

Political Evolution in Ex-Princely State of Patna Under the Dynamic Leadership of Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo

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Abstract: (The ex-princely State of Patna was ruled by Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo from 1931 to 1948. During his tenure as Maharaja, Sri Singh Deo tried to introduce a number of democratic reforms for the smooth working and good governance of Patna State. This article is a modest approach to unravel the dynamic administration unleashed by Maharaja Sri Singh Deo in ex-princely state of Patna during his tenure as Maharaja)

Keywords: (Governance, Political identity, Suzerain Powers, Democratic set up, feudatory state)

Introduction:

The history of Patna State dates back to Ramai Deo, the real founder of the state who founded the Chauhan dynasty in 1320 A.D. approximately. But Ramachandra Mallick argued that the real state of Patna came into exist in the year 1159 A.D. Prior to the rule of Ramai Deo, the State of Patna was ruled by the eight Mullicks or Pradhan. This system came to an end when Ramai Deo killed all the Pradhans and declared himself as the king of Patna. As per the historical sources Ramai Deo ruled in Patna since 1211 A.D. The rulers like Ramai Deo, Dalaganjan Singh Deo, Prithviraj Singh



Deo and Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo were most popular and benevolent ruler of the ex-princely state of Patna. History always remembers Chauhan dynasty of Patna State for their own special identity and heroism. It could maintain its own special identity in the history of contemporary era and particularly out of twenty-six feudatory states of Odisha whose existence was found at the time of their merger into the Indian Union. Thus, Patna state was one of the premier states of all the princely states in Odisha. It is quite distinct from other princely states of Odisha on the grounds of its special traditions, customs and culture. The main cause of special attention of Patna State was the

working of three branches like, legislature, executive and judiciary under its last ruler Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo.

Most of the foreign as well as Indian writers have done commendable works on the princely states of India. But few works have been done on ex-princely state of Patna which is very insignificant although the state bears a very significant place on the deep rooted and strong socio-cultural based. Its former ruler Sri Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo was a benevolent ruler and he tried to introduce a system of democratic governance in the ex-princely state of Patna. The state of Patna was so famous in the history of India because of its individual political identity and importance even during its feudatory stage under all the suzerain powers including the British. Thus, it was one of the premier states of the Eastern Agency at the time of India's independence. The glory of Patna state reached its climax under its ex-Maharaja Sri Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo due to his farsightedness and intelligent vision even if he belonged to a feudal background.

Objectives:

The objective of this article is to focus a brief outline of the evolution of democratic governance in ex-princely state of Patna during the regime of Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo who ruled Patna State from 1931 to 1948 and later on who could become a successful Chief Minister of Odisha from 1967 to 1971 by heading the leadership of first non-congress coalition government in the post independent era.

Methodology:

The methodology undertaken in this research work includes historical and analytical methods. The historical records and officials' documents were examined: primary as well as

secondary sources that are available on the subject have been used. A primary source includes historical documents, reports, official statements and interview of eminent historians who possess vast knowledge on ex-princely State of Patna. In the secondary sources, the major works of different distinguished authors in the field have also been included and analysed.

Geographic Location of Patna State:

The Ex-Patna State, presently known as Balangir, formed a part of the erstwhile South Kosala empire. It was situated in the Mahanadi Valley of Sambalpur area and occupied a part of the modern Bolangir district of the State of Odisha. The state lay between North Latitude 20°9' and 22°4' and East 82°41' and 83°40'. It was surrounded on the north by Sambalpur District and the Sonepur State: on the east by the Sonepur State, the Boud State and the Kalahandi state and on the west by the Sambalpur District. The state had an area of 2530 sq. miles according to the Census of 1941 and it had a population of 6,32,220. Bolangir was the headquarters of Patna State.

History of Patna State:

Patna State was a very important state among all the ex-princely states of Odisha. The Chauhan rulers were very courageous and great warriors. It always maintained a very unique position among other erstwhile princely States of Odisha. By dint of their own efforts, they could bring a new culture in their respective state.

The kingdom of Patna State was founded by Ramai Deo in the year 1159 A.D, which within a short span of its militant career became the head of the cluster of Eighteen Garhs. The Patna State under the rule of Chauhans had a glorious past. Historical sources reveal that it was a very

powerful kingdom which was ruled by Kusha, the second son of King Ramachandra. But the modern history starts from Ramai Deo who was instrumental in establishing the Chauhan rule in the state. There were 72 states under its control and it is also observed that until the growth of British Supremacy in these parts, the state of Patna was the fountainhead of a cluster of confederacies of states known as Athara Gadajats (18 forts). The Patna state could maintain its special identity and remained independent even in the time of Moghul emperors as well as during the ascendancy of the Maharattas. The Britishers captured the territory of Odisha from the Maratha in 1803 and thereafter Sambalpur and Patna State came under the control of the British India. Then, the British authority had exercised full control over the State of Patna and the state was regarded as their feudatory state. Further, the State of Patna, from the time of Ramai Deo, had as many as 33 rulers and the last ruler was Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo who was more popular, benevolent and a lover of democratic principles.

Personal Career of Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo

Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo was a great visionary and a very intelligent ruler who could adept himself in all circumstances. His primary motto was to serve the well-being of the subjects of his empire. He was a man having simple living and high thinking.

Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo had a very charismatic personality and he could realise that good governance is highly necessary for peaceful living of the people. He was such a noble heart having all the repository of good qualities like humbleness, discipline, versatile genius, visionary democrat, good administrator, ruler and leader

par excellence. The inborn qualities of leadership were found in him with a high sense of brilliant leadership of mankind-principled, truthful, honest, just and impartial, humane and kind, caring, considerate and compassionate, generous to a fault with malice towards none, nor a harsh word to anyone, friend, comrade or opponent, superior, peer or subordinate. He always maintained a smiling face even in adversity which was most important hallmark of his nature. A man having divine power who was deeply religious, highly spiritual, brilliant student, erudite scholar and statesman, excellent sportsman, naturalist, photographer, lover of culture and tradition, a wonderful Chow Dancer, persuasive orator, widely travelled, matured and wise personality who could inspired people for his own ideological and disciplined life style. Born on 31st March, 1912 in the holiest day of Mahavir Jayanti at the royal and dignified family of the princely state of Sareikela, Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo was the second son of Raja Aditya Pratap Singh Deo. He was adopted as son by the sonless king of Patna State Late Maharaja Prithviraj Singh Deo. Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo was recognized as heir at the age of 12 by the British Government after the death of Maharaja Prithviraj Singh Deo in 1924. But as R.N. Singh Deo was minor at that time, as per the rule of succession established by the Britishers, the Patna State was placed under court of ward till 1933 till he attained maturity and assumed the full charge of the Ruler of Patna.

Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo had a great academic career starting from Mayo Rajkumar College of Rajasthan, where the then principal of this institute late E.C. Jolijones had opined that during his 24 years of service he never came across such a brilliant student like Sri Singh Deo, who never stood second either in education or in sports, debate or in horse riding or in shooting

etc. After completion of education in Mayo College he joined Hazaribag College in 1931 and passed the intermediate Arts Examination, standing first amongst the successful students. While studying graduation he was brought back to the state to take over the administration of Patna State. Thus, Sri R.N. Singh Deo had an outstanding brilliant academic career who stood first class in all the examinations he appeared throughout his life. In the All-India level Diploma examination, he stood first class in the country and received gold medal from the then Governor General Lord Irwin in 1929. At the age of twenty on 24th April, 1932 he married Kailash Kumari Devi the daughter of Bhupinder Bahadur the then king of Patiala.

Governance in Patna State

Maharaja Rajendra Narayana Singh Deo could establish a popular government in his princely state of Patna during the time of British regime also. A complete democratic set up was found in the Patna State. The three organs like, legislative, executive and judiciary were working in the State. Various administrative machineries like the cabinet, High Court, Secretariat, Civil Service, Local self-government were constituted to provide good governance to the people of Patna State. The various function of the government was divided among different departments which remained under the charge of ministers. The entire state was divided into different divisions to provide better administration. As the Chief of the Patna State, Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo himself supervised all the work of the state.

1. Patna Legislative Assembly

Patna State had a legislative assembly whose primary duty is to legislate the laws for the smooth and good governance of the state as a

whole. The formation of a cabinet and Legislative Assembly in the Patna State was a rare example which proves that Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo was a true democrat and a firm believer in the Parliamentary Democracy. The Patna State Legislative Assembly consisted of 28 members and a President. The president was not one among these members. Out of these 28 members, 14 were to be elected out of the special constituencies named in the Patna State Legislative Assembly Act of 1943 and the other 14 were to be nominated by the Maharaja, the Ruler. Thus, the Assembly consisted of equal number of elected members and nominated members. The Chief Minister was the ex-officio President of the Assembly and could participate in the business of the Assembly like any other members. The tenure of the Assembly was three years. The Assembly was very powerful and could discuss matters relating to day-to-day administration and formulated laws relating to the larger interest of the people of the Patna State. The Council of Ministers consisted of two ministers and one of them was a representative elected by the legislature and the other one was nominated by the Maharaja himself. Thus, the Patna State Assembly was designed and functioned in a democratic way. This shows Maharaja Singh Deo's firm commitment towards the representative form of government. He also wanted that administration of Patna State must work in accordance with the legislation made in the Patna State Legislative Assembly. Although he came from a feudal background all his activities proved him as a great democrat.

2. Growth, Development and Role of Civil Service

The good governance of a state cannot be possible without an efficient and competent civil servant whose sole function is to assist the

rulers of the state. In the feudatory states, the internal administration was controlled by the ruler himself who was guided by the provisions laid down in the sanads granted by the paramount power from time to time.

In the state of Patna, the ruler was the custodian of all authority in the state. He was the sole authority so far as the internal administration is concerned. All the administration of the state was carried on in his name. Next to the ruler, Diwan was the highest official in Patna State. The post of Diwan was a very respectable and responsible post which was created since the foundation of the state. The ruler was informed all the necessary information of all the departments from Diwan. An Advisory team was also constituted by taking all the ministers which was also known as Cabinet in 1936-37. Below the ministers a number of subordinate officers were working as the permanent civil servant of the state. For the smooth and convenient administrative system, Patna State was divided into three Sub-Divisions like, Sadar, Titilagarh and Patnagarh having their headquarters in their own respective place. Each and every Sub-Division was under the charge of a Sub-Divisional Officer (S.D.Os) who held the gazetted rank. The Sub-Divisions were the administrative unit of the state and all the S.D.Os enjoyed the judicial powers in both civil and criminal matters. The entire revenue administration of the Sub-Divisions was entrusted to the S.D.Os. The post of Tahsildars and Additional Tahsildars were also created to assist the S.D.Os in revenue matters.

All the civil servants of Patna State were entrusted in different works. The major departments of the Patna State were, Land Revenue Department, Land Records Department, Nuzul Department, Customs

Department, Excise Department, Tobacco Excise Department, Income Tax Department, Police Department, Education Department, Medical Department, Archaeological Department, Cooperative Department, Agriculture Department, Printing Department, Geology and Mines Department, Debottar Department, Public Works Department, Electrical Department and Gardens Department. All these departments were coordinated by the Patna Ruler to bring a system of good governance in the state.

The Patna State Service Commission was also constituted to recruit various upper and subordinate level employee to work in the various department of Patna State. The Commission had the power to fix the criteria for the promotions, Provident fund, salaries and other allowances of the employees working in the different department of Patna State. The main intention behind the constitution of a Commission was to bring transparency in the appointment procedures of Patna State.

3. Judiciary in Patna State

Judiciary always plays a vital role in interpreting the law and to deliver justice to the people. The due procedure of law is ensured and strengthened by the judiciary. It is the judiciary who always bring the common man as well as the government to work in the right direction without any fear and favour. However, the administration of justice in the feudatory states was quite different with regard to the modern judicial system. During that time the judiciary does not enjoy the complete independence and both the executive and judicial powers were vested in the hand of feudatory chief. The Chief's court was the highest court and he enjoyed the supreme power and final appellate authority in his empire.

Thus, Judiciary was one of the important organs of the government in the Patna State. Prior to 1934, in the Patna State there were various kinds of courts like, The Court of Maharaja, Court of the Dewan, Court of the Civil Office, Magistrate of First Class, Magistrate of Second Class, and Magistrate of Third Class having different jurisdiction. In the year, 1940, a High Court was established by Maharaja to deliver justice to the people of Patna state. There were three judges in the Patna High Court who were appointed by the Maharaja. All the judges were highly qualified and expert in legal profession. Rai Bahadur Subodh Chandra Dutta retired District and Session Judge, Bengal was appointed Chief Judge of the High Court and Mr. Khettra Nath Sinha, Retired Sub-ordinate Judge, Selection Grade, Bihar and Orissa, was appointed as Puisne Judge and also to discharge duties of a District and Sessions Judge. Beside this, adequate provision was also made to appoint a part time third judge whose services was requisitioned to constitute a Division Bench of the High Court. The prime task of the Court was to interpret the laws and to inflict punishment on the culprits. Maharaja codified the laws regulating the lives of his people of Patna State. The Maharaja had the power to grant pardon. Thus, Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo thought that justice must be given to all section of the society and culprits must be punished in order to develop the peoples' confidence upon the government. Further, transparency must be maintained in each and every field of administration of the state. Therefore, he had given utmost importance to judiciary.

4. System of Education in Patna State

Education is the backbone of the state. An educated and enlightened citizen is an asset

to the state. Hence, Sri Singh Deo had taken a number of steps for the spread of education in the Patna State. The government constructed school building to provide primary, secondary and higher education to his people. The High School as well as almost all rural schools had got library facilities for students. The students were also given financial assistance to pursue technical education. Singh Deo had also established George Sanskrit Tol to provide Sanskrit education. It imparted knowledge in Sanskrit literature (Sahitya), Vyakarana (Sanskrit Grammar), Karmakanda and Dharma Shastra (Scripture). A wing for teaching of Jyotish (Astrology) was also introduced in the Tol in 1940. With a view to provide higher education in Patna State, Singh Deo had established an institution named "Rajendra College" in 1944. At that time, it was affiliated to Utkal University and the first session of the college was started from 3rd July, 1944. This college has been elevated to the state of an autonomous college by the Department of Higher Education, Government of Odisha and it has become a post-graduate college having the subjects of science, commerce and arts. Recently, this college has been declared as the Rajendra University in 2020 by the Government of Odisha.

In order to facilitate Hindi education one Hindi Middle English School at Bolangir and one Hindi School at Titilagarh were established. A Guru (Teachers') Training School was established in Patna State to impart training to the teachers to make teachers competent in the teaching profession. It was abolished in 1937, with effect from the 1st January as majority of the teachers had been trained. An Industrial School was also opened in the state in 1938 to impart vocational education in different branches such as weaving, tanning and taxidermy. Regular Scout training was given to the High School students and a Girls'

Guild movement was also in progress in different schools. Thus, R.N. Singh Deo had made a significant contribution in spreading primary and higher education in the Patna State to eradicate illiteracy from the society. Besides this, Maharaja Singh Deo also encouraged women education in his Patna state.

5. Communication Network in Patna State:

A good communication network is the pre-requisite for the smooth running of the administration as well as the leading of a happiest life of the people. Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo made a tremendous contribution in introducing a wide range of communication network in the erstwhile Patna State. Patna State Transport Corporation was also created to provide Bus services to the people. Bus services were also provided to go outside the Patna State. There was a workshop in Patna State to repair and maintain all the vehicles of the state. Roads were built up to connect important villages with the headquarters of the Patna State. Telephone and telegraph connections were also available in the important places of the state for the easy communication of the people. Patna State was electrified since 1919 and electric connection was broadened in the state during the reign of Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo.

6. Health Administration in Patna State

Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo gave emphasis to the sound health of the people of his empire. Because a man having good physic can only work in a peaceful mind. Hence, adequate provisions were made to relieve people from various diseases. In this context, a number of Ayurvedic Dispensaries were also set up in the remote villages at government cost to improve the health of the people. The public health department consisted of five branches—medical,

leprosy, vaccination, sanitation and child welfare. X-Ray and Electro Therapy Institute and maternity relief facilities were also provided to the women. A separate ward was created in the hospital for TB and leprosy patients for their treatment and proper attention. Two child welfare centres were also set up in the state for the treatment of the small children. A Vaccination Department was in existence to vaccinate the people. To provide vaccination to purdah women, many special women vaccinators were appointed. A mobile dispensary under qualified compounders were moving around the village areas to provide medical services to the people instantly. Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo was not only concerned with the health of the human being rather he attached equal importance to animals also. In this regard, a veterinary hospital was also in existence at Bolangir for the treatment of inoculated cattle.

7. Art and Culture in Patna State

To promote art and culture in the Patna State he constructed “Koshal Kalamandal” where different types of dance and drama were performed by different artists. He also established the “Dalaganjan Press” where different literary works and “Patna Dipika” and “Patna State Gazetteer” were published. The Kalinga Historical Research Journal was also published from the Patna State and eminent historians of that time Sri Purna Chandra Ratha, Dr. Satya Narayan Rajguru, Balamukund Hota, Sri Manabodh Sahu and other writers from outside Odisha contributed their valuable research articles to this journal.

8. Other Developmental Activities in Patna State

Singh Deo as a Ruler of Patna State took a number of welfare measures for the improvement of socio-economic and educational status of the

people. During the reign of Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo in Patna State the system of Village Panchayat and Gram Sabha was introduced with a view to decentralising the power from the grass root level. There were 770 Panchayats and three Praja Sabhas in the Patna State whose primary duty was to see the overall development of the village areas. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people of Patna State. Therefore, Maharaja Singh Deo established a network of Cooperative Banks and Cooperative Societies to make credit facilities available to his peasants for their agricultural operation. He also made adequate arrangements for storing of food grains in granaries for future needs and during emergencies. He also initiated the enactment of land reforms and adopted brilliant policies of collection of revenues for the larger interest of his peasants. During his reign, Vana Mahotsav Day (forest festival) was observed and emphasis was given on plantation and afforestation in the Patna State.

It was observed that being a member of a royal family, Sri Singh Deo always behaved just like a general people tried to maintain a cordial and good relations with all his subjects irrespective of caste, colour and creed. He was against the social evil of untouchability and enacted certain laws to allow the Harijan communities to enter into the temples and other important public places. Maharaja himself visited so many Harijans and Adivasi (tribal) houses to cure the snake bite people. Thus, he tried to maintain equality among his subjects. This noble quality of Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo made him most popular ruler of that time. The people were also inspired tremendously and accepted untouchability as a social evil. This activity clearly reflected Sri Singh Deo's strong attitude of distinct vision and he was fully attracted towards the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence

and untouchability. In this sense, he was a great follower of Gandhiji.

9. Merger of Patna State

After the independence of India, when the Government of Odisha moved for the merger of the feudal states with Odisha, Maharaja R.N. Singh Deo, the ruler of the State of Patna signed the document of merger on 14th December, 1947 in the presence of Sardar Vallab Bhai Patel, the then Home Minister of India and with that the princely state of Patna lost its identity and became a part of the Indian Union and a part of Odisha province. R.N. Singh Deo carved out a place of honour for himself as the first ruler to sign the instrument of merger in the entire Republic of India. Rulers of all other feudal states followed the footsteps of Singh Deo. To that extent, the State of Patna and Bolangir occupies a position of glory in the history of Modern India. The State of Patna merged in the province of Odisha with effect from 1st January, 1948 and a new district named Bolangir-Patna was constituted by amalgamating the ex-states of Bolangir, Kalahandi and Sonapur. But, on 1st November, 1949, the ex-states of Patna and Sonapur were separated from Kalahandi, and a new district named Bolangir was formed by combining the ex-states of Patna and Sonapur. Again, Sonapur was also declared as a separate district from Bolangir on 01.04.1993.

At the time of merger R.N. Singh Deo transferred very humbly the assets and liabilities of Patna State to Odisha Government. These included:

- i) Claims of Provident Fund deposit by the officers and staff share with interest Rs.358785-12 Anna 9 paisa.
- ii) Civil Deposits etc. Rs.198618 -14 Anna 11 paisa.

- iii) Trust Funds Deposited in the State Treasury Rs.156779- 11 Ana 8 paisa.
- iv) Devottar Property Rs.5888-9 Ana 8 paisa.
- v) Arrears of Pay Bills of Officers since 1.1.1947, Rs.720133-Ana, 4 paisa.

10. Conclusion:

Maharaja Rajendra Narayana Singh Deo was a true man having a liberal outlook. He always believed in the development of the people and dedicated his life for the noble cause of the people. After signing the instrument of merger, he wholeheartedly transferred all the money which was deposited in the Patna royal treasury to the Government of Odisha without any hesitation. Thus, Patna State always felt proud to have such a nice gentleman who dedicatedly work for the wellbeing of the people of Patna as well as Odisha as a whole.

All round development of Patna State was possible because of Sri Singh Deo's able leadership, efficient administration and dynamic personality. The British Government, therefore, honoured him with the title of Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (K.C.I.E). Thereby, he became His Highness Maharaja Sir Rajendra Narayana Singh Deo of Patna. Patna State was a "Salute State" and Maharaja Saheb was honoured with nine-gun salute. Indeed, Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo was such a versatile genius that it is very difficult to describe his good nobility in writing. His contemporary men those who came in close contact with him always told that "Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo was a man among the princes and a prince among men".

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