

## Formation of A Separate State and the Role of Utkala Sammilani

Today, Odisha offers its tribute to the late legends and freedom fighters of the State who succeeded in bringing back the identity of Odia people and the State in terms of language. The fate of Odias were neglected and the rich cultural heritage were on the verge of oblivion during pre-Independent period. Since the year 1886, these blessed souls of Odisha had initiated the great movement of uniting Odia people in the line of language. The then king from Balasore Baikunthanath Deb brought the proposal to formulate a State on the basis of Odia language. In the year 1902 the king had presented a proposal to Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India in this direction.

### **Odisha From 1903 to 1950**

In the year 1902, 'Utkala Sammilani' was constituted with an intention to form a separate State by uniting the Odia-speaking people scattered over Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. The first consensus in this direction was primarily initiated by King of Khallikote Harihara Mardaraj and veteran Journalist Sri Nilamani Bidyaratna at the Rambha palace and 'Ganjam Jatiya Samiti' was formed to promote the cause. In the year 1903, Utkal Gauraba Madhusudan Das was deeply inspired by the Samiti and organised a grand meeting of Utkala Sammilani at Cuttack and the meeting was presided over by king of Mayurbhanja Sriram

Chandra Bhanjadeo. The promoters of Utkala Sammilani were Utkala Gauraba Madhusudan Das, Vyasa Kabi Fakir Mohan Senapati, King of Paralakhemundi Sri Krushna Chandra Gajapati, Utkalamani Pandita Gopabandhu Das, Pandita Godabarisha Mishra, Pandita Nilakantha, the editor of Utkala Dipika Sri Gaurishankar and many other eminent personalities.

### **The Goal of Utkala Sammilani**

The main purposes of Utkala Sammilani were : (i) Uniting Odisha which was scattered over several provincial administration, (ii) the all-round development of Odisha, (iii) to bring all Odia speaking people under single administration and (iv) to protect the interest of Odia people staying outside the State. In the year 1924, the British Government appointed 'Duff Commission' under Phillip Duff to earmark the boundary of Odia speaking people in South India. In the same year the demand for the Odia State caught major attention of Odia people. To strengthen the cause and aware people regarding the movement, Sasi Bhusana Rath of Berhampur had established two news dailies as 'New Odisha' and 'Dainika Asha'.

In the year 1930, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati the nominee of Bihar-Odisha Assembly had represented the Round Table Conference in London where he did put a strong

foundation for the formulation of a separate state of Odisha. Responding to the movement the British Government appointed 'O'Donnel Committee' to prepare the map of Odisha in the year 1932. The Committee had prepared the map for Odisha where they separated 'Paralakhemundi' and 'Jaipur Jamindari' from Ganjam region. However, with the intervention of Utkala Gauraba Madhusudana, Maharaja of Paralakhemundi, Poet Banchanidhi Mohanty, Padmashree Laxmi Narayana Sahu, Barrister Biswanatha Mishra and editor of 'Mukura' Braja Sundara Das, Jaipur Jamindari and the one third of Paralakhemundi could be reinstated in the new Odisha map. Finally, in the year 1935, the separate Odia State was established under the Indian Administrative Act.

Odisha took birth on 1st of April 1936. The Maharaja of Paralakhemundi took over the administration as the first Prime Minister of Odisha. Mandhata Gorachand Pattnaik and Latifur Rehman also took over as ministers of the newly born State of Odisha. The First Governor appointed for the region having five districts was Sir John Austin Hubback. However, there were 26 nos. of Gadajat regions (ruled by Kings) were left apart due to their unwillingness to join the newly formed State. Later in the year 1947, these Gadajat regions were also merged in Odisha.

Immediately after its birth Odisha had witnessed another historic movement called 'Prajamandala Movement'. The purpose was to ensure the people of Gadajat regions, civil rights and liberty along with a responsible administration from the rulers. The movement was also against the various kinds of taxes collected by the rulers from the people in Gadajat region. The movement got momentum on 24th June 1936 with the visit

of Dr. Pattavi Sittaramaya the President of 'Nikhila Bharata Gadajata Praja Sammilani' to Cuttack and who had also laid the foundation of 'Nikhila Utkala Gadajata Praja Sammilani', that pioneered the movement in Odisha till the year 1949. Among other leading personalities who also had joined the movement were Saranga Dhara Das, Balunkeswara Acharya, Radhanatha Rath, Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Kailash Chandra Mohanty, Maheswara Subahu Singh and Braja Kishore Dhal.

Soon after the formation of the Prajamandal Sammilani, the organisation spread to the Gadajat States like Nilagiri, Dhenkanal, Talcher, Ranapur, Nayagarh, Hindol, Athamallik, Sonapur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Khandapada and Tigiria etc. Ranapur occupies a special position in the movement as two nos of youth called Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakara Parida were hanged to death in one day as they were found guilty for a murder case related to the movement. In the Nilagiri state, police had to open fire to control the mob during the movement. The period from 1948 to 1949 had remained as the dark period in the history of Odisha.

The Sun has witnessed many ups and downs in Odisha. However the 1st of April shall remain as the reminder and inspiration to the youngsters of Odisha for the contributions made by our predecessors towards bringing Odia people and the state to a respectable position in the map of independent India.

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