

Formation of Orissa as a Separate Province

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The Hindu kingdom of Orissa lost its complete political identity after the demise of the last Kings Mukunda Dev. The rules of the Afghans, the Mughals, the Naib-Nazims, the Marathas brought further instability and territorial vivisection. Further under the British rule three major political divisions came up. i.e, territories north of Chilika lake, territories south of Chilika Lake, and the western hilly tracts. Gradually these divisions passed under different situations. Finally, it took shape under the administrations i.e., Bengal Presidency, Madras Presidency and the Central Provinces as per the exigencies of the time without any consideration of race, language and culture. As a result the Oriya people in these administration became a negligible minority.

Following, the British occupation of Orissa the land was subjected to administrative negligence, mis-management excessive taxation, and oppressive of the corrupt officials, which brought Economic devastation of the country, and caused natural calamities i.e., famines and floods. As a result the Oriyas lost their own identity and culture. In the later part of the 19th century, however a big step was undertaken to strengthen the Oriya language and culture against Bengali, Telugu, and Hindi Chauvinism. H.H. Risley, Secretary to Government of India in 1903-05 once observed: "When the people speaking a distinct language were distributed over areas too

small to constitute a substantial portion of a province they were neglected." After this statement the leaders of the Oriya Movement got further encouraged and demanded a separate political identity of their own. Later on it could possible due to the rise of middle class intelligentsia and the growth of Mass Media, like press, and the development of new Science and Technology.

The local newspapers like, the *Utkal Dipika* of Cuttack, *Prajabandhu* of Rambha, and the *Sambalpur Hitaisini* of Bamara played an important role to create the national consciousness among the Oriyas under the towering personalities of Shyamasundar Rajguru of Paralakhemundi, Nilamani Vidyaratna of Bamara, Gaurisankar Roy of Cuttack. Soon after 1866, education made good progress in Orissa. The advancement of education introduced the Oriyas to western knowledge to seek higher posts in administration.

The Oriya intelligentsia became socially and politically conscious. The elite class formed the cream layer of the society for the growth of political and social consciousness among the people. They took up the cause of the Oriyas and raised the cry, Orissa for Oriyas.

The language controversy surfaced to substitute Bengali for Oriya as medium with a series

of attacks and counter-attacks involving Oriya vrs Bengali in Cuttack, Balasore, Sambalpur and Ganjam. To substitute Bengali, Hindi, Telugu in place of Oriya was a mean attempt indeed.

Rajendra Lal Mitra suggested, "Even as a race, the Oriya's were not different from the Bengalis. In his opinion Oriya language was merely an offshoot of Bengali. Kantichandra Bhattacharya, a teacher of Balasore Zilla school supported the opinion of R.L Mitra and brought out a booklet suggestesting "*Odia Ekti Swatantra Bhasa Naye*".

In the year 1876 Raja Shyamananda De, of Balasore, Babu Bichitrananda Das of Jaipur and Raja Baikunthanath De of Balasore submitted a memorandum to Lord Curzon for the amalgamation of all Oriya speaking tracts of Madras, Bengal, and the Central Provinces. The Utkal Sabha demanded for fixation of the territorial limits where the Oriyas would be spoken under one administration. But the attempt failed due to Govt. Resolution No.237 dated 15th January. Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna, the editor of *Sambalpur Hitaisini* called upon the people to protest against this unjust order of the Govt. through his poems and powerful writings.

During 1895-1905 the *Odia* and *Navasambad* advocated the merger of Ganjam, Ghumsar, Jaypore and other princely states of South, Sambalpur and the other adjacent states of Bamara, Bilaspur, Patnas, Sonpore, Raipur and other princely states in west, Chaibasa and Singhbhumi, stretching from the Suvarnarekha to Tamluk in the north with the Orissa Division. There by a long cherished desire of the people to be united with their own race could be fulfilled.

The creation of Orissa, as a separate province was taken up by a series of administrative

Committees and Govt Resolutions. In 1919, the Montague Chemsford reforms gave a proposal for granting of the constitutional and provincial autonomy to the Oriya speaking tracts. No wonder the Montague-Chemsford recommendation proved still-born. Besides, the Sinha Resolution on 20th Feb. 1920, proposed the resolution in the council "This council recommends to the Governor- General in Council that a mixed committee of officials and non-officials be appointed to formulate a scheme for the amalgamation of the Oriya- speaking tracts at present controlled by the Governments of Madras, Bengal and the Central Provinces with existing Orissa Division of the Province of Bihar and Orissa."

To strengthen the Sinha Proposal the Government of India appointed a Commission consisting of C.H Phillip and A.C. Duff in 1924.

The Commission visited the places like Vizagpattam, Paralakhemundi, Mandasa, Icchapuram, Chikiti, Sorada, Khalikote, Barahampur, Rambha in order to ascertain the desire and opinion of the people and submitted to the Govt. that, "There is a genuine and long standing deep-seated desire on the part of the educated Oriya classes of the Oriya speaking tracts to amalgamate with Orissa under one administration"

On behalf of the Oriya speaking people, Krishna Chandra Gajapati, the Maharaj of Paralakhemundi, went to London to attend the Round Table Conference and presented a Memorandum in favour of creating the separate state of Orissa. The Govt. of India announced in their Resolution No. F.12. VI-31 of 18th September 1931, the formation of a Boundary Commission under Samuel O' Donnell "to examine and report on administrative, financial

and other consequences of setting up a separate administration and demarcate the boundaries of the proposed Orissa province. The Commission visited places and record 410 witnesses at Jamsedpur, Chaibasa, Sambalpur, Raipur, Midnapur, Gopalpur, Waltair, Kakinada, and Cuttack.

In determining the boundaries they examined several factors like, language, race, geographical position and the economic interests. The Orissa province was to include Orissa Division, Angul, Padmapur, Khariar, Vizagpattam agency tracts. This proposal was recommended by the Joint Select Committee under the leadership of Lord Linithgow. As per this Committee Berhampur town, Jeypore estate Report, about 30% of Paralakhemendi state including Paralakhimendi town, Jalantara were included in the proposed Orissa province.

Thus after a long period of struggle the Oriya people got re-united after centuries of political separation. On 1st April 1936, the new province of Orissa came into existence on linguistic basis during the British rule in India with Sir Jhon Austin Hubbak as the first Governor. A long cherished dream of Oriya people and their leaders like Madhubabu came true.

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