

**NON-CO-OPERATION AND ITS AFTERMATH  
IN ORISSA : 1920-29**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
award of the Degree of  
**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "NON-CO-OPERATION AND ITS AFTERMATH IN ORISSA: 1920-1929" submitted by Mr. Pritish Chandra Acharya in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is entirely his own work.

We recommend this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
Prof. BIPAN CHANDRA  
Supervisor

  
Prof. SUVIRA JAISWAL  
Chairperson

## PREFACE

The present work is an attempt to study the history of the Non-Co-operation Movement and its aftermath in Orissa. A detailed account of the occurrences in various parts of the State has been presented. An endeavour has also been made to give an analytical account of the attitude of the different social groups and classes towards the movement and to examine the part played by them. Care has been taken to study the nature of the movement in its various aspects.

In September 1920 at the Calcutta Special Session the Congress supported Gandhi's plan for non-co-operation with the Government on the issue of the Jallianwallebagh massacre and the Khalifat Question. A programme of the boycott of government educational institutions, law courts and legislatures and the promotion of handspinning and handweaving for producing khadi was taken up. The Nagpur Session (1920) made changes in the Congress <sup>Constitution.</sup> committees were reorganised on the basis of linguistic areas. At this point of time, the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee was formed in Orissa. This Committee launched the national movement in Orissa thereafter.

The study of the Congress-led movement has acquired great interest as well as significance. But, to my mind,

the story has not been satisfactorily told. Its study has been primarily undertaken on nationalistic lines. The nationalist historians have undoubtedly contributed a lot to understand different aspects of the political movements emerging in this eastern belt of India, but have left unanswered certain crucial questions concerning the development of nationalism and the anti-imperialist struggles.

Our paper attempts an interpretation of the nationalist struggle in the social context of Orissa. It is divided into three chapters. In the introduction a general outline of the history of Orissa has been made. The first chapter deals with the growth of nationalism in the late 19th and early 20th century. In the second chapter, the non-co-operation movement has been dealt with, and in the third chapter the post-non-co-operation politics i.e., the Swarajists, constructive programme and factionalism in the party as well as the pre-Civil Disobedience developments.

The study is based entirely on the material available in Delhi, as rules of CHS, JNU, M.Phil. degree requires. A fuller indepth study using archival and other materials in Orissa and Calcutta will have to be undertaken later.

I am grateful to the large number of teachers and friends, who have helped me in my work. My indebtedness

to Professor Bipan Chandra, my guide cannot be fully expressed in words. He has guided me with patience, giving me freedom to pursue my own ideas. The errors, however, are entirely mine. Other teachers in the Centre particularly Shri Bhagwan Josh, Mrs. Mridula Mukherjee and Shri Aditya Mukherjee have encouraged me a lot. They have been helping me in all academic matters since my M.A. days in JNU. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to them.

My friends Shri Krishan, Chandi Nanda, Devendra, Subrat, Sushant and K.S. Reddy have gone through the manuscript and made valuable suggestions. I am indebted to them. I must thank Vidya, who went through the draft and Sanghamitra, who prepared the map for the work.

I also express my gratitude to the librarians and staff of JNU Central Library, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Regional Language Library and the National Archives of India.

I acknowledge the help and suggestions given by my Centre's Chairperson Prof. (Mrs.) Suvira Jaiswal.

Shri Om Prakash has typed it. I thank him.

*Bipan Chandra Acharya.*  
PRITISH CHANDRA ACHARYA.

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern Orissa extend from  $17^{\circ}49'N$  to  $22^{\circ}34'N$  and from  $81^{\circ}29'E$  to  $87^{\circ}29'E$  longitude on the eastern coast of India. On the north-east, it is surrounded by West Bengal; on the north Bihar, Madhya Pradesh on the west, Andhra Pradesh on the south and the Bay of Bengal on the east. Total area measures about 1,55,842 square kilometres and the population is 26,370,271 according to 1981 Census figures.<sup>1</sup>

Northern and eastern parts of Orissa comprise four districts i.e. Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Mayurbhanj. Southern Orissa consists of Phulbani, Koraput and Ganjam districts, while Sambalpur, Bolangir, Sundargarh, Kalahandi and Dhenkanal belong to western Orissa.

The three divisions have striking economic and cultural differences among themselves. Western Orissa, which was earlier a part of the Central Province, has got some affinity with it. From the point of administration and economic development Western Orissa would constitute a separate entity with special problems and potentialities.

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1. Census of India, 1981, Part II B (1), Primary Census Abstract, General Population of India.



Coming into being of 'Modern Orissa', is a recent development. In the past Orissa underwent many a changes in its geography as well as politics. It constituted the territorial nucleus of past kingdoms of Kalinga, Utkala, Odra and Kosala. Those kingdoms covered a vast area in the historical geography of ancient India. In medieval times the territories of Orissa were said to have extended roughly from the Ganges to the Godavari and from the Amarkantak to the Bay of Bengal. But decline followed all too soon. In 1568 medieval Orissa lost her independence. It was annexed to Akbar's empire. Later, during the late 17th century it came under the Marathas before the British consolidated their position over it.

Orissa during Maratha rule possessed two distinct political divisions - Mughalbandi and Garjats. The former comprised the plain and fertile lands in the Coastal region and was thickly populated. The latter was a wild tract of land covered by forest and hills with population sparsely distributed. The Garjat was held by several feudatory chieftains, who paid annual tribute to the Maratha Government.

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Orissa came within the orbit of East India Company's political interest after the battle of Buxar. But actual possession was gained only in the year 1803 after the Second Maratha War. The British defeated the Marathas and the main lands of Orissa came under their rule. Eventually the feudatory states were forced to submit to the 'Raj' one by one. But the difference between Moghal-bandi and Garjats created by the Marathas continued. The mainlands such as Cuttack, Puri and Balasore were kept under the direct management of the British, while the Garjats were asked to pay tribute only. Orissa continued to exist as a divided house being ruled by twenty six feudatory chiefs and three provincial governments, i.e. Central Province, the Madras Presidency and the Bengal Presidency. The feudatory States were Athgarh, Talcher, Mayurbhanj, Nilagiri, Keonjhar, Pallahara, Athmallik, Hindol, Narasinghpur, Baramba, Khandapara, Tigiria, Nayagarh, Ranapur, Despalla, Baud, Bamra, Rairakhol, Sonepur, Patna Kalahandi, Gangpur and Bonai.<sup>2</sup>

In 1905, Sambalpur, which was hitherto a part of Central Province, was amalgamated with the other Oriya speaking tracts and, in 1912, a separate Bihar and Orissa

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2. Two Bachelor of Arts, <sup>The</sup> Oriya Movement, p.75.

province was constituted which paved the way for a separate Orissa province.

Since it was not a single province, what was meant by Orissa there was the portion of different provinces, inhabited by Oriya speaking people. This was considered Orissa proper during the period under study. British rule is an important landmark in Orissa's history. Direct management by the British led to the loss of services of many traditional jagirdars like daka beheras, delais, paiks and many others.<sup>3</sup> Their land came to be assessed at the same rate as those of the ryots. They were also given no compensation for the consequent loss of their land.<sup>4</sup> Land revenue settlement, whose burden was very heavy, was revised eleven times between 1804 and 1816 involving an increase every time.<sup>5</sup>

The consolidation of British Raj in Orissa was accompanied by serious discontent and resentment among the people. This is evident from the fact that the people put up a stiff resistance to alien rule throughout the

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3. Prasanna Kumar Mishra, Political Unrest in Orissa in the 19th Century, p.6.

4. Orissa Historical Research Journal, vol.III, No.4, 1955, Ewen's Report, pp.x-xvii, in ibid.

5. Ibid., p.8.

19th century. This political unrest in the 19th century Orissa can be divided into two phases: pre-1857 and post-1857.

In the first phase, the unrest, which was primarily anti-foreign control in nature, was supported by the local chiefs. The Khurda uprising (1817-24) broke out at the initiative of the local chief, when his claim over four parganas was not considered by the British. At the time of British conquest of Orissa in 1803, the local chief had supported the British in the hope of receiving these parganas, which had been snatched away from him by the Marathas. The zamindars and Mahajans also extended their help to the chief. The Kanika and Kujang princes helped the Khurda chief. The royal rebel, Boxi Jagabandhu, could not be captured for about five years (1817-1822) because of the protection given to him by the chiefs of Nayagarh, Ghumsar, Baud and zamindars of Cuttack and Ganjam.<sup>6</sup> Ghumsar Uprising of 1835-37 was led by the local chief - Dhananjay Bhanj - forced to surrender to the Raj. His zamindari was forfeited. This small feudatory State was asked to pay Rs.75,000 annually as political tribute. Dhananjay Bhanj declared open rebellion and absconded.

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6. Orissa Journal of Research, vol.3, J/10, 3 Sept. 1922, in Prasanna Kumar Mishra, op. cit., p.31.

A reward of Rs.5,000 was announced on his head.<sup>7</sup>

Surendra Sai, a member of the Sambalpur royal family, claimed title to state power and declared open rebellion against the British Raj. The local zamindars and neighbouring chiefs extended their helping hand to him.<sup>8</sup> This mutiny in Sambalpur spanning between 1829-64, marked the end of the first phase of the political unrest in the 19th century.

One noticeable feature of all these uprisings was the large scale participation of the people in it, both directly and indirectly. For instance, the official records show that over three thousand insurgents participated in the Khurda Uprising.<sup>9</sup> In Sambalpur Uprising also people in thousands were organised at the call of Surendra Sai. Because of the people's sympathy, the 'natural leader' could escape, until he voluntarily surrendered in 1862.<sup>10</sup>

In the post-1857 phase of political unrest, the local chiefs backed out because of the British policy

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7. "SRG, Madras, JAR Stevenson to Government of Madras, 22nd September 1935, in Prasanna Kumar Mishra, op. cit., pp.47-52.

8. Prasanna Kumar Mishra, op. cit., p.67.

9. Orissa Journal of Research, vol.18, Correspondence, J.O. Hallorom to E. Impey, 1st May 1817, in Prasanna Kumar Mishra, op. cit., p.27.

10. See Pritish Acharya, "Surendra Sai: Eka Mulyankana" in the Ganavarta, March 8, 1984, p.3.

of concession towards princely states. While three Garjat states could be confiscated before the 1857 revolt, not a single state was confiscated after the revolt.<sup>11</sup>

The pre-1857 movements could not have been anti-feudal because they were led by the local chiefs and princes, who acted as 'natural leaders' of these uprisings. In the post-1857 phase, when these leaders backed out, the political movements could become anti-British as well as anti-feudal. Here the forms of defiance were attacks on the local chiefs and other royal symbols, which were identified with the colonial state. In Keonjhar Uprising, (1867-68 and 1891-93) for instance, the tribals such as bhuyans, juangs and kols refused to accept the ruler. The royal palace was attacked and was captured for some days. The local chief had to leave his own palace more than once.<sup>12</sup> The loyalists were attacked and their houses, burnt down by the meli sardars. The Raja's constables and other officials were held captives.<sup>13</sup>

In the Domapada Uprising (1876) the peasants organised by the ex-Dewan Nidhi Patnaik set up a meli darbar or

11. Prasanna Kumar Mishra, op. cit., p.171.

12. Ibid., p.192.

13. Fakir Mohan Senapati, Atmajivana Charita, pp.134-44.

alternative court and ordered their fellowmen to pay rent to the meli court and not to the chief.<sup>14</sup> The local chief was socially excommunicated. Even the dhobi (washer-man) refused to work for the chief. So his clothes had to be washed in Cuttack.<sup>15</sup>

All these uprisings could be attributed to the increase in rent as well as labour rent, like bethi and begari.<sup>16</sup>

In late 19th century, the local chiefs further increased the rent. In 1875, Nilagiri Garjat experienced a 60 per cent increase of tax was imposed on the quarry workers. In Nilagiri Garjat a section of the tax payers, who used to pay Rs. 2,500 to the Raj Kukhery, were now asked to pay Rs. 4,000. In 1876, Damapada had also an increase in rent.<sup>17</sup> A possible reason was the payment of tribute to the British Government. The support of Colonial arms further encouraged the rulers to defy their people. So the peasants' resentments and tensions increased manifold.<sup>18</sup>

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14. Ibid., p.72.

15. Ibid., p.73.

16. Pandit Mrutyunjaya Rath, Utkala Sahitya, vol.22, No.5, in Ibid., p.134.

17. See Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., pp.67-72.

18. Nilagiri Uprising erupted in 1875 and Damapada Uprising, in 1876, Ibid.

The combined forces of the local chiefs and the British army ruthlessly suppressed these post-1857 tribal and peasant uprisings. All these uprisings were spontaneous reactions of the people, which missed a clear understanding of the contradiction with imperialism and the nature of imperialist exploitation. The real force behind the immediate Indian oppressors was never exposed to their concerted attack.

In the late 19th century, Orissa had a slow growth of newly educated middle class. In their search for identity, the educated middle class fought for a separate Orissa Province. The first identity, for which the educated middle-class strived, was, therefore, linguistic and cultural identity. "Union" (of Orissa) was a natural aspiration of these "people" who had been denied "the privilege of self-preservation by the neighbouring races".<sup>19</sup> Many of the local chiefs also identified themselves with this quest for identity.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in late 19th century Orissa there erupted two movements simultaneously: the political movements of the

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19. See Two Bachelor of Arts, op. cit., p.17.

20. In the Utkal Union Conference of 1903, the platform of Oriya movement, most of the delegates were feudatory chiefs and Government servants. See ibid., p.30.



newly-educated middle-class and the local chiefs. These two sets of movements ran separately and were often antagonistic to each other. There was a general absence of a modern educated section in the tribal and peasant movements.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the newly educated class supported the different feudatory chiefs in suppressing the resistance of the tribal and the peasants.<sup>22</sup>

Emergence of nationalism and the nationalists (by nationalists, we mean a growing trend within the new middle class, who in later years separated themselves from the 'Oriya Unionists', fighting for separate Orissa Province, and formed the unit of Indian National Congress in Orissa) in the 1st decade of 20th century was a challenge to the already existing middle class movements. Institutionalisation of Congress was possibly the first organised effort of the middle-class to integrate the two movements - the movement for the creation of a separate linguistic and cultural 'Oriya' identity and the movement for the creation of an all-India 'national' identity. The process of this integration was further carried forward

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21. Dharanidhar Shuyan, the tribal leader of the Keonjhar Prajameli, was the only educated man among the whole lot of rebels. See Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., p.134.

22. Fakir Mohan Senapati was very proud to admit in his autobiography how Madhusudan Das and he, two leading intellectuals of Orissa, were party to the suppression of these movements. Ibid., p.130.

by the radical forces of 1930s namely the socialists, the communists and the Kisan sabhaites.

During the nationalist phase, despite lack of complete integration of the two movements, both of them seemed to be complementary to each other. The nationalists' support to the tribal and peasant movements could not go beyond the condemnation of the feudatory chiefs' atrocious acts or mediatory attempt between a chief and the people.<sup>23</sup> With the emergence of a new middle class identity the people were gradually preferred to the Rajas.\*

The reason was the inhuman oppression of the people by the native rulers. "The condition of the State's people in Orissa <sup>Utk</sup>uptil the third decade of 20th century was not much different from that in Medieval Europe. Royal hunting, bethi, begari, magana and rasad, etc. the different forms of labour rent as well as rent in kind, were every

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23. Mention may be made of the Kanika peasant movement in 1921-22. The Utkal Provincial Congress Committee in its Bhadrak meeting condemned the Raja of Kanika for his anti-people activities. Harekrishna Mahatab, a Congress leader from Balasore district, mediated between the Raja and the people of Kanika and aimed at making the 'two parties' reach an agreement. Thus the Congress here played the role of the 'third' party. See Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, pp.60-63.

\* This has been discussed in the second and third chapters.

day occurrences."<sup>24</sup> In each settlement, the land revenue was increased.<sup>25</sup> 'Off the record' demands were, also no less taxing. For instance, the Daspalla Chief demanded twenty five varieties of maganas, supply free of cost, from his ryots, while in Kanika these demands were not less than sixty four in number.<sup>26</sup> Many of these State demands were unique in nature and were confined to the feudatory states only.<sup>27</sup> The forms of suppression were also different from those in the British Orissa.<sup>28</sup> Thus, during the Prajmeli of Nilagiri in 1930s, the speeches and appeals by the leadership demanded "a rule of law like" that in the Mughalbandi Orissa. The people were mobilised to achieve, a state like British Orissa.<sup>29</sup>

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24. Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Mukti Pathe Sainik, Part I, pp.40-54.
25. The Utkala Dipika, 1870, n.d. in J.K. Samal, "Agrarian Unrest in the Princely States of Orissa in the Later Half of the 19th Century" in New Aspects of History of Orissa, vol.V, p.29.
26. "Bengal General Proceedings (Poll) No.50, Government of Bengal to the Government of India, No.297, P.D., Dt. 25 May 1894", in J.K. Samal, op. cit., p.30; Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.60.
27. J.K. Samal, op. cit., p.29.
28. Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, op. cit., p.54.
29. 'An Appeal' cited in the History of the Nilagiri Praja Andolan, Parisista, p.28.

The feudatory rule was so inhuman that sometimes individual English officers favoured the people against the local chief. The English Magistrate of Balasore tried to prove that the Keonjhar meli of 1891 was because of the oppressive rule of the local chief.<sup>30</sup> Possibly because of that reason, the rebels in some particular cases were given lesser punishments when compared to their massive violent nature. Dharani Dhar, the leader of Keonjhar Prajameli was sentenced to only five years' imprisonment, while others two to three years.<sup>31</sup> After the Kanika Prajameli in 1921-22, the Police Superintendent of Balasore received a punishment transfer for his secret backing to the movement through the Congress.<sup>32</sup>

The other reason why the nationalists had an anti-landlord (feudatory chiefs) attitude was the latter's open identification with the British and opposition to the Congress.<sup>33</sup>

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30. Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., p.149.

31. Ibid.

32. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.62.

33. The dichotomy was so distinctive that during his Orissa tour, Gandhi did not hesitate to intensify it. In a public meeting at Cuttack on March 23, 1921 he attacked on the native rulers, and said, "you have got several feudatory Native Chiefs every one of whom bends the knee before the Political Agent and admit his slavery". See The Collected

The Congress in Orissa had no social-base among the local chiefs and the big landlords. So it genuinely attempted to encompass the masses in their movement. Our hypothesis is that the nationalists at this point of time were never scared of the possible capture of the movement by the masses. To them, the mobilisation and politicisation of the people meant the possible expansion of the hegemony of the existing leadership over the movement and against colonial rule. So there was as such no dichotomy between the existing nationalist leadership and the people. Rather, it was a horizontal competition among the different trends of nationalist leaders for the supreme commandership over the Congress.\*

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contd...fn.33..

Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol.XIX, November 1920-April 1921, p.478. Sumit Sarkar, also, says "In U.P., the Congress was more responsive to peasant outbursts than that of Bihar, perhaps because Avadh taluqdar was notoriously loyalist. Sumit Sarkar, Modern India: 1865-1947, p.223.

\* This has been discussed in the third chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### FORMATION OF THE UTKAL PROVINCIAL CONGRESS COMMITTEE - 1920

#### I

Late nineteenth century politics in Orissa found its reflection in an upsurge against native oppression as well as colonial dominance. This could not fit in well with the all India strategy of Indian nationalism for quite sometime. The quests for regional as well as Indian national identities often support each other, but sometimes they are also at cross purposes and pose a dilemma for leaders, who are devoted to both. Orissa was a concrete example of this dualism. Despite the fact that the Indian National Congress had been set up in 1885 to represent the anti-colonial forces and co-ordination had been made among the different sets of nationalists in many regions, Orissa remained without representation in its leadership and even in its organisation, until the year 1920. As a consequence, the quest for an independent linguistic cultural identity as well as the demand for a separate province could not be linked up with the broader anti-colonial movement. And the two ran separately for sometime.

The reasons for this specificity of politics in Orissa were manifold. The relative lack of nationalist

activities in Orissa before 1920 could be ascribed to a near absence of a band of creative intellectuals as it existed in Bengal and Maharashtra. This section of creative elites was responsible in establishing a strong sense of regional identity in these two states and assumed the leadership of the national movement. But Orissa trailed behind in this regard. This was partly due to the continued social and political dominance of the traditional ruling elites such as, the local feudatory chiefs and the zamindars. (Almost half of the area of present Orissa was occupied by the feudatory chiefs.)

In the Moghalbandi Orissa too the big zamindars dominated the scene.<sup>1</sup> The influx of neighbouring (Bengali and Behari) middle class educated and their consequent predominance in the fields of jobs<sup>2</sup> as well as progress of education in Orissa itself were also

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1. Jagannath Patnaik, "Social Life of the Rajas of the Feudatory States of Orissa under British rule", in Proceedings of Orissa History Congress, 1978, Burla, p.101.
  2. Two Bachelor of Arts, op. cit., p.17; Fakir Mohan Senapati wrote in 1892, "The officers and lawyers are all foreigners. Not even the postal clerk is native." Quoted in G.N. Dash, "Jagannath and Oriya Nationalism" in Anncharloth Eschmann and others, ed. The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa, p.365, in Sudhir Chandra, "Regional Consciousness in 19th century India: A Preliminary Note", in Economic and Political Weekly, vol.XVII, No.32, August 7, 1982. Obviously the foreigners, he complained of, were not so much the British as Bengalis.

strong impediments to the growth of a native educated class.<sup>3</sup> Orissa did not have a single high school or a school for girls until the year 1866.<sup>4</sup> There was no printing press, except the one, run by the missionaries.<sup>5</sup> The increasing pressure on land and uncertainty of agricultural production overburdened the population. One acre of 'good' land never fetched more than fifteen or sixteen maunds (one maund = 40 seer) of paddy.<sup>6</sup> More than fifty per cent of the population lived in a chronic state of indebtedness.<sup>7</sup> The sordid condition of the cattle could well indicate the aggravated misery of agrarian population. About five cows could together fetch not more than one seer of milk.<sup>8</sup> Crop failure was a regular feature of the rural economy.<sup>9</sup> The lowest

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3. Contemporary data are not available. Even then the prospect was not at all encouraging in 1920-30. For instance Balasore, the most advanced region, had a literacy rate of little over eight per cent. Final Report on The Revenue Settlement of Orissa - 1922-23, p.92. It was more depressing in the feudatory states. Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gangpur State - 1929-36, pp.10-16.
  4. Narayan Rao, "Educational Development and Reforms in the 19th Century" in Proceedings of the Orissa History Congress, 1978, p.63.
  5. Gopal Chandra Mishra, Odisara Vikasare Patra Patrikara Pravah, p.26.
  6. S.R. (Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement) of the Gangpur State - 1929-36, p.30.
  7. Ibid., p.17.
  8. S.R. of Athmallik State, p.20.
  9. S.R. of Orissa - 1922-32, p.13.



rung in the untouchables like Pano had been reduced to such a de-humanised state of existence that a sort of social banditry became the virtual resort for them.<sup>10</sup>

The social prejudices like caste structure had also a vital bearing in the shaping of social perception. The contemporary press records how an Oriya student of the medical college in Calcutta had been ex-communicated by his community for dissection of a corpse.<sup>11</sup> Interdining among castes, English education, etc., were widely condemned.<sup>12</sup> Education was quite expensive and books sometimes cost about two rupees.<sup>13</sup>

Orissa division (of Bengal Province) had been so neglected by the authorities that even an English Commissioner Cockburn could perceive the neglect in 1850's, and commented: "Lacs of rupees have been spent in almost every division of Bengal, except in Orissa".<sup>14</sup> No doubt the colonial bureaucracy was instrumental for

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10. S.R. of Dhenkanal State, p.13.

11. The Utkala Putra, 17.6.1874, in Narayan Rao, op. cit., p.60.

12. Narayan Rao, op. cit., p.60.

13. Ibid.

14. "S.R.A. 1850-60, No.274", in Narayan Rao, op. cit., p.60.

such negligence. At the implementation level the role of the Bengali officials and clerks in this regard deserves attention.<sup>15</sup>

Backward economy coupled with poor transport and colonial negligence culminated in the famine of 1866, known as Naanka Durvikhya, which took a toll of over ten lac lives.<sup>16</sup>

The famine of 1866 brought about a change in the social and intellectual life of Orissa. The social prejudices were partly weakened. People looked for food and employment wherever they could, irrespective of caste and social origin.<sup>17</sup> This helped partly in breaking caste prejudices.

The economic insecurity which was inherent in cultivation forced this upper strata of rural population to look for alternative means of employment for which they required modern education. They began to <sup>give</sup> modern education and government services priority over agriculture. As a result of this the post-1866 phase was marked by a

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15. Contemporary press regularly complained of Bengali negligence. Ibid.

16. Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., p.38.

17. Narayan Rao, op. cit., p.61.

significant increase in the number of students, at primary as well as high school level. By 1883-84 Orissa had 1,04,953 students and 8,920 schools at the primary level. In 1868, a high school and in 1875 a medical school were opened at Cuttack. In 1882, for the first time few girls appeared for the Middle English Examination. In 1897, two girls were admitted to the college at Cuttack.<sup>18</sup>

The famine produced considerable stir among the emerging intelligentsia, who began to take a fresh <sup>look at the nature of</sup> British rule. The famine was largely attributed to the un-British character of the British rule. The unwise famine policy of the government, they thought, was responsible for the deplorable situation.<sup>19</sup> The lower level officials were also not spared. These officials, who happened to be mostly Bengalis, gave mal-information and largely contributed to the famine, the intelligentsia complained.<sup>20</sup> The Oriya-Bengali controversy, which had been going on intermittently since the 1840's, became particularly virulent now.<sup>21</sup> In South Orissa, the controversy was

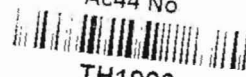
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18. Ibid., p.66.

19. Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., pp.41-43.

20. Ibid.

21. Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., p.1280.



shaped against the Telugus,<sup>22</sup> and in Western Orissa, it became an upsurge against Hindi.<sup>23</sup>

The Oriya identity was in the making as well as at stake. Some Bengali officials posted in Orissa made an effort to have Oriya replaced by Bengali on the ground that Oriya was but a variant of Bengali.<sup>24</sup> One Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya published a book, where it was said that Oriya was a mere dialect of Bengali.<sup>25</sup> In Western Orissa, which was then a part of the central province, it was finally resolved to abolish oriya as the court language of Sambalpur and to introduce Hindi in its place. The order was to be effective from first January 1896.<sup>26</sup> So far all the key posts in the educational institutions, lower courts and offices, the Oriya intelligentsia increasingly complained, were held by the "neighbouring races".<sup>27</sup> In a sense, they felt that the Oriya's

22. Two Bachelor of Arts, op. cit., p.34.

23. P.K. Nayak, "Chandra Sekhar Behera", in New Aspects of History of Orissa, vol.IV, p.27.

24. Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., p.1280.

25. Gopal Chandra Mishra, op. cit., p.26.

26. S.C. De, "Trends of Political Events in Orissa, 1882-1936", in P.K. Nayak, op. cit., p.27.

27. Two Bachelor of Arts, op. cit., p.17.

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"privilege of self-preservation" was being grossly undermined.<sup>28</sup> Fear of cultural submersion spread. The Oriya educated section resisted the said moves. Following the outbreak of famine in 1866, Bichitranand Das and Gouri Shankar Ray started the Utkala Dipika, the first newspaper in Oriya, making it possible for matters relating to Orissa to be publicly debated.<sup>29</sup> By 1871, four other newspapers were in circulation. Surprisingly this number increased to twenty-five by the end of 19th century. Unfortunately most of them had a very short span.<sup>30</sup>

The post-1866 period Orissa also witnessed the mushroom growth of a few socio-religious organisations such as Utkala Bhasadhi Sabha, Cuttack Debating Club, Puri Dharma Rakkhini Sabha to discuss different socio-religious issues. Utkala Sabha at Cuttack, National Society at Balasore and the Utkala Hiteisini Samaj at Parlakhemundi were also part of these developments during the late 19th century.<sup>31</sup>

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28. Ibid.

29. Shantanu Kumar Pattnayak, Growth of Press and Newspapers", in Proceedings of the Orissa History Congress, Berhampur, 1977, p.170.

30. Ibid., p.171.

31. Ibid., pp.170-71.

Modern press as well as various social organisations of the Oriya-speaking intelligentsia were primarily an intellectual defence against this domination.<sup>32</sup>

As a measure of intellectual defence, the educated section comprising of people like Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), Radhanath Ray (1848-1908) and Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912) laid the foundation of modern Oriya literature.<sup>33</sup> Until then Oriya had no prose literature worth the name and its poetry was adhering to the iron laws of traditional prosody.<sup>34</sup> They wrote about a glorious past and recalled the greatness of Orissa during ancient as well as medieval period. To sustain their regional identity, Radhanath Ray, in his "Mahayatra" (1896), made the Pandavas turn to Orissa in the course of their 'final journey' to heaven, for, he wrote: "If all other lands will be leaves (of a plant) then Utkal will be equal to

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32. Nilakantha Das recollects how the newspapers of those days used to write satires on the Bengalis. Nilakantha Das, Atmajivani, p.28; Harekrishna Mahatab also points out that defence against Bengali domination was the only politics of Orissa in the late 19th century. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.22.

33. Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., p.1280.

34. Maysdhar Manasingh, "Fakir Mohan Senapati", pp.22-23, in Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., 1280.

a flower".<sup>35</sup>

They glorified the medieval Orissan empire. The lead in this respect was taken by Rama Shankar Ray through his play 'Kanchi Kaveri (1880-81)'.<sup>36</sup> He was followed by Madhusudan Rao, whose 'Utkala Gatha' comprised a whole series of poems with history as his source of inspiration.<sup>37</sup> But it was Radhanath Ray, who contributed most impressively to the utilisation of Jagannath as a symbol of Oriya identity.<sup>38</sup> Madhusudan Das, a protagonist of Oriya consciousness, in spite of his conversion to Christianity had no qualms about accepting Jagannath as a symbol of Oriya identity.<sup>39</sup>

The prolonged search of the Oriya new middle class for a distinct Oriya identity culminated with the institutionalisation of the Utkal Union Conference in 1903 to plead for the union of all Oriya speaking tracts under one presidency.<sup>40</sup>

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35. Quoted in G.N. Dash, "Jagannath and Oriya Nationalism" in Anncharlott Eschmann et al, ed., 'The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa, in Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., p.1281.

36. Ibid.

37. Priya Ranjan Sen, "Modern Oriya Literature", pp.65-66, in Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., p.1282.

38. G.N. Dash, op. cit., p.369, in ibid.

39. Sudhira Chandra, op. cit., p.1281.

40. Two Bachelor of Arts, op. cit., p.10.

The local chiefs and big landlords identified with the small new middle class in this respect. Under the changing colonial circumstances, acquisition of western education had become for them an important pre-requisite for social mobility. Even discussions with their 'superiors', i.e., English officials, required some knowledge of English language.<sup>41</sup> Fakir Mohan Senapati pointed out how an uneducated chief was looked down upon by the British officials. The local chiefs and big landlords were now compelled to take to modern education. They sent their family members to attain the expensive English education. Even if many of them could not be educated, they gathered educated men around them in order to acquire a higher social status.<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly enough, the landed interests of this section did not clash with the struggle for Oriya Union, which the new Oriya middle class had undertaken. Moreover, many of them became the leaders of the Oriya movement.<sup>43</sup>

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41. Fakir Mohan Senapati pointed out how an uneducated chief was looked down upon by the British officials. See Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., pp.112-17.

42. Ibid.

43. The Utkal Union Conference was presided over only by the local chiefs between 1903 and 1912. Mayurbhanj Prince was its first president in 1903. See Nivedita Mohanty, Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Province, 1866-1936, p.53.



They participated in liberal activities and imbibed western liberalism retaining at the same time old feudal values. This led to a situation where there was no organic unity between their consciousness and their emotional life. On the plane of consciousness they were liberals but, contrary to this, on the emotional plane they remained traditional with old values of status and respectability. They would participate in liberal discussions in the urban areas and, at the same time, would indulge in social oppression in the countryside. The urban privileges were combined with their feudal inheritance.<sup>44</sup> This also partially explains the dichotomy between the two sets of movements, i.e., the peasant and tribal movements and the Oriya movement.

The social composition of the other section of the newly educated class constituted of rich peasants and small landlords. With modern education many of them had become professionals - lawyers, government servants and teachers.<sup>45</sup> Madhusudan Das, the first commoner to preside

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44. Radhakant Barik, "Gopabandhu and the National Movement in Orissa", in Social Scientists, vol.6, No.9, April 1978, p.42.

45. Nivedita Mohanty, op. cit., p.53.

over the Utkal Union Conference in 1913 was a lawyer and Fakir Mohan Senapati, another intellectual of those days, was a high school teacher.<sup>46</sup> Despite being small in number they lacked the avenues for achievement as professionals which resulted in their dependence either on feudatory chiefs or on the colonial government. Fakir Mohan Senapati wrote, how his family depended completely on his salary and because of the termination of his job, they had to undergo many hardships.<sup>47</sup>

Because of these reasons the feudatories acted as the major partner in the search for Oriya linguistic and cultural identity. They set up printing presses. Baikunthnath Dey, a zamindar of Balasore, founded one of the earliest printing presses in Orissa, Dey Press at Balasore in 1873. He brought out a magazine called the Utkala Darpana.<sup>48</sup> In 1873, a zamindar from Cuttack, Kalipada Bandopadhyaya set up Utkal Hitaisini Press and published a magazine the Utkala Hiteisini.<sup>49</sup> Bamanda chief, Basudev Sudhal Dev also established a printing

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46. Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., p.74.

47. Ibid., pp.98 and 106.

48. Shantanu Kumar Pattanayak, op. cit., p.166.

49. Ibid.

press in the year 1885. He brought out a paper called the Sambalpur Hiteishini, which was one of the few regular newspapers in those days.<sup>50</sup> Even the intelligentsia's newspapers, for example, the Utkala Dipika, also required the financial assistance from the zamindars and Rajas.<sup>51</sup> The feudatories also had a big say in <sup>other</sup> ~~inter~~ professions such as law, medicine and academics. They were the biggest patrons of education and literature.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the limited political movements, for that matter the Oriya union movement, were likely to have sought financial support of these local chiefs in the absence of any other alternative.

In other words, late 19th century Orissa politics was largely under the influences of the feudatories and zamindars. The professionals were minor partners in the quest for Oriya identity, "which happened to be the only politics in those days".<sup>53</sup> This politics was based on the principle of non-confrontation with the colonial rule and minimum linkage with the anti-colonial forces. The

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50. Gopal Chandra Mishra, op. cit., p.26.

51. Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., p.50.

52. 'The Utkala Dipika', n.d., in Narayan Rao, op. cit., p.63.

53. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.22.

tribal and peasant movements were ignored. The intellectuals oscillated between the people's movements and the feudatories. In their writings, they traced the causes of these movements in the oppressive rule of the local chiefs,<sup>54</sup> but contrary to this conviction, they themselves were instrumental in their ruthless suppression. Fakir Mohan Senapati was proud to admit how Madhusudan Das and he helped the Keonjhar chief to procure the help of the British Police to suppress the uprising in 1891.<sup>55</sup> On one occasion, he wrote, how he misinterpreted the Oriya version of the complaint of two thousand praja of Domapada, who had gathered before the English magistrate, to complain against the local chief in 1878, and thus the local chief could be saved.<sup>56</sup>

The Oriya movement could not go beyond its middle class boundary; the form of politics being an annual conference at which a few resolutions were passed. Besides the local chiefs, others who attended the sessions were mainly people from humbler origin.<sup>57</sup> Even during those days, many felt it to be a personal gamble of a few

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54. See Fakir Mohan Senapati, op. cit., p.134.

55. Ibid., p.130.

56. Ibid., p.80.

57. Nivedita Mohanty, op. cit., p.56.

aristocratic Oriyas led by (their leader) Madhusudan Das and... for the henchmen of the British government".<sup>58</sup>

Another reason why the Oriya unionism could not identify itself with Indian nationalism, was that at this point of time the Indian National Congress representing Indian nationalism contained a sizable number of Bengalis. Identification with the Congress would have meant fighting the Bengali domination in Orissa while having an alliance with the Bengalis elsewhere. This would have placed them in an awkward situation.

The Bengali Congress leaders' apathy towards Oriya aspirations was equally responsible for the alienation of the Oriya middle class from national politics.<sup>59</sup> At that point of time, it may be noted, the Congress was yet to transcend its middle class character and transform itself into a mass party. Whatever measures were taken to bridge the gap between the national and the regional identities came from the disillusioned Oriya unionists. The efforts on the part of the Congress to encompass this

58. Quoted in Ibid., p.65.

59. Miss Sailabala Das, daughter of Madhusudan Das, "the grand oldman of Orissa", has been quoted in Nivedita Mohanty, op. cit., p.97, as to how her father's repeated appeal to Surendra Nath Banerjee, the Congress stalwart, in 1902, to take up the Oriya issue in the All India National Congress was turned down, and how her father got disillusioned with national politics after that.

regional identity were far from satisfactory. Because of this the Oriya delegates in the initial years could not feel at home in the Congress sessions.<sup>60</sup> Till the year 1905, not a single Oriya delegate ever spoke a word on any resolution discussed at the annual sessions of the Congress.<sup>61</sup>

The different 'sabhas' preaching Oriya unionism, used to send delegates to the Congress in the initial years. In 1886, the year after the formation of the Congress, Raja Baikuntha Nath De from Balasore attended the Congress session. Two years after this, in 1888, Madhusudan Das, a leading advocate from Cuttack, and Gouri Shankar Ray, the editor of the Utkala Dipika, were delegates at the Congress session at Madras.<sup>62</sup> It is known from the delegates' lists of the Congress between 1886 and 1901 that not less than twentyone delegates from Orissa participated in the Congress annual sessions

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60. P.K. Mishra, "The Early Phase of Nationalist Movement in Orissa, 1885-1905" (hereafter Early Phase) in Indian History Congress Proceedings, Vol. 2, 1978, p.647.

61. Ibid., p.646.

62. "Report of the Indian National Congress - 1888" in P.K. Mishra, First Half Century of the Congress Movement in Orissa: A Review" (hereafter First Half) in Indian History Congress Proceedings, 1979, p.637.

held during these years.<sup>63</sup> However, the identification of these leaders with the National Congress was rather sketchy. They used to merely report the activities of the Congress sessions in their respective sabhas.<sup>64</sup>

In 1903 the Madras session of the Congress passed a resolution saying, "...the Congress deprecates the separation of the district of Ganjam and Vizagapatam from the Madras Presidency". This resolution was against the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts with the Orissa parts of Bengal. The Oriya unionists then severed their relations with the Indian National Congress and founded the Utkal Union Conference to carry forward their struggle at the regional level.<sup>65</sup>

All these led the Oriya unionists to think that national identity and regional identity were contradictory to each other for the time being and primacy had to be accorded to the latter at the cost of the former.

## II

Although the traditional elites dominated the political scenario for quite sometime, the intellectual or professional

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63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. K.M. Patra, Orissa Legislature and Freedom Struggle - 1912-47, p.14.

section of the new middle class gradually emerged dominant and eventually replaced the old guards. It was a matter of time only. By the year 1920, which symbolised the formation of the UPCC (Utkal Provincial Congress Committee), the stage was set for the change-over.

However, it is important to note that even in 1920, the eventual capture of political scene by the new social forces was far from complete. This year marked only a higher stage of confrontation between the nascent trend among the new social forces on the one hand, and the old-new middle class (moderates), the feudal elites and the colonial rulers, on the other.<sup>66</sup>

Long before 1920 the ground was prepared for such a social-battle. Towards the end of 19th century, a new trend was emerging within the new social forces as a reaction to the politics of concession. Polarisation was taking place within the educated circle, the old contending themselves with the existing concession

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66. Madhusudan Das joined the Bihar and Orissa Ministry in 1920. His supporters, the Oriya unionists, organised a welcome meeting for him at Cuttack. The young nationalists condemned Madhusudan Das and circulated a handbill in the meeting saying: "At last Mr. Das, a government servant, is drawing Rs. 60,000 from the malaria of Balasore, famine of Puri and floods of Cuttack". The meeting got disrupted and was captured by the young nationalists. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p. 29.



politics and the young strongly objecting to it. This was owing to the disillusionment of the younger political intellectuals with the politics of concession and appeal, which had already proved ineffective.

The Oriya nationalists had high hopes in the British rule. In fact, the initiative for a separate Orissa province was taken by colonial authorities. The British statesmen, General Chesney and Sir Stafford Northcote, then Secretary of the State for India, had put forward a proposal for the separation of Oriya-speaking tracts from Bengal and their amalgamation under one administration for administrative conveniences. Cooke, the Commissioner of Orissa, advocated this case in 1895.<sup>67</sup>

The transfer of Sambalpur from central province to Orissa division in the year 1905 generated further hopes among the Oriya middle class.<sup>68</sup> As a result the need for associating with the Congress did not gather momentum. On the other hand, their faith in the British administration got reinforced. But, in 1912, a separate province of

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67. "Simon Commission Report, vol. IV, p. 583" in Radhamohan Sahu, *The Formation of Orissa: A Political Back Drop*, in A.P. Pathy (ed.), Indian State Politics, p. 3.

68. Radhamohan Sahu, op. cit., p. 3.

Bihar (and Orissa) was carved out and Orissa was kept dismembered. The high hopes of the Oriya unionists received a rude shock and then disillusionment with the British grew. This was reflected in the increasing number of meetings that the Utkal Union Conference held in the year 1912.<sup>69</sup>

The younger generation within the Oriya movement started blaming the old guard for the failure. The process reached its climax in the year 1919, when Gopabandhu Das representing the former category wrote, "...for sixteen years, because of the Ruling Chiefs' deliberations the UUC had an age of speeches, making and paper resolutions... The conference has achieved nothing..."<sup>70</sup>

The rift between the 'old' and the young Oriya unionists, who later headed the Congress in Orissa, soon acquired new dimensions. The petty anti-Bengalism within the Oriya movement was strongly criticised by the younger section. In the second conference of the UUC itself held in the year 1904, Gopabandhu Das and his friends walked out of the Conference hall, and wrote a letter

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69. Ibid.

70. Gopabandhu Das, quoted in S.C. Dash, op. cit., p.85.

to Madhusudan Das, protesting against a few Bengali students supporting the Oriya movement being prevented from entering the pandal at the instance of Madhu Badu.<sup>71</sup> Although the differences were bridged temporarily, the instance nevertheless exhibited a growing trend against the hitherto dominating tendency of Oriya parochialism.

Many of these newly educated people happened to be writers and poets in Oriya language. The difference in their approach to literature had bearing on their different political view-points. This was the period when a struggle between the traditionalists and the modernists in literary composition was being carried on.<sup>72</sup> In 1894, Gopabandhu Das, in his school day writings, confronted the older generation represented by Radhanath Roy. He escaped rustication from the school, but nevertheless monetary punishment was imposed on him for his criticism of the school inspector's (Radhanath Roy) style of writing.<sup>73</sup> But the battle continued pervading politics and culture in the later years.<sup>74</sup>

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71. S.C. Dash, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

72. Ibid., p. 10.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

The gap between the 'old' and the 'new' was further widened as the latter developed a strong penchant for humanistic approach, which the former ignored. Nilakantha Das, a nationalist, recollected how Biswanath Kar, a strong Oriya unionist, once declined to come out for flood work because of the fear that his good shoes and new dhoti and shirt would be dirtied. Then and there, social-relations with him were cut-off by the nationalists like Nilakantha Das and Brajasudra Das.<sup>75</sup>

This new generation's pledge to serve the nation or desh, by which they meant a sum total of people, was a significant development compared to the careerism of the early days politics.<sup>76</sup> When these people joined politics, they did not <sup>combine</sup> ~~combine~~ careerism and politics. Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Anant Mishra and many others, left their future prospects in Government service. Despite their bright educational qualifications they joined the Indian National Congress at a point of time when it was almost a non-entity in Orissa's politics.

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75. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.278.

76. Gopabandhu Das, along with Nilakantha Das and Anant Mishra, took an oath not to join any government office, and instead, to work for the nation. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.35.

From their own experience, they could learn that the local chiefs and big landlords' support in no way helped the political movement.<sup>77</sup>

Unlike, the older political leaders, the young nationalists belonging to the new trend tried to grow independently. In 1909, Satyavadi School and later on the 'Samaj' and the Satyavadi were founded which were meant not only for opening avenues of employment for the new wholetimers but also for imparting political education to the political cadres.<sup>78</sup> (The role<sup>of</sup> monetary contribution from the moneyed men in laying foundation of these institutions could not be overlooked. But the control remained in the hands of nationalists.)

The youth were trying to find out an alternative to the existing moderate politics in Orissa. This was so, by and large, due to their inclination, right from the beginning, towards the anti-colonial movement developing

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77. Gopabandhu Das joined as the state lawyer of Mayurbhanj and few other states, but, by 1912, he got disillusioned with the nature of work and left it. On one occasion, when the English political agent insulted an Indian for no fault of his, neither the chief nor the officials could protest against this injustice. After this incident, he (Gopabandhu) finally decided to leave that job and resume his independent legal practice at Cuttack. S.C. Dash, op. cit., p.39.

78. Ibid.

outside the state, despite the fact that they themselves were off-springs of the regional nationalist groupings.<sup>79</sup>

The Swadeshi movement of 1905 did affect Orissa though it was confined to a few public meetings at some urban centres like Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Sambalpur and a signature campaign and bonfire of foreign clothes at Puri.<sup>80</sup> This movement was enriched by the students like Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra and other future Congressmen.<sup>81</sup>

By 1905, Gopabandhu had come in contact with a terrorist from Bengal, Sashi Bhusan Roychoudhry, who was camping at Bhubaneswar with the purpose of recruiting people on the line of Bande Mataram Group in Bengal.<sup>82</sup> This led to the formation of an informal group, with the membership of college students - like Godabarish Mishra, Nilakantha Das, Brajasunder Das, Acharya Harihar Das, Jagannath Mohapatra, and Anant Mishra.<sup>83</sup> Their

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79. Ibid.

80. Purushottam Kar, "The Swadeshi Movement in Orissa" in Proceedings of Orissa History Congress, 1979, pp.87-91.

81. Ibid.

82. S.C. Dash, op. cit., pp.18-19.

83. Godavarish Mishra, Ardha Satabdira Odisa O Tahinre Mo Sthana, pp.104-05; S.C. Dash, op. cit., p.19.

nationalistic identification with the terrorist movement went to the extent of making them fast on the day when Khudiram Bose was hanged in the jail.<sup>84</sup>

These young nationalists, while cooperating with the Oriya movement, thought that its identification with the broader anti-colonial movement could help them in achieving their goal. In the year 1908 itself, an anonymous letter sent from Puri and published in the "Odia O Navasambado" (weekly) "ridiculed" the UUC for being just "a thanks giving body" with no concern for the Congress programme and with no concrete achievement to its credit.<sup>85</sup> The letter took a dig at Madhu Sudan Das, the leading Oriya unionist, and asked why Orissa didn't join the Bankipur session of the Indian National Congress.<sup>86</sup>

Gopabandhu, the disillusioned Oriya nationalist, moving towards Indian National Congress, reached the Lucknow Congress in 1916, openly breaking the UUC norms. After coming back from the Lucknow Session and most possibly keeping in his mind the unity scene of moderates and

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84. Godavarish Mishra, op. cit., p.105.

85. "The Odia O Navasambado", n.d., Quoted in P.K. Mishra, The Political History of Orissa, p.120.

86. Ibid., p.121.

extremists he hastened to form the district unit of Congress in Puri under the Bihar and Orissa Congress Committee.<sup>87</sup> Although the unit was practically a non-entity, it symbolised a significant development in the nationalist history of Orissa.

From 1917 onwards, a massive debate had begun within the UUC on the question of making it a political organisation on Congress lines. It in 1919 conference even passed a resolution condemning the terrible massacre in the Punjab.<sup>88</sup> Gopabandhu Das wrote at this time, "...The Oriya nationalists on asking to wait for the opportune moment to join the national politics. But it is the time to join. If obliteration of Orissa can save Indian nationalism, is it not desirable? It will rather be a stroke of good fortune for Orissa... the sponsors of the Sammilani (UUC) not only want us not to join the struggle but also to stand as a reaction. Our inaction and slavery will impose harder work on others... We have to dedicate ourselves to Indian nationalism."<sup>89</sup>

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87. Harekrishna Mahatab, Gandhiji O Odisa, p.4.

88. Gopabandhu Das, Quoted in S.C. Das, op. cit., p.85.

89. Ibid., pp.85-88.



The first decade of the 20th century marked the reign of flood and drought culminating in the great famine of 1919 which de-populated the Oriya territory to a great extent.<sup>90</sup> The price of rice, which was twenty seers per rupee in 1904, rose to six seers per rupee in 1920.<sup>91</sup> In the famine stricken Orissa, a major portion of the population emigrated and the period between 1915 and 1920 and thereafter showed an increase in the steady flow of money-orders received by the local post offices.<sup>92</sup> The Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee's report showed the chronic indebtedness, which happened to be an average of Rs.75 per household and the rate of interest being 25 per cent. On the other hand, "fifty per cent of the landlords were found to be free from debt and seventy per cent of the indebted landlords were lightly indebted."<sup>93</sup>

The agrarian crisis helped the young nationalists with the new outlook to coordinate the discontentment of the people against the existing colonial set-up. They engaged themselves in impressive relief work in emergencies

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90. S.R. of Orissa - 1922-32, p.4.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid., p.5.

93. Ibid., p.7.

caused by floods and drought.<sup>94</sup> Later on, Congress in Orissa was made popular because of the high profile that these individual leaders maintained for their humanitarian activities.<sup>95</sup>

In the late 1910's Congress on the national plane was also undergoing<sup>a</sup> change generating aspirations among different anti-colonial forces. The advent of Gandhi in politics in 1918 symbolised an effort on the part of the nationalists to find a way to coordinate the anti-colonial developments, emerging in different regions.<sup>96</sup> Gandhi sent Amrit Lal Thakkar to carry out the relief work in Orissa during the famine in 1919.<sup>97</sup> He also wrote on the famine-conditions in Orissa and appealed for funds in the nationalist press like Navajeevan.<sup>98</sup> Thus through famine relief-work Congress and Orissa came to know each other.

Gandhi and Congress were soon as alternatives to the whole exploitative system, whether feudal or colonial. As

94. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.248.

95. Today nationalists like Gopabandhu Das have become a household name, a superman, an Utkalamani, and a man of action among the Oriyas. See Radhakant Barik, op. cit., p.40.

96. Harekrishna Mahatab, Gandhi O Odisa, p.4.

97. Ibid.

98. See Gandhi Collected Works, vol.XVII, pp.396-405.

a result, rebels of the anti-feudal movements were seen escaping to the Gandhi Ashram for security. Govind Mishra, a rebel of the Daspalla, Praja meli (1915-16) escaped to Sabarmati Ashram after the movement was crushed by the local chief. He was the first Oriya to come in personal contact with Mahatma Gandhi looking for leadership & guidance.<sup>99</sup>

On 13 April 1919, an unarmed but large crowd, while protesting against the arrest of two nationalist leaders, Dr. Saffiuddin Kitchlu and Dr. Satyapal, at Amritsar in the Jalianwalabagh, was fired upon. Thousands were killed. This led to a wave of horror and anger all over the country.

In Orissa, when the news of the Punjab happenings spread through the local newspapers like the Samaj and the Satyavadi a strong sense of protest was generated among the people.<sup>100</sup>

The educated person's understanding of colonialism underwent a change because of the changing circumstances. Even the moderate-dominated Utkal Union Conference could

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99. Harekrishna Mahatab, Gandhi O Odisa, p.4.

100. Harekrishna Mahatab recollects what tremendous impact this incident had in Orissa. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.23.

not prevent the passing of a resolution condemning the incident in its annual conference in 1919.<sup>101</sup> The post-war crisis and Punjab massacre, when highlighted in the newly set-up regional nationalist press, generated a sense of "we feeling" among the politically aware people against the alien rule.

Towards the end of the first decade of 20th century Orissa witnessed spontaneous emergence of youth groups on nationalistic line. Harekrishna Mahatab, Nabakrishna Choudhury, Nityanand Kanungo, Bhagirathi Mahapatra, and a few others started a nationalist study circle, called Bharati Mandir in Cuttack in late 1919. Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Acharya Harihar Das & many others had earlier formed the 'Satyavadi' group. These two groups became the citadels of political activities on nationalist line prior to 1920. Probably such groups were also found among the Oriya students at Calcutta and Patna, who attended the Nagpur conference of the AICC in 1920. But as Harekrishna Mahatab explains, there was no link among all these groups.<sup>102</sup>

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101. S.C. Dash, op. cit., p.85.

102. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.23.

The socio-political developments in the region, which were leading certain groups towards nationalist politics, coincided with the Congress mass appeal in 1920. The annual session of Congress at Nagpur in 1920 made changes in the Constitution of the party. Accordingly Provincial Congress Committees were to be reorganised on the basis of linguistic areas. Congress membership was now thrown open to all men and women of the age of 21 on payment of 4 annas as annual subscription.<sup>103</sup>

The changing nature of Congress enabled the young nationalist trend to simultaneously express their regional as well as national aspirations and achieve a sense of political identity. These new developments in Congress encouraged the twenty seven delegates, representing the different nationalist groups of Orissa, to the session at Nagpur and to set up a party unit in Orissa thereafter.<sup>104</sup> Nagpur Congress symbolised not only the re-union of Orissan nationalists with the Indian National Congress, but also a formal union among the Orissa's different nationalists groups. The delegates representing the different groups of Orissa came to know each other only at Nagpur.<sup>105</sup>

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103. Bipan Chandra, Modern India, p.267.

104. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.28.

105. Ibid.

The coordination among the nationalists, within and outside Orissa could be possible only at Nagpur.

On the way back to Orissa these Congress delegates, under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das, reached Chakradhar-  
Utkal  
pur, the venue of the Union Conference. The session of the UUC was dominated by the nationalists. Jagabandhu Singh, a nationalist, presided over the session and spoke in favour of the ensuing non-cooperation movement.<sup>106</sup> A resolution was moved on the issue of UUC's support to the AICC. Voting on the resolution showed a massive victory for the nationalists' securing 127 votes against 16 with 4 abstention.<sup>107</sup>

The victory over the Utkal Unionists was followed by the formation of Utkal Provincial Congress Committee under the presidentship of Gopabandhu Das. Dr. Ekram Rasul was made the Vice-President, Bhagirathi Mahapatra the Secretary and Brajasundar Das the Joint Secretary.<sup>108</sup> The feeling for national identification that was being generated for the last few years could be concretised now.

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106. Nivedita Mohanty, op. cit., p.101.

107. Ibid., p.102.

108. Surendra Nath Patnaik, History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, p.39.

Six district committees were constituted under the UPCC. They were Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Ganjam, Sambalpur and Singhbhum.<sup>109</sup> A separate Orissa province on linguistic basis, which was hitherto the call of the hour was recognised by the All India Congress, much before the recognition came from the British Raj. Now the Non-cooperation pledge was taken up by the newly formed UPCC with full vigour and all enthusiasm.

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109. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa - 1905-1936, p.122.

## CHAPTER II

### NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT

Formation of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee on the eve of 1920 marked the formal setting up of links among the nationalists in Orissa with their organisational and ideological affiliation to Congress at a national plane and more hectic interaction between non-Orissa nationalists and nationalists at home. The infant UPCC had to make efforts to carry out the Non-Co-Operation Campaign in this belt, hitherto unexposed to the Congress led anti-imperialist stir unlike her neighbours in Bengal and Bihar.

The developments of Non-Co-Operation in Orissa showed that the first phase of the campaign which lasted from January to March 1921, was confined to a few pockets most of which had been already exposed to some kind of politics during the pre-Non-co-operation days.

The campaign began from Sambalpur which had experienced a mild language agitation against the possible imposition of Hindi in 1903 and had also hosted the annual session of the Utkal Union Conference in 1915.<sup>1</sup> The local politically

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1. P.K. Nayak, "Chandra Sekhar Behera" in New Aspects of History of Orissa, vol.IV, pp.27-29.



active people like Chandra Sekhar Behera, Dasarathi Mishra and Dharanidhar Mishra, who had attended the Nagpur Session of the Congress in 1920, encouraged school students to begin Non-Co-operation in the beginning of January 1921.<sup>2</sup> On 2nd January, the students of Sambalpur Zilla School held a meeting at Budharaja and called for a boycott of classes on the next day. The students' boycott of classes led to a successful hartal and a public meeting in the town.<sup>3</sup> The campaign in Sambalpur spread to nearby smaller towns like Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Kuchinda, Sheden and Padampur and school students went on strikes there.<sup>4</sup>

The students, who were studying at Calcutta and were schooling themselves in Congress ideals, were invited by the local people of Sambalpur to chalk out initiatives, needed to be taken to carry forward the struggle.<sup>5</sup> Bhagirathi Mishra, a law student at Calcutta, contacted Nilakantha Das, a former teacher of Satyavadi school and then a lecturer

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2. Ibid.

3. S.P. Padhi, "Aksaya Taraka Chandra Sekhar", p.66 cited in C.R. Mishra, "Laxmi Narayan Mishra", in New Aspects of History of Orissa, vol.IV, p.41.

4. Ibid.

5. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.54.

in Calcutta University.<sup>6</sup> Nilakantha Das, known for his efforts in the Satyevadi educational unit and still not sure of his distinct nationalist loyalty due to his vacillation between co-operation and Non-co-operation, then decided to join the movement and along with Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mishra left for Sambalpur.<sup>7</sup>

The forms of movement in Sambalpur included various activities. On 6 January the three Congressmen were enthusiastically greeted by a large gathering at the railway station. A huge procession was taken out and the people received them with chandan and garlands.<sup>8</sup> The whole town was covered by the procession infusing a sense of self-confidence among the people. The procession culminated in a large public meeting at Balibandhu where the speakers advised the students to boycott classes and the peasants to defy the forest laws.<sup>9</sup>

By the latter half of the month, the movement gained strength and its flames reached many other nationalist pockets. On 21 January 1921, the 'Satyevadi School' was

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p.224.

9. Interview with Harekrishna Mahatab, Sambalpur, dt. 13.2.86.

declared a national school by its defacto-head Gopabandhu Das. Thus, it became a centre more of considerable headache for British quarters than of any sympathy, which characterised the pre-Non-co-operation phase.<sup>10</sup> On 24 January, a large public meeting was held on the bank of Kathjori at Cuttack and the UPCC President Gopabandhu Das condemned the British Government and appealed to the gathering to join the Non-co-operation Movement.<sup>11</sup>

Other than public meetings, the nature of defiance in this phase, took the form of a number of resignations by government officials from their respective institutions and students from their educational institutions. Engineering students, twenty four in number, left their studies at Patna and came back to Orissa to join the movement. Officials such as Gopabandhu Choudhury, a deputy collector, Lingaraj Mishra, a Sanskrit lecturer in Muzaffarpur, Nilkantha Das, a lecturer of Calcutta University, Madhu Sudan Biswal, a deputy Inspector of Schools, Birabar Das, a Public Works Department Official, Surendra Nath Das, a Police Sub-Inspector and Md. Hannif, an Executive Inspector, resigned from their respective offices.<sup>12</sup> A few lawyers like Gopabandhu Das,

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10. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.206.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p.39.

Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Jagabandhu Singh, and Chandra Sekhar Behera also left their legal practices to join the movement.

The resignations during the first phase reveal that most of these people were politically active long before the Non-co-operation. The campaign only incited them to act courageously. <sup>13</sup> The anti-imperialist consciousness had also gripped Hopabandhu Choudhury who was thoroughly disillusioned With his official work and was looking for an opportune moment to jump into the stir. <sup>14</sup> The personal disillusionment, in a way, found its solution with his participation in the movement which gripped him during his official tenure.

Formation of district Congress Committees and nationalist schools and publication of newspapers comprised the other immediate and serious political preoccupations. The sources available for Sambalpur, reveal all these activities there. Sambalpur District Congress Committee was set up with Chandra Sekhar Behera as president and Dharanidhar Mishra as one of the Office bearer. <sup>15</sup> The Seva, a weekly newspaper, was

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13. Example of Lingaraj Mishra could be cited here. Despite his anti-imperialist consciousness he had joined government office, for he had to repay some loans. By the time, Non-Co-operation was started, he had freed himself of debt so he joined the movement immediately. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.206.

14. Ibid., p.277.

15. Ibid., p.224.

brought out and a national school was established in the building of Flezer Club in the town.<sup>16</sup> Teachers and students who had left the government school and had joined the movement, were absorbed in the national school.<sup>17</sup> Within a few days, the school became very popular and parents, while sending their children, came to be emotionally attached to the movement.<sup>18</sup>

The first phase of the movement was confined to only a few urban pockets and it lost momentum by the end of February 1921. Thus, the Fortnightly Report (of the Government) found nothing serious to report in March.<sup>19</sup> This political vacuum was filled in by Mahatma Gandhi's timely visit at the end of March. It stimulated new party workers. The Non-Co-operation was re-inaugurated. <sup>hopes among the</sup>

On 22 March, Gandhi reached Orissa and covered many of the urban centres of Coastal Orissa, like Bhadrak, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam.<sup>20</sup> In all these places the UPCC

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16. Ibid.

17. Nilamani Senapati, ed., Orissa District Gazetteer Sambalpur, p.79 in P.K. Nayak, op. cit., p.30.

18. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.224.

19. Fortnightly Report, File No. March/1921, Deposit No.35, Home Political Dept.

20. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. XIX, Nov. 1920-April 1921, p.474.

organised large public meetings in which Gandhi criticized the British rule. He also took up the Orissa Union issue and blamed the British rule for not solving the problem of amalgamation of Oriya people. In his Cuttack meeting, which was possibly the largest in the series, Gandhi attacked the colonial mentality of the English educated people.<sup>21</sup> Apart from the public meetings, he separately met the women, merchants, students and Muslims in most of the places.<sup>22</sup>

In the second phase of Non-Co-operation, which was inaugurated with Gandhi's visit, mass participation began when large number of people received him on the route. At Bhadrak railway station, where Gandhi approached Orissa, seventy two kirtan mandalis with dhol and majira welcomed and took him in a large procession.<sup>23</sup> Although such descriptions may sound like a nationalist exaggeration, the generation of momentum to the movement imparted by Gandhi's timely visit cannot be overlooked.

The Non-Co-operation, which was hitherto an urban based movement started percolating into the interior during the second phase. The activists, deputed at the District Congress Office, now carried the message to the

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21. Ibid.

22. Harekrishna Mahatab, Gandhi O Odisa, pp.13-18.

23. Ibid., p.13.

semi-urban and rural areas. On 5 April 1921, four activists including Harekrishna Mahatab, were deputed by the UPCC to Balasore. For a few days they concentrated at the district headquarters. Their work comprised the organisation of the 'National Week', formation of the District Congress Committee, and Swaraj Fund collection. They, along with other new recruits, divided the district into five units and accordingly Krushna Prasad Mahapatra was sent to Basta, Karunakar Panigrahi and Biswanath were deputed to Jaleswar, Nand Kishor Das camped at Sore, Ghanashyam Sahu, Upendra Nath Panda and Banchhanidhi Mohanty at Bhadrak and Harekrishna Mahatab stayed at Balasore proper.<sup>24</sup>

The Sambalpur D.C.C. also divided the district into a few units and accordingly Laxmi Narayan Mishra and Arun Das penetrated into the rural areas like Bhatli, Kusumpur, Kanakbira, Sareipali, Ruchida and Ambabhona, Nrusingha Guru was placed in charge of Jharsuguda, and Bhagirathi Patnaik of the Barpali region.<sup>25</sup> The nationalists in their respective areas enrolled Congress members, preached giving up liquor and withdrawal of students from educational institutions.

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24. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.43.

25. C.R. Mishra, op. cit., p.40; D. Chopdar, "Nrusingha Guru" in New Aspects of History of Orissa, vol.IV, p.57.

They also campaigned for dissociation from British law courts and spoke for the establishment of Swaraj panchayats for amicable settlements of disputes.<sup>26</sup>

Some students, who attended the Negpur Congress, entered the feudatory state of Keonjhar, and an "up-country youth", Ramdas Babaji, Kanika to extend the Gandhian satyagraha in the princely states.<sup>27</sup>

In Sambalpur, the nationalists' attempt at mobilisation involved relief works in the affected areas. A band of Congress volunteers along with their leader Nilakantha Das went to interior areas like Manpur, medicating the people against cholera and other epidemics, which in return fetched the local people's sympathy for nationalist cause.<sup>28</sup> Young cadres like Nrusingha Guru and Ganesh Padhi also carried forward relief work when cholera broke out at Jharsuguda in the Sambalpur district.<sup>29</sup> At Bhadrak the local Congressmen like Banchhanidhi Patnaik mediated between the zamindars

26. C.R. Mishra, op. cit., p.41.

27. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.44; Biswamay Pati, "Popular Struggle and Indian Nationalism: The Kanika Movement of Orissa 1921-22" in Social Science Probings, vol.2, No.2, June 1985, p.247 (hereinafter Popular Struggle).

28. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., pp.226-27.

29. D. Chopdar, op. cit., p.57.



and the ryots. He persuaded both zamindars and ryots to accept the intervention of the local Congress Office in settling their disputes. As a result of this, many zamindars and ryots approached the local Congress office for mutual arbitration purposes.<sup>30</sup>

In Puri, the local issues were taken up along with the Non-cooperation, thus, intensifying the scope of the movement. As explained earlier, Orissa was undergoing an agrarian crisis due to the famine-conditions in 1919-20. Despite food-scarcity, the British Government exported rice from Orissa through the sea. Strong resentment was growing among the people against this step of the government. The nationalists co-ordinated the people's discontent and made an attempt to prevent the export of rice from Puri.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, the details of the nature of protest against the export of rice is not available. Probably the protest continued for some time and by the end of January 1922, the non-cooperators burnt down a temporary police station in Puri.<sup>32</sup>

30. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.49.

31. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/February/1922, Home Political Dept.

32. Ibid.

The arbitration courts undermining the colonial judicial and other administrative institutions, the relief works in the interior areas and the local issues being taken up by the nationalists were all aimed at inculcating an intense sense of nationalism and thereby eroding the colonial hegemony among the various social classes. As a result of all these by April 1921, Non-Co-operation had been re-kindled in Orissa.

From 6 to 13 April 1921, the Congress decided to observe the "National Week" condemning the Punjab wrong. On the first day of the week, 'hartals' were organised and demonstrations were led. The sources for Sambalpur, Balasore and Cuttack reveal the complete success of the National Week Campaign.<sup>33</sup> The demonstrations were joined in large number by the local school students, who observed a token strike on that day.<sup>34</sup>

Among the feudatory states in Keonjhar the movement gathered momentum in mid-1921. A few Congressmen, who had attended the Nagpur Congress in 1920, entered the state

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33. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.155; Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.39; Fortnightly Report, April 1921, Deposit File No.42, Home Political Dept.

34. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.39.

and campaigned for non-co-operation.<sup>35</sup> On 16 May 1921, a hartal was organised and the non-cooperators demonstrated under the leadership of Mahant Chema Tripathy at the capital of the princely state.<sup>36</sup> Men of low caste origin such as Nandakishor Puhan also actively participated in the hartal.<sup>37</sup>

In July or August 1921, the message of Non-cooperation spread into another princely state, Kanika, which had a rich tradition of melis, i.e. organised rebellion against the local chiefs.<sup>38</sup> Ram Das Babaji, an upcountry youth, in the garb of a sadhu gave a series of speeches condemning the local chief who happened to be an Oriya nationalist and who had strongly opposed the Congress led Non-co-operation Movement.<sup>39</sup> The Kanika high school students also lent their support to this anti-raja movement and decided to launch a strike.<sup>40</sup>

In September 1921, when Babaji Ram Das was arrested, Jadumani Mangaraj, a Congress activist from Cuttack, made

35. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.44.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, pp.245-46.

39. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.60.

40. Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, p.247.

a fiery speech and predicted that, the "Raja of Kanika would soon face the consequences of this action". Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the UPCC Secretary, also spoke in a public meeting at Kanika. Chakradhar Behera, a young militant of the state, initiated a secret campaign requesting people not to act as false witness against the Babaji.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of January 1922, no-rent campaign had intensified and gramya sabhas and circle sabhas had been set up in Kanika to carry on the no-rent struggle. Prominent figures of the previous meli (1906), such as Dinsbandhu Khandaitray also gave whole-hearted support to the movement.<sup>42</sup> As part of the movement, the ryots paid the rent at the Government Kutchery at Kendrapada, instead of paying at the Raj Kutchery.<sup>43</sup>

At Singhbhum, prior to the launching of the Non-co-operation, a model school had been opened on the Satyavadi line by the nationalists, and a satyavadi teacher, Godavarish Mishra, was deputed there to run the school. Under the leadership of the students and teachers of the school, the very centre of Singhbhum, which was assigned a national

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41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., pp. 247-49.

43. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p. 61.

status during the period, came to be surcharged with national activities. As a mark of non-co-operation, the English school Inspector who was scheduled to visit was not allowed to enter into the school.<sup>44</sup> In this distant Oriya tract, few meetings and protest marches were also organised by the non-co-operators in response to the call given by their high commands.<sup>45</sup>

This phase witnessed the maximum participation of students in the movement. Students of Khurda High School, Cuttack College, Sambalpur Zilla School, Balasore high school and Kanika high school went on strikes.<sup>46</sup> Their demands were directly or indirectly related to the Non-co-operation Movement. For example, in Cuttack they demanded the withdrawal of the rustication order on a student leader who had participated in the non-co-operation movement. When the authorities refused to accept the demand, the students organised a strike in the college. In Sambalpur, the UPCC President, Gopabandhu Das,

44. Godavarish Mishra, op. cit., p.185.

45. Ibid.

46. Fortnightly Report, June/1921, Deposit File No.46, Home Political Dept.; Fortnightly Report, April/1921, Deposit, File No.42, Home Political Dept.; Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.39; Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, p.247.

50. Ibid.

was invited to the school hostel premises for a discussion on the movement. Then the students demanded adult franchise. When the school authorities objected to such activities, twenty two students left the hostel as a mark of protest.<sup>47</sup> Students were also very active, enmasse, in picketing the liquor shops and in other forms of protests. They also participated in Khurda forest Satyagraha in large numbers.<sup>48</sup>

Non-Co-operation movement which had gained momentum by April-May 1921 resulted in several cases of violence in certain pockets which had experienced some amount of nationalist activities before hand. The June official report refers to many cases of arson in the region. In Cuttack, the offices of the Inspector of schools and the principal of Ravenshaw College were burnt down. As a result the Police arrested a few students.<sup>49</sup> At Khurda, where the students were on strike, the school building, the houses of the local Board Overseer, the veterinary Assistant, and the Dispensary Nurse were set on fire.<sup>50</sup> For the

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47. Fortnightly Report, April/1921, Deposit, File No.42, Home Political Dept.

48. Ibid.

49. Fortnightly Report, June/1921, Deposit, File No.63, Home Political Dept.

50. Fortnightly Report, June/1921, Deposit File No.46, Home Political Dept.

masses these houses symbolised the British colonial rule, and these petty-officials were seen as agents of the rulers and as sworn enemies of the Non-Co-operation Movement.

At the initiative of the local Congressmen, several Swaraj Panchayats were also set up at different places.<sup>51</sup> A village, Srijang in Balasore District which became prominent during the Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements may be mentioned in this respect. A village level activist, Goura Mohan Das formed a Congress panchayat, i.e., Swaraj Panchayat, which used to settle both faujdari (criminal) as well as civil cases among the villagers in 1921.<sup>52</sup>

The formation of Swaraj Ashramas at Cuttack, Balasore, Sore, Jagatsingpur and Jaipur and national schools at Sambalpur, Chakradharpur, Satyavadi, Cuttack and starting of several nationalist newspapers such as the Seva (Sambalpur), the Swarajya Samachar (Balasore), <sup>the</sup> Samaj and <sup>the</sup> Satyavadi, concretised the concept of alternative national institutions which could replace their British counterparts.<sup>53</sup> Apart

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51. Ibid.

52. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.49.

53. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.125.

from this, these institutions could employ the non-co-operators who intensely desired to identify with the struggle. In Balasore, attempts to persuade the people to read nationalist newspapers like the Amrit Bazaar Patrika and the Servant (Calcutta) were seen as a part of their political activities. Thus the people enmasse could be involved in the process of movement.

Collection for the Swaraj Fund and membership drive were also taken up. A small village in Angul area contributed Rs.40 on the Satyagraha day, for the Swaraj Fund and thus identified with the Congress movement.<sup>54</sup> In Sambalpur district, young cadres like Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Arun Das, Chandra Sekhar Behera and many others held an intensive tour over the rural areas like Kusumpur, Bhatli, Kanakbira, Sareipali, Ruchida and Ambabhona and enrolled as many as 2800 members in the Congress.<sup>55</sup> As a result, by September 1921, the Sambalpur DCC budget had a surplus of Rs.1600 over expenditure.<sup>56</sup> The number of Congress meetings significantly increased, during this period. The leaders appealed to the government officials to resign their respective offices.

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54. Fortnightly Report, June/1921, Deposit, File No.51, Home Political Dept.

55. C.R. Mishra, op. cit., p.41.

56. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.228.



Some police constables were also found secretly backing the Congress campaign.<sup>57</sup> The massive impact of the movement, at this point of time, has been explained by the official report itself which confessed that "an impression had been created that the British Raj was fast approaching its end and a new Raj associated with the name of Gandhi was about to take its place."<sup>58</sup>

By the end of June 1921, according to nationalist sources, the membership of UPCC had reached 40,000; the collections for the Tilak Swaraj Fund were of the tune of Rs.22,000 and there were 16,000 charkhas working under the party.<sup>59</sup> Even conceding a certain degree of exaggeration, a major increase in the nationalist strength can be seen. The Congress party, a nonentity in Orissa till 1920, had definitely grown into the major political force of the region. Within a year, the Utkal Union Conference, representing the so-called educated section was no more a match to the Congress.<sup>60</sup>

The Vijayawada session of the AICC in April 1921 emphasised the further strengthening of Congress and

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57. Fortnightly Report, June/1921, Deposit, File No.51, Home Political Dept.

58. Ibid.

59. The Aasha, Dt. 27.3.1922, Quoted in Nivedita Mohanty, op. cit., p.104.

60. Interview with Harekrishna Mahatab, op. cit.

preparation for Civil Disobedience. The UPCC concentrated on Sartha area of Basta Police Station in the Balasore district from where the Civil Disobedience Movement was to begin. Cadres were trained. People were impatient to receive the call. The enthusiasm ran so high that it was speculated, a single day's effort would <sup>be</sup> sufficient to capture all the thanas in the district.<sup>61</sup>

AICC meeting of 28-30 July 1921, at Bombay, adopted a more militant stance including boycott of foreign cloth and boycott of the coming visit of the prince of Wales in November.<sup>62</sup>

The UPCC was represented at this AICC meeting by Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Niranjan Patnaik, Gopabandhu Das and Harekrishna Mahatab.<sup>63</sup> Picketing before liquor shops and foreign cloth shops constituted a significant form of non-co-operation in districts like Balasore, Cuttack and Puri. It was intensified after the above-mentioned AICC meeting.<sup>64</sup> The volunteers trained for Civil Disobedience

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61. Harekrishna Mahatab, the man in charge of 'Civil Disobedience' campaign at Sartha publicly declared this in several mass meetings. See Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.53.

62. Sumit Sarker, Modern India: 1885-1947, p.205.

63. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.48.

64. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.125.

picketed before the auction of liquor shop in Balasore, and all twenty five involved in such picketing were arrested by the police.<sup>65</sup>

In small towns like Jaleswar the merchants took collective pledge for not to sell foreign cloth.<sup>66</sup> When an adamant merchant declined to comply with the nationalists' demand local Congress activists, namely Karanakar Panigrahi and Harendranath Ghosh, organised the workers of the rice-mill belonging to that merchant, for a strike. This threat at last forced the merchant not to sell foreign cloth.<sup>67</sup>

On 17 November 1921, on the occasion of the Prince of Wales's visit, a general hartal was observed in different parts of Orissa. Particularly in Cuttack it was a complete success.<sup>68</sup>

Orissa in June 1921 was also the scene of another pioneer work. Tribal and poor peasant grievances against forest restrictions were linked up with the nationalist mainstream. The official reports complained of forest laws being openly flouted in Khurda region; and the striking

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65. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.55.

66. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.50.

67. Ibid.

68. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.125.

high school students were found actively involved in these activities.<sup>69</sup>

The movement seems to have grown and the police forbade the UPCC leader, Gopabandhu Das, to make public speeches at nationalist pockets like Cuttack.<sup>70</sup> In the beginning of 1922, the people had started defying the police orders which prohibited nationalist meetings, particularly in Cuttack district.<sup>71</sup> A temporary police station in Puri district was burnt down.<sup>72</sup>

The numerical strength of the UPCC had increased manifold by the end of 1921 and the AICC meet at Ahmedabad was attended by more than 125 Congressmen from Orissa.<sup>73</sup> Realising its increasing strength the UPCC on its own started in the beginning of February 1922, no-rent and 'no-jungle' tax campaigns in different parts of Orissa. On 10 February, 1922 Gopabandhu Das asked a large gathering of 2,000 people at Khurda to stop payment of rent and jungle tax.<sup>74</sup>

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69. Fortnightly Report, June/1921, Deposit, File No.46, Home Political Dept.

70. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/September/1921, Home Political Dept.

71. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/January/1922, Home Political Dept.

72. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/February/1922, Home Political Dept.

73. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.45.

74. Biswamay Pati, "Peasants, Tribals and the National contd...

In Kanika Raj, also, by the end of January 1922, the peasant discontent had been consolidated through gramya sabhas and circle sabhas at places like Ayetan. Rich peasants had started supporting the struggle.<sup>75</sup> Four thousand people gathered to form a meli in Kanika. A regular council with office bearers was established at Madhupur to co-ordinate the agitation.<sup>76</sup>

The Congress's initiative in this regard was partly possible because of Mahatma Gandhi's announcement on 1st February 1922 that he would start mass Civil Disobedience Movement, including non-payment of taxes unless within 7 days political prisoners were released and the press, freed from government control.<sup>77</sup>

But, on 5 February 1922 in Chauri-chaura, a village in the Gorakhpur district of U.P., a procession of 3,000 people violently reacted to the police firing and burnt 22 police constable alive. On 12 February 1922, the Congress Working Committee met at Bardoli in Gujarat, and passed a resolution to call off the movement and to confine the

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 Movement in Orissa (1921-36)" in Social Scientist, vol.II, No.7, July 1983.

75. Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, pp.247-49.

76. Ibid.

77. Bipan Chandra, Modern India, p.277.

movement only to constructive programme.<sup>78</sup>

Harekrishna Mahatab later recalled that Gandhi's abrupt and unilateral decision to suspend the entire movement after Chauri Chaura was deeply resented by almost all the prominent Congress leaders and naturally even more by the younger people in the state.<sup>79</sup> The UPCC officially called off the movement and instructed its workers in Kendrapada sub-division to expedite the payment of rent.<sup>80</sup>

But the official withdrawal of the movement had little impact on the total mass of non-co-operators. Their non-cooperation with the government continued until mid-1922.

In Kendrapada, when the police arrested the local Congress leaders in March 1922, a large crowd rescued them from police custody.<sup>81</sup> In Kanika, the movement was growing despite the local leader Babaji Ram Das's arrest in September 1921. The forest laws were violated by the peasants and tribals in February 1922.<sup>82</sup> On 18 April 1922, when the peons of the Raja went to serve notices on the debtors in the state, a crowd of 400 people injured them severely.

78. Ibid., p.274.

79. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.63.

80. Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, p.249.

81. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/March/1922, Home Political Dept.

82. Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, p.249.

After this, five of the accused were arrested by the police on 20 April. But a crowd of 2000 people rescued these prisoners from the police custody and set them free.<sup>83</sup> The people's might challenged the Raj. The authorities dealt the situation ruthlessly. On 23 March 1922, the Police Superintendent with a large band of policemen approached Kanika and opened fire on a peaceful gathering of 1000 people who had gathered to submit a memorandum against the local chief. As a result three persons were gunned down to death at the spot and about a hundred and forty people were injured. Apart from this, the police repression in Kanika, also, included man-handling of the women-folk, arrest of 150 people and imposition of a collective fine of Rs.10,000 on the people.<sup>84</sup> The landed property of many participants was confiscated and as a result many affluent farmers were pauperised.<sup>85</sup>

As the nationalist sources claimed, the Government adopted every cruel method to repress the movement after February 1922. Around 2,500 houses were burnt to ashes, mostly in Cuttack district.<sup>86</sup> The official sources, however,

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83. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/March/1922, Home Political Dept.

84. Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, p.250.

85. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.46.

86. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.59.

denied this and reduced the number of burnt houses to about 225.<sup>87</sup> The Congress leadership accused the police for the mischief. They said that "instructions had been given to set the houses on fire, to repress the people and to malign the Congress and its leaders".<sup>88</sup> The people also suspected the police. A police Inspector along with six police constables were caught by the local people at different places of Cuttack town (according to Mahatab, they were caught red-handed) and were produced at the Swaraj Ashram for their trial. The Congress leaders, Gopabandhu Choudhury and Bhagirathi Mahapatra were given the responsibility of punishing the miscreants.<sup>89</sup> The police was also socially boycotted <sup>and</sup> excommunicated.

This forced the Reserve Police Force of Cuttack to go on strike on 28 March, 1922. They demanded the arrest of the Congress leaders. Unless the arrests were made at the earliest possible time they threatened to resign.<sup>90</sup>

The police strike led to the arrest of four prominent non-cooperators: Gopabandhu Das, Gopabandhu Choudhury,

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87. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/March/1922, Home Political Dept.

88. The Deputy Magistrate of Balasore, an Irish Officer, was said to have disclosed this to Harekrishna Mahatab. See Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.59.

89. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/March/1922, Home Political Dept.

90. Ibid.



Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Atal Bihari Acharya.<sup>91</sup> This was followed by the arrest of other Congress leaders, and, by the end of 1922, almost all prominent leaders of the UPCC were behind bars.<sup>92</sup>

By the end of 1922, the movement had calmed down in most of the areas. The people's sense of protest, as the official report for November refers, was confined to non-cooperation with the survey and settlement operations particularly in the district of Balasore. The boycott of the survey staff was succeeded by a hartal in the local market.<sup>93</sup>

As far as the social-composition of the participants was concerned, a close observation of the movement in Orissa reveals that students constituted perhaps the most significant factor in the movement.<sup>94</sup> Students both from schools and colleges, formed the standing army of the Congress. They were the main force in carrying the message into the interior, as brought out earlier. Many students left their studies to take part in the movement. Those,

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91. Ibid.

92. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.126.

93. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/November/1922, Home Political Dept.

94. Interview with Harekrishna Mahatab, op. cit.

who could not leave their schools, expressed partial support by organising token strikes and by joining the demonstrations. In institutions like Sambalpur Zilla School, the sympathy of the teachers with the Non-Co-operation further encouraged the students in this regard.<sup>95</sup>

Muslims largely kept aloof from the movement. The nationalists' attempt to mobilise the Muslim population remained confined to the formation of a Khilafat Committee at Cuttack under Dr. Ekram Rasul, the Vice-President of the UPCC.<sup>96</sup> Possibly, the question of their mobilisation was overlooked because Muslims in Orissa constituted a negligible part of the population. Secondly, as on the national plane, in Orissa, intellectuals with purely national, secular and agnostic outlook were rarely found.<sup>97</sup> The dominant section among the UPCC leadership came from the traditional caste elites - the Brahmans.<sup>98</sup> Their attempts to mobilize Muslims in a half-hearted manner may be influenced by the dominant Hindu tinge in their ideology. But one may avoid hasty and sweeping generalisation in this regard.

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95. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.156.

96. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.41.

97. Radhakant Barik, op. cit., p.40.

98. This faction of the Congress were to become the Responsivists a few years later. This has been discussed in the third chapter.

Merchants, business class in general and the landlords' attitude towards the Congress at this stage, also requires a special mention. Merchants and businessmen as a class did not associate themselves with many forms of struggle adopted by the nationalist leadership on the all India plane.<sup>99</sup> At the most they took part in fund collection and hartals which did not cost them much.

This was also true of Orissa. The business community did not come out openly in support of the Congress. At best, businessmen like Padmalochan Mohanty lent monetary support for the publication of nationalist literatures like the Seva in Sambalpur.<sup>100</sup> The merchants of Balasore district, however, took a collective pledge under nationalist pressure not to sell foreign cloth. A successful hartal at Balasore on 6 April 1921 at a short notice, was also an example of the shopkeepers' partial support to Non-Co-operation.<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, in Sambalpur, a form of support to the movement by the affluent section of the society was the

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99. See Aditya Mukherjee, "The Indian Capitalist Class: Aspects of its Economic, Political and Ideological Development in the Colonial Period - 1930-1947" in The Indian History Congress Proceedings, Kurukshetra, 1982.

100. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.157.

101. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.39.

sending of their children to the national school established during the Non-Co-operation Movement.<sup>102</sup>

The landlords, especially the rural zamindars and feudatory chiefs, were quite antagonistic to the Congress as well as to the Congress-led movements. In rural Balasore, the village people refused to provide shelter to Congressmen and did not help in the preparation for the public meetings out of the fear of the zamindars.<sup>103</sup> In Keonjhar, a princely state, a one day hartal at the capital brought imprisonment ranging from 4 to 12 years for the non-co-operators.<sup>104</sup> In the princely state of Kanika, the local chief was the main instrument behind the ruthless suppression of the movement.

Except in few places such as Bhadrak in the Balasore district, where the zamindars had faith in the local Congress officials and they used to visit the Congress office, with their complaints against the ryots and for settling the consequent disputes, the landlords and the British officials were taken as men in general belonging to the "same family", and the local zamindars came to the

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102. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.157.

103. Harekrishna Mahatab, Saihanara Pathe, p.43.

104. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.44.

rescue of the British government against the Congress <sup>in</sup> many places.<sup>105</sup>

As a result, the Non-Co-operation Movement in Orissa tended to openly combine anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. The Congress propaganda had been directed... "against a few individual zamindars".<sup>106</sup> In Kanika also, the UPCC desperately wanted to make the movement anti-Raja.<sup>107</sup> As explained earlier, the Congress here had emerged as a reaction to the domination of politics by the feudatory chiefs and big landlords. Hence the antagonism between the Congress and the landlords. At the same time, some landlords participated in the Non-Co-operation, especially in fund collection in some urban pockets like Balasore.<sup>108</sup>

The peasants and tribals actively participated in the Non-Co-operation Movement and aspired for Swaraj, particularly when their agrarian issues were linked with it. The Kanika episode as well as the struggle at Puri, where export of rice

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105. Ibid., p.51; Fortnightly Report, File No.18/November/1922, Home Political Dept.

106. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/September/1921, Home Political Dept.

107. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, pp.60-65.

108. Ibid., pp.43-46.

from a famine affected region was prevented, clearly bring this out.

A crucial question which needs an evaluation here, was the dynamism of the movement, even after its official withdrawal in February 1922. The movement here continued till the end of 1922. In fact, the movement around Non-Cooperation itself adopted in different parts of the province an unlimited variety of methods. The organisation of Congress at local level was quite autonomous making it possible for it to adopt all kinds of methods to arouse and channelise people's initiative. The UPCC had very little control over the DCCs. The DCCs were largely independent bodies.<sup>109</sup> The UPCC nowhere seemed to have tried to interfere with or prevent the spontaneous reaction of its subordinate bodies. This was possible owing to the fact that the struggle in Orissa was never massive compared to that in other parts of the country like Bengal and other parts of the country like Bengal and Bihar and any form of defiance of authority meant building up of the UPCC image.

In these local struggles, people used their creative faculties to the fullest possible extent. A typical example would be Kanika struggle. The UPCC leaders wanted to keep it as a local struggle, while the local chief attempted to

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109. Ibid., p.51.

impute to it a non-cooperation colour which would fetch him sufficient support of the colonial-state for its suppression. The UPCC leaders did not identify themselves with the struggle openly and provided only secret support so that the British Government might trace the cause not to any incitement by outside leaders, but to the local chief's inhuman rule.<sup>110</sup>

In many struggles, after the arrest of the known and tried leaders the movement came under the direction of local, younger and inexperienced activists who perforce had no guidelines to fall back upon. So, the section of youth gave full expression to their innovative faculties and youthful zest.<sup>111</sup> Thus, particularly in Kanika, the arrest of Babaji Ram Das in September 1921, preceded the emergence of young militants like Charkradhar Behera, and many others.<sup>112</sup>

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110. Ibid., pp.60-73.

111. See Bipan Chandra, The Long-Term Dynamics of the Indian National Congress, Presidential Address in the Indian History Congress, Amritsar, 1985, pp.35-36.

112. A washerman, a school teacher and a landless labour were also in the leadership of the movement. See Biswamay Pati, Popular Struggle, p.247.

### CHAPTER III

#### AFTERMATH OF NON-CO-OPERATION

As has been sketched in the previous chapter, the mass phase of the Non-Co-operation Movement started slowing down with the inevitable British suppression which came as a follow-up measure. Most of the provincial as well as district level leaders were arrested. The number of arrests came to around thirty by the end of 1922.<sup>1</sup> In a small princely state like Kanika, where the non-co-operators had organised melis against their immediate oppressor and the prince was identified with the British-rule, not less than 150 people were marched to the jail. Inhuman methods of suppression, like molestation of the womenfolk, setting the houses on fire and confiscation of landed properties of the participants gradually demoralised the people.

This resulted in characteristic disillusionment which dripped through to the Congress rank and file. The hope of "Swaraj in one year" had also been belied.<sup>2</sup> Many non-co-operators of 1921-22 started moving back to their respective schools, colleges, courts and offices of the

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1. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.126.

2. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, pp.83-85.



colonial set up. In Balasore, which happened to be the most active nationalist pocket, except for all other students now joined their original institutions.<sup>3</sup> Jagabandhu Singh, who assumed the presidentship of UUC in 1920, and played a crucial role in the formation of UPCC, apologised to the authorities and resumed legal practice which he had left during the course of Non-co-operation.<sup>4</sup>

In a sense, only those who could not join their institutions because of the nature of their services, like those who had resigned from government services, now constituted the Utkal Provincial Congress Party. Though disillusioned, they formed the band of whole-timers of the UPCC. Between a lawyer and a government official, obviously it is more difficult for an official to rejoin his office, than a lawyer to resume his legal practice. Gopabandhu Choudhury, who had resigned his post as a deputy collector during the course of Non-co-operation, emerged as a provincial leader in the post-Non-Co-operation period. Surendranath Das, who had left his post of Sub-Inspector (Police), became the informal head of the party, when it was under ban during 1931-32.

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3. Ibid., p.88.

4. Ibid.

On the other hand, as explained earlier the UPCC, despite all its weaknesses and the disillusionment of the ranks and files, emerged as the major political force of Orissa. The Utkal Unionists were, now, left aside. Congress had built up an image of its own both among the educated persons as well as the uneducated masses. Identification with the Congress symbolised a hearty nationalistic attitude towards a great cause.

It is in the context of a "passive phase" with a 'positive image' and significant meaning that the post-Non-Co-operation Congress politics began to develop.

As soon as the tempo of the movement slowed down, the Congressmen were divided into two factions giving birth to factional politics within the Congress. This factionalism became one of the major characteristics of Congress politics in Orissa in the post-Non-Co-operation Phase.

The formation of Congress, here, had been preceded by the emergence of independent groups on nationalist's lines during the pre-UPCC days. Satyavadi, a group at Sakhigopal in Puri district, and the Bharati-Mandir at Cuttack, were the main groups among them. Satyavadites of the Satyavadi, whose origin could be traced to Swadeshi movement in 1904-05 and the Satyavadi school in 1909, were much older as compared to the Bharati-Mandir which represented the younger nationalists in Orissa. Besides

the generation gap between the two, other considerations like caste and region also fostered division among the nationalist ranks. The Satyavadi band had been founded not only by nationalistic bond, but also by same kind of upper caste and kinship relations. These primordial loyalties exercised strong influence on these people.<sup>5</sup> The Satyavadi group originated in Puri while the Bharati Mandir group in Cuttack and Balasore.

In course of the co-operation movement, these different trends were integrated into the Congress as a cohesive group with common affinity to nationalist ideology; and they wholeheartedly fought the landlord dominance in Orissa politics represented by the Utkal Union Conference. Because of their efforts, the Congress grew from a non-entity into a major political force within a short span of time. The British rule was fought back. The 'moderates' (UUC) were sidetracked. But once the confrontation phase of politics came to an end with the withdrawal of the Non-Co-operation movement, these groups started fighting for their own hegemony within the party.

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5. The writings of Nilakantha Das clearly show it. When people from the Satyavadi group sometimes deserted him on political issues, he explained it as a betrayal of love and affection by his fellow castemen and his kith and kin. Moreover, his writings openly admit that besides some political affiliations, these a-political relations counted a lot in keeping them bound in one cohesive group. See Nilakantha Das, Atma Jivani.

The declining phase of active movement coincided with the rise of factional politics within the UPCC.

After Non-Co-operation, on the national plane the Congress as a cohesive and homogenous group was also disintegrating. Enthusiasm had evaporated and discontentment was developing within the rank and file. Serious differences cropped up among the leaders regarding the future course of action.<sup>6</sup>

One section among the leaders led by Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das favoured entry into the legislatures, ending the long spell of their boycott. From within the legislative Councils, they planned to expose the official weaknesses, and thus use the councils to arouse public enthusiasm. The other section comprising leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Ansari, Babu Rajendra Prasad, and others, known as the 'no-changers', were for the continuation of original Congress tactics - the tactics of avoiding legislative entry - for entry into legislatures, they felt, would weaken nationalist fervour and create rivalries among the leaders.<sup>7</sup> The 'no-changers', the dominant Gandhians, wanted the entire Congress to continue its constructive activities when there was political lull in the Congress.<sup>8</sup> The Gaya

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6. Bipan Chandra, Modern India, p.277.

7. Ibid., pp.277-78.

8. Ibid.

session of the AICC in December 1922 rejected the council entry resolution of the pro-changers by 1740 votes against 890.<sup>9</sup> But Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das went ahead with their own plans. They formed the Congress Khilafat Swaraj Party with Das as President and Motilal Nehru as one of the Secretaries.<sup>10</sup> The Swaraj party was formed in March 1923 to contest the coming election in November 1923.

In Orissa, the Swaraj Party was centred around the Satyavadi group.<sup>11</sup> The UPCC was polarised into Swarajists and non-swarajists; the latter being represented by the Bharati Mandir groups. The council entry decision of the Swarajists or for that matter the Satyavadites further disillusioned the existing rank and file of the Congress. One cadre from Balasore wrote: "Gandhi was talking about Swaraj within one year. But two years have passed since then. There is so much factionalism in Congress that no interest has been left in Congress activities. We unnecessarily left our studies. If the Congress decides in favour of council entry, where will we be? ...We are all thoroughly frustrated..."<sup>12</sup>

9. Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p.225.

10. Bipan Chandra, Modern India, p.276.

11. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.92.

12. Ibid., p.85.

The non-swarajist leaders within the Congress mainly hailed from the Bharati-Mandir group. As mentioned earlier, they got thoroughly disillusioned with the UPCC politics controlled by the Swarajists.<sup>13</sup> This led them to take, in a sense, political sanyas from Cuttack, the UPCC unit headquarters. Thus Harekrishna Mahatab left for Balasore and engaged himself in grassroot level politics.<sup>14</sup> Gopabandhu Choudhury, who had burnt his boats and had no chance of re-joining the British institution also dissociated himself from the party and set up an Ashram, called Alaka Shram, and a national school.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from the council entry question, the two factions were divided on their approach to Gandhi. The Satyavadites differed from Gandhi and their opposition identified with Gandhi.<sup>16</sup> Thus more than Swarajist and non-Swarajists, the UPCC was also polarised into Gandhians and non-Gandhians.

The Satyavadites' differences with Gandhi had become so intensive that, in 1927, when Gandhi visited Orissa,

13. The UPCC was gradually coming under Swarajists control and by 1929 the Fortnightly Report, File No.18/June/1929, Home Political Dept. described the UPCC as Swaraj Party.

14. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.89.

15. Ibid., p.88.

16. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., pp.155-66. .

and was passing through Satyavadi, the local organisers, who happened to be Gandhians, persuaded him to cancel his visit to Satyavadi.<sup>17</sup> Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das and other pro-changers did not help in organising the public meeting for Gandhi in Puri.<sup>18</sup> (Possibly they sabotaged the meeting!) As a result, only a few people turned up for the meeting. "As far as the audience was concerned, Nilakantha Das wrote, "Gandhi's Puri meeting in 1927, was no comparison to the earlier meeting organised for him jointly in 1921."<sup>19</sup>

These political differences spread to the nationalist press. The Samaj, which was well established by then, came under the Satyavadites' control and started opposing the no-changers. Harekrishna Mahatab and a group of his co-activists started the Prajatantra from Balasore in 1923.<sup>20</sup> It became the representative force of the faction opposing pro-changers. Niranjan Patnaik, another Gandhian and Chairman of the All India Khadi Board, Orissa Unit founded the Gandhi Samachar as a counter force to the Satyavadites' influence in nationalist politics.<sup>21</sup>

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17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p.178.

20. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.121.

21. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.165.

At times, these differences led to a clash at the personal level. For example, in 1927 Gopabandhu Das had been made the Chairman of the Flood Relief Committee. The other faction accused him of misappropriating the relief fund of Rs.42,000.<sup>22</sup> The Young Utkal, a magazine and its editor Bhubanananda Babu, possibly sympathetic to the no-changers, initiated this process.<sup>23</sup>

By 1927, the opposition from the non-swarajists became so stiff that Gopabandhu Das, the UPCC President, had to leave for Puri and resolve not to come back to Cuttack, the non-Swarajists' base.<sup>24</sup> In 1928 he passed away there.

As far as the Council entry programme of the Swarajists was concerned, their candidate Nilakantha Das contested and won the election for Central Assembly in 1923.<sup>25</sup> In 1927 Pandit Lingaraj Mishra, another ex-teacher of the Satyavadi school, was like his predecessor was elected to the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Assembly.<sup>26</sup> Between 1926 and 1930, Orissa was represented by the maximum number of

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22. Ibid., p.172.

23. S.C. Dash, op. cit., p.154.

24. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.280.

25. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.92.

26. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.265.



Swarajists in the Legislative Council. Not less than five of their members got elected, only to resign in 1930 on the eve of the Civil Disobedience Campaign.<sup>27</sup>

The entry into the Council helped the Swarajists to fetch some official patronage in the form of monetary grants and government recognition for some of their bankrupt nationalist institutions like the Satyavadi school. The teachers were now regularly paid.<sup>28</sup>

In the Council the Swarajists put forward resolutions demanding Charkha training in schools, expansion of primary education, extension of permanent land settlement to Orissa and relief measures at the time of the flood in 1925. They also demanded an enquiry into the matter.<sup>29</sup> These resolutions were wholeheartedly supported by landlord members like the Raja of Kanika and Madhupur.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, a few of their resolutions like the demand for release of political prisoners were resisted even by the Moderate leaders like Madhusudan Das.<sup>31</sup> But none of the resolutions could be adopted.<sup>32</sup>

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27. K.M. Patra, op. cit., p.62.

28. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.92.

29. K.M. Patra, op. cit., pp.57-61.

30. Ibid., p.57.

31. Ibid.,

32. Ibid.

The other faction, i.e., the no-changers, on the other hand, after their release from the jail met at Cuttack and chalked out a plan so as to revive the nationalist tempo in Orissa. In this meeting, Harekrishna Mahatab, Niranjan Patnaik, Gopabandhu Choudhury and few others founded Khadi and village organisations and organised door to door a nationalist campaign as necessary forms for the revival of the Congress movement.<sup>33</sup> A few Ashramas were also set up at Guamal, Balasore, Basta, Jaleswar, Bhandiari Pokhari and Chanibali. In 1923, the Prajatantra Press was founded at the Balasore Ashram, which not only carried on the nationalist propaganda but also provided occupation to the Ashramites, during this no-movement period.<sup>34</sup> Apart from the press and Khadi, constructive work also included running of national schools, social service like relief work in emergencies (particularly flood and famine) and work among the village people. Thus Harekrishna Mahatab, while keeping aloof from the UPCC politics, was involved in local issues.<sup>35</sup>

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33. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.89.

34. Ibid., p.92.

35. He mentions an incident where the local Zamindar's beating killed a ryot and the local nationalists exposed the Zamindar. See Ibid., p.89.

At the Delhi Special Congress of the All India Congress Committee, September 1923, a compromise was struck between the pro-changers and the no-changers by which Congressmen were allowed to contest elections even while faith in the constructive programme was reiterated and an All India Khadi Board was set up.<sup>36</sup> In February 1924, Gandhiji was released and at the AICC meeting in Ahmedabad (1924) he pressed for a minimum spinning qualification for Congress membership.<sup>37</sup> All these gave a moral boost to the Bharati-Mandirites, who identifying themselves with Gandhi, used constructive works to revive the Congress activities.

Niranjan Patnaik initiated the formation of a unit of the All India Khadi Board. Jivramji Kalyanji and Iswarilal Vyas deputed from the Centre came to Orissa for Khadi works and set up Ashramas at Sore and Bhadrak in the Balasore district.<sup>38</sup> Govind Mishra, a princely state rebel from Daspalla, who had escaped to the Gandhi Ashram and had been trained during the pre-Non-Co-operation days, also started an Ashram here at his own initiative

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36. Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p.227.

37. Ibid.

38. Harekrishna Mahatab, Gandhi O Odisa, p.59.

and carried forward the khadi campaign. Other than these three categories, local initiatives like that of Gopabandhu Choudhury gave birth to a few Ashramas in different parts of Coastal Orissa.<sup>39</sup>

The Khadi board and Charkha Movement had spread to Western Orissa by 1924. A Congress meeting was held at Sambalpur on 17 September 1924 to popularise the programme. The speakers in the meeting proposed to send a batch of Congress workers to Ganjam DCC, which possibly lacked sufficient man power to carry forward the Khadi campaign.<sup>40</sup> Bhagirathi Patnaik a local Congress leader opened a 'Khaddar Board' with its headquarters at Jharsuguda.<sup>41</sup> During this time, he also held meetings among the 'untouchables' and preached against untouchability at different places in the Barpali region like Panchpara, Turekela, Panpali, Agalpur and Jharnipali. Untouchables were purified after attending Sudhi jagna organised by local Congressman.<sup>42</sup> They were advised to adopt prohibition and undertake khadi work.<sup>43</sup>

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39. Ibid.

40. The Sadhana, Dt. 23.9.1924, p.2, in P.K. Nayak, op. cit., p.30.

41. R.P. Pania, "Bhagirathi Patnaik" in New Aspects of History of Orissa, vol.IV, p.34.

42. Ibid., p.36.

43. Ibid.

Thus, in 1927, when Gandhiji came to Orissa in a month-long Khadi Campaign, he found to his satisfaction four categories of Khadi efforts as a part of the constructive ideals, operating, thanks to the efforts of the nationalists with Gandhian commitment.<sup>44</sup>

Constructive works successfully involved a section of the disillusioned Congress activists in the political process, in the absence of any active political participation. They kept the political spirit of the nationalists alive. It is not that they only provided some preoccupation to a band of idle workers. They also provided some avenues for livelihood to the cadres which helped them in sustaining nationalist politics. Through them, the volunteers could overcome the sense of frustration when the national movement was in low-profile. Thus, Bhagirathi Patnaik was seen in the different weekly markets in the Sambalpur district, selling khadi clothes to become financially viable during 1926-27.<sup>45</sup>

Ashramas were set up mostly in the countryside and the social works taken under the constructive programme further helped the Congress and the Congressmen to establish

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44. Harekrishna Mahatab, Gandhi O Odisa, pp.54-59.

45. R.P. Panda, op. cit., p.35.

close links with the rural people.<sup>46</sup> This helped the Congress to build up and keep up a pro-people image, which in the long run helped it in mobilising the people for the nationalist cause.

At the time of the mass movements, the Ashramas became centre of anti-Imperialist propaganda and the Ashramites proved to be hard core rebels. Soon after the call for the Civil Disobedience Movement was given, Congress was declared illegal and all the Ashramas were seized and the Ashramites were put behind bars.

Interestingly enough, except for a few all the Ashramas and Khadi centres were patronised by the non-Swarajists like Niranjana Patnaik, Harekrishna Mahatab, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Govind Mishra and many others. Few Swarajist centres, for that matter, started by the Satyavadites were gradually disintegrating. Thus Satyavadi school, the citadel of Non-co-operation Movement, was disbanded in 1926, largely due to the differences that crept in among the Satyavadites on the issue of affiliation with the Patna University of the Bihar Orissa Government.<sup>47</sup>

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46. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Patha, p.89.

47. The differences had become so intense that Gopabandhu Das, the founder of the school, left Satyavadi for Puri along with the Samaj Press. He was opposed to the affiliation. The other section led by Nilakantha Das had applied for affiliation but was refused permission by the authorities because of the political image that the school had. Udaynath Sarangi, Gandhi Maharaṅka Shishya, p.148.

The non-Swarajist politics during this period also involved participation in the elections of the local boards like municipalities. They participated in it on the plea that Gandhi did not oppose it.<sup>48</sup> Thus municipalities in Balasore and Cuttack were captured by them. No-changers such as Harekrishna Mahatab in Balasore, and Gopabandhu Choudhury in Cuttack were elected Chairmen of District Boards in 1924-25.<sup>49</sup> Their entry into the District Local Boards, as they claimed, gave some boost to the constructive programmes. Within the Boards, they fought for those and as a result, spinning was introduced in the schools.<sup>50</sup> welfare activities like public health and sanitation were undertaken.<sup>51</sup> Apart from these, Congress meetings were held and attempts were made to organise Congress committees in each police thana.<sup>52</sup>

The differences were not confined only to the questions of pro-changers and no-changers. At another level, they

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48. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.95.

49. Ibid.; Binod Kenungo, Gyana Mandal, Griya Encyclopedic, vol.36, pp.110-11.

50. Ibid.

51. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.95.

52. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.130.

involved the question of militancy and created cracks within the party. In 1924, a group of young Congressmen of Sambalpur complained that the DCC had failed to spread the Congress message in the rural areas. On 6 August 1924 the dissidents convened a general body meeting and ran a parallel DCC. Chandra Sekhar Behera, the old guard of the DCC, was ousted and Chintamani Pujari and Bhagirathi Patnaik took over as the President and Secretary of the unit.<sup>53</sup>

During this period, even factionalism based on regionalism or narrow parochialism held its sway. Western Orissa, consisting of Sambalpur district at that time, always constituted a different social and political entity. Its opposition to the UPCC dominated by Coastal Orissa, comprising of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore reached a climax in 1929. The local Congress Workers from Sambalpur fell out with the Congress committees and tried to secure affiliation with the Congress committees of the Central Provinces.<sup>54</sup>

In South Orissa, like Ganjam where Telugus constituted a significant number of the population and the Oriya

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53. R.P. Panda, op. cit., p.35.

54. Fortnightly Report, File No.18/October/1929, Home Political Dept.



speaking tract was under the Madras Presidency, the nationalists or for that matter Congressmen were divided into Telugues and Oriyas, both organising separate district congress committees.<sup>55</sup> At the time of Civil Disobedience both the competing DCC's organised salt satyagraha separately.<sup>56</sup>

Factionalism did not show any sign of slowing down even at the time of the "active-phase" during the Civil Disobedience movement. The major two factions, Satyavadi and Bharati-Mandir, campaigned for Salt Satyagraha separately. The non-Swarajists like Gopabandhu Choudhury, Harekrishna Mahatab, Rama Devi and Malati Devi organised the Satyagraha at Inchuli in the Balasore district, while Nilakantha Das organised it at Kakatpur in the Puri district separately.<sup>57</sup>

Apart from the political differences, sometimes the reason for the growth of factionalism seems to be the growth of political opportunism among the party cadres. As mentioned earlier, Congress after the Non-cooperation Movement had emerged as a major political force in Orissa.

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55. Dandapani Behera, "The Civil Disobedience Movement in Ganjam" in Proceedings of Orissa History Congress, 1977, pp. 159-62.

56. Ibid.

57. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p. 205.

The Swarajists' decision in favour of council entry further generated some hopes for a career. Entry into the council became a political career for some people. The way Nilakantha Das resigned from the Central Assembly on the eve of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930, but left the Congress to contest the election as an independent candidate, can be explained only by political opportunism and careerism.<sup>58</sup> When the tempo of the Salt Satyagraha did not seem to recede he again resigned the council to re-join the Congress and participated in the Salt Satyagraha.<sup>59</sup> This incident denotes the growth of political opportunism among some Congressmen. The process of transformation of Congress from an organ of struggle into a seat of power had already started in the 1920s.

Growth of political opportunism which was complementary to the intra-party rivalry within the UPCC, disillusioned the youth, the new-recruits of the Congress.<sup>60</sup> The malice against the other groups, both inside and outside the jail, during the Civil Disobedience Movement and the attempt at mobilisation with the hope of getting party tickets in the coming election frustrated the youth who

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58. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.127.

59. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.205.

60. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, p.147.

had expected their leaders to be of high political standards.<sup>61</sup> This disillusionment explains the formation of an alternative to the existing Congress culture in the form of Utkal Samyavadi Karmi Sangha in February 1933.<sup>62</sup>

It will be, however, wrong to subdivide Congress party into just two factions each opposing the other. The emergence of a disillusioned group within the rank of Congress itself explains the existence of an alternative to both which was above the narrow politics of factionalism.

Few individual Congress leaders, however, stood <sup>apart</sup> ~~apart~~ from this narrow politics. Among them were leaders like Laxmi Narayan Mishra of Sambalpur, Surendranath Das of Balasore and many others, whom the official reports and press did not feel worth recording.

Soon after the party was banned, Surendranath Das absconded to the French occupied territory of Balasore and along with few other activists fought day in and day out to keep up the nationalist momentum. The Pradesh Congress committee functioned from there and party literature was regularly published hereafter. Many people were trained and sent for Civil Disobedience.<sup>63</sup> He remained underground

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61. Ibid.

62. Sureniranath Dwivedy, Mo Jivana Sangram Ardha Satabdira Samajvadi Angolanara Kahani, autobiography, p.39.

63. Harekrishna Mahatab, Sadhanera Pathe, p.147.

for nearly 12 months and his 'Ashram' at French Salasore became "a special source of trouble and embarrassment" for the British Government.<sup>64</sup>

Laxmi Narayan Mishra, an activist from Sambalpur, organised a number of Congress meetings in the town as well as in the rural areas during the 'passive phase'.<sup>65</sup> He also mediated between the two factions of the Congress in the district and tried to patch up the differences.<sup>66</sup> He mobilised the peasantry against the tyranny of Padampur Zamindar and Kharlar Zamindar. The peasants were advised not to pay any begari or supply rasad to the authorities. He also participated in the Dhenkanal and Talcher states people movements in 1930s.<sup>67</sup>

Babaji Ram Das, a militant leader in the days of 'Kanika Unrest' when released from jail sometime in mid-1920s, was forbidden to enter Orissa. This could not silence him politically and he went among the Oriya labourers of Calcutta and spread anti-colonial message among them.<sup>68</sup> The authorities in Orissa were ready to

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64. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/March/1932, Home Political Dept.

65. C.R. Mishra, op. cit., pp.44-45.

66. R.P. Panda, op. cit., p.35.

67. C.R. Mishra, op. cit., pp.48-49.

68. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/June/1929, Home Political Dept.

arrest him as soon as he returned.<sup>69</sup>

These radical Congress <sup>men</sup> did not have a faction of their own. They worked independently with a strong urge and stayed away from all factions. Possibly due to no common link among them, they could not pose any significant challenge to the existing factions within the UPCC. Nonetheless, they became a source of inspiration for the youth and other new recruits to the Congress movement.

Aftermath of Non-Co-operation also saw the revival of Oriya nationalists, whose opposition to the Indian National Congress needs no special mention.<sup>70</sup> The Swarajists came closer to them. Their (Swarajists') fight within the council was mostly concentrated on the Oriya issue. Nilakantha Das, the well-known Swarajist, helped the Utkal Unionist leader Madhu Sudan Das to enter into the Congress which the other faction, particularly Harekrishna Mahatab, opposed tooth and nail.<sup>71</sup> The non-Swarajists were also very much concerned with the Oriya issue. But they liked the issue to be taken up by the Congress along with other anti-imperialist issues. But finally the UUC

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69. Ibid.

70. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.129.

71. Nilakantha Das, op. cit., p.169.

leader was enrolled as a Congress member in 1924, despite the opposition by the non-Swarajists.<sup>72</sup>

The UUC's alliance with the Swarajists and for that matter the Congress further de-activated the Congress in Orissa. A strong trend started developing within the Congress which opposed all confrontations with Imperialism. This was clearly reflected at the time of the visit of the Simon Commission to India. The AICC declared a boycott of the all white Simon's Commission and appealed to the people to organise demonstrations on that occasion all over the country. A number of Congress members of the Bihar and Orissa legislature on the plea of serving the interest of the 'people of Orissa' supported the non-Congress members in a resolution welcoming to the Commission, which, they hoped, would give them an opportunity to put forward their long standing demand for creating a separate province by amalgamating the Oriya speaking tracts.<sup>73</sup>

But the anti-Simon Commission trend overpowered their opponents at the Puri conference of the UPCC on 19 August 1927, where a resolution was passed boycotting the Simon

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72. P.K. Mishra, Political History of Orissa, p.130.

73. K.M. Patra, op. cit., p.69.

Commission's visit and UPCC members were debarred from welcoming the Commission.<sup>74</sup> The pressure from UPCC as well as direction from their high commands compelled the Swarajist legislators to oppose the government in this regard.<sup>75</sup> Lingaraj Mishra, a Swarajist member put forward an amendment to the official resolution in the council, opposing the resolution. The Oriya nationalists were left alone on the issue, and they welcomed the Commission at Patna.<sup>76</sup>

Eventually Motilal Nehru in the Calcutta AICC in 1928 sarcastically remarked on the reception to the Simon Commission by the Orissa Congress.<sup>77</sup> As a mark of protest, the Oriya delegates walked out of the Conference and marched on the streets of Calcutta.<sup>78</sup> This reflects in a way, the sensitivity of the issue, despite the non-swarajist plea of viewing it secondary.

At the height of serious differences within the party, during the passive phase, communal tension mounted up in few Muslim pockets like Shadrak in the Balasore

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74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. P.K. Mishra, First Half, p.640.

77. In fact he confused the liberals with the Orissa Congress. Ibid.

78. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/January/1929, Home Political Dept.

district.<sup>79</sup> The quite unprecedented growth of both Hindi and Muslim communalism was in fact by far the most serious and permanent negative development of these years. The recurrent issues were the Muslim demand to stop music before mosques and the staging by them of demonstration with cow-skulls.<sup>80</sup>

The tension did not last long and had become normal by July 1926.<sup>81</sup> But the role played by the half-hearted secular nationalist leaders in indirectly providing impetus to the growth of these forces is equally important.

Nationalists with a Hindi tinge in their politics were not a rare phenomenon during the whole national movements in India. Medan Mohan Malviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, N.C. Kelkar and many others among the Swarajists had formed a responsivist group after 1923 and offered co-operation to the Government, so that the so-called Hindi interests might be safeguarded.<sup>82</sup> In 1925 they formed the Independent Congress Party to represent the Hindu interests among the

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79. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/June 1926, Home Political Dept.

80. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.58.

81. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/July/1926, Home Political Dept.

82. Bipan Chandra, Modern India, p.279.



nationalists.

All these factors had certain impact on similar forces in Orissa. The Oriya Swarajists like Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das and Bhubanananda Das attended the first Conference of the Independent Congress party and identified with it, although no unit of this party was formed in Orissa.<sup>83</sup> In 1927, these people under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das formed the unit of Hindu Mahasabha in Orissa. It was, however, not very active.<sup>84</sup>

The half-hearted secular nationalist politics was not confined to sections of the Swarajists only. A few among the so-called Gandhians like Biswanath Hota were also party to this.

In 1926, under the leadership of Biswanath Hota, a Hindu squad called Birastami Akhadadala was formed to fight out the Muslims at Balasore.<sup>85</sup> This squad used to lead the Hindu demonstrations to counter their Muslim counterparts.<sup>86</sup> The pre-mature death of communal tension was primarily because the Muslims were a very small religious

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83. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.58.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., p.59.

86. Ibid.

minority in Orissa.<sup>87</sup>

The 'passive phase', with negative developments like factionalism, parochialism, communalism and disillusionment within the rank and file was gradually followed by the period of momentum and hectic activity which generated zeal and hopes among the participants.

Apart from other things, this could be attributed to the open-endedness of the party. The working of the different trends together explain the open nature of the UPCC. The Congress had become not merely a party in the limited sense. It was rather a 'party of the parties,' representing all shades of opinion. This openness opened the possibility of "a period of momentum" even during the "passive phase".

The Great Depression (1929-30) also by aggravating agrarian crisis played a significant role in reviving the political scene on the all-India level.<sup>88</sup> But due to the constraints on the period of study a detailed analysis of this aspect is not feasible here.

The tribal and peasant discontent against the feudal oppression were also largely channelised into the anti-

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87. It continued for only a fortnight or so and no communal rioting was reported hereafter. Ibid.

88. Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p.256.

colonial movements. In 1927, the tribal people and peasants in the princely state of Nilagiri rose against the Raja, and the local Congress leaders of the British-Orissa (Balasore), without intervening directly sympathetised with them.<sup>89</sup> Their support came in the form of publication of news and articles in support of the movement in the Congress press and advice and inspiration to the leaders of movements and arrangement of shelter for them in British Orissa.<sup>90</sup> This support generated confidence among the revolting peasants.

In 1928, the peasant movement developed in Bamra, a princely state adjacent to Sambalpur. The land revenue had increased significantly under the the new Meefar Land Revenue Settlement. As a result subsistence for the peasants became more difficult.<sup>91</sup> Local gauntias or headmen of the village like Hara Pradhan, Bhagbatia Pradhan, Jagannath Garneik and Bhagbana Patel organised the peasants. Mahatma Gandhi's Bardoli agitation had inspired them in this regard. Dayanand Satpathy, a primary school teacher and a reporter of the nationalist paper the Aasha, acted as the linkage

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89. Harekrishna Mahatab, Gandhi O Odissa, p.59.

90. Ibid., p.121.

91. "Report of the Orissa State Enquiry Committee, 1939", p.6 in S. Pradhan, "Dayanand Satpathy" in New Aspects of History of Orissa, vol.IV, p.52.

between the local struggle and the struggles outside.<sup>92</sup> The result was that about 4,000 peasants demonstrated before the political agent at Sambalpur seeking redress of their genuine grievances. Failing to secure redress they organised a no-rent campaign on the Bardoli peasant movement line.<sup>93</sup>

The late 1920s saw the radical Congressmen taking interest in the organisation of labour force and attempting to integrate them into the national movement. But, unfortunately, Orissa lacked modern industries worth recording. It did not have a labour force in the modern sense of the term. In 1929, these radical Congressmen like Babaji Ram Das were, thus, found organising the Oriya labourers in Calcutta.<sup>94</sup>

Since mid-1920s, unprecedented growth of women's participation in the political process was a significant development, which preceded the large scale participation of the womenfolk in the salt satyagraha. In 1924 the first Utkal women's conference was held at Cuttack, was succeeded by many public gatherings of women.<sup>95</sup> After this, women

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92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Fortnightly Report, File No. 16/June/1929, Home Political Dept.

95. Nivedita Mohanty, op. cit., p.82.

started appearing in many public meetings. The culmination was the formation of the All Orissa Women's Association whose conference, held at Balasore in 1931, was attended by as many as 1200 women. A 30-member Executive Committee was constituted to run it.<sup>96</sup> Congress activists like Sarala Devi (who had participated in the Non-Co-operation campaign), Rashamani Devi, and Kishori Mani Devi were the main force behind the organisation. The 1924 Conference had been presided over by Prefulla Chandra Ray, who inaugurated the UPCC session that year. But, it could not be claimed as the women's wing of the UPCC for open affiliation with the Congress would have divided the infant women's movement into pro-UPCC and pro-UUC.<sup>97</sup> The women's movement drew its strength mainly from the middle-class educated women.<sup>98</sup>

The student and youth organisations were also growing up. The general restlessness of the rising generation in the middle and late 1920s was giving birth to a variety of these organisations, which were critical of both Swarajists and No-changers, and demanded more consistent anti-Imperialism

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96. Ibid., pp.81-83.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

in the shape of the slogan of Purna-Swaraj. They also had an awareness of international currents and of the need to combine nationalism with social justice.<sup>99</sup>

In Orissa, although the student movement at this stage had been divided into Oriya unionists and nationalists, the larger following among the students remained with the latter.<sup>100</sup> In 1924 the All Orissa Students Conference was held, disobeying the District Collector's attempt to dissuade the students from participating in it.<sup>101</sup> Students in general started participating in discussions on the social evils like casteism.<sup>102</sup> In 1928, the lathi charge on Lala Lajpat Rai triggered off the student protest in the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. They organised a condolence meeting and condemned the incident through a resolution boycotting the classes as a mark of protest.<sup>103</sup>

By 1929, the students' disrespect for authorities had grown significantly. In Cuttack, they observed a strike, demanding the removal of an unpopular principal,

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99. Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p.252.

100. Interview with Kalindi Panigrahi, an activist, Cuttack, dt. 4.1.1980, in S.C. Hazary, "Student Protest Movement in Orissa" in A.P. Padhy, ed., Indian State Politics, p.323.

101. Ibid., p.323.

102. Nivedita Mohanty, op. cit., p.80.

103. S.C. Hazary, op. cit., p.323.

a symbol of authority.<sup>104</sup> When the Congress party revitalised after a longish period of liberation radical Congressmen like Rajakrishna Bose were engaged in developing student organisations and mobilising them on Congress line.<sup>105</sup>

In 1928-29, youth Leagues were formed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose. In Orissa, the unit of youth league was constituted under the leadership of Bansidhar Mishra, Rajkrishna Bose and few others. Bansidhar Mishra was elected the president of the Orissa Youth League.<sup>106</sup> They brought out for some time a weekly called Yuvak from their headquarter at Cuttack.

The UPCC itself had become very active towards the close of the 1920s. Not less than 300 Congressmen from Orissa were delegates of the AICC Conference at Calcutta held in 1928.<sup>107</sup> The venue placed at a short distance from Orissa must have tempted many people to attend the AICC meet. Additionally, the increase in the numerical

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104. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/September/1929, Home Political Dept.

105. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/July/1929, Home Political Dept.

106. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.59.

107. P.K. Mishra, First Half, p.640; Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/1/1929, Home Political Dept.

strength of the party also played a significant role in increasing the number of delegates. Congress meetings were frequently held at different places.<sup>108</sup>

The revolutionary terrorists of North India like Bhagat Singh and his comrades also inspired the people. Particularly, the youth identified with their sacrifice. When Jatin Das died in the jail after a 63 days' hunger strike, the event had wide impact in Orissa. Jatin Das Day was celebrated in the different parts of the province.<sup>109</sup>

Finally, after the Lahore Congress and its adoption of the Purna Swaraj creed in 1929, an independence pledge was taken at innumerable meetings throughout the country on 26 January 1930.<sup>110</sup> The impact in Orissa is worth noting. Jawaharlal Nehru's speech was read out at different Congress meetings.<sup>111</sup> For example, at one such meeting in Cuttack, Gopabandhu Choudhury read out the pledge and asked people to extend support to the struggle.<sup>112</sup> At Bhubaneswar, some

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108. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/September/1929, Home Political Dept.

109. Ibid.

110. Bipin Chandra, Modern India, p.284.

111. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/November/1930, Home Political Dept.

112. K.M. Patra, op. cit., p.41.



Congressmen hoisted the tricolour flag at the top of the Lingaraj temple. This resulted in the arrest of Congress leaders like Krupasindhu Hota, Bholanath Shah, Acharya Harihar Das, Lingaraj Mishra and few others.<sup>113</sup> The Independence Day was also celebrated in places like Puri and Balasore.<sup>114</sup>

Apart from the meetings, in the first half of 1929, the UPCC had renewed the programme of bonfire of foreign clothes in different urban areas as a form of defiance of the alien-rule.<sup>115</sup>

Thus, by the end of 1929, the momentum had already been gathered for a mass movement which culminated in the massive Salt Satyagraha in different parts of Orissa.

113. The Samaj, dt. 29.1.1930, in K.M. Patra, op. cit., p.72.

114. Surendra Nath Patnaik, op. cit., p.69.

115. Fortnightly Report, File No. 18/March/1929, Home Political Dept.

## CONCLUSION

Before the formation of the Provincial Congress Committee, the Utkal Union Conference was the major political force in Orissa. Formed in 1903, the UUC's main demand in the initial stages was the amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts and a separate Orissa province at the later stage. It was a moderate organisation and by and large the local princes and landlords were the main social force behind it. It served as a 'loyal institution' under the Raj.

Meanwhile the tribal and peasant discontent against their immediate oppressors namely the local princes and the landlords was also growing. The new intelligentsia, numerically weak but strong in its opposition to British rule, gradually identified itself with the struggles of the tribals and peasants. Thus the gap between the intelligentsia and the UUC increased. Finally when the new intelligentsia formed the Congress the two organisations - the Congress and the UUC - competed with each other for sometime; hence also the antipathy of the local princes and landlords towards the Congress. Consequently, the Non-Co-operation Movement in many places assumed anti-feudal as well as anti-British character in the social context of Orissa.

Non-Co-operation Movement spread mainly in the areas which were exposed to some kind of modern politics during the UUC days. Thus, Sambalpur, Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Ganjam were the main centres of the movement. The leadership was provided by persons who were already active in politics during the pre-UPCC days. Most of the officials and lawyers, who resigned in the course of the movement were disillusioned with British institutions and were looking for an opportune moment to give expression to their disillusionment. The call of Non-Co-operation encouraged them to act courageously.

The movement, here, was never massive compared to the movement in Bengal and Bihar. The affluent sections largely remained aloof from it or at best gave some passive support to it. The princes and most of the landlords opposed it. The leadership, on the other hand, made attempt to mobilise the masses. Under these circumstances we do not see much substances in the theory that the leadership was afraid of the possible capture of the leadership of the movement by the masses. There was no such competition between the masses and the existing leadership for the leadership of the movement. Rather, sometimes there was a horizontal competition among the different trends of leadership for hegemony over the Congress.

The movement slowed down after 1922. But by that time the Congress had become the major political force in the region. Its rival - the UUC - had been left far behind. Even during the 'passive phase' after February 1922, the Congress organisation built up a 'positive image' of its own. It was in the context of the 'passive phase' and 'positive image' that the post-Non-Co-operation politics began to develop. The different trends within the Congress, particularly the Bharati Mandirites and the Satyavadites completed for leadership over the Congress, giving birth to factional politics inside it. These trends had grown as independent nationalistic organisations in the pre-UPCC days and were integrated into one whole during the 'movement phase' within the Congress. After the 'movement phase', they developed rivalries which spread even to the rank and file. On the national plane, the Satyavadites identified with the Swarajists or pro-changers and the Bharati Mandirites with the no-changers.

Factionalism within the Congress led to the disillusionment of a major section of the rank and file, which largely consisted of the youth and students. Thus, grew the Utkal Samyavadi Karmi Sangh in February 1933 as an alternative to the existing leadership of the Congress. It later merged with the All India Congress Socialist Party.

One other trend of radical Congressmen also existed which remained above all factionalism and worked hard to keep up the nationalist momentum even during the 'no-movement phase'. Surendra Nath Das, Babaji Ram Das, Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Bhagirathi Patnaik were its most important leaders.

By 1927-28 the UPCC had overcome the phase of frustration and was moving towards a new phase of hectic activity. Growth of tribal and peasant, youth and student, and women movements infused a new life into the Congress. Apart from other things, the openendedness of the party contributed to the growth of the Congress and the national movement. The UPCC was not merely a 'party'; it was rather a 'party of the parties' which permitted the functioning of different trends within the party. There was thus always open the possibility of a more militant mass-based trend coming to the forefront and leading the movement when the circumstances were favourable.




# ORISSA 1921-1931

(area of study)



- 1 Talcher
- 2 Hindol
- 3 Narsinghpur
- 4 Khandapara
- 5 Baramba
- 6 Tigiria
- 7 Athgarh
- 8 Nilgiri

20 0 20 40 km

-  Garjat States
-  Moghal Bandi
-  Present day Bihar
- N B Puri is included in Moghal Bandi

## APPENDIX - ONE

The map is drawn from the original map of Orissa, published by the Authority of the Government of Orissa in 1940 (the original map is in the Office of the Board of Revenue, Orissa, Cuttack)\*. The Orissa Provincial Congress Committee then consisted of six district Committees, such as Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Ganjam, Sambalpur and Singhbhum. At present Singhbhum is a part of Bihar. The Gariat states were Talcher, Hindol, Narsinghpur, Khandapara, Baramba, Tigiria, Athgarh, Nilagiri, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Pallahera, Dhenkanal, Bonai, Bamra, Rairakhol, Athmallik, Daspalla, Nayagarh, Ranapur, Sonepur, Boudh, Patna, Kalahandi, Jeypore, Gangpur and Parlekhemundi.

\* Compiled from C.U. Aitchinson's "A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sunnuds Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries", vol.II, Calcutta, 1931, in Prasanna Kumar Mishra, Political Unrest in Orissa in the 19th Century, Calcutta, 1983, Appendix Three.

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