## Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo of Mayurbhanj

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Among the galaxies of the Kings and Maharajas of Odisha Gadajats, Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo is singled out as one of the most benevolent persons of Mayurbhanj state. He was born on the 17th December 1871 in the magnificent palace of Baripada to his father Maharaja Sri Krushna

Chandra Bhanjdeo the real maker of Mayurbhanj. A new era of good governance was started from his benevolent regime.

Chandra Ram Bhanjdeo had lost his father on 29.05.1882 at the early age of 11 years only. As the child Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo was set-a-side and the British Govt. appointed Mr. P. Wylly as a Manager look into the to administration of the state. Ram Chandra Bhanj's early

education started in the palace itself and then he enrolled himself as the student of the M.E. school of Baripada town. Later on he came to study the F.A. & B.A. in the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. The Private tutors Mr. Mohini Mohan Dhar, M.A.LL.B and Mr. Kidley took extreme care for his higher studies. Whenever, he was in the graduation classes, it was decided to adorn the throne of Mayurbhanj in 1890. Two years after on 15th, August 1892 he was coronated as the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj.

In 1896, Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo got married with the princess of Chhotnagpur state

Lakhmi Kumari. They were blessed with a daughter and two sons. The eldest daughter was Sripada Manjari born in 1897. The eldest son Sri Purna Chandra Bhanjdeo was born on 7th August 1899 and the youngest son Sri Pratap Chandra Bhanjdeo was born on 18th February 1901. Ram Chandra Bhanideo lost his beloved wife-Lakhmi Kumari in 1902 in severe small pox. And in 1906, his eldest daughter Sripada Manjari died of typhoid fever. Ram Chandra Bhanj was terribly

upset by the flicking fortune of his life. To commemorate their memories, he established the Lakhmi Kumari Dharmasala, in 1906 and the Sripada Manjari Cancer Ashram in 1907 at Baripada. He also established the Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanjdeo High School in the heart of Baripada town in 1889.

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In the face of stiff opposition of the subjects and the royal family, Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo opted for a second marriage with Sucharu Devi, the daughter of the great exponent of Brahmo Samaj - Mr. Keshav Chandra Sen. But the Maharaja did not bring Sucharu Devi to the Baripada palace once.

Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo had inherited a well-organised administrative system of his father. Mr. Mohini Mohan Dhar, M.A.LL.B. was the Dewan of the state. Maharaja established the State Council. This council was the Supreme Body of the state. All the criminal, civil-revenue Land settlement, forest, excise laws & regulations were enacted in the council. Public Works Dept. was set up for planning and development of the road, irrigation, public buildings of the state. The sub-divisional officers were appointed in three sub-divisions of Sadar-Bamaghati and Panchpidh. The S.D.Os. dealt with the executive and judicial cases. Munsifs and sub-judges were also appointed. Telegraphic Communications were introduced and connected with Cuttack, Calcutta and other important towns of India. School Inspectors were appointed. He also instituted the police stations and hospitals in Baripada, Rairangpur, Bahalda and Karanjia. Qualified doctors and Police Inspectors were appointed to discharge their duties. A Central Jail at Baripada and two other sub Jails at Sadar Rairangpur and Panchpidh were established. The superintendent of police looked after the law and order situations in the state. To pronounce the rightful judgments the Maharaja gave appointment to the two towering advocates of Odisha Mr. Madhusudan Das and Pandit Gopabandhu Das. To look into the details of the forest products he appointed the Forest Officers and Rangers. To boost up the economy and revenues of the state, he sold the forest products like timbers, lac, honey, leaves, dry fire woods, root fruits and sabai grass etc.

For the development of agriculture, he spent huge amount of money nearly 6 lakhs. to

construct the Balidiha Embankment to reserve water for irrigation. He ordered to dig a network of Canals and big ponds in different places of Mayurbhanj. Along with different types of paddy, the farmers produced different food grains, mustard, millet, harad, muga and biri, etc.

To encourage the participation of the people with the local problems and administration the Maharaja declared Baripada to constitute itself into a municipality under Mayurbhanj State Regulation 1 of 1905 on 1st June 1905. The area of the town was only 2 square miles and the population was only 5617 according to the census of 1901.

To the best use of the mineral product of the district, Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo appointed the noted Geologist Mr. Pramath Nath Bose to explore the iron ore in Gorumahisani. After a strenuous labour of one year, Mr. Bose prepared an exhaustive report and submitted to the Maharaja. It was found that a vast deposit of iron ore of the highest quality is available in the mountain. Looking into the golden opportunity of vast iron ore a Parsi businessman Mr. Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata concluded an agreement with the Maharaja in 1905. The first name of the company was Tata Iron and Steel Company. Under this banner, the greatest Iron and Steel Factory was set up in Kalimati now (Tata Nagar or Jamshedpur) in Bihar. The Gorumahisani Iron-Ore mines provided the essential raw materials to TISCO for its solid foundation. The royalty charge was very meagre 1/2 Anna per ton. During the years 1906-07, a railway track was constructed to link Gorumahi Sani to Tata Nagar for the speedy supply of iron ore. At Gorumahisani, a beautiful planned town was set up with a network of roads, quarters with piped water, electricity, schools, clubs, community hall, hospitals etc. Nearly 3,800 persons were engaged daily as the Officers, Geologist, Clerk, Mechanics, Supervisors and labourer on monthly salaries. This

mining township enhanced the economic life of the people of Mayurbhanj, Bihar and West Bengal.

The foresight of Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo was unlimited. What is good, he instantly performed it. He undertook a railway network in the district and extended the narrow gauge railway line from Rupsa (Balasore) to Baripada. It was inaugurated to traffic in January 1905. The total expenditure was more than 7 lakhs.

His works were manifold in the fields of Odia literature, culture, agriculture, education and Chhou dance of Mayurbhanj. In April 1891, a monthly Odia Magazine "Utkal Prabha" was published for which he set up a printing press. Mr. Chaitanya Mohapatro, Govind Chandra Patra and Rajeswar Mohapatra were the editors of the magazine at different times. Many creative essays, poems and articles of the high standard were published in the magazine. The chief among them were the famous "Chilika" Kavya of Radhanath Roy, poems of Madhusudan Rao, Gangadhar Meher and different articles of Fakirmohan Senapati and Ram Sankar Roy were published, The annual fee of the Utkal Prabha was only Rs.1.50 paisa. The Maharaja conferred awards on the creative poets and authors. Another weekly paper - "Manorama" in Odia was published from October 1905 and lasted up to the year 1909.

His donations to other institutions were praiseworthy. He donated huge amount of money to the science departments of Ravenshaw College and to the Medical School of Cuttack. In 1903 the Utkal Sahitya Samaj was established in Cuttack in his presence. And in 1905 whenever the Utkal Sahitya Samaj celebrated the second anniversary of its foundation, Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo was the Chief Guest on the occasion. There he himself declared to bear the entire construction charges of a new building for which the building of Utkal Sahitya Samaj was named as the Sri Ram Chandra Bhawan.

The Baripada Jubilee Library was constructed by him and thousands of rare and valuable books, magazines, journals were preserved, but now the library is shattered to pieces except the buildings. Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj spread the education to the nook and corner of the district and established hundreds of L.P. and U.P. Schools in the rural areas to educate the people. In 1897 during his regime a lower primary school was established in the village Tamal Bandh under Rairangpur Tahasil office, which completes 117 years.

The Maharaja encouraged Chhou Dance of Mayurbhanj. On the festival occasion a mega show of Chhou Dance was enacted in the palace premises. The Maharaja provided all the facilities of Chhou Dance - costumes, musical instruments and stage management-equipments with the remunerations to the dancers. On January, 1912, on the occasion of the royal visit of George V and his queen to Calcutta, the Maharaja arranged a wonderful Chhou recital before them which was immensely enjoyed by the couple and countless onlookers.

Ram Chandra Bhanj was the brotherin-law of the Khallikote Raja-Harihar Mardaraj who got married to his cousin sister-Kanak Manjari Bhanjdeo in 1897. Prince Ram Chandra Mardaraj was born to them on the 13th January 1900. On the occasion of the 2nd year birthday of his son, Harihar Mardaraj arranged an informal get-together of all the top leaders of Odisha at the Rambha palace near Chilika in 1902. Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj, Fakirmohan Senapati, Madhusudan Das, Sri Vatsa Panda, Harihar Panda of Aska, Radhanath Roy, Balaram Moharana, Sri A.R. Patro, Gadadhar Vidyabhusan etc. participated. Here in it the members pledged to build Odisha into a newer form. Madhu Babu proposed to convene the next

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meeting at Berhampur at the earliest of 1903. Accordingly the next meeting was held in April 1903 under Presidentship of Shyamsundar Rajguru. Here Madhu Babu delivered a very inspiring speech and proposed to transform the name of Ganjam Sammilani into Utkal Sammilani. Its next inaugural meeting was held in Cuttack. The first inaugural meeting of the Utkal Sammilani was held on 30.12.1903 at Idga in Cuttack Town. Here Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo was the President of the Utkal Sammilani. As the President, he cast his foresight to the distant future of Odisha and covering all the aspects of Odisha its unification, Odia language, culture, mineral resources, agriculture, forests and appealed to all the Odia people to set themselves to works for the development of Odisha. It was a memorable speech in Odia and a part of Odisha history.

On 8th May 1910, Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo decided to travel to the overseas countries of China, Japan, America and England. On his way, he met the Japanese Emperor at Tokyo. After his visit to America, he met George V-the king emperor of England at his Buckingham palace of England. He returned to Odisha with an oceanic knowledge about the lives and administration of the western countries but before he extrapolating the vast knowledge, he died an accidental death on 22nd February 1912.

The Maharaja attended the Delhi Durbar of the king Emperor George V in 1911 and was confirmed the hereditary title of Maharaja by the Emperor which was awarded to his father, Sri Krushna Chandra Bhanjdeo in 1877.

In January 1912 he longed for a hunting of animal in the nearest jungle of Baripada with a host of his associates, attendants and some Railway Engineers of Calcutta. It was dusk with darkness. Maharaja and his attendant Mr. Radhu ascended on one Mancha and the others were at a small distance on the other Mancha. The Maharaja fired at the bears who were roaming in the visible distance. At this, one bear was killed and the other was wounded. Maharaja out of curiosity, wanted to get down but Radhu opposed to it. But the Maharaja got down to search the wounded bear with a long black coat on the body. Radhu too got down. But as it was ill luck, Mr. S.N. Sen, one of Railway engineers of Calcutta mistaking Maharaja's figure as the bear fired at him. The splinters entered into the legs, hands and chest of the Maharaja, Radhu died there, Maharaja was immediately taken to Calcutta for better treatment. His body was operated by the doctor Mr. Brown. Everybody was hopeful of his signs of survival but after a few days, the signs of septicemia (blood poisoning) began to develop and on 22 February, 1912 he passed away in Calcutta on Thursday at 6.30 A.M. On 24th, February 1912, the British emperor - George V sent the condolence message to his family. And thus the rising sun of the prospective brightest developmental Mayurbhanj kingdom was set forever.

Sri Ram Chandra Bhanjdeo considered that "work is the basic element of his life for which he was born and fitted to work." He never used his powers and public money for his personal luxuries. He led the life of a common man.

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