



Freedom Struggle in Ghens (Bargarh)

Er. Nirakar Mahalik

Ghens (Bargarh)'s contribution had a good effect on the course of India's struggle of Independence. In 1803 while Britishers occupied Orissa, the brave Oriya Paikas vehemently opposed under the leadership of Jayee Rajguru. In 1817 eminent Oriya leader Baxi Jagabandhu rose into rebellion which is named as first struggle of Independence. Again in 1837-64 struggle for freedom started by Veer Surendra Sai of Samblapur in the western part of Orissa under the support of local zamindars and Gountias against the British. Zamindar of Ghens in Bargarh district vehemently supported the cause of Surendra Sai and rose in revolt.

Revolt of Surendra Sai started vigorously when Narayan Singh, an old and incapable scion of Barpali zamindar family was elevated the king of Sambalpur by the Britishers in 1833 A.D. The struggle was taken to every corners of Sambalpur kingdom and other neighbouring states. Madho Singh of Ghens and other zamindars were participated in the movement. Surendra Sai and his brother Udanta Sai and uncle Balabhadra were arrested in 1840 A.D. by the British and sent to Hazaribagh zail in Bihar.

The second phase of revolution started after May 10th 1857 with the outbreak of sepoy mutiny in India. The mutineers attacked Hazaribag jail and released all the inmates. Surendra Sai with his brother Udanta Sai was also released on 30th July 1957 A.D.

Surendra Sai reached Khinda, his native village and again remained in custody at Sambalpur. Again he fled from Sambalpur on 31st October 1857 for his second phase of revolt. He

fought against the Britishers tooth and nail along with zamindars of Ghens and others. Britishers arrested Madho Singh and on August 25th 1858 Ghens zamindary was forefeited to Britishers. Lastly he was hanged in the same year 1858.

After the death of Madho Singh of Ghens, his three sons Hatee Singh, Kunjal Singh and Bairi Singh rose in revolt vigorously along with other zamindars of Lakhapur, Kalabira, Kodabaga, Bheden, Kharsal, Mandomahul, Pahadsirigida, Patakulunda, Loisingha and other zamindars of Raigarh and Bargarh.

At that time there were three important strategic points for communication to reach Sambalpur from outside. They are Badapati pass, Jharghati pass and Singhoda pass. All zamindars alongwith brothers of Surendra Sai cordoned Sambalpur from all sides. Ghens brothers Hatee Singh, Kunjal Singh and Bairi Singh alongwith others were in charge of Singhodn Ghati. This ghati is a link between Nagapur to Sambalpur along the river and land route. It is nearer to Lahurachoti Sohela in Bargarh District. It is called three sons by Madho Singh of Ghens - Hatee Singh, Kunjal Singh and Bairi Singh were the terror in Singhoda Ghati, even the local chief of that area who supported British could not dare to pass through that Ghati.

In the meantime Britishers took severe action and attacked Singhoda Ghati. During February Captain Shakespeare attacked that Ghati with several Madras Troops alongwith cavalry and armoured force. They cordoned Singhoda Ghati from four sides and fired to hill



top. Ghens zamindar Hatee Singh was the captain of revolutionary forces there. They hid themselves inside the artificial stone trenches except eleven supporters who could not resist the fire and ultimately died there. After the fire ceased revolutionary soldiers managed to escape to near-by hill. On the way Hatee Singh became senseless due to strike of a stone spill from unknown angles. Other soldiers managed to hide Hatee Singh in a cave where he was nursed until he came to sense. British soldiers searched Singhoda Ghati thoroughly but could not find any trace of human presence.

After this incident Surendra Sai selected Kunjal Singh and Bairi Singh, the two brothers of Hatee Singh to be in charge of Singhoda ghati. But Britishers took it seriously. They kept permanent army in three strategic Ghatis, attacked Kharsal fort in 1860 and hanged the zamindar. Bheden zamindar met his death during a fight but Kolabira zamindar was hanged. Bargarh zamindary was forfeited and attached at Raigarh in M.P.

There was a small zamindary named Deori, a cluster of 15 villages in Raipur District contiguous to Ghens zamindary. Narayan Singh was the zamindar there. Sonakhan zamindary with Maharaja Sai zamindar was adjacent to Deori. Maharaja Sai, Binjhal by caste was nephew of Narayan Singh. In 1857 revolt Narayan Singh was hanged by the British due to the help rendered by Maharaja Sai to the British. Govinda Singh, son of Narayan was also arrested and transported to Nagapur jail. He was released in July 1859. Sonakhan Zamindary was attached to Deori temporarily. At that time Surendra Sai with Kunjal Singh and others fled to Khariar due to strong action taken by the British in Sambalpur region.

One day Govind Singh rendered help from Surendra Sai to kill his father's enemy Maharaja Sai. Surendra Sai sent 120 revolutionary force with Kunjal Singh of Ghens as leader. On July 16th 1860, Kunjal Singh, Govind Singh and Hatee Singh with others attacked the zamindar of Deori and murdered him. They took two

daughters of Maharaja Sai in to custody. They all returned to Khariar after attack. Nagapur commissioner declared Rs.500 and Rs.250 for Govinda Singh and Kunjal Singh respectively, who could catch and handover them in person. Kunjal Singh happened to be the father-in-law of Govinda Singh. Surendra Sai with his revolutionary forces remained in Kalahandi in Bindra - Nuagarh area till they surrendered.

Major Impey joined as Deputy Commissioner, Sambalpur in April 1861. Reviewing the situation he declared the policy of British amnesty in 1861. Accordingly Mitrabhanu Sai, son of Surendra Sai, with his uncle Udanta Sai and Dhruva surrendered in 1862. Hatee Singh of Ghens also surrendered after constant persuasion from Udanta Sai, brother of Surendra Sai. His Ghens Zamindary again returned to him. Lastly Veer Surendra Sai surrendered on 16th May 1862. But Kunjal Singh did not surrender.

Britishers came to know that Kunjal Singh was staying at Badmal, a village near the foot of a nearest hill (where now Talkhol Minor Irrigation Project was constructed) about 5 km from Ghens. On 7th March 1864 Lieutenant Beril and Lieutenant Boie of British force came to Badmal for search of Kunjal Singh but he left the place and proceeded towards Talkhol forest before they reached the village. After this incident Hatee Singh, Kunjal Singh and Bairi Singh were arrested. Hatee Singh was sentenced to transportation for life imprisonment at Andaman, Kunjal Singh and Bairi Singh were sentenced to death.

Veer Surendra Sai and Ghens Zamindars alongwith others fought an unequal battle in the most adverse circumstances for the urge of freedom. It was the spirit to preserve the rights and interest of the then leaders of the community which will continue in this country for ages to come.

Er. Nirakar Mahalik lives at N1/82, IRC Village, Bhubaneswar-15