

Nayagarh Uprisings

Arun Kumar Sahoo

Nayagarh was one of the most disturbed tributary mahals of Orissa during the British Rule. It is one of the Feudatory States of Orissa situated to the west of Khurdha. It was one of the smaller States of Orissa. All in all, it was a beautiful State, rich in the bounties of nature. During the times of British Occupation of Orissa Nayagarh was under Raja Binayak Shingh Mandhatta. A treaty engagement was concluded with Raja, who was granted a Quabool Nama, and agreed to pay his annual tribute of Rs.5,17,914-16-2/- regularly. But his subsequent relationship with the Britishers was not remain cordial, when he objected to the establishment of Police Thanas in his estate. Besides this he was also suspected of having been involved in Ghumusar Risings, and violating the treaty engagements. Apart from this the next charge against him was that he protected, gave shelter

to the rebel leader Buxi Jagabandhu and several other leaders. But he died in 1823. He was succeeded by his son Brajabandhu Singh Mandhatta. The people were thoroughly dissatisfied with this new ruler due to his oppressive measures and mal-administration which ultimately led to a popular rising during the period from 1849 to 1852.

The Raja generally demanded exorbitant rates and a number of illegal cesses from the ryots. There was no limit to his demands. The militia class who held Jagirs for their services to Raja had to pay rent for their holdings. Besides this, the simmering discontent of the people was caused by the prevailing practice of feudal levies, like Begar, Bethi, Magan and Rasad. The Sarbakaras, Sardars or Lakhrajars and Bebartas, all of them were both autocratic and oppressive. They would declare a defaulting tax payer "Palataka" in order to auction his properties and grab it illegally. They were the intermediaries between the Durbars and the Ryots, who received commissions in proportion to the amount of rent and revenue which they used to collect without paying any attention to the weather conditions and quantity of

production from the agricultural land. They arbitrarily collected more from the peasants to ensure their commissions. They forced the peasants and the rural labourers to work without wages in their lands during the sowing of paddy transplantation and harvesting. Besides this it was observed that the poor labourers had to carry the luggages of government officers on tours and to work on Bethi for the construction of public roads and ponds. In short each and every section of the society in the state was aggrieved and disappointed. Thus this discontentment which was deposited from a long period needed only one strike of matchbox. And it happened when Raja discontinued the system of giving commission to the Paikas, Sarbakaras, Dalais, Dalabeheras and the Ryots. They came forward, joined hands with militia as well as with peasants, the khandhs class who obviously constituted a very formidable body in the estate and started opposing the actions of Raja who became universally unpopular among his subjects.

In 1843 the peasants complained before A.J.M Mills, the Commissioner of Cuttack against the Raja. But at the initial stage British policy

was not to interfere in the internal affairs of that tributary mahal. Early in 1846, the Jagir holder Bhagirathi Mangaraj was dispossessed by the Raja. His cattle, crops and the belongings were forcibly taken away. He started depredations against this illegal act of Raja, being supported by a large number of followers of Nayagarh, Athagarh, Khallikote, Banapur and Ghumushar in March 1846. When the Ruler found himself incapable of controlling the situation, sought help from British Authorities. The British Authorities in Ganjam rendered assistance to Mills to suppress the rebellious activities of Bhagirathi Mangaraj and punished 45 persons with various terms of imprisonment.

In 1849 the ryots who were thoroughly dissatisfied with the autocratic measures of the chief first appealed to F Goldsburg, Commissioner and Superintendent of tributary mahals, Cuttack then to Government of Bengal for redressal of their grievances. As their complaints were not heard, the ryots restored to open revolts under the leadership of Kamal Lochan Paikray and Hari Gajendra Singh. Kamal Lochan, son of the late Dewan Barju Paikray, was deposed by Raja from his

Jagir. Same was the case of Hari Gajendra Singh, who lost his Jagir in Nayagarh. The charge against him was his involvement in the intrigues against Ruler.

Besides these two, many others who had lost their Jagirs were Udhav Samantaray, Sibram Routray, Biku Pattanaik, Hari Routray, Loki Bahubalendra, Raghunath Dora, Balaram Dora, Jaladhar Baliara Singh and Bhagaban Bahubalendra. Imbued with strong ideas to do something and to fight against the oppression and mal-administration, about 5,000 Paikas, Dalabeheras, Dalais combined their efforts to resist the oppressive rule of the Raja. When the Ruler felt that the situation is going out of his control, he sought for British intervention.

When a large number of aggrieved people come to the office of the superintendent to put forth their grievances against Raja, the superintendent was bound to depute the Deputy Collector of Cuttack, Babu Ram Prasad Rai to Nayagarh to settle the matter. Babu Ram Prasad Rai immediately issued the order to place the state under British attachment, suppressed the rising, the Ryots were either fined or imprisoned. Then they

appointed Ram Prasad Roi as Tahasildar of Nayagarh.

But this settlement proved ineffective. Previously the Ryots used to complain against their oppressive ruler, but then they started complaining against the corruption of the British Officers as well as against the oppression of the Amalas. But their complaint produced no favourable results for them. Ramachandra Rai, the Tahasildar continued in his office at Nayagarh, assessed the Khanabari lands of the Paikas, which was unusual in tributary mahals. It created further discontentment among the Paikas. Nayagarh seemed to be in a state of utter confusion. There was disaffection also among the Kandhas of Nayagarh. The Kandhas held their lands free of rent on the condition that they would pay Bhetis or Nazranas and do Bethi for the Raja. In 1849 the Raja forced the Kandhas to pay a tax in cash for their lands, ploughs and houses they held. The Ryots, the militia class and the tribal population, particularly the Kandhas were sufferers due to the imposition of such oppressive measures. Consequently the growing discontentment burst in to open revolt in 1894.

The leaders Hari Gajendra Singh, Kamal Paikray and Udhav Samantaray came forward and decided to take bold step. From jail they wrote letters to the Ryots inducing them to withhold payment of rents and to assemble in Khurdha in huge numbers to start a united move against the authorities. Accordingly in November 1849, the ryots of several villages stopped payment of rents to the government, which became a matter of concern for the authorities. Magistrate of Puri was sent to tackle the situation, who at the request of Raja recommended the names of four ring leaders of the movement. They were Kamal Paikray, Udhav Samantaray, Shibram Routray and Hari Gajendra Singh for exterminate from the estate. This increased further dissatisfaction among the people, who as a reaction to this killed Bhutia Subudhi, chief servants of Raja, Sardar of Sunamui. The Paiks, Kandhas, and other tribes joined the insurgence of Nayagarh. A mass revolt occurred in the estate. The Kondhs of Boudh and Ghumsar came forward to help the rebels of Nayagarh, assembled on a hill called Goonamuttee. They decided to start a serious revolt from the

village Baharijhol, the granary house of Nayagarh Royal family. By the end of 1850, all the hill tribes of Nayagarh, Ghumushar and Daspalla extended their support to the rebel leaders.

The British authorities took immediate steps and the superintendent himself moved towards Nayagarh on 17th December 1850, with an escort of two companies of the 30th Regiment MN I. By that time, Kamal Paikray, along with his followers had fled to the inaccessible jungles bordering Daspalla. Apprehending dangers to the lives of Raja Family he left one company at Nayagarh for the protection of Raja and his Garah, returned to Cuttack on 1st Jan 1851.

The insurgents usually resorted to looting, murder and arson. Anybody or any party hostile to the insurgents were either murdered or threatened to be murdered. The main attack of the insurgents was on the granaries of the Raja located at different villages of the estate. On 19th January 1851 Rebels plundered the houses of Narayan Samantaray and Dama Samantray, the two supporters of Raja of village Ghumsar. Thereafter a series of outrages were committed by the insurgents in different villages of Nayagarh. On 25th

January about 300 insurgents destroyed the village Sunamui. Then they threatened to attack a nearby village, Koral, where the detachment of the Paik companies had been posted. Gradually the insurgents became more and more daring and violent. The Kandhas of Gunighar under the direction of Chakra Bisoi joined Kamal Lochan Paikray, the rebel leader of Nayagarh. It forged the unity between the two rebel leaders, Chakra Bisoi and Kamal Lochan Paikray. This strengthened his strength tremendously. He proposed to destroy the villages, which helped the Raja vigorously. Altogether 132 villages were burnt. Many of the granaries of Raja were burnt. The insurgents even acquired arms and ammunition from the person in charge of the Raja's Barud Khana. All the passes to and from Nayagarh were blocked by stone barricades. Their depredations were mainly confined to "the less open parts of the country where they could secure a safe retreat into the jungles." Thus the revolt had taken a serious turn by the end of February 1851. In fact the Paikas left the burnt villages without helping the inhabitants. Gradually the spirit of discontent extended beyond Nayagarh, particularly to Ranapur,

Khandapara and Daspalla. Gouldsbury concluded that the disturbances in Nayagarh have now assumed the form of a popular insurrection...”

The Raja himself was incapable either of managing or of protecting his territory. Due to the gravity of the situation, after a careful review, Gouldsbury suggested to the Government of Bengal for taking over the entire management of the estate. He also proposed that the Raja should be granted a sufficient amount for his support from the surplus revenues of his estate. Further he recommended that until all the leaders of the insurrection were captured, the estate would remain under military occupation. As the capture of the rebel leaders was a matter of great importance Gouldsbury offered suitable reward for their apprehension which was as follows:-

Kamal Lochan Paikray-	Rs.500/-
Udhab Samantaray-	Rs.300/-
Subram Routray	Rs.300/-
Dinabandhu Pattanaik.	Rs.250/-
Bhagaban Bahubalendra	Rs.250/-
Basu Bisoi	Rs.250/-

Gouldsbury directed W.Ainslie, Assistant Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, to move from Boudh to Nayagarh and take over the charge of civil administration there on 17th Feb. 1851, Gouldsbury himself proceeded to Nayagarh to supervise the matter. Then Captain Findley started his marathon campaign to trouble-spots such as Itamati, Koral, Mahipur and Gunighar. There he dispersed the insurgents and established police out-posts for future protection of the areas. But when Gouldsbury arrived on 21 Feb 1851, the unsettled state of affairs came to an end. He arrested all the family members of Kamal Lochan Paikray and captured Damu Dakua, one of the leaders and many of his followers. Gouldsbury gave a call to the insurgents to surrender to put forth their grievances and to help the British Government in bringing peace to the estate. The open revolt was quickly suppressed and opposition was driven underground but that only kept the fire smouldering

for a considerable period. The impact of the risings in Nayagarh was felt in the neighbouring estate of Daspalla and Ranapur. Such risings were suppressed ruthlessly by the British government as in Nayagarh. However it had far reaching consequences in moulding the minds of men in all the feudatory states of Orissa.

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Arun Kumar Sahoo is the Member of OLA, from Nayagarh Constituency and lives at Qr.No.5R/15, Unit-1, Bhubaneswar.