

## History of Separate Province of Orissa

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The formation of Separate Province of Orissa in 1936 on language basis is an important milestone in the history of Indian Union. It had its origin in the movement of the Oriya speaking people clamouring for a separate province on the basis of language for a long time. Orissa was dismembered with the onset of British conquest in 1803. Ganjam and its adjoining Oriya speaking areas south of the Chilika Lake was merged with Madras, Midnapore to Bengal, Singhbhum, Saraikela and Kharasuan was merged with Chhotnagpur Division, Sambalpur and Chhatisgarh feudatory states in the west was merged with Central Province.

Orissa Division of Bengal Province was seriously affected by the Great Famine of 1866. After the Great Famine, growth and development of education and communication, increase in volume of trade, establishment of Printing Press and publication of different Oriya journals paved the way for growth of political consciousness in Orissa. People became aware of the administrative apathy and non-chalant attitude of Government towards them. This ignited the agitational attitude among the Oriya speaking people against the British Government. During this period newspapers played a significant role in highlighting the cause of the Oriyas inhabiting in different provinces. When Lord Northbrook, the

then Governor-General proposed for break-up of Central Province and merge its areas with other Provinces, the Pioneers of Oriya fought for merger of Sambalpur with Orissa. In 1876, Raja Baikunthanath De of Balasore and Bichitrananda Das made a representation to the Government for union of all the Oriya speaking areas under single administration. The people of Ganjam organized meetings and made resolutions for the unification of all the Oriya-speaking tracts. In the Ganjam District, the Oriyas formed an Association called the Ganjam Utkal Hitabadini Sabha. In 1878 Orissa Association was formed under the leadership of Madhusudan Das, Fakir Mohan Senapati and Radhanath Roy. By 1882, Utkal Sabha was formed under the leadership of Madhusudan Das which became a strong and organized political forum of the Oriyas to ventilate their feelings and grievance. On 15<sup>th</sup> December 1902, Raja Baikunthanath De submitted a memorial to Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India for unification of all the Oriya speaking areas.

During early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the natives of Ganjam showed their keenness for merger with Orissa. In a memorial addressed to Lord Curzon, they described themselves as 'a limb separated from the body' and prayed not for patchwork redistribution but that the Government of India will be graciously pleased

to bring together the scattered divisions inhabited by the Oriya speaking people i.e Ganjam in Madras, Sambalpur in the Central Province and Orissa Division in Bengal under Government of Bengal or under any one Government and one University.'

In 1903, first session of the Ganjam Jatiya Samiti Conference was held at Berhampur under the leadership of Harihar Mardaraj, Raja of Khallikote. Nilamani Bidyaratna, the Secretary of the Conference worked relentlessly for the organization. In attending this meeting, Madhusudan could realise that such an organization was necessary at Orissa level. Hence a meeting of Utkal Sabha was held and it was decided to set up Utkal Sammilani or the Utkal Union Conference. Accordingly Utkal Sammilani was formed. In its first meeting held at Cuttack on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1903 which was presided by Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo, a large number of delegates within and outside Orissa attended. Madhusudan was the Secretary of the reception committee. To create awareness among the people for amalgamation of scattered Oriya-speaking tracts and to draw the attention of the erring Government officials to this cause, he organised display of paintings and posters. In one such poster the body of Orissa was seen as divided into several parts and distributed among several provinces.

On Utkal Sammilani Madhusudan has written a poem which has far reaching effects and touching lines of this poem helped in creating unity among Oriyas lying scattered in different Provinces in moribund state. This runs as follows:

*'Ehi Sammilani Jati Prana Sindhu  
Koti Prana Bindu dhare  
Tora Prana Bindu Mishaide Bhai  
Dein padi Sindhu neere'*

Utkal Sammilani was the brain child of Madhusudan. As per the decision taken, a memorandum was submitted to the Government to transfer all the Oriya speaking areas from different provinces to Orissa Division. In course of time, Sambalpur Division was transferred to Orissa Division in 1905. Gangpur and Banai were transferred from Chhotnagpur Division to Orissa and five Oriya States- Patna, Kalahandi, Sonepur, Bamra, Rairakhol were transferred to Orissa from the Central Province.

On 25<sup>th</sup> August 1911, Lord Hardinge, the Governor-General recommended some of the administrative changes. One of such recommendations was creation of a new Province consisting of Bihar and Orissa including Chhotnagpur. This was strongly resented by the Oriya people. The Oriya movement then continued in full speed. In its tenth Session of Utkal Sammilani held at Parlakhemundi in 1914, the Raja of Manjusa said, 'Can you say that I am alive if you cut off my head and keep it at Ranchi, throw my trunk in the Bay of Bengal and keep up my legs in the Madras Hospital? This is the condition of our Utkal Mother who is lying dead being disfigured and separated from her body.' Lord Curzon also felt that 'the interests of the Oriyas have been sacrificed without compensation simply because they are a non-agitating people.' During this period, amalgamation meetings were held at Berhampore, Cuttack, Puri and resolutions were passed to submit memoranda to the Montagu-Chelmsford Commission. The Commission in their report realized the need for an administrative union of the Oriya-speaking people and recommended for a sub-province for Oriyas. In the Act of 1919 to the misfortune of Oriyas, there was no provision for the merger of the Oriya-speaking areas. In 1921, resolutions were tabled in the Legislative Councils of Bihar and Orissa and Madras to effect unification of

the Oriya-speaking areas. On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1921, Biswanath Kar moved the resolution in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council to bring all the Oriya-speaking tracts under one Government.

The Government appointed C.L. Philip and A.C. Duff to make on the spot enquiry regarding the attitude of the Oriya inhabitants of the Madras Presidency towards their merger with Orissa. The Commission gave favourable observation to the Government. A statutory Commission was appointed in 1928 under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon to report on the working of reforms in India. The Oriyas submitted a memorandum to the Commission praying for the creation of a separate Orissa Province. The Commission appointed a subcommittee for Orissa to have a detailed investigation. The Subcommittee with Major Attlee as Chairman consisted of Suhrawardy, Raja of Kanika and Rai Bahadur Laxmidhar Mohanty. It recommended creation of a separate Orissa Province consisting of Orissa Division, Angul, feudatory states of Orissa, some portions of Mohanpur and Gopiballabhapur under the Bengal Presidency, Khariar Estate under the Central Province and Ganjam District under the Madras Presidency. On the basis of this report, the Simon Commission recommended the appointment of a boundary commission for the new Orissa Province.

The Report of the Simon Commission led to the summoning of the Round Table Conference. Sri Krishna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev, the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi who attended the Conference circulated a pamphlet 'The Oriyas, Their need and Reasons for a separate Province.' His efforts yielded results. Before the Third Round Table Conference ended, the Orissa Boundary Commission under the chairmanship of S.P.O' Donnell was appointed to review the boundary line of the proposed Orissa Province. In the lines of recommendations of Joint Select Committee, the Government of India Bill, 1935 was passed by Parliament and the new Province of Orissa was born on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1936 after much hue and cry.

At last the yearlong struggle and indomitable spirit and courage of great leaders resulted in amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts as a Separate Province which had been lying scattered in different Provinces for centuries together.

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