

Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati : The Architect of Modern Odisha

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The Gajapati District in Odisha lies between 18° 46' N and 19° 39' North latitudes and longitudes 83° 48' East. The district of Gajapati comprises one sub-division, three Tahasils and seven Blocks, two Towns, one Municipality, one N.A.C, hundred six Panchayats and 460 inhabited villages. The district is bounded in the North East by the Ganjam district, on the North by the Kandhamal district in the West by the Rayagada district, in the South by Srikakulam, a district of Andhra Pradesh. Now Parlakhemundi is the district Headquarters of the Gajapati district. Parlakhemundi Zamindari estate presently called Gajapati District presents a most colourful historical and cultural panorama, spanning over several centuries since it sprang in to existence as "Prabala Khemundo" later corrupted in to Parlakhemundi means the 'coral headed'. Parlakhemundi was the core and honeycomb of the glorious ancient kingdom of Kalinga known to history from the days before Ashoka and Kharavela (2nd Century B.C). It was extending from the Gangas to beyond Nellore,



whose destinies swirled through the mighty arms of the Gangas, The Gangas, and the Gajapati of Puri from about 6th century. Krusha Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev, one of the real heroes of making the modern Odisha, belongs to the great Ganga dynasty. He was born on 26th April 1892. His father was the king Goura Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev and the mother was Radhamani Devi. He had his early education at home under the direct supervision and guidance of his father and mother. During his early education, Apanna, a reputed teacher and author of many books was his private tutor. Syama Sundar Rajguru, the first Oriya graduate of the then Ganjam district was also his tutor. W. Taylor, the ex-Secretary and manager of the kingdom, had also guided Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Dev during his early education. To his misfortune Krushna Chandra lost his father in 1905, his uncle Padmanava Dev in 1904 and his family teacher Syama Sundar Rajguru in 1909. Anyway, Krushna Chandra received his secondary education in the Parlakhemundi Maharaja's High School. After completion of

matriculation he went to Madras to prosecute his higher studies and joined in the Newington Residential College, an institution of special category to educate the sons of kings and landed aristocrats. Mr. Cameran Morrison and Mr. Dela Hay were appointed as his tutors at Madras. Due to the un-time death of Maharaja Goura Chandra Gajapati, the father, Krushna Chandra was only of 12 years of age, a minor, so the zamindar went to Court of Wards for administration and remained till 1913. On 26th April, 1913 the coinciding birthday of Krushna Chandra, the coronation ceremony was held in a very traditional pomp and exuberance. He became the Raja of Parlakhmundi estate since then.

Parlakhmundi zamindari was one of the eighteen ancient zamindaries of Ganjam. The zamindars of Parlakhmundi, Peda-khemundi and China-khemundi claim descent from the Gajapati kings of Odisha. It is to note that both the Khemundi estates originally belong to Parlakhmundi in the name of Vijaya Nagar and Pratapgiri respectively. In 1835 A.D., the Gajapati Palace was built. Krushna Chandra Gajapati had great wisdom in administering his estate. It was a very critical time for the Odiyas as they remained divided under four divisions such as in Bengal, Bihar, Central Province and the Madras Presidency. He realized that unless the Odiyas are united under one Government there could be no use in crying for their development. Right from his coronation, he had determined to do all possible good to his subjects as well as to unite the Odiyas under one administrative head. He utilized his full time and resources for accomplishment of the ends. Sri Krushna Chandra Gajapati selflessly wanted to awaken and unite the Odiyas, from the date of his coronation he earmarked a substantial amount from his exchequer for the purpose.

He felt disappointed due to the alienation of his own estate Parlakhmundi and also the entire Ganjam district from political Odisha and decided to work for bringing them together. At that time Madhusudan Das, Sri Ramachandra Dev, the Raja of Khallikote and some of the leaders of Odisha, started organising Odiyas to unite together under a banner of Utkal Union Conference. The Utkal Union Conference served the best purpose of infusing a new light basing on nationalistic inspirations in the minds of Odiyas. Harihara Mardaraj, the Raja of Khallikote laid the seed of Utkal Sammilani or (Union Conference) in the Rambha Palace in the year 1902 A.D, which was really working for the awakening of Odiyas. Since 1902, the Utkal Union Conference were organized at different places for proposed Odisha in different times. The important leaders were Madhusudan Das, Ramachandra Bhanja Dev, the Maharaja of Mayurbhanja, the chiefs of Dhenkanal, Keonjhora, Athagarah and Talacher, Sashibhusan Rath, the Raja of Surangi Biswanath Beborita Patnaik and Baikunthanath Dey and many others. On joining of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati after his coronation, the Conference took a separate shape. The tenth session of the Utkal Union Conference was held at Parlakhmundi for two days in December, 1914 under the presidentship of Shri Vikram Dev Varma, who later on became the Maharaja of Jeypore. The Conference was well attended by Odiyas of all Odiya-speaking tracts. The leading personalities of the Conference were Madhusudan Das, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Gopabandhu Dash, Nilamani Vidyaratna, Radhakrushna Das, Babaji, Sashibhusan Ray and Rajas and Rajkumars of Madhupur, Tekilli, Manjusha, Tarala, Kanika and host of others. Krushna Chandra Gajapati being the chief host of the Conference spent more than rupees ten thousand for organizing the Conference.

Madhusudan Das eulogized the Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati for his organizing ability, for the success of the Conference and for his patriotism.

On 28th Jan, 1914 the young Maharaja married the princess Nalini Devi, the daughter of Raja of Kharsuan, Mahendra Narayan Singh Deo. During the First World War in 1916, he was made the Honorary Second Lieutenant of His Majesty's Indian Land Forces and was promoted to the rank of a Captain subsequently. In 1918, the title of 'Raja Sahab' was conferred upon him and was made hereditary in 1922. He was the recipient of a rare Sanand in 1920 from the then Viceroy and Governor General of India, in recognition of his services rendered to the Indian Army during the Great War and as a mark of approbation. The title of 'Maharaja' again was awarded to him, as a personal distinction by H.E. Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy and Governor General of India, in the year 1936. He was a member of the Royal commission on Agriculture under the chairmanship of H.E. Lord Linlithgow. He was also a member of Madras legislative Council. Honorary Doctorates were awarded to him by the Utkal and Berhampur Universities. The prestigious knighthood award of K.C.I.E. was also conferred on him by His Majesty, the king of England. He was one among the founding fathers of Indian Constitution, being a member of Constituent Assembly of India as well. His contribution to horse-racing and his encouragement for horse breeding in India are notable. He was the proud owner of the celebrated and champion English race-horse, Rock of Gibraltar and the famed Indian-bred, Balchand, the winner of the Indian Derby in 1957, to name just a few. He was a senior member of the leading Race clubs as well as social clubs in the country.

On the demands made by Utkal Union Conferences, the British Government appointed

Philip Duff Committee for enquiring on the Oriya speaking tracts for unification in 1924. On 2^d Nov, 1924, the Committee headed by Mr. C.L. Phillip, the then Political Agent of Orissa State and Mr. A.C. Duff, the then collector of Vizagapatnam visited Vizagapatanam and Ganjam, and met the Raja of Parlakhemundi and all other landlords of Ganjam district, for a detailed enquiry. After the enquiry, the Committee came to the conclusion that Odiya speaking areas of Madras including Ganjam Agency and Vizagapatnam Agency should be amalgamated with Odisha. The Committee members were of the opinion that Mandasa, Tarala, Tekkali, Budarsingh, Jalantar and Parlakhemundi estates of Ganjam district should form a part in Orissa. Krushna Chandra Gajapati had plunged in to the Odia movement by organizing popular opinion, and had convinced the Philip Duff Committee of the desire of the people of Ganjam to merge with Odisha. In the face of stiff national protest against the Simon Commission, Krushna Chandra Gajapati ventured to open dialogue with the Commission and made a special appeal at the Commission for the creation of a separate state for Orissa. The members of Simon Commission were so much impressed with the claim of Odisha and so appointed a sub-committee headed by Major Atlee to look after. Accordingly, the report of Simon Commission published on 27th May, 1930 with the recommendations of making a separate province, in 1930, Krushna Chandra Gajapati contested the election of Madras Legislative Assembly from the Ganjam Constituency and declared elected. He also became sole leader of Landholder's Association of Madras. He represented Odisha in the 1st Round Table Conference in London and placed the demand for a separate Orissa Province on 12th Nov, 1930 and thus conference had its sittings up to 19th Jan, 1931. The Government of India

appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir S.P.O' Donnell, for the determination of boundary of Orissa Province on 18th Sept, 1931. Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati was included in the team for Odisha among others to guard the work. The Boundary Committee of O' Donnell received a memorandum from the Utkal Union Conference and also from various other local Associations. The Committee recommended the creation of Odisha State and this was felt possible only by the endeavour of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati. Though the report of the Committee favoured a separate state for Odisha but to our misfortune it excluded Parlakhemundi, Midnapur and Singhbhumi areas. Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati mobilised all forces again to counteract the recommendations of exclusion. In this context, there was an emergency meeting of Utkal Union Conference held at Berhampur on 21st Aug, 1932 and a committee was constituted under the leadership of Krushna Chandra Gajapati to meet the Viceroy on delegation on 17th Sept, 1932, a Committee led by Krushna Chandra Gajapati met the Viceroy Lord Willingdon at Simla for the creation of a Odia Province on 17th Nov, 1932 Raja Ramchandra Mardaraj of Khallikote estate with his Secretary again went to attend the Round Table Conference which took place during the period from Nov, 17th to Dec, 24th, 1932. Our Krushna Chandra Gajapati sent a telegram to Raja Ramchandra Mardaraj to put-forth the demand for inclusion of Parlakhemundi in the proposed province. Again on 12th Jan, 1933, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati participated in the Third Round Table Conference in London and stressed for the separate province after taking in to all the Odia speaking areas in consideration. On 17th March, 1933, a White Paper was published for the creation of the new province but the estates of Parlakhemundi and Jeypore

were not included in the said province. Following this along with other leaders for amalgamation Maharaja was greatly disappointed and immediately called the 23rd Session of Utkal Union Conference to defend and in the Conference, passed a resolution for integration of all the Odia speaking areas under the presidentship of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati. Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, heading a seven member team again submitted a memorandum to the Joint Parliamentary Committee at London demanding the amalgamation of Jeypore Agency, the Parlakhemundi Estate and other Oriya speaking areas in the new proposed province and argued strongly on 3rd July, 1933, for the cause. Being assured by the members of Joint Select Committee, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati returned home from London on 13th Aug, 1933. Maharaja received a great shock on the passing away of the great patriot Madhusudan Das, on 3rd Feb, 1934 who was fighting for the cause of Odias and for the formation of separate new province 'Odisha'. Accordingly to review the boundary question for Odisha, consequently a Committee headed by major Atlee was formed to take evidence from the Odias as well as from the Telugus of Madras Province. Maharaja of Parlakhemundi on behalf of Odias and G.V. Sitapati on behalf of Telugus appeared before the Atlee Committee at London. The Committee after hearing from both sides awarded their recommendations for amalgamation of majority Odia speaking portions only. Hence, the Parlakhemundi estate was divided into two parts. First part including town area of Parlakhemundi was added in Odisha and the remaining part was left out. Moharaja tolerated great grief of dividing of his own estate for the creation of new Odisha State. On April, 1934, the map which was persented by the Maharaja was accepted by the Secretary of States, London and accordingly, they

were incorporated in the Section, 289, Government of India Act, 1935.

Maharaja continued his fighting to resume the rest of his estate land which still marked as Bichhinanchal. The long dream of Gourchandra Gajapati, the father and Sri Padma Nabha Narayan Dev, the father and paternal uncle were also in the fight for the unification of their motherland Odisha but the Odia movement came into the real picture by the hard and sincere endeavours of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati along with other front line leaders of the state. On the 1st April, 1936, the long desired separate new province 'Odisha' was formed. The inauguration ceremony was commenced with the Darbar held in the Ravenshaw College Hall at Cuttack. Sir Courtney Terrel, the Chief Justice of Patna, administered the oath to Sir John Hubback. As the first Governor of Odisha, Sir Samuel greeted the people of newly formed Odisha. People of Orissa accepted their portion of the land constitutionally given to them out of the country long claims having a part in other portions of Madras Presidency, Midnapur to West Bengal, Singhbhum to Bihar, etc. Anyway, the Odias now got a homeland of their own and it was possible only by the efforts and sacrifices of mainly two Odias like Madhusudan Das who sowed the seed, laid the foundation and another Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati of Parlakhemundi who organized, took the matter to round Table conference for fruition.

In the wake of the formation of Orissa Province, Krushna Chandra Gajapati started a political party named 'Odisha National Party' on 1st April, 1937; the provincial autonomy was accorded to Odisha in accordance with the Government of India Act, 1935. Election was held, though the Congress Party got the majority but refused to form the Ministry. Sir John Hubback

invited Krushna Chandra Gajapati to form the Ministry and so Maharaja became the First Prime Minister of the State of Odisha. The Ministry had to resign on 13th July, 1937 due to inevitable circumstances. In 1938 Krushna Chandra Gajapati, the former Prime Minister of Odisha became a member of the Indo-British Trade negotiation. Again on 3rd Nov, 1941, a coalition Ministry was formed with the Chief Ministership of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati. Maharaja was also nominated as a member of the Indian Defence Council in the years 1941-42. Later on Maharaja as a Chief Minister brought a Bill in the Legislative Assembly for the establishment of Utkal University and as such, the University was inaugurated on 27th Nov, 1943, during his tenure. Due to the political differences, he resigned from the Office of Chief-Ministership of Odisha on June, 1944 and handed over the charges to the then Governor of the State.

The philanthropic deeds of Sri Krushna Chandra Gajapati were so vast that it could not be in record. He made liberal donations to the Pasteur Research Institute at Conoor, the Coimbatore Agricultural University, the Indian Red Cross Society. It was due to his persistent efforts that the Central Rice Research Institute at Bidyadharpur of Cuttack district was founded. The Cuttack Medical School was upgraded to a Medical College during his tenure. He generously contributed Rupees Five Thousand to Gopal Chandra Praharaj, the lexicographer of the Purna Chandra Odia Bhasakosh for the publication of the fifth volume of it. He also donated rupees five hundred in favour of the Satyabadi School at Sakhigopal. He also liberally donated to Utkal Sahitya Samaj of Cuttack, which was a leading literary institution of Odisha for the development of Odia language and literature. He spent a lot to extend the narrow gauge railway line from Parlakhemundi to Gunupur. After independence

of India, Maharaja remained aloof from direct controversial politics and intended to serve his estate and Odisha people through different public and social welfare services. He spent all the time for the development of agriculture, industry, culture and Odia literature. He was one of the directors of Hindusthan Steel Ltd. after being nominated by the Central Government in the year 1954. He contributed generously for the development of Odia language and literature. He had given donations for printing of Odia Glossary 'Purnachandra Bhashakosh' Gopalkrishna Padyabali, Jagabandhu Singh's 'Prachin Utkal', Pandit Gopinath Nands's Odia Sabda Tatwa Bodh Abhidhan, etc. He also spent for the development of Odia language in the Singhbhumi and other Odiya-speaking tracts. He established Parlakhemundi Government. College, Sanskrit College, Model Agricultural Farm House at Parlakhemundi and also a theatre/drama stage for the development of art and culture. The credit of establishing Utkal University, High Court, Medical College & Hospital at Cuttack and many other institutions in Odisha goes to him. Krushna Chandra Gajapati donated the whole amount of his pay and travelling allowances, which he received as Prime Minister to the funds of Utkal University for the development of higher education.

To our ill-luck, such personality who gave everything to us, the land, the language the identity through his sacrifices passed away on 25th of May, 1974 at the age of eighty two in his palace. The enlightened light not only of the Parlakhemundi Estate but the illuminated light of the whole State had gone out. His wife Maharani of Parlakhemundi left him since long. Maharaja was blessed with two sons and two daughters, all of whom, alas, are no more. The famous words "the old order changeth, yielding place to new" could not have been more true. His eldest son, late Ram Chandra

Gajapati, the former Yuvraj of Parlakhemundi was a keen sportsman and acemarksman with his rifles and shot-gun. His younger son, late Madhaba Sundar Gajapati, the former Rajkumar of Parlakhemundi, a graduate from Madras University, was a reputed sportsman and had the destination of representing India in the game of gulf. Krushna Chandra Gajapati passed away very peacefully leaving behind him countrymen, relatives, friends, admirers to mourn on the irreparable loss. He was accorded a State Funeral by the Government of Odisha and was cremated with honour. In accordance with the primogeniture, he was succeeded by his eldest grandson Shri Gopinath Gajapati, formerly a Chemical Engineer later became a Member of Parliament for the past two consecutive terms of Lok Sabha. The Birth Anniversary is celebrated on 26th of April every year in the State and the Government of India issued a postage stamp on the occasion of his birth centenary in 1992.

Since then, the inhabitants of Odisha are very much emotional in remembering their beloved Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, the hero, the pride of Odisha for his dedication to the unification of Odisha and for various philanthropic, welfare works in every corner of his motherland.

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