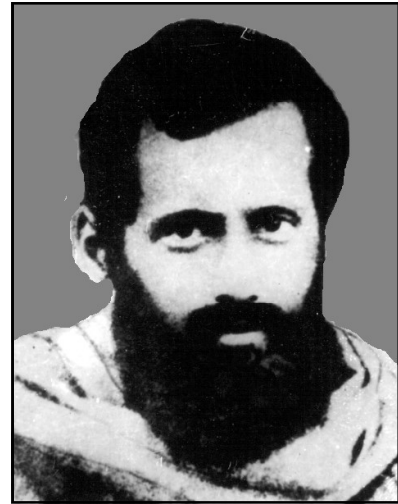


UTKALA SAMMILANI : BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION OF A SEPARATE STATE

Today, Orissa offers its tribute to the late legends and freedom fighters of the State who were succeeded in bringing back the identity of Oriya people and the State in terms of the language. The fate of Oriyas 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 Orissa had initiated the great movement of uniting Oriya people in the line of language. The then king from Balasore Baikunthanath Deb brought the proposal to formulate a State on the basis of Oriya language. In the year 1902 the king had presented a proposal to Lord Curzon the then Viceroy of India in this direction.



Orissa From 1903 to 1950

In the year 1902, 'Utkala Sammillani' was formed with an intention to form separate state by uniting the Oriya speaking people scattered over Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. The first consensus in this direction was first initiated by King of Khallikote Harihara Mardaraj and veteran Journalist Sri Nilamani Bidyaratna at the Rambha palace of the former 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 Sammillani at Cuttack and the meeting was presided over by king of Mayurbhanja Sri Ramachandra Bhanjadeo. The promoters of Utkala Sammillani were Utkala Gauraba Madhusudan Das, Byasa Kabi Fakir Mohan Senapati, King of Paralakhemundi Sri Krushna Chandra Gajapati, Utkalmani Pandita Gopabandhu Das, Pandita Godabarisha Mishra, Pandita Nilakantha, the editor of Utkala Dipika Sri Gaurishankar and many other eminent personalities.

The Goal of Utkala Sammillani

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

In the year 1930, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati the nominee of Bihar-Orissa assembly had represented the Round Table Conference in London where he did put a strong foundation for the formulation of separate state of Orissa. Responding to the movement the British Government appointed

'O'Donnell Committee' to prepare the map of Orissa in the year 1932. The committee had prepared the map for Orissa where they separated the 'Paralakhemundi' and 'Jaipur Jamindari' from Ganjam region. However, with the intervention of Utkala Gauraba Madhusudana, Maharaja of Paralakhemundi, Poet Banchanidhi Mohanty, Padmasree 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 Orissa map. Finally, in the year 1935, the special Oriya State was formulated under the Indian Administrative Act.

Orissa took birth on 1st of April 1936. The Maharaja of Paralakhemundi took over the administration as the first Prime Minister of Orissa. Mandhata Gorachand Pattnaik and Latifur Rehman also took over as ministers of the newly born State of Orissa. 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 un-willingness to join the newly formed State. Later in the year 1947, these Gadajat regions were merged in Orissa.

Immediately after its birth Orissa 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 opposing 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 also had laid the foundation of 'Nikhila Utkala Gadajata Praja Sammilani', which pioneered the movement in Orissa 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 has occupied 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 as a part of the movement. The year from 1948 to 1949 had remained as the dark period in the history of Orissa.

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

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