

Formation of Separate Orissa Province : A Bird's Eye View

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Orissa lost its independence in 1568 A.D. after the sorrowful defeat and sad assassination of last Hindu King Mukunda Harichandan Dev in the battle field of Gohira Tikiri. In course of time Orissa was ruled by Muslims, Marathas and was lastly occupied by the Britishers in 1803 A.D. During the British rule the famous Paik Rebellion of Khurda erupted in the year 1817 which gave a big jolt to the very root of British administration. Thus out of sheer revenge, the British rulers targeted to ruin and devastate the very existence of heroic Oriya race. With a calculated move the Britishers annexed the coastal belt of Orissa with Bengal Presidency, the Southern part with Madras Presidency and the western part with Central Province as a result of which the Oriya speaking tracts were scattered and the Oriyas were segregated from each other. Due to the merger of different parts of Orissa with the neighbouring provinces like Bengal, Bihar, Madras and Madhya Pradesh, the Oriyas were compelled to suffer humiliation in the cultural, administrative and socio-economic field.

But in the midst of 19th century there was a sea change in the socio-political arena of Orissa due to spread of English education and publication of Oriya newspapers, the Oriyas became well aware regarding their rights. A new Oriya intellectual society was created in course of time,

who tried hard for the all round development of Orissa through the medium of newspapers, literatures and meetings. For protecting the interest of the common people many social, cultural and religious organisations sprang up rapidly. The inhabitants of Ganjam and Sambalpur started protest meetings and agitations for the unification of Oriya speaking tracts. They became successful in reintroducing the Oriya language at the government level in the year 1890 and 1901 respectively.

The emergence of Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das in socio-political arena of Orissa created new vistas and vigour in the minds of Oriya youngmen. Madhusudan Das inculcated patriotism, Oriya nationalism in their hearts and minds.

In the year 1903 "Ganjam Jatiya Samiti" was formed at Rambha and its first session was inaugurated at Bramhapur where resolutions were passed regarding the all round development of Orissa. This session was attended by Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das and Vyasakabi Fakirmohan Senapati. The success of "Ganjam Jatiya Samiti" meeting inspired Madhu Babu and as a result of which an organisation namely "Utkal Sammilani" was formed to solve different problems of Oriyas. The first session of "Utkal

Sammilani" commenced at Idga Padia of Cuttack on 30th December 1903. Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo, the king of Mayurbhanj presided over the meeting. This session of Utkal Sammilani was attended by Gadjat kings, zamindars, Govt. employees, lawyers and students where Oriya natinoalism took its form. Later on the leaders of "Utkal Sammilani" had drawn the attention of British Government regarding various problems through seminars, symposia, youth sessions and general meetings.

Instead of pointing out the defects of British rule Madhubabu was determined to fulfill the hopes of Oriyas keepig good terms with the Englishmen. Social reformation, women emancipation, eradication of untouchability, development of farmers and agriculture, unification of Oriya speaking tracts and above all creation of Oriya nationalism was the goal and motto of "Utkal Sammilani". Through Oriya newspapers "Asha", "Utkal Dipika", "Prajabandhu" and English newspaper "The Oriya" attention of British rulers was drawn regarding the various demands of Oriyas. In different annual sessions of "Utkal Sammilani", resolutions passed regarding unification of Oriya speaking regions which were sent to British rulers often yielded results. Due to the demands of Oriyas Sambalpur was merged with Orissa division in 1905 A.D. by the British Government.

In the year 1912 the Bihar-Orissa Province was formed by the British Government. In 1914 A.D. the annual session of "Utkal Sammilani" was held at Paralakhemundi under the presidentship of Bikaram Dev Burma, the king of Jeypore. For the first time Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, the king of Paralakhemundi opined in this annual session of "Utkal Sammilani" regarding the formation of a separate Orissa Province instead of unification of Oriya speaking tracts.

While on one hand the Raja, Zamindar and common inhabitants of Ganjam were much interested for merger of Ganjam with Orissa division, the Telegu local leader of Ganjam and his supporter Brundaban Patra (an Oriya) were trying their level best against the merger of Oriya speaking tracts with Orissa division. Further the Telegus of Ghumusar and Buguda had agitated against the amalgamation of Oriya speaking regions with Orissa division. The Oriya weekly "Asha" had strongly argued in favour of formation of a separate Orissa Province basing on Oriya speaking tracts. Viceroy Lord Curzon and Lord Hardinge also supported for formation of a separate Orissa Province based on Oriya language speaking people. But on the other hand, Patabhi Sitarammaya, the editor of "Matrubhumi" (an English magazine published from Masalipattam) had argued against the merger of Oriya speaking tracts with Orissa division which were under the jurisdiction of Madras Presidency in its November 1924 edition.

In 1924 Phillip-Duff Committee was formed in which the British Commissioner and political agent Mr. C.L. Phillips and Collector Mr. A.C. Duff were members. While the aforesaid committee was touring Ganjam, the inhabitants of that locality strongly demanded through a memorandum for merger of Ganjam, Jeypore and Visakhapatnam with Orissa division. Starting the investigation since the month of October, 1924, the Phillip Duff Committee completed the preparation of its final report regarding the unification of Oriya speaking tracts in the month of December 1924. This Committee had opined in favour of merger of Oriya speaking tracts with Orissa division which were under the Madras Presidency. In 1927, presenting the resolution (regarding the unification of Oriya speaking tracts) in Central Council Pandit Nilakantha Das said that "for formation of a separate Orissa province the

united efforts of Oriyas was badly necessary." (19th February 1927, "Utkal Dipika")

In 1928, Sir John Simon came to India as the chief of seven members Parliamentary Commission for investigating the constitutional reformation system. Indian National Congress called on the people of India to boycott the Simon Commission as there was not a single Indian member included in that Commission. Responding to the call the Congress workers staged protest meetings and processions showing black flags and placards shouting "Simon Go Back" in every nook and corner of India.

But without caring the call of Indian National Congress Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das greeted and paid large ovation to Simon Commission at Patna Railway station on behalf of "Utkal Sammilani" and handed over a memorandum to the Commission regarding the formation of a separate Orissa Province. Simon Commission formed a sub-committee appointing C.R. Atlee as its Chairman to look into the matter. The sub-committee recommended in favour of formation of a separate Orissa Province.

Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati went to London in 1930 with a view to attending the Round Table Conference. He could not be able to influence the British authority through a leaflet containing "The Oriyas : their needs and reasons for a separate Orissa Province." The British authority appointed a boundary select committee which recommended in its report in favour of formation of a separate Orissa province in the month of April 1932. As Sir Samuel Hoare through a white paper published on 18th March 1933 had excluded the Oriya speaking tracts of Paralakhemundi, Jeypore and Jalantar from the proposed Orissa Province, a special session of Utkal Sammilani was convened in the month of May 1933 to discuss regarding the

highhandedness of Britishers and it was unanimously resolved in that session to stage peoples movement and protest meetings against the whimsical decision of British Government.

On 11th February 1934 it was resolved in the annual conference of Utkal Sammilani held at Brahmapur that if Jeypore and Paralakhemundi were not included with the proposed Orissa Province, the Oriyas would not accept that Orissa Province."

Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati again proceeded to London leading a group of Oriya representatives in which the Rajasaheb of Khallikote, Mr. Lingaraj Panigrahi, Mr. Bhubanananda Das and Shyam Sundar Das were included. Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati gave a memorandum to the Secretary of State of the joint select committee for merger of Paralakhemundi in the proposed Orissa province. At last a report was published on behalf of the joint select committee which was accepted by the British Parliament.

On 1st April 1936 Orissa became a separate Province due to the peoples demands, movements and agitations as well as for the untiring efforts of Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Bhubanananda Das and many others for long three decades.

The newly formed Orissa consisted of six districts namely Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Sambalpur, Koraput and Ganjam having its capital at Cuttack. Sir John Austin Hubback took oath of office and became the first Governor of Orissa Province.

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