

His Majesty's Order-in-Council and Making of New Odisha

Dr. Janmejay Choudhury

With the death of Mukunda Deva, the last independent ruler of the Hindu kingdom there followed a long period of political confusion and territorial disintegration in Odisha. Under the rule of the Afghan, Moghuls and Marathas, there were a number of princely rulers who enjoyed a semi-independent status. Under the British they continued to maintain their existence as the rulers of tributary Mahals, paying annual tributes to the Paramount power. Southern Odisha was conquered by the British from the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1759, and thereafter remained a part of the Madras presidency till 1936. Sambalpur, annexed by the British in 1849, remained a part of Central provinces till 1905. Balasore, Cuttack and Puri districts, conquered by the British from the Marathas in 1803, remained parts of Bengal till 1912 and thereafter became parts of the province of Bihar-Odisha. As a result of this dismemberment, the Odia-speaking territories virtually became appendages to four provinces – Bengal, Madras, Central Provinces and Bihar, and being reduced to the status of linguistic minorities in all these provinces, the Odias felt neglected and dominated by the linguistic majorities, and particularly felt distressed at the deliberate efforts to abolish Odia language. The new elites that emerged in Odisha in the latter half of the nineteenth century for the unification of Odia speaking areas.

The intellectual luminaries of Odisha were Radhanath Ray, Pyarimohan Acharya, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Gauri Sankar Ray, Madhusudan Das, Rajendra Narayan Bhanjdeo. The Odisha branch of All-parties Conference sent a memorandum to the All-parties National Convention, which was being held at Calcutta on 22 December 1925, for the creation of province of Odisha. It may be noted here that in October 1928 on the occasion of the Dussehra festival, the Odia nationalists of Cuttack worshipped the Mother Utkal in the form of an image, calling her 'Chhinnamasta' Utkal i.e., dismembered mother Utkal. They brought out a procession, led by Madhusudan Das, which included all sections of population high and low, educated and uneducated.

In November 1930, the Round Table Conference was held by the British Government in London to hold discussion with the representative Indians on the constitutional reform. Shri Krushna Chandra Gajapati, the Maharaja of Parlakhemundi was nominated to the Conference by the British Government. He raised the question of the amalgamation of Odia tracts in the Round Table Conference. He circulated among the delegates of the first session of the Round Table Conference a pamphlet, titled "The Odias, Their Need and Reasons for a Separate Province."

In March 1931, the Odisha Congress delegates raised the amalgamation question in the Karachi Session of the Congress. At Karachi, Mahatma Gandhi was reported to have promised the Odisha Congressmen that he would raise their problem in the second Round Table Conference. On 3 May, 1931 the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee unanimously passed a resolution for the establishment of the separate province of Odisha. The UPCC appointed a Committee, consisting of Pandit Nilakantha Das (chairman), Gopabandhu Choudhury, Lingaraj Panigrahi, Shashibhusan Rath, Niranjana Pattanaik, Mukunda Prasad Das, Bichitrananda Das and Laxmi Narayan Mishra to deal with the question of formation of separate province. In September 1931, the Government appointed the Odisha Boundary Committee to demarcate the boundary of the proposed province.

But the report caused disappointment among the Odias because it had excluded some Odia-speaking tracts to be included in the proposed province. The special session of Utkal Union Conference, held at Berhampur on 21 August 1932, protested against the exclusion of such Odia speaking tracts as Manjusa, Singhbhum, Phuljhar and South-west Midnapur. In March 1933, the British Government brought out the White Paper caused deep discontent than the O'Donnell Committee. A Odia deputation, headed by the Raja of Parlakhemundi, met Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India in London on 3 July 1933 and presented their demand for the reconsideration of the boundary question. In the meantime the Telugu representatives also arrived in London to counteract the move of the Odia deputation. On the basis of the views of the Madras Government and the Government of India, the British Government then agreed to transfer Jeypore estate from Madras presidency to Odisha but refused to transfer Parlakhemundi. On 11 February 1934, in a meeting of the Utkal Union Conference, at Cuttack, Maharaja of

Parlakhemundi proposed that his estate be divided between Madras presidency and Odisha, and that Odisha portion was to include the Parlakhemundi town. With this partition plan the Raja approached the Secretary of State for India in London. But the plan could not receive the approval of the authorities in England due to the opposition of the Government of Madras and the Viceroy.

Fortunately for the Raja of Parlakhemundi, and the people of Odisha, the Joint Select Committee that was appointed on the Government of India Bill under the chairmanship of Lord Linlithgow gave a sympathetic hearing to the Raja of Parlakhemundi and recommended the addition of the following territories to the proposed province of the White Paper – a) that portion of Jeypore estate which O'Donnell had recommended for inclusion in Odisha, b) Parlakhemundi and Jalantar Maliahs, c) a small portion of Parlakhemundi estate including the Parlakhemundi town. Consequently the area of Odisha was increased from 21545 to 32695 square miles. In the meantime, the nine-men Administrative Committee, consisting of Sir John Austin Hubback (Chairman), Madhusudan Das, N.R. Naidu, W.O. Newsam, Nilamani Senapati, Lokanath Mishra and Gauri Chandra Deb, appointed in June 1933, thrashed out various administrative problems connected with the creation of the new province such as provincial headquarters, the facility of High Court and University and organization of districts.

On the basis of Joint Select Committee's report, provision was made in the Government of India Act 1935 for the creation of the new state of Odisha. According to His Majesty, the King Emperor's Order-in-Council, dated 3 March 1936, the province was inaugurated on 1 April 1936. The same day, Sir John Austen Hubback took over as the first Governor of new Odisha.

Dr. Janmejaya Choudhury, Lecturer in History, Sri Jagannath College, Kaipadar, Khordha.