

Political Unrest and Oppressive Measures by the Britishers in Colonised Orissa from 1905 to 1930

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Abstract

The Indian National Movement was undoubtedly one of the biggest mass movement modern societies has ever seen. It was also popular and multi-class movement. It was basically the result of a fundamental contradiction between the interest of the Indian people and that of British colonialism. In my research paper discuss about the Orissa people were able to see that Orissa was regressing economically and undergoing a process of underdevelopment. This anti-colonial ideology and critique of colonialism was disseminated during the mass phase of the movement. It derived its entire strength, especially after 1918 from the militancy and self-sacrificing spirit of the masses.

Keywords: Colonialism, Freedom, Struggle, British, Movement, Oppression.

Brief Introduction

Freedom struggle in political sense means any struggle of the people to be free of any unjust oppression or tyranny which causes illegal curtailment of just rights of the people. We are familiar with such struggles in a very limited scale in our ex-feudatory states where the ruling chiefs carried on their administration without caring for the good of their subjects or oppressing them in various ways. People sometimes arose against the ruler to express their deep resentment against tyrannical rule; such risings are, of course very limited in

nature and often take place on the spur of the moment¹

Swadeshi Movement in Orissa (1905)

According to the report of the Revenue Commissioner of Orissa, the Swadeshi and boycott movement had a very mild effect in Orissa. But that is not true. Of course it might not have been vigorous as it was in Bengal. That was probably because the leaders had concentrated their efforts on the amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts. However Orissa had her share in the movement. During this time, Bipin Chandra Pal, the illustrious leader and he addressed two meetings on 9th and 10th April. Thousands of people attended such meetings and were immensely inspired. In August 1909, a National School was established by Gopabandhu Das, which was the *Satyabadi Vanavidyalaya* at Sakhigopal. Bipin Chandra Pal literally and figuratively carried the message of boycott the British goods and extent Swadeshi movement from province to province. In January 1907, he set out on a long tour of the new province of East Bengal besides Allahabad and Bangladesh in the United Provinces, Cuttack in Orissa, Visakhapatnam, Vijayanagaram, and Rajmundry in Andhra Pradesh. The original

¹Das, M.N.(ed) , *Sidelights on the History and Culture of Orissa*, Vidyapuri, Cuttack,1977, p-20

conception of boycott was mainly on political and economic one. It had two distinct but allied purposes in view. The first was to bring pressure upon the British public by the pecuniary loss they would suffer by the boycott of British goods, predominantly the Manchester cotton goods for which Bengal presidency provided the richest market in India. Secondly, it was regarded as indispensable for the reinforcement of indigenous industry which, being at its infant stage could never grow in the face of free competition with foreign countries which had highly developed industry. Like the boycott and the Swadeshi, as a purely economic measure for the growth of Indian industry was not an altogether novel idea in India. It was preached by several eminent personalities in the nineteenth century such as Madhusudhan Das, Gopabandhu Das, and Gopabandhu Choudhry of Orissa to not liaise with British to rule us.² Apparently, Swadeshi movement was launched in order to undo the great wrong, which was inflicted upon them by an arrogant Government and callous to the voice of the people. It developed into an idea of non-cooperation with the British in every field and the object aimed at was a political regeneration of the country, with the distant goal of absolute freedom looming large before the eyes of the more advanced section. Similarly, Swadeshi movement was entirely outgrew the original conception of promoting Indian industry. It assumed a new form based upon the literal connotation of the word Swadeshi, namely attachment to everything Indian. This

² Patnaik, Jaganath, *Landmarks of Quit India Movement in Orissa*, Orissa Archives, Bhubaneswar, 1992, pp.10-11

development was undoubtedly the result of the newly awakened patriotism and nationalism which had been slowly gathering force during the 19th century.

The Economic Prohibition and method for Swadeshi

Historian R. P. Dutt has argued that Swadeshi was reflective of the grievances of the petty bourgeoisie, but Sumit Sarkar has shown that trading communities and the industrial bourgeoisie were in fact indifferent or hostile to the movement. The movement did belong to the Bengali middle class, but this middle class had no links with capitalist industry or agriculture, unlike its British counterpart. The only element that distinguished the early nationalist leadership was western education, and consequently their attraction to nationalist ideology. The category of *bhadralok* was therefore more of a social category referring to men of education rather than a particular class and yet they were mostly well-off. Their nationalist ideology was one which sought to reach out to the masses, but its limitations were determined by their class position, and that constituted the failure of the movement. There were an earnest attempts were made to enlist the sympathy and support of all classes of people. A confidential official report refers to attempts made by the leaders of Faridpur and Brisal to enlist the sympathies of the Namasudras to boycott the Swadeshi Movement. As a matter of fact the movement was broad based, “not to speak of the participation of *Zamindars* and pleaders,

students and youths, peasants and shop keepers, even medical men and native army, Brahmins and priests, barbers and washer men played an important part in the extension of the boycott to Swadeshi Movement... At a washer men meeting at Jagatsinghpur, the participants took the solemn oath. Even Brahmins and priests refused to perform pujas and ceremonies in which offerings were made of foreign articles. In some places the dissidents were even excommunicated from the caste. Moreover, the British Government also noticed how the secret connivance of the native police fostered the boycott for Swadeshi cause.” In the Swadeshi Movement there were normal procedures of picketing which were somewhat as follows. A small band of young men mostly students would stand close to the shops where foreign goods were sold. They would approach with folded hands anyone going towards these shops and try to convince him not to buy foreign goods. If any one was coming out of these shops with foreign goods they would request them to return the goods and get the money taken back. If the person was willing but the shopkeeper refused to refund the price, the freedom fighters would in some cases pay the price themselves and make a bonfire of the foreign articles in public.³ In Cuttack district, *Kathjodi* River bed Malati Devi, Gopabandhu Chowdary and other prominent leaders they took an oath on the name of motherland,

- a) Abjuring of English cloth, salt, sugar etc.
- b) Abjuring English speech

- c) Resignation of honorary offices under Government and seats in Councils
- d) Lawyers should resign from their post.
- e) Students should not go to their schools and colleges

Also they told the people to join the Swadeshi Movement and boycott the foreign goods and the social boycott was a very powerful weapon. A man selling or buying foreign goods or in any way opposing Swadeshi movement and helping Government in putting it down would be subjected to various degrees of humiliation. People would not talk to him, jeer at him from a distance his children would be hooted and hissed in schools and play grounds. The relatives or neighbours would not attend his social ceremonies, priests, physicians, servants, washer men and barbers would decline to serve him and there were even instances where the marriage of his sons and daughters was rendered difficult, if not impossible. The popular upsurge of 1905 was unprecedented; but it did not emerge from nowhere. The writings and speeches of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and his associates had done much to prepare the way. Tilak reached out to the masses through popular festivals. He transformed the traditional *Ganapati Utsav* into a public celebration where patriotic ideas could be spread. Later he inaugurated a Shivaji festival for the same purpose to induce nationalistic feelings among the masses. In 1906 even Bengal honored the great Maratha as a national hero. The Swadeshi Movement quickly gathered force and bonfires of British cloth demonstrated the people’s determination not to rely on foreign products. The sale of English goods fell dramatically as Bombay Mills

³ Majumdar, R.C.& Majumdar, A.K. (ed.), *Struggle For Freedom Movement*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1969, pp.33-34

worked overtime to meet the demand for coarse *dhotis* or *Khadis* woven on local handlooms rather than fashionable Manchester cottons. Also student volunteers encouraged people to use Indian products. The Popular enthusiasm was sustained by songs written by Rabindranath Tagore and others. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Vande Mataram* became a national anthem and its opening words a sort of battle cry.⁴ In the beginning, its activities consisted mainly on discussing the injustices done to the Indians and recommending their removal to the Government. It was almost a constitutional legacy. But things began to change with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in India in 1914 after his political experiment in South Africa. By this time the calm politics in India had been surcharged with a fiery spirit in form of revolutionary activities in consequence of the partition of Bengal in 1906. Orissa, the neighboring province, could not be unaffected by the movement. These extremist leaders came to Orissa and tried to persuade *Oriya* youth on their own idealism. Khudiram Bose, the legendary extremist came to Orissa and contacted Pandit Gopabandhu Das and Braja Sundar Das and further famous activists, Bagha Jatin and his four associates who had been hiding at Koptipada in Mayurbhanj, while trying to escape they had exchange of fire with Police. Jatin and his friend Chittapriya passed away in consequence of bullet wound, but Jyotish, Viren and Manorajan tried by a Court of law. Jyotish was sentenced to transportation for life while other two were awarded capital punishment. However, *Oriya* youth were not

influenced by these revolutionary activities. But *Swadeshi* movement had some effect in Orissa. After the First World War, politics in India took a new turn. The British authorities were apprehensive of large scale agitation in India. So as a preventive measure they promulgated certain oppressive acts like Rowlat Act of 1919. Mahatma Gandhi reacted sharply at these arbitrary actions of the Government. At this instance *Hartal* was observed all over India on the 6th April 1919.⁵

Expansion of Non-Cooperation Movement (1920)

Non-cooperation movement was the first positive move on the part of the Congress to make it a real mass-based political party. A fundamental change in the social composition of the party as well as in its outlook and policies was marked. Mahatma Gandhi emerged as mass leader with a novel weapon of *Satyagraha*. One of the programme of non-cooperation was the boycott of educational institutions. There was already a general awakening in the country. Orissa had its own share of the Non-Cooperation Movement had made the beginning from Cuttack city, which had been the centre of Orissa politics and culture. Under the leadership of H. K Mahtab, N. K Choudhry, N. K Kanungo, and number of spirited young college students and lawyers started a reading room; named as *Bharati Mandir* at Bakhrabad by the beginning of 1920. *Bharati Mandir* also became a debating place where burning topics of the day were seriously discussed by these politically inclined young men. The suspicious government posted a

⁴ Heehs, Peter, *India's Freedom Struggle 1857-1947 A Short History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1988, pp.62-63

⁵ Pradhan, A.C., *Non Cooperation Movement in Orissa*, Bhubaneswar, 1991, p-3

C.I.D Officer who posed as a casual reader in *Bharati Mandir* which was the nucleus of the Non Cooperation Movement in Orissa. As a response to the non-cooperation call given by the newly formed Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee, there came gradual withdrawal of students from government and aided schools and colleges. The beginning of the process began at Sambalpur and Cuttack. There was a strike in Ravenshaw College and nearly six students took part in it. The prominent student leaders in the strike were H. K Mahtab, N. K Kanungo, Choudhry Brothers, Jadumani Mangaraj, Narayan Birabar Samant, and Bansidher Mishra. The students of Ravenshaw College followed the nearly sixty students organized a strike and many left their studies. The key student leaders like Mohammud Hussain Mazid, Arun Das, Chandra Sekhar Panigrahi, Benumadhab Supakar and Gourishankar Sahani also deferred their studies and joined the camp of Non-cooperators. The student leaders Uma Charan Mohanty and Guru Charan Jena from Bari left their College and attended the meeting addressed by Gandhi at Cuttack. The Non Cooperation Movement was not purely a non-violent in Orissa. There had been certain cases of arson, notably at Khurdha and Banki High Schools in which the students were implicated. In December 1920, a crowd of uncontrollable boys aggressively disturbed the examination of the Tikari High School. While a serious strike occurred in the Rajkanika High School and the Headmaster of Khagole High School was assaulted. Many of the *Oriya* students remaining their studies at Patna, Calcutta, and Madras left their studies. Ganesha Prasad Padhi, Chakradhar Panda, Madan Mohan Patnaik, Dukhishyam Mishra,

and Binod Bihari Panda left the Patna Engineering College. Nanda Kishore Mishra and Arjuna Panigrahi of Paralakimedi left Pachiappa College, Madras. Students after returning to Orissa participated in the Non Cooperation Movement and spread its messages into rural Orissa.⁶ Boycott of schools and colleges by the students was followed by the establishment of national schools in Orissa. Subsequently such schools were established at Sambalpur, Chakradharpur, Berhampur and Paralakimedi and later on at Nayabazar in Cuttack. Besides many Ashrams, national schools were opened at Jagatsinghpur, Balasore, Bhadrak and Guamal. Jagatsinghpur National School was started on 2nd February 1922. Also National Schools were opened at Balasore, Bhadrak, Soro and Guamal besides many ashrams. Another organization of the agitating students was set up at Cuttack which was known as the *Swaraj Sevak Sangha*, Brajabandhu Das Secretary and N. K Choudhry, R. P Singh, R. K Bose and Raghu Rout, its members. When *Oriya* students conference held at Chakradharpur along with the Chakradharpur session of Utkal Union Conference in the last week of December 1920 under the presidency of Biswanath Kar, there came a strong opposition to the old and moderate leadership in Orissa. The resentment culminated in the ugly scene *Baliyatra* field of Cuttack district there the meeting was held on 8th January 1921, which had been organized to give an ovation to Madhusudan Das for his appoint as a Minister of the Bihar Orissa Government. The student leaders distributed

⁶ Mahtab, H.K., *History of Freedom Movement*, Cuttack, pp.60-63

pamphlets against Madhusudan Das and the result was the emergence of young leadership in the Orissa politics, and control over the Congress Organization and Non Cooperation Movement.⁷ Pandit Gopabandhu Das had been attending Congress Sessions since 1916, he was imbued with Congress ideal as initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. In the year 1920 people of the Puri district were seriously affected by famine conditions. Pandit Gopabandhu Das with his band of devoted workers were doing their best to help the people. When Mahatma Gandhi came to know of the sufferings of the people of Puri district he sent, Thakkar Bappa, the renowned social worker to make a survey of the situation and submit a report to him. Thakkar Bappa, while collecting necessary information about the famine-stricken people came to know about the selfless service done by Pandit Gopabandhu Das and his co-workers. Thakkar Bappa came in contact with Pandit Gopabandhu Das and informed Mahatma Gandhi about him. In this way Pandit Gopabandhu Das was introduced to Mahatma Gandhi, who entrusted him the leadership of Orissa in carrying out Non Co-operation Movement.

Gopabandhu Das who kept contact with the trend of National Movement was determined to initiate it in Orissa. So he set up Puri District which was intended to be the Centre of Training of the future Congress workers. Similarly, Gopabandhu Choudhury, a Dy. Magistrate had established a small library called *Bharati Mandir* where books, especially on modern politics, periodicals and newspapers were available. College Students, like

Harekrushna Mahatab, Nabakrushna Choudhury, Nityananda Kanungo, Bhagirathi Mohapatra, and Jagabandhu Singh used to meet there in the evening and to discuss among them the political affairs in the country. The Rowlat Act, the All-India *Hartal*, Gandhiji's proposal for Non Co-operation Movement made great impact on their minds, and they made up their minds to devote themselves to national service if opportunity comes. Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Jagabandhu Singh, Mukunda Prasad, and Niranjana Patnaik among the thirty-five delegates from Orissa to Nagpur Session of Indian National Congress were elected to the Subjects Committee of the Indian National Congress. They returned from Nagpur and determined to start Non Co-operation Movement in Orissa. Pandit Gopabandhu Das brought a resolution to the effect that aims and objects of the Indian National Congress should be the aims and objects of the Utkal Conference. This resolution was passed by overwhelming majority of delegates. Thus started the bifurcation in Orissa politics, the old veterans of the Utkal Union Conference stuck to their guns and rejected the resolution passed. They were determined to carry on their work till a separate Orissa province was created. The young enthusiasts under the leadership of Pandit Gopabandhu Das were determined to introduce Congress ideal and programme in Orissa.⁸

In 1921 Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee came into being under the President ship of Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Ekram Rusool became Vice-President and Bhagirathi Mahapatra, General Secretary, Harekrushna

⁷ Ibid., p.64

⁸ Ibid., pp.65-70

Mahatab remained in charge of Balasore district, Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Brajabandhu Das, in charge of Cuttack district, Jagabandhu Singh in charge of Puri district. Chandra Sekhar Behera was given the charge of Sambalpur district and Pandit Godavarish Mishra remained in charge of Singbhum. In the beginning the P.C.C. took up the two main works of the National Congress that is recruiting volunteers and raising money for *Tilak Swaraj fund*. By June, forty thousand Congress Workers had been enrolled and Rs.22, 000 had been collected for *Tilak Swaraj Fund*. The Programme of Non-co-operation was started in Orissa in such circumstances. It consisted mainly in picketing of foreign – cloth shops, liquor shops, burning of foreign cloth and organization of labour for boycotting shops dealing with foreign cloth. Pandit Gopabandhu Das organized the *Oriya* labourers in Calcutta to boycott all shops dealing with foreign cloth.⁹ In Orissa Non Co-operation Movement which was started mainly due to the following facts-

- (i) The zeal, enthusiasm and devotion of the young workers who plunged into the national movement sacrificing their studies.
- (ii) Visit of Mahatma Gandhi in March, 1921 provided the greatest incentive to workers and generated mass awakening. Hundreds of volunteers from interior areas came forward to participate in the movement.

- (iii) National poets like Banchhanidhi Mohanty, Birakishor Das, Kuntala Kumari Sabat, Laxmikanta Mahapatra and others not only provided incentive but also inspired the workers to face all difficulties ungrudgingly.
- (iv) The two Newspapers, *Samaj* and *Prajatantra*, propagated the news about the movement among the people and criticized the Government for their oppressive dealings.
- (v) The lady workers who joined the movement not only did constructive work at grass-root level but also provided the male workers with incentive for zealous work. Prominent among the lady workers were Sarala Devi, Rama Devi, Janhabi Devi, Malati Devi and others.

Soon Gopabandhu Das addressed a big gathering on the sands of the *Kathjuri* River at Cuttack on 24th January, 1921, address created a big stir among the students. A large number of them like Harekrushna Mahtab, Jadumani Mangaraj, Nityananda Kunungo, Nabakrushna Chaudhury, and Rajkrushna Bose. Bansidhar Mishra, Karunakar Panigrahi and Narayan Birbar Samant left their studies for good and joined the freedom struggle. Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra boycotted Courts and gave up their legal practices. Gopabandhu Chaudhury resigned from his Civil Service post as Deputy Collector. This also influenced

⁹Misra, Prasana Kumar, *Political Unrest In Orissa in the 19th Century*, Vidya Prakashan, Calcutta, 1982, pp27-28

Lingaraj Mishra, Nilakantha Das, Madhusudan Biswal, Birakishore Das, Surendranath Das and Maulavi Mohammad Haniff to resign from their respective government services. The fledgling Congress organization in Orissa received a shot in the arm with Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Orissa in the last week of March 1921." There were huge gatherings to listen to Gandhi at Cuttack, Puri, *Satyavadi*, Bhadrak and Berhampur. He urged the people of Orissa to enroll at least one lakh Congress members and collect there lakhs of rupees for the *Tilak Swaraj* Fund. The end of June, collections for *Tilak Swaraj* Fund came to Rs.25, 000/-, membership of Congress reached 40,000 and there were about 15,000 *chara khas* plying in the state.¹⁰ Although Orissa could not fulfill its target, the efforts of Orissa Congress in furthering the cause of Non Cooperation Movement was very much appreciated outside Orissa and was reported in the national newspapers. A total of twelve delegates from Orissa including Harekrushna Mahtab, Gopandhu Das, Niranjana Pattanaik, Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Godavarish Misra and Mukund Prasad Das attended the Bombay session of All India Congress Committee held from 28th July to 30th July, 1921. The meeting adopted a somewhat more militant stance, concentrating on the boycott of foreign cloth (including public bonfires) and the boycott of the ensuing visit of the Prince of Wales. The *Swaraj Ashram* at Cuttack and Alakashram at Jagatsinghpur. Such centers were set up as house of the non-co-operators, where they were trained to preach the uses of the *charkha* and

¹⁰ Chand, Soma., *Harekrushna Mahtab, and Freedom Struggle 1920-1947*, Firma Klm, Calcutta, 1997, pp.3-6

the desirability of *panchayats* and national schools among the rural common peoples.

Incendiarism at Cuttack and Balasore:

Towards the later half of March 1922, a large number of houses suddenly caught fire at Cuttack. Neither the public nor the police had any clue about the identity of the culprits. The situation became so unmanageably panicky that the police suspected it to be the handiwork of Congress non-cooperators in an attempt to defame the former, yet the public thought it to be the opposite. The government believed that the trouble was due to bad characters sheltering behind the non-cooperation leaders who doubtless encouraged them in the hope of making things difficult for the government. On one occasion, Gopabandhu Das rescued a constable from being beaten up by a crowd but the same constable later reported against him to the Police. However, it is surprising that the government came down heavily on the non-cooperators during this period of relative calmness following the suspension of the movement, 'hundreds of *khadi*-clad volunteers went smilingly to prison. Harekrushna Mahtab was imprisoned in mid-July by which time Orissa had been rocked with two events of great importance. The Non Co-operation Movement was withdrawn in February 1922 after Chauri Chaura incident. Therefore a long period of 8 years lapsed before next phase of Congress mass movement was taken up.¹¹

Situation Makeover bring Civil Disobedience Movement (1929)

The Lahore session of the Congress held in December 1929 witnessed the emergence of glorious chapter in the history of

¹¹ Ibid., pp.7-9

India's freedom struggle as its president Jawaharlal Nehru declared complete Independence or '*Poorna Swarja*' as the goal of the Congress to be achieved by Civil Disobedience Movement. The Lahore Congress further decided to observe the 26th January 1930 as the day of independence which was to be celebrated every year with people taking the pledge that it was a crime against man and God to submit any longer to British rule. Gopabandhu Choudhury read out the declaration in a large gathering at Cuttack adopted by the Congress Working Committee to observe 26th January 1930 as the day of independence. The Congress leaders like Godabarisa Mishra, Lingaraj Mishra, Nand Kishore Das and Narayan Biswanath Das from the Madras Legislative Council and Nilakantha Dash from the Central Legislative Assembly. In February, 1930, the Congress Working Committee authorized Mahatma Gandhi to initiate the Civil Disobedience Movement in the Country. The people of Orissa welcomed this move of Mahatma Gandhi. On the call of Mahatma Gandhi in March 1930, the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee decided to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement by breaking the salt law. Gopabandhu, Choudhury and Purna Chandra Bose, while addressing in a large gathering at Cuttack announced the first list of satyagrahis which included 74 prominent leaders of the province. On 6th April 1930 the *satyagrahis* under the leadership of Gopabandhu Choudhury and Acharya Harihar Das started their protest to Inchudi from *Swaraj Ashram* of Cuttack. However, Gopabandhu Choudhury was detained at Chandol. After his arrest, Acharya Harihar Das led the party and *satyagrahis* like Murali

Tripathy, Gouranga Charan Mohanty, Kisori Mohan Mohapatra, Gunanidhi Mohanty, Sibaprasad Bhagat, Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta Biswanath Hota, Raghunath Mishra, Udayanath Mohanty, Kalipada Das, Sridhara Moharana, Balaram Das, Golakanath Dey, Sriram Prasad Sahoo were included in the party. On the 9th April, about twenty *Satyagrahis* under the leadership of Madan Mohan Patnaik marched towards Inchudi from Cuttack.¹² In Cuttack district, Kujang became an important centre of Salt *Satyagraha*. In Kujang and Ersama area Rani Bhagabati Pata Mahadei, Narayan Birabara Samanta, Sarat Chandra Das, Raghunath Das, Baidhara Satapathy, Jogannath Satapathy, Duryodhyana Patnaik, Babaji Bhimasesn Das took part in Salt *Satyagraha*. The other line of actions of Civil Disobedience included picketing before the shops, boycott of foreign clothes. The spread of *Khadi*, non-payment of *Chaukidari* tax, formation of village *panchayats* etc. The most prominent among them were Surendra Nath Dwivedy, Rabindra Mohan Das, Nityananda Mohapatra, Binod Kanungo, Sudhir Chandra Ghosh. Particularly, the students were successfully carried on picketing before the excise shops and the police ruthlessly whipped the students putting them under arrest.¹³ People also refused to pay *Chaukidari* tax and the villagers of Srijang near Inchudi took a decision in their village *panchayat* not to pay *Chaukidari* tax. On 12th July 1930, a serious clash ensued between the police and people. The police party was manhandled by the

¹² Panda., H.C.(ed), *Proceedings of the National Seminar on Role of Orissa Freedom Struggle*, Cuttack,1998, pp.61-63

¹³ Ibid.

villagers who prompted them to take repressive measures on the villagers. The police looted the properties of leading villagers like Gaur Mohan Das and Bidyadhara Rath to the tune of sixty-thousand rupees. A large number of villagers are arrested and confined in Hazaribag and Balasore Jails. A punitive tax amounting to six-thousand rupees was imposed on them. The prominent freedom fighters like Harekrushna Mahtab, Gopabandhy Choudhry, Rama Devi Malati Devi, Kokila Devi, Gokulanada Mohanty, Surendra Patanaik, Gunanidhi Mohanty, Rajikrushna Bose, Sardar Surendra came to this village to assess the situation and consoled the people. Another notable feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the participation of women in this area. Leaving the age old seclusion inside their homes, the women picketed before the shops selling foreign goods and liquor. Women of Srijang under the guidance of Rama Devi dived into this mission. Boycott of foreign cloth and picketing before the shops selling liquor and opium at Cuttack and Balasore were carried on with great vigor. The British Government's repressive measures during the Civil Disobedience Movement were very harsh. By an ordinance the British government declared all Congress Committees and *Satyagraha* Committees as unlawful organizations. The police made a thorough search of their *Swaraj Ashram* and took away all the papers relating to Civil Disobedience Movement. The Editor of *Prajatantra* was convicted for treason and around 3,000 *satyagrahis* were arrested and sent to the Jails. Mahatma Gandhi appreciated the spectacular success of the movement in Orissa. At last, with the signing of Gandhi-Irwin pact the people of coastal areas were

allowed to produce salt for their domestic purpose but not for sale on commercial basis. Because of the pact, the political prisoners of Orissa were released from the Hazaribag Jail and they were given warm reception at Balasore and Cuttack.

After the second Round Table Conference, Mahatma Gandhi resumed the Civil Disobedience Movement throughout the country. The British government adopted drastic steps to crush the movement and Congress party was declared illegal. The Congress Offices in Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Sambalpur were forcibly made to close down. Because of the repressive measures, some Congress leaders carried on underground movement. The movement continued till it was suspended by Mahatma Gandhi on 7th April 1934. The vigor with which the people of Orissa carried on the Civil Disobedience Movement remains as a glorious chapter in the history of freedom movement.¹⁴

There was a meeting of 7 PM in *Kathjori* sand bed as held in protest against Gandhi's arrest on that day, *hartal* was observed in all parts of Cuttack town, public motor transport stopped operational, lawyers did not go to the Court, a large procession was brought out in the town under the leadership of Mrs. Malati Choudhary in the evening the meeting was held in the *Kathjori* river bed under the Chairman-ship of Babu Narayan Birabar Samanta. In this meeting Krushna Chandra Pradhan and Mrs Malati Choudhary arranged a bonfire of foreign clothes.

¹⁴ *Utkal Prasang*, Februar, 1998, pp.35-38

Arrest and Imprisonment of Satyagrahis

Arrest and imprisonment of the Congress *Satyagrahis* were made from the very beginning of the movement. Initially there were some short term (one week or so) detention; Gopabandhu Chaudhary and Purna Chandra Bose were sentenced to one week detention for addressing the meeting in the *Kathjori* riverbed in violation of section 144 on 23rd March 1930. Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya was arrested on 9th April 1930 for picketing and was sentenced to one week imprisonment. Jibram Kalyanji Kothari and Surendranath Das who were arrested on 11th April and were the first persons to be sentenced to long terms of imprisonment (six months, during the Salt *Satyagraha*). On 22nd April, Jadumani Mangaraj was arrested at Kendrapara and was sentenced to thirty months rigorous imprisonment. On 4th May Purna Chandra Bose was arrested at Cuttack and was sentenced for two year imprisonment, on 8th May, Krupa Sindhu Hota for two years imprisonment. On 13th May, Bipin Sahu, the Municipal Commissioner of Cuttack was arrested for criticizing the government and police oppression and calling upon the people to join the Civil Disobedience Movement; he was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment under section 117 of Indian Penal Code and Section 9 of salt laws. Malati Chaudhary, Lingaraj Misra and three others were sentenced to two months imprisonment for picketing the Council elections. On 7th November 1930 Ramadevi, Prana Krushana Padhiary and Nityananda Kanungo arrested at Cuttack and Nityananda Kanungo was released on bail. Rama Devi was sentenced to three months modest imprisonment and fined Rs.200

and her term of imprisonment was raised by one month for non-payment of fine.¹⁵

This jail became over crowded with political prisoners. On 28th July 1930, forty-three non-political prisoners were released from the Cuttack Jail to make room for the political prisoners. Besides Jails in Orissa the prisoners were sent to Patna, Hazaribagh, Bhagalpur and Gaya Jails.

Handling of *Satyagrahis* in Jail

The treatment of the *Satyagrahis* inside the Jail was a continuation of the policy of repression outside the Jail. Most of the political prisoners were treated as ordinary 'C' class prisoners i.e. the treatment meted out to them were hardly different from the treatment of the thieves and dacoits inside the Jail. After the *Satyagrahis* were treated as 'A' and 'B' class prisoners. Generally they were the prominent Congress men. In the Cuttack Jail, the jail authorities ordered the political prisoners to attend the convicts parade and often salutation to the government. As they refused to do so, some of them were beaten and some were handcuffed. It was reported in *Utkal Dipika*, in 1930 the respectable *satyagrahis* like Jadumani Mangraj, Gunanidhi Mohanty, Mathura Mohan Behera and Murari Tripathy were being treated in the Jail like the regular criminals.¹⁶

Police Search in Congress Office

Raid, search and seizure for the Congress party office were adopted as the measures of repression. On 6th July 1930 the police raided and searched twelve places in the Cuttack town including *Swaraj Ashram*, Samaj Press, Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya shop, Congress store, and

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ *The Samaj*, 26 March, 1930

the houses of Dharmananda Basu to find out where the unauthorized news sheet *Sambad* was being cyclostyled. At the Congress organisation in Cuttack declared on 29th November 1930 was unlawful under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The *Swaraj Ashram* of Cuttack was locked by the police and its inmates were arrested and convicted. Thereafter new Congress office was opened at Cuttack. This was raided numerous times and more arrests and conviction followed. Press was also suppressed in Cuttack it was mentioned in the weekly *Samaj*.

Other forms of civil disobedience (picketing and Temperance campaigns)

In the Cuttack town the picketing of foreign clothes shop began on 20th June 1930. Earlier a meeting of the Cuttack Lawyers held in early May under the Chairmanship Janakinath Bose, the well-known Advocate of Cuttack and father of Subhash Chandra Bose had resolved that they would not wear foreign cloth and, if possible wear *Khadar*. By 23rd June twelve freedom fighter who were found picketing the cloth shops had been sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment. On 11th July picketing of schools and the Ravenshaw College was begun in Cuttack town. By the first week of August, picketing of exercise (liquor and opium) shops began in Cuttack. The police were posted before the excise shops and the picketers were arrested. Some picketers were arrested and imprisoned. Some young picketers were simply beaten and released because of lack of accommodation in jail. Yielding to the pressure of picketers, the cloth dealers in important town are pledged not to import foreign cloths. Mrs Malati Choudhry played a leading efforts and the influence of the

satyagrahis on the porters and bullock cart men who refused to carry the bales from the wagons to the shops, the cloth merchants of Cuttack had to pack up foreign goods and yarns in a storeroom under Congress seal and owners' lock for three months from 17th July 1930, and under took to sell only cloth goods manufactured by Indian Mills.¹⁷

Subjugation in Kujang

In Kujang area of Cuttack district the Sub-Divisional Magistrate shabbily treated the *satyagrahis* by uttering abusive language and breaking their earthen pots used for boiling brine, cooking rice and storing drinking water. The drinking water which the *satyagrahis* were bringing in buckets from a place, one and half miles away from the salt manufacturing centre was thrown away by the police. The Cuttack Sadar Sub-Divisional Magistrate Raibahadur Madhab Chandra Mishra perpetrated such indecent assaults on guiltless young *satyagrahis* even before there was any breach of law that the incidents themselves were sufficient to arouse the local people in revolt. Once *satyagrahis* cooking pots were frequently broken, drinking water was constantly thrown away, all eatables were looted, not guilty *satyagrahis* taking shelter in the jungle under the shelter of a cowherd were assaulted and thrown into ditches and thorny bushes and the hut was ultimately dismantled. In this helpless condition fourteen *satyagrahis* were left behind and S.D.O went away triumphant riding on the shoulders of two unfortunate *Chaukidars* with

¹⁷ Patra, Kishori Mohan, *Oriya State Legislature and Freedom Struggle; 1912-1947*, ICHR, New Delhi, 1979, pp.115-119

his posse of constables and the *zamindari* officials. Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee resolved on 28th February 1930 to make effective arrangements to start organized mass civil Disobedience Movements in accordance with the instruction of the AICC. It is observed that the participation of ordinary farmers and common men was more predominant than that of the urbanized, educated elite class. From elite class Bhagatbat Prasad Mohapatra resigned from council, Priyanath Sarkar and Gokulanath Dey from Balasore and Nityananda Kanungo from Cuttack joined the movement. Harekrushna Mahatab observed, if there was no Non Cooperation Movement in 1920 and Salt *Satyagraha* in 1930, perhaps Orissa must have failed to get a single Congress workers. However, there was surely a fall of student's strength in the Colleges. The strength reduced from 614 in 1926-27 to 566 in 1931-32. The number of students in College hostels also declined to 259 from 351 in the same period. This movement made impressive impact on the student community of Orissa. Surendranath Patnaik was expelled from Ravenshaw Collegiate School for hoisting the Congress flag on 12th March in a meeting on the river bed of *Kathjori* in Cuttack district. Balam Pati, Bipinbihari Mohanty, Krupasindhu Khuntia, Bhupendranath Bose, Niranjan Ghose, Braja Mohan Singh, Chintamani Mishra, Chakradher Satapathy, Gatikrushna Swain, Sadasiv Sarangi and Akula Nanda Behera left their Schools to join the *satyagraha* camp. The students took part in picketing before liquor shops and processions to hoist flags and sing the song composed by Birakishore Das. The situation in schools generally got rather out of hand. It was

admitted by the Bihar and Orissa government that the secondary schools generally were naturally affected by the political excitement of 1930, and in June an unruly mob of boys left their school, attacked and murdered appoints man at the railway station.¹⁸ S. N Dwivedy studying in class 10th of Ravenshaw Collegiate School in 1930 organized the strike and picketing at the gate of the School, not allowing the students. This resulted in rustivating ten students, among these were Binod Kanungo, Bipin Bihari Mohanty, and Pradyot Gupta. Among other students who left School were Surendranath Pattanaik, Sadasiv Sarangi, Baidher Satapathy, Sachidananda Mohanty, Pyari Sankar Ray, Gajendra Nath Das, Satrughna Sahu, Benudhar Kanungo, Baidyanath Rath, Adwait Ballav Ray, Debendra Banarjee, Sudhanshu Maitra, Narasingha Sahu, Hemanta Kishore Bal, Khetramohan Raul, Nrusingha Chandra Samantsinghar, Rajkishore Mohanty, and Ashok Dash. Two students from Banki were arrested at Cuttack while picketing and it is reported that even School teachers like Artabandhu Mohanty, Upendra Nath Dash supported this movement in many ways. It is known from official report that recommendation was made to disqualify the teacher who took part in political propaganda. Nilamani Routray was punished in N. C High School. The movement undoubtedly accounted for a large decrease in the number of pupils in public institutions of different kinds. How far this decrease had been balanced by a rise in the number of national schools is difficult to say. In 1930 the number of national schools in

¹⁸ Op.cit., pp130-132

Bihar-Orissa was about 400 with 17,000 pupils on their rolls. Another fascinating thing observed while comparing 1921 movement with 1930 movement. The latter had a little impact in educational institutions compared to the former in Orissa. As Harekrushna Mahatab admitted, 60 students joined in 1921 but it might not be more than in 1930. He had given more credit to workers and peasants than the students in 1930 movement in Orissa.¹⁹

Conclusion

These activities, whether in the form of organisation of party conferences and meetings or in the form of undertaking of Gandhian constructive programmes, worked as the key to the upcoming mass movement to be led by the Congress. Without them, it probably would not have been easy for the Indian Nation Congress to hold sway over the new forces during their emergence in the late 1920s, and to lead and coordinate the anti-colonial mass agitations in the 1930s.

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¹⁹ Ibid