

T.E. Ravenshaw and the Spread of Education in Orissa

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The renowned British Commissioner, T.E. Ravenshaw was an educationist *par excellence*. He lived and worked as the administrator of Orissa Division. During this period he adopted some innovative methods for the development of education in Orissa. Prior to his tenure of office, nobody could take any significant steps for the promotion of education from elementary level to University. The Britishers came to Orissa in 1803. The indigenous system of education was then prevalent in Orissa. The Wood's Despatch in 1854 ushered a new era in the evolution of British educational policy. The good ideas of Harrison took definite shape with appointment of T.E. Ravenshaw as the officiating Commissioner of the Orissa Division in July 1865.

A large part of Orissa was under the Calcutta Presidency.¹ T. E. Ravenshaw had taken keen interest for the progress of primary, secondary, technical and female education, which received greater attention than before. To popularise English education T.E. Ravenshaw, the officiating Commissioner of Orissa Division proposed to raise the status of the school from a Zilla school to a Collegiate school by opening of college classes. In the beginning the mode of teaching of village school teachers was primitive and in some

respects clumsy. Thus several important steps were taken for the improvement of elementary village schools. Afterwards the primary education began to develop. In the same way a number of prompt and active supervisors and civil officers were appointed for proper inspection of the schools.

T.E. Ravenshaw actively supported appointment of a separate Inspector for the Oriya-medium schools. In order to supervise the primary schools a Sub-Inspector was appointed for each sub-division of a district in 1872. The system of teaching gradually improved and systematically modified. Thus a number of eminent Sub-Inspectors were required for the proper inspection of the educational institutions.²

Generally the schools were classified into vernacular and Anglo-vernacular schools respectively. Further they were classified in respect of their management as (i) Government managed, (ii) Government aided etc.³ He instituted honour for teachers and rewards for successful students. Special duties were assigned to the inspecting body.

In 1866 the "Na Anka Durbhiksha" swept away the lives of 30 lakhs people. The condition of education in Orissa was severely affected, The Cuttack Zilla school faced a lot

of problems. Mr. W.Hunter an eminent Inspector of Schools writes in his reports in this respect:

"The school suffered severely due to the Na Anka famine and 64% of students were affected". T.E. Ravenshaw the Commissioner of the Orissa Division compared the education of the State with that of other states. He wrote "No other province in the Presidency was so deficient of intelligent and public spirited residents who would appreciate the facts, bearing on the prospects and means of people and who could give practical information to the authorities as would have been the case in any district of Bengal proper and in carrying out remedial measures."⁴

T. E. Ravenshaw realised that the women education in Cuttack city was totally neglected. The common people were not interested to the growth of women education. They did not send their daughters to the schools because they had bad feelings. The story of Revati high-lighted by Fakir Mohan explained the feelings of the people about the education of their daughters. The Commissioner took initiatives for the growth of women education in Orissa for the first time. A large amount of financial assistance was sanctioned for the development of women education. The Cuttack Girl's School was at the beginning started as a primary school. But at last he financed for its improvement and spread of women education in our State. In 1873, the name of this girls school was renamed as Ravenshaw Hindu Girl's School.

An important step towards the development of education in Orissa was taken when a medical school was established newly at Cuttack. T.E. Ravenshaw, the Commissioner

and Dr. W.D. Stewart, the Civil Surgeon of Cuttack both were interested for spread of medical education in Orissa. A huge amount of financial assistance was needed for its promotion and expansion. Ravenshaw very keenly recommended the sanction of the scheme. Thus the Government decided to start an esteemed institution on experimental basis. His active action and skillful contribution to this institution is always remembered in the history of modern Orissa. At the beginning stage the Government sanctioned only 3,000 Rupees per annum for its improvement.⁶ The Government highly appreciated the role of Dr. Stewart and Ravenshaw for the initiative taken by them in the establishment of this institution. He offered his free service to supervise and instruct the students. The people of the state were satisfied and a large number of Oriya students were also getting facilities for higher education in Orissa. The saga of its birth, baptism and upbringing is nostalgic and reminds one of the sagacious stewardship of a few worthy sons of Orissa as well as benevolent Britishers whose sincere efforts and perseverance at different points of time could make it see the light of the day.⁷

T.E. Ravenshaw highly appreciated the devoted and efficient services rendered to the female orphans by the Baptists. He was not only duty-bound, but also sympathetic towards poor, destitute pupils and respectful to the higher authorities. He was a distinguished administrator of the Department of Education and took keen interest in providing high quality education in schools and colleges. After a dedicated and self-sacrificed service for the spread of education for about 10 years in this state he left Orissa on 5th April 1878.⁸

When T.E. Ravenshaw was the Commissioner of Orissa Division, the then,

Inspector of Schools, Mr. H.L.Harrison, appreciated his knack and definite work, agreed with the Committee and upgraded the Zilla School into a Collegiate School. The excellent result of Cuttack Zilla School of 1865 and 1866 prompted Mr. Hunter, the Inspector of Schools to write: "This stands unquestionably first among the educational institutions of Orissa, having the largest number of candidates at the entrance examination contrasted with the result obtained by schools deserves unqualified praise, He concluded that the time had arrived for the promotion of collegiate education in Orissa."⁹

The establishment of Ravenshaw College is the main contribution of T.E. Ravenshaw for the spread of higher education in Orissa. At the beginning stage it was only a small school. But this institution was converted into a full-fledged first grade college. The famine of 1866 in which about a million people perished made the then Government conscious of the fact that the seriousness of the situation could not be realised because of lack of proper education in the state, There were only six students on the rolls in the B.A. Class, in Ravenshaw College in 1875. The institution gradually went ahead and provided inspiration to the upcoming intellectuals. When T.E. Ravenshaw was appointed as Commissioner of Orissa Division in July 1865, the education system developed throughout Orissa. Lt. Governor of Bengal, Sir Richard Temple, agreed to open a college at Cuttack for the spread of higher education. Ravenshaw gave a memorandum to the authority for the establishment of a degree college.¹⁰ But the Lt. Governor agreed to the proposal on the condition that a contribution of Rs.10,000 was

forthcoming from the public. The government sanctioned sufficient financial assistance for its improvement. In this connection Mr. Ravenshaw wrote, "The establishment of a college at Cuttack is an object of personal importance to myself and also of greatest importance to the spread of Higher Education in Orissa."¹¹

The shaky foundation of the Cuttack College was strengthened due to the sacrifice of a worthy son of the soil. The Maharaja of Mayurbhanj in 1879 had contributed Rs.20,000/- to the college. To perpetuate the memory of Ravenshaw, the then Commissioner of Orissa from 1865 to 1878 for his univocal support to Oriya as a separate language and for his memorable service for the promotion of western education in Orissa, the Maharaja proposed to change the name of the college to Ravenshaw College.¹²

T.E. Ravenshaw was instrumental in creating numerous departments of various subjects in the Ravenshaw College. The Ravenshaw College buildings are highly impressive. The new building offered accommodation for all the college classes, there being an Arts Block, Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Zoology and Geography laboratories and a library erected through the donation of the Raja of Kanika, well known as "Kanika Library". The Post-Graduate Department of English was opened. Some reputed lecturers and professors were appointed. They had imparted high quality of teaching to the pupils. The college students are generally very active and they participated in national and international seminars and conferences respectively. The esteemed institute auspiciously celebrate the Independence Day,

Republic Day, Netaji Jayanti and others. At present the library contains more than one lakh volumes. It is truly a mirror of the Ravenshaw spirit of dedicated study aspiration for knowledge infinite.¹³

T.E. Ravenshaw was a distinguished administrator who took keen interest in providing quality education in schools and colleges. The administrative system of education was efficiently modified. Ravenshaw College is a mother of institutions. This was an important centre of nationalistic activities in pre-independence days. There were a large number of illustrious men and women who have shaped Orissa's destiny during the last hundred years. There are some historical importance of the Ravenshaw College. All the significant, cultural, intellectual and political movements have sprung from its portals, and it has nourished great souls like Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das, Godabarish Misra, Bhubanananda Das, Acharya Harihara Das, Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Gopabandhu Das. Like that some important political luminaries who have attained eminence in the State like Biswanath Das, Dr. H. K. Mahtab, Nityananda Kanungo, S. N. Dwivedy, Manmohan Mishra, Biju Patnaik, Smt. Nandini Satpathy and Rabi Ray were once students of Ravenshaw College. In the same way a number of brilliant scholars are the product of the Ravenshaw College. They were well known personalities like Dr. Artaballav Mohanty, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Dr. P. Parija, P.S. Sunderam and Dr. A.K. Das Gupta.¹⁴

Ravenshaw College had shaped the minds of great creative writers like Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, Annada Shankar Ray,

Gopinath Mohanty, Sachidananda Rautray, Surendra Nath Mohanty and Manoj Das. Now their deeds are living in our heart as well as in the air of Orissa. H.R. Batheja, the then Principal of the Ravenshaw College, addressed on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the College in which he explained:

"And so we have at last a temple of learning fair to look on, stately in proportions, which can be compared not unfavourably with the only other temple-the temple of Jagannath for which Orissa is known all over India. The Twin monuments represent Orissa to the outside world and are a source of justice and pride to every Oriya."¹⁵

The Ravenshaw College teachers are mainly engaged in research work. The list of papers published in various journals reveal that the research output of this institute has certainly been significant. We are proud due to the contribution of our teachers and talented students who are acquiring higher academic qualifications from Indian and foreign universities. The valuable research papers are published in national and international journals. They also highlighted the memorable contribution of Ravenshaw as a pure and dedicated object or mirror of the modern history of Orissa. Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the doyen of Indian history who taught in this college during 1919-23, thus spoke nostalgically in 1958, "I passed some happy years in this college. It must be prospering as the epitome of all that was good and bright of Orissa."¹⁶ Ravenshaw, indeed, is all wisdom and happiness; the institution that combines a centurian's wisdom and the ardours of spring time youth. This college is the center of

education which has produced eminent poets, philosophers, scientists, historians and artists. It has set the pattern for their administration and management. The country mainly celebrated it as the premier educational institution. The Government has passed a scheme for the promotion of its status from college to deemed university. The U.G.C. of India has sanctioned sufficient fund for the progress of higher education in Orissa.

The Officiating Commissioner, John Beams and the then Collector of Balasore strongly supported Oriya as a separate language in his book "Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India."¹⁷ The Oriya teachers were few in numbers and the printed Oriya text books were not published much for the secondary schools. Ravenshaw emphasized that Oriya language was officially adopted as the medium of education in all classes of schools in Orissa. He further argued that one Oriya person should be appointed as Inspector of Schools for Orissa. Radhanath Ray was appointed as Inspector of Schools in Orissa in 1877. T.E. Ravenshaw persistently worked hard for the increase of the number of vernacular schools. In 1890, the Committee took initiative for the publication of Oriya text books of high quality. The Board of Selection of Oriya text books consisting of five members appointed by the Government.

When T.E. Ravenshaw was the Commissioner of Orissa Division, a Survey School was established at Cuttack in 1877. A Teachers Training Centre was also established in 1869. Now the number of technical education centres has gradually increased. Orissa School of Engineering and the Industrial Training

Institute at Cuttack have produced a large number of trained technicians as well as Junior Engineers. The rural people were interested in joining these technical courses because they were getting appointments in various institutes. To conclude, it holds the pride of place by imparting the largest number of courses among all polytechnics in the state.¹⁸ After Independence, several significance steps had been taken by the Government of India for the development of higher education. During the 21st century, the significance of technical education have greatly increased. A large number of research scholars have gone abroad for research purposes. The Government of India provided financial assistance to them. Some Indian scientists and research scholars have gone to Japan, U.S.A. U.S.S.R., Germany, France and Canada etc. after their higher education in the Ravenshaw College.

T.E. Ravenshaw was a pioneer in the field of education. He was an outstanding administrator and an eminent Commissioner. He had taken effective steps for the spread of education in Orissa. The premier Cuttack Zilla School of the State has been also named after this distinguished educationist.

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His Excellency the Governor of Orissa Shri Rameshwar Thakur giving away Medals and Prizes to Engineers at the 46th Annual Technical Session of Institution of Engineers (Orissa State Branch) on 20.2.2005.