

Freedom Struggle Movement in the Novels of Nityananda Mohapatra

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Some are made great and prominent for history but history is very much proud of having many legendary personalities. This has become a bare truth all over the world, so is also with Odisha. Among some eminent luminaries in the field of literature and freedom struggle of Odisha, Nityananda Mohapatra is a front-liner. He has made Odisha history noble and worth attractive. After completion of a ton of experience and age, his mortal body disappeared on the 17th April, 2012. Really there is an irreparable loss in the area of literature and freedom movement not only in Odisha but also in India. But his foot-prints in those fields are never to be washed out by the tidal waves of time, the great killer and healer. His name and fame ever dazzles in the lap of time till the earth exists.

Nityananda had a spotless political career. His dedication and sacrifice are unquestionable, which were rarely marked with many freedom fighters. He was a staunch disciple of *Gandhiji* and had never deviated from the path of *Satya*, *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa*.

Nityananda was a brilliant student but left his formal studies while he was in class – XI in Bhadrak High School in the year 1930. Nabakrushna Choudhury, Dr. Hare Krushna Mahtab and some others from Odisha had left

education and lucrative jobs under British government considering it as slavery and participated in the freedom movement. By 1930, the freedom movement had progressed one step ahead under the leadership of *Gandhiji*. The first step was the Non-cooperation Movement (1920-1921). In 1930 the Civil Disobedience started. *Dandi*, the sea-beach of Gujarat created sensation in defying the salt law and had been termed as the historical “*Dandi March*” led by *Gandhiji*. Similarly thousands of spirited *satyagrahis*, poured in sea water, defied the salt law at *Inchudi*, the sea beach of the Bay of Bengal at *Balasore* under the leadership of *Harihara Acharyaji*. *Nityananda* joined the Civil Disobedience and became a young *satyagrahi* just at the age of 18. In the very evening a meeting was arranged at the Permit field of *Balasore*. *Nityananda* delivered a firing speech and was arrested.¹

Similarly he had been arrested time and again in the other phases of the freedom movement i.e. the Individual *Satyagraha* (1940) and the Quit India Movement (1942). He was also arrested when he was the President of *Bhadrak* Union. To be particular, his life and youth had been spent in the prison cells amidst the brutal behaviour and atrocity of the British Police.



Like many others, Nityananda's creative activities and literary success started from the prison cells. Dr. H.K. Mahtab had started one 'Karmamandir' and with some others Nityananda kept burning the creative activities like *Khadi*, spinning thread in Charkha and literary writings. Like his father, the great lyricist Kanta Kabi Laxmikant Mohapatra, Dr. Mahtab also had inspired him for continuing his pen in different aspects of literature.²

As a true freedom fighter, Nityananda was well experienced. He was also in power politics for some years. He was elected twice as an independent M.L.A. to Odisha Legislative Assembly and became a Minister in the Cabinet of Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo, the former Chief Minister of Odisha. But his honesty and dedication was of high morale which encouraged many young politicians of his times. As a whole from pre-Independence period to the post Independence time, Nityananda had been saturated with experiences, sweet and sour. As a Satyagrahi he witnessed the sufferings and miseries of the people in the subservient country. In free India he had observed the decline period, when moral values and glorious cultural heritage of our country started diminishing. That had pained the novelist Nityananda Mohapatra. All the hopes and aspirations of people in free-India went unfulfilled. Nityananda had dreamt of a nice, noble and flowering nation, but that was in vain. Being undone, he had painted the exact scenario of socio-political situation, especially of Odisha on his three political novels i.e. '*Hidamati*', '*Bhangahada*' and '*Gharadhia*'. Hence at first he was an observer, then a writer. That was the key to the success of his writings.

Freedom movement took a new shape after Gandhiji joined the Indian politics. The

enchanting principles *Satya*, *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa* that he practiced in South Africa had brought immaculate success for him. Again he applied those weapons in India. That created a miracle. People of all religions and sect were spell bound and the involvement in all the movements i.e. the Non-cooperation (1920-21), the Civil Disobedience (1930), the Individual Satyagraha (1940) and the Quit India Movement (1942) had some way or other achieved success and at last the British rule in India came to an end. Not only that, the plain, simple, value based life of Gandhiji had also deep impact on the common mass, even if people thought him as the incarnation of God and started worshipping him. On the other hand, principles of Karl Marx had also some impact on the Indian life, though not as effective as Gandhian principles. The political situation of the pre-Independence period mainly based on the freedom movements, atrocity of police, wretched conditions of the Satyagrahis in Jails, impact of Gandhiji and Marx on the common life, treacherous activities of the traitors and last but not the least was nationalism and patriotism that reached the apex during freedom struggle. But honest attempting was put to picturise the Freedom Movements only and that had been very successfully narrated in the political novels of Nityananda Mohapatra.

Gandhiji's involvement in the freedom movement removed fear from the minds of the Indians, the Satyagrahis became brave, courageous and enthusiastic and never cared for the British atrocity, rather they accepted the *zoolum* of military personnel as garlands and prison cells as holy temples. Hence they courted arrest spontaneously.³

The last phase of the freedom struggle was the Quit India Movement (1942). The



Congress Working Committee took the decision in launching the movement on 8.8.1942. The British Government became furious. They arrested Gandhiji the very next day and put him in the Aga Khan Palace as a prisoner. Most of the frontline leaders of the Congress party were also arrested. The British Government tried its level best to nip the movement in the early stage but could not be successful. Gandhiji's call "Do or Die" created a different situation. The movement could not be within the control of the non-violence. Angry nationalists went on demonstration reciting different patriotic slogans. They surrounded the police stations, looted arms and ammunitions, set fire to it, disconnected the telegraph and Railway lines, shops, industries, markets were closed, day to day life trend hampered, even the excited and angry freedom fighters killed the British Officers in different places. Equally the police became blood thirsty. They started *zoolum*, charged *Lathi*, fired upon the assembled Satyagrahis and the common mass were not spared. During this august Revolution Odisha was ahead and sustained heavy loss. Excluding the feudatory states in six districts of Odisha death toll tallied 110, out of them 50 were shot dead on the spot and 59 expired in the prison cells being injured out of police atrocity. More than 3000 *Satyagrahis* were arrested and 5 Lakh rupees and above was collected as fines.⁴ Laxman Nayak a dedicated freedom fighter of Koraput was arrested on false allegation and was hung till death on 29.8.1943. This created unprecedented awakening among the prisoners. Nityananda narrated, "Not a single drop of blood touched the ground, but the hot-blood-current flowed in the veins of hundreds of prisoners".

1942, the 28th day of September, Eram, a vast, uncultivated land under Basudevpur police

station of Bhadrak witnessed a horrible activity of police, that they fired at the unarmed assembly of Satyagrahis. That event was called "the second *Jallianawallabag* massacre" because similar incident had occurred in Punjab (1919). But there was a big difference between two pathetic events. The people in *Jallianawallabag* were well aware of police firing beforehand; whereas the people at Eram had never sensed it. D.S.P. Kunjabihari Mohanty had been to Bhadrak on inquiry of the breakage of the windows of the union president and the threat by the Satyagrahis to break and loot the granary of the Zamindar at Podhuan. People were intimated the presence of police by sounding conch. From the neighbouring villages, they rushed to Eram within a very short span of time. Two of the Satyagrahis restrained the *Chaukidars* not to carry the bedding and dress of the Police the slaves of the Britshers. This was coloured as an attack on the Police. Immediately D.S.P. ordered firing and 304 rounds of bullets took away 35 lives and 107 were severely injured. The people of the nearby villages were morally frightened and ran away to the forest; villages were deserted, even pregnant ladies gave birth to infants in the Jungle. Police got the golden opportunity in the absence of the villagers. They enjoyed delicious dishes by plundering the goats, hens, cocks, fine rice and enjoyed to their hearts content.⁵

Nityananda was the inhabitant of Bhadrak, and a freedom fighter. So he had narrated the heinous and brutal activity of the police at *Eram* in a very pathetic manner in his novel '*Bhangahada*', "Dukhi motivated the villagers, delivered firing speeches what worst might be the situation, we would not obey the Government, constitute Panchayat Raj, snatch away freedom from the British Government within



a fortnight, without caring for Jail, *Lathi*, fines and firing.”⁶ Police arrested Dukhi Dash. The news spread like lightning. A stream of nationalists flowed to the *Melan* field. Dhani Mastre, a teacher, fixed the tricolour flag in the mid field. That was the symbol of religion and the fight between virtue and vice. The British militants started flag marching in the villages. The conch sound was heard from every house, because the instrumental sound of conch was the best way of intimating the presence of the police during the pre-independence period. Police commanded; “*Five minutes’ time. The Mass replied, Mahtma Gandhi Ki Jai. Police roared, the public uttered, Swadhin Bharat Ki Jai. Fire, sounds of bullets created the palpitation of hearts.*”⁷ That created a heart rending scene. The novelist again explained, “who is dead, who to die, and who is wounded, the field, drenched in the flow of blood of the Satyagrahis, witnessing it.”⁸ This was the real symbolic picture of the *Eram* massacre. From those examples of the political novels, the spirit, dedication and sacrifice of the nationalists during the freedom movement were well imagined.

All the noted events of freedom struggle are successfully placed in the political novels of Nityananda Mohapatra. He narrated all the political movements chronologically that to in the village sphere, where characters like *Dukhi, Dhani, Sukura, Debaki, Nidhiabou* were quite

unknown in context to modernity. But through those characters Nityananda had made the village a real battle field of freedom movements.

Nityananda is no more with us. Odisha has lost one of her greatest freedom fighter-litterateurs. Still he remains alive, for all time to come. Again to repeat, Nityananda is not famous for history, but history is rather grateful and ever indebted to this noble national hero.

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