mass proclaimed Sri Banamali Das as their spokesman. The dialogue took place in standing all position. It is interesting note how a young boy only twenty years old face the political agent and English ex-military man. Towards the end of the dialogue the conversation were as follows:

Political Agent (Bazalgette):-Do you know this type of revolt against Raja Sahib was a sedition punishable with death sentence ?

Banamali Das : Yes, I know that. But kindly tell me if your ancestors beheaded the start king Charles-I of established the parliamentary system in 1648. Whether you are ashamed of it or are you proud of it?

P.A.: – Oh! I am proud of that tradition, the king was irresponsible.

B. Das: – So also the Raja who stands by you.

P.A.: – Can you prove it?

B.Das: – Yes, by all means.

P.A.: – Come with your evidences to Nilgiri circuit house by 10A.M.¹⁴

Next day just as at 10 a.m., Sri Das went to the circuit house and produced the registered letter refused by the Raja. He pleaded of the ruler refused to receive the letter of his subjects how could be a responsible king. The political agent went to the another room, discussed with Raja and came back and told to Sri Das that all the fines would be exempted. He was asked to withdraw his people. Sri Das agreed to this, the police were withdrawn simultaneously.¹⁵ The political agent agreed to the proposal and next day the decisions were announced to the people. The police and the people left the village simultaneously. The people carrying Sri Das on shoulder marched in a huge procession from Patna to Ayodhya. It was an important milestone in the history of Prajamandal which was launched by the people of Nilgiri under the leadership of Banamali Das. The enthusiasm knew no bounds. The news spread like a wild fire but the glory of Sri Das roused envy among a few leaders of Prajamandal. But they could not wipe out the impression of the people from their minds. Durbar administration took advantage of the absence of the political agent who left for his headquarters at Sambalpur and again started the arbitrary rule.

‘Patna’ victory created an authority parallel to that of the Raja among the people. Secondly it created a very little festival ground for spread of Prajamandal organization at the grass roots level in the villages. Banamali Das and few youth closed to him got themselves fully engaged in their talk.¹⁶

Raja panicky at the rapid of the organization moved out of the palace to win over the tribal to his side. He camped at ‘Darkholi’ Dak Bungalow in 1939 to motivate the tribal for his favour. The Raja pleaded to the tribal leader, Sandhia Sing that the clean castes looted their property. All the forest, hill, fields were of the tribal for time immemorial. The clean castes coming from the Mogulbandi occupied their lands, forest. He told them to arise and taught them lessons. As secretary of the Prajamandal, Banamali Das came to know the trick of the Raja. Prajamandal gave a call to boycott Raja at Darkholi. He was given an opportunity to make the call a success. He camped in a village near Darkholi Bungalow. The boycott was hundred per cent success.¹⁷

Next day while Shri Das taking a stall in village Gohira near to his camp, the police party arrived and arrested him and his cycle driver in 1938. They came on foot all the way from Gohira to Nilgiri. As the news of arrest was spread, people in thousands gathered at Nilgiri town to rescue him from the police custody. But Sri Das forbade them and advised them to meet the president of Prajamandal and advised what to do. Sri Das was kept in police custody that day as the Dewan was not available to remand him to jail custody.¹⁸

Arrest of Banamali Das persuaded the political agent and the collector of Balasore to intervene the matter. Dr. Mahtab was also a party to the negotiations. Mahtab supported Raja’s

claims for 'Bethi' and 'Sikar' on one or two occasions in a year. President wanted that the views of the Prajamandal leaders should be taken. They were conditionally brought to Udayanarayan Birbar's house where the meeting took place. Sri Das was very firm in the meeting not to offer 'Bethi' and Sikar on any condition. Whatsoever there was a voting; Mahtab's proposals were rejected by overwhelming majority.¹⁹ Enraged Mahtab did not take his meal at Birbal's place and drove away to Baleswar to report everything to collector. The collector, however, supported the decision of the workers. Negotiation was ended with a decision to release all the political prisoners immediately. Everything ended happily. Bethi, Sikar, Veti and Magan were abolished. But Dr. Mahtab bore a grudge against Banamali Das for defeating his proposals by vote. He was determined to expel Banamali Das from Prajamandal by hook or by crook. He waited for opportunity.²⁰

Of all the twenty six Gadjat states of Orissa, Dhenkanal and Talcher supported the Prajamandals. Nabakrushna Choudhury and Saranga Dhar Das, the president of All Orissa State peoples' conference gave a clarion call for Satyagraha in Dhenkanal for participation of all workers of different sides. Nilgiri responded the call very enthusiastically. Banamali Das went but did not participate in Satyagraha led by Nabakrushna Choudhury. He stayed with Rabi Ghose at Nuahata camp. Both of them decided to form a action squad to punish the rapist who committed rape on ladies of village 'Kuliana' in Parjang. The squad was formed and under the four command of Banamali Das raided the police camp, seized their guns and asked to them to vacate the village next day. They did that. The gun was returned to them. Shri Das's squad had

its own guns. Dhenkanal Satyagrahi came to a close as the response from outside was not very encouraging. Further Political Agent Bazalagette was murdered at Ranapur in 5th January 1939 and the second world war was imminent. Banamali Das was returned home thereafter.²¹

Banamali Das, the secretary of the Prajamandal converted the Prajamandal in scientific and democratic manner. He circulated a notice in almost all the villages regarding the election of the office bearers of Prajamandal on 23rd September 1939. The elected one hundred fifty members would elect the president who would remain in chair for a term of one year, the chari paisa members were instructed to prevent the entry of scoundrels in the party election.²²

The second World War broke out in September 1939 and the Prajamandal initiated its agitational activities to a halt for the time being. Banamali Das, the secretary of the Nilgiri Prajamandal assured the president Eastern states agency to help the British Government with men and money in war. So the agitation between Banamali Das and the Prajamandal were strained. He was arrested on the 20 October 1939 under the Defence of India Act by the Durbar delivering an objectionable speech at Patpur while observing Gandhi Jayanti and sent to Nilgiri Jail. So the election of the Prajamandal was suspended. After three months he was released from the Jail.²³

In January 1940 an annual session of the Prajamandal was convened at Sajangarh under the presidentship of Kailash Chandra Mohanty. Surendra Nath Diwedy, the leader of the congress socialist joined that meeting as the chief guest. Shri Kailash Chandra Mohanty and Banamali Das were again elected as president and the secretary of the Prajamandal respectively.

Rivalry in leadership was a potent factor in the Prajamandal from the very beginning of the establishment. A rightist group with congress ideology under the guidance of Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab and his followers Kailash Chandra Mohanty, Udayanath Birabara and Suryamani Bhattacharya were the chief force in the Prajamandal, the progressive outlook who believed the leftist ideology of Marxian principle was the secretary of Banamali Das, Giridhari Panda, Gokulananda Nayak, Mohini Mohan Bose, Mohan Patra, Sanatan Behera, Mohana Sing and Pranabandhu Agasti.

The latter group of Marxian principle got the two communist papers named 'Krushaka' and 'Agachal'²⁴ from Cuttack published by Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi. They also received the soviet bulletin. They took a house in fair at Kadamsahi and named it "Peasant Association Office". The growing hold of the communist group and their increasing popularity could not be easily tolerated by the bourgeois nationalist like Harekrushna Mahtab and Prajamandal President Kailash Chandra Mohanty. During the national celebration week of 1940, a rally was addressed by the secretary Banamali Das and his slogan was "Na ekbhai, Na ekpai, Samrajyavadviladhai and lalajikabadallena etc." But Kailash Chandra Mohanty informed it to K.B. Memon, the secretary of All India States People Conference (AISPC) that Sri Das was going against the four fold constructive programmes of Gandhi. On June 23, 1939 the police seized the communist booklets and Sri Das was arrested under the section 39 of the Indian Defence Act of 1939. After four days of course, he came out from Jail on bail.²⁵

An executive committee of Prajamandal was summoned by Kailash Chandra Mohanty and Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab. They expelled Banamali

Das from secretaryship and primary membership on the ground of violence activity. Dr. Mahtab advised the working committees to do so because the paper seized was an unlawful document. He was arrested at Cuttack in 1940 and was made an accused in communist conspiracy case which was being tried inside Cuttack jail. In the Jail he read the subjects of Economics, Philosophy, Political Science and Hindi literature. Shri Das stayed in Cuttack jail for one year six months. Then he was transferred to Angul Jail in 1941. From there Shri Das was released in 1942. Hence forward he became an organizer and leader of the communist party in Nilgiri. The first Rally under the Red Flag was held on the 1st May 1942 – May day. Nandini Satapathy addressed to the rally attended by large number of ladies.²⁶

On August 9th 1942 leaders of the congress were sent to the Jails. Throughout India there was sweeping round ups of the patriotic element. At Nilgiri this round up took place on 12th August Sri Das though warranted could not be arrested as he was at Cuttack. The Raja under the mighty colonial master A.N. Michel conducted the dark operation in Nilgiri. In the police encounter, Raghu Naik of Godisula and Ganga Malik of Chasulikula were shot dead and many persons were wounded. A reign of terror prevailed in the state and the whole state looked like a cremation ground. Even then he was warranted on instruction of the state party, he avoided arrest and mobilized people against British tactics to demoralise the people and forcible collection of war funds.²⁷

While addressing a meeting of the students at Bhadrak in 1942, Banamali Das was arrested. Bhadrak Jail was fulfilled at that time by the freedom fighters. Harekrushna Mahtab building at Bhadrak was converted to a camp Jail. But

Banamali Das and Gandhian leader Shri Gokulananda Mohanty were transferred to Balasore jail. Sri Das was detained under Defence of India Rules.²⁸

He was released from the jail after the war was over in September 1945. At Balasore railway station he met Prajamandal President Kailash Chandra Mohanty to welcome him, who was released simultaneously from Bolangir jail. No one in the Prajamandal had gone to welcome him. By the commands of Banamali, thousands and thousands of communists went to Balasore railway station to welcome him. Banamali came running ahead of Kailash Mohanty and organised reception in his honour at Shri Das's house. Kailash Babu seemed repentant for expulsion of Sri Das in 1940. He said "Banamali is my political heir."²⁹

After Second World War Atli, leader of the labour Party in England became the Prime-Minister of England. He assured to give Independence. This assurance marked a significant position in India. The days of Independence were drawing nearer. The Raja of Nilgiri wanted to swim in the troubled water. He supported the Adivasis, tribals and choosed Sandhya Sing as the leader of the Royalists. He was helped by the ruffin Dhunda Sing. The Raja Nilgiri supported all possible help to the royalist group or Rajabhaktas. They started a terrorist movements, demolished the house of the communist, Prajamandal leaders, moved from place to place to loot the paddy crops. The state police remained indifferent to the acts of terrorism and aggression by the loyalists.³⁰ To protect the people of Nilgiri from the internal dangers, the secretary of the communist leader Banamali Das came forward to resist the people. Different training centres were opened. He formed a Muktisena, gave training

to the party leaders. A training centre of Muktisena opened at Kuldia Banasima. In order to face the royalists he received military training from Dacca and gained direct experience. He also made a hand bomb named Kocktail which was less harmful with high sound. The members of the communist parties got training from the Mendhasala camp at Puri District. Bipul Choudhuri, retired military officer from Assam became the commander of the training centre of the Mendhasala. Iswar Das, Gobinda Sing, Upendra Pasa of Nilgiri joined the training camp at Puri. When the attack of the Rajabhaktas under the leadership of Sandhya Sing was beyond control, the Muktisena fought against the Rajabhaktas or loyalists. In Nov.12, 1947 the militant groups of the Odisha like Baishnav Pattanaik of Dhenkanal, Nanda Krishore Pattanaik of Athagarha, Iswar Das of Nilgiri, Harihara Das of Asika, Sayad Abdul Kadar of Bhadrak, Benugopal Roy of Bhadrak, Gopinath Brahmachari of Puri under the commander of Bipul Choudhuri entered into Nilgiri through Balasore. A front war was held. Malati Choudhury, the congress lady leader presented arifoil to the armed communist leaders in order to strengthen the courage of the people. Gopinath Brahmachari wounded by the arrow of the tribals. He was shifted to camp. Sudarshan Rout was rescued from a tank. Finding no other alternative, the loyalists were retreated. Sandhya Sing was caught red handed.³¹

The government of Odisha which was watching the situation at Nilgiri intervned in 13th November 1947, authorized by the central Govt. of India. The police of the Eastern state federation stood helpless to the Rajas. On 14th November 1947, Raja Kishore Chandra Mardaraj Harichandan handed over the administration of the Nilgiri to Dominion Govt by putting his signature

with seal of snake and flower. The manager of the state provided welcome relief to the people of Nilgiri. Nilgiri was administered as an occupied territory of Govt. of Orissa till 1st January 1948 when the occupation was legalized by the merger of all the Garjats of Orissa with the province.

Banamali Das was the vanguard of the Prajamandal Movement and he was throughout a rebel from 1930 to 1938. The whole period was an era of struggle against injustice of Nilgiri king protected by the colonial rules. He had never compromised either with the opposition leaders the congress leadership or unethical points relating to people's issues. He never aspired for any easy higher position. A genuine leader of the people of Nilgiri, he took the vanguardship under the organization of communist party since 1938.³²

After the annexation of Nilgiri to Dominion Govt. on 1st Jan 1948, Banamali Das did not lead his life peacefully. He was arrested on February 1948 from his house by PD Act. He was imprisoned at Nilgiri jail. But he jumped from the Nilgiri jail after two months by the help of the Assistant jailer Bagha Murmu.

In 1957 Banamali Das came again to the picture of Nilgiri. He arranged All Odisha peasant conference at Nilgiri from 4th April to 5th April in 1957 which was inaugurated by Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the president of All India Peasants' Association.

It was presided by Banamali Das, the peasant conference demanded sealing law against lands of the rich, Zamidars and the kings. This peasant conference demanded that the Government should enclose the five thousand acres of land of Salvatachhak of Balangir king, Mahisi Gotha and coast stretch of cultivated land Kalarapala of Nilgiri king, thousands and

thousands acres land of the king of Dhenkanal and distributed these lands among the landless peasants. This conference grew the popularity of Shri Das from the grass-root level. He proved the way for entry to the Odisha Legislative Assembly. During Indo-China war in 1962, the Chinese invasion was serious threaten to the unity of communist party. The pro Peking wing had a hard time defending itself. Outside the leftists had been defiant in their attitude. The rightists were pro-moscow. They had been active on the trade union front and did not recognize parliamentary technics. The leftists were more proletarian in character and were still wedded to the notion of an armed struggle. Banamali Das condemned the rightists as revisionists and he was arrested and put in the Balasore Jail.

In 1964 the All India communist party which was founded in September 1924 at the initiative of Satyavhka of Uttar Pradesh was divided into two factions on the basis of difference relating to ideological and strategic stand of Communist in India. Jyoti Basu of Bengal, Sundaraya of Andhra Pradesh and Nambudipad of Kerala declared CPIM in 1964 at Tabali in Andhra Pradesh. Banamali Das was the first comrades from Orissa attended the Tabali conference and influenced by the ideology of these persons. Returning to Orissa he formed a CPIM party and arranged a meeting at Sahadevkhunta of Balasore in 1964. It was presided by Promod Dasgupta, the state secretary of West Bengal. The prominent figures like Laxman Patanaik of Khurda, Jagannath Mishra of Paralakhemundi, Shivaji Patanaik of Khurda were attended the meeting. So that Banamali Das became the first CPIM secretary in Orissa.³³

In 1967 he was the first CPIM MLA in Orissa Legislative Assembly. In 1971 he was again

elected when Orissa was governed by two Chief Ministers named Biswanath Das from 3rd.April , 1971 to 14th June 1972 and Nandini Satpathy from 14th.June 1972 to 3rd. March 1973. In 1974 he was elected to Orissa Legislative Assembly for the last time under CPIM banner when Orissa was governed by the Chief Minister Nandini Satapathy. During the time of Satapathy Land Reform was strictly promulgated. Sri Das took part in the discussions like social reforms, dowry Act, and the remuneration to the old and the disabled.

There were frequent flood at Rajnagar, Marshaghai, Paradip and Chandbali. Banamali Das along with party members visited those areas and distributed relief from village to village. He raised a question in the Orissa Legislative Assembly for the permanent solution of the flood.

In 1973 there was terrible famine in Nilgiri sub-division. It became acute. In 1974 due to the no rainfall, cultivation came to standstill. The misery of the people knew no bounds and the echo of the great famine was heard at Nilgiri sub-division. Banamali Das drew the attention of the Govt. of Orissa in Legislative Assembly and demanded the test relief. The Govt. did not pay any heed. Banamali along with the active party members started movements in front of the Blocks. At last Rabindra Mohan Senapati, the then collector of Balasore provided relief to the famine stricken families. He demanded work instead of food in Odisha Legislative Assembly.³⁴

Banamali Das was a reputed writer and wrote a number of books both Odia and English. The un published books are 'Peace against war', "Prosperity against poverty" and "Against communalism for Fraternity" in English. His unpublished auto-biography "Bud-Bud Ra Kahani" and his published poem "Godhulilagana

bear the literary talents and wisdom of Sri Banamali Das.³⁵ He was also the editor of the 'Samyabadi' from 1969 to 1982 published from the party office Cuttack. Banamali Das was not of pessimistic. He believed the Radha Krishna religion and went to Radha Krishna temple everyday, situated near the royal palace of Nilgiri. Towards the fag end of his life he was influenced by Manoj Das, famous Odia writer who was the firm believer of Sree Maa Aurobindo. He had been joining Aurobinda Pathachakra of Nilgiri since 1992.

He had his heart surgery operation in Hyderabad with the sole responsibility of the then Chief Minister Biju Pattnaik. In 2005 it was detected in SSKM Hospital of Kolkata, that he had been suffering from protest cancer. At last he passed away on 2015 Feb. 2007. With his death the mother Nilgiri lost a revolutionary man, staunch communist leader and front line politician in Odisha Legislative Assembly.³⁶

His life was a open notebook. Like Madhusudan Das of Odisha, his life tale was the half century of history in Odisha in general and Nilgiri in particular. In about half century (1938-1985) he dominated the political and revolutionary scenario of Nilgiri soil. He dedicated his life for the cause of the poor inhabitant, downtrodden, half fed masses of Nilgiri with zeal and honour. Such a man can not die, for they live in their achievement.

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