



**TRIBAL MOVEMENT
& FREEDOM FIGHTERS
OF ODISHA**



TRIBAL MOVEMENT & FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF ODISHA

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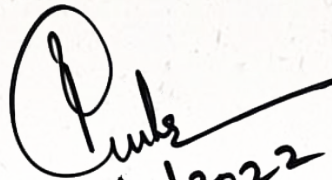
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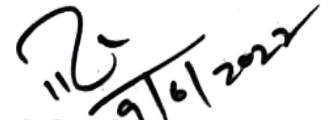
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INTRODUCTION

The tribal communities of India are a diverse group dispersed across the length and breadth of our great Nation. Often lauded for their deep humility, rich cultural traditions of social equality and civic harmony as well as their enduring love and respect for nature, India's tribal communities even after Independence continue to remain at the fringes of mainstream society though they have contributed substantially in the making of Indian Civilization. Increasing pressures on land and water resources have pushed many tribals from their traditional lands in search of living towards towns and cities.

Historical evidences show that many tribal movements and uprisings have taken place during British regime against the rulers for granting independence. In the process of movements and uprisings that have taken place nationwide as well as in various

States, there are some tribals who have contributed enormously for Indian's freedom while a good number of tribal leaders have scarified their life at the hands of the British rulers. But it is a pity that no systematic documentation has yet been done in this regard for the posterity to commemorate and remember their contribution.

Although tribal movements initially began over social and religious issues and against the oppression of the foreign rulers, in course of time, they merged with the national movement and with the non-tax campaign. The colonial government forced the tribals to adopt British Policies and introduced protective administration in tribal areas. However, most of the movements were ruthlessly suppressed by the colonial rulers.¹

The tribal people constitute about 8 percent of the total population of the Country. In other words, out of every 100 people residing in the country eight comprise of the

¹. S. Sethy - "Tribal Leaders of Odisha and their Contribution in Political and Social Movements," *Odisha Review*, October - 2015, pp.52

tribals. Relative isolation, traditional occupation, unique dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organisation are some of the very basic characteristic features of the tribes in India.

It is a well-known fact that a series of movements spearheaded by India's war of independence of 1857 rocked the British Empire to its foundations. Along with these there were several agitations and uprisings in tribal areas also. A famous social worker V. Raghvaiah (1971)², who did a lot of research on tribal freedom fighters and tribal uprisings writes that "The tribals too initiated struggles to safeguard their honour, to protect their cherished freedom and to get redressal against money-lenders during British regime, the Zamindars and other parasitic landholders, who tried to deprive them of all they had".

In 1757, the British East India Company occupied Bengal defeating Nawab Siraj-Ud-Daulah in the Battle of Plassey. This resulted in strengthening of the Company's influence which gradually expanded to the rest of India over the next hundred years. The annexation policies, the defective land revenue system, oppressive colonial rule and the administrative vagaries of the British rulers caused

discontentment among the people of India. As a consequence, So many movements and armed rebellions broke out all over the sub-continent against the British as India's freedom movement. It turned into one of the biggest mass movements in which an overwhelming participation of people including tribals throughout the country brought to its knees the mighty imperialist forces.³

Various reasons have stimulated the tribals to revolt against the feudal and colonial authorities. In 1600 A.D, during Moghul regime, the British came to India as traders but after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 A.D, they succeeded in emerging as a supreme colonial power. During their rule of nearly two centuries from 1757-1947 A.D, they drained India of its wealth and destroyed the self-sufficient character of its villages. The introduction of new extortionist land policies by British had resulted in agricultural indebtedness, decline of indigenous rural industries and rise of capitalist class in India. Moreover, the frequent increase of land revenue and cesses by the British created some landless peasants. Because of these unpopular measures peasant and tribal unrests erupted in different parts of India in the colonial period. The tribal movements

which took place during this period never gained the focus it deserved, although it contributed a lot for the dissolution of British rule in India.

The tribes in India are generally freedom-loving people. They are heavily dependent on land and forest for their subsistence. So, when the British imposed taxes on land frequently they took it as a challenge to their age old rights and revolted against the local administration.

The term 'adivasi' connotes that they were the first or early settlers of the land. A Tribe may be defined as a social group of a simple kind, the members of which speak a common dialect and act together for common purpose. Tribes live in a definite habitat, remain unified by a social organisation that is based primarily on kinship and cultural homogeneity. Their habitat and culture not only provide them a sense of freedom, self-identity and respect, but also empower them to stand united against any kind of exploitation, oppression and harassment by outsiders like zamindars, kings, British and others.

There were also movements against oppressing landlords, moneylenders and harassment by police and forest officials in Bihar, Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

². Raghaviah, V. (1971), Tribal Revolts, Andhra Rastra Adimjati Sevak Sangh, Nellore.

³. R. Ratha, "Tribal Freedom Fighters of Odisha", *The Odisha Historical Research Journal*, Vol. LVIII, Nos 1&2, 2019, pp.119-129

For example, Bhagat movements were found among Oraon of Chotanagpur, Bhils of Rajasthan, etc. Alienation of two important resources of the tribals namely land and forest were at the helm of many tribal movements. Erosion of land and forest rights began with the commencement of the British rule, which mainly irritated the tribals.

It brought about a combination of forces that were at work during the British period. Of these the most important were the introduction of the private property in land and the penetration of the market forces. Those two factors taken together opened up the way for large-scale alienation of land from tribals to non-tribals especially after the tribal areas got connected by roads and railways along with establishment mining and industry.

Many of these tribal groups in India revolted against the forceful and devastating intrusions into their life and region by the British. The tribals had been living peacefully and in harmony with nature for hundreds of years in their own forests prior to the arrival of the colonial power. They were reduced to the status of landless labourers and debtors from being the masters of their own land. The uprisings were basically aimed against this unwarranted disruption of their time-honoured customary rights.



The British introduced money lenders into the tribal areas which led to severe exploitation of the local inhabitants. They became bonded labourers under the new economic system. The tribal societies had a system of joint ownership of land which was replaced by the notion of private property.

The British imposed restrictions on the use of forest produce, on shifting cultivation and on hunting practices. This led to the loss of livelihood of the tribals. A Forest Department was set up in 1864 by the government mainly to control and regulate the rich resources of Indian forests. The Government Forest Act of 1865 and the Indian Forest Act of 1878 established complete government control over the forest land. The activities of

the Christian missionaries also led to social tension in tribal society and this was also resented by them.

Tribal movements or rebellions or uprising in India were inspired by revolutionary tendencies. They wanted to make use of the situation to fight and eliminate evil forces that existed in the tribal society. Various tribes like *Kandha, Koya, Maria, Santal, Munda, Dharua, Bhuyan, Koya, Juang, Gond, Kolha, Binjhal, Oraon, Halba, Bhil, Paharia, Khasi, Naga, Lusai, Kuki, Andamanese, Sentinelese* etc. had fought against the British administration at different places. The uprisings were basically against this unwelcome intrusion, and a fight for the restoration of their rights and customs.

⁴ R. Ratha, "Tribal Freedom Fighters of Odisha", *The Odisha Historical Research Journal*, Vol. LVIII, Nos 1&2, 2019, pp.119-129

Tribal Resistance Movement was an integral part of Freedom movement of India. In this historic struggle, the heroic roles played by some distinguished tribal leaders like: Tilka Manjhi of Bihar, Siddhu and Kanhu Murmu and Birsha Munda of Jharkhand, Rani Gaidinliu of Manipur, Alluri Seeta Ram Raju of Andhra Pradesh, Nirmal Munda of Odisha, Laxman Naik of Odisha and many others were prominent.

Coming to the State of Odisha, this State has traditionally excelled in the socio-economic and political spheres right from the days of king Kharavela down to the reigns of Bhaumakara, Somavanshi and Ganga dynasties. That was its golden period which ended with the death of the Suryavamshi king Pratap Rudra Deva in 1540. In 1568, Suleman Karrani, the Afghan ruler of Bengal defeated king Mukunda Deva in a battle which signalled the end of independent Hindu rule in Odisha and the beginning of Muslim Rule.⁴

In 1759, the British East India Company entered Ganjam of Odisha and in 1803 they captured coastal Odisha to establish their colonial administration. The foreign rulers ruled the people of Odisha forcibly; enforced their exploitative laws and regulations on them; implemented oppressive revenue system and interfered in

their traditional privileges and imposed new socio-economic and political order. These activities of the foreign rulers during the British regime whose policies disintegrated the tribal society, culture and polity caused unrest among the tribals who were deeply humiliated by the oppressors. To protect their interest, the tribals launched relentless rebellions and movements against the oppressors led by their charismatic leaders. During this period, many tribal movements and uprisings had taken place in different parts of Odisha against the rulers for freedom from the oppression of the foreign rulers.⁵

Tribal resistance movement was an integral part of Freedom Movement of Odisha. In this historic movement the heroic role played by some distinguished

tribal leaders like **Laxman Naik of Koraput, Ratna Naik of Keonjhar, Kamala Lochan Dora Bisoyee, Chakra Bisoyee and Nabaghana Kanhar** of Ghumsur, **Dayanidhi Dharua** of Mayurbhanj, **Rindo Majhi** of Kalahandi, **Tama Dora** of Malkangiri, **Dharanidhar Nayak** of Keonjhar, **Madri Kalo** and **Nirmal Munda** of Sundergarh and **Veer Surendra Sai** of Sambalpur who had contributed a lot for the freedom of India as well as Odisha deserves mention.

There are few important aspects of the tribal resistance movement of Odisha which deserve mention. One is that the tribals have their own social, cultural and religious identity, their own taboos, make beliefs and peculiar compulsion of life style and therefore, any attempt of the administration of



⁵ S. Sethy - "Tribal Leaders of Odisha and their Contribution in Political and Social Movements", *Odisha Review*, October - 2015, pp.52

an alien rule to make an inroad into the tribal society by way of reformatory and correctional changes, however laudable, is bound to be resisted by the tribals with all their individual and collective might.⁶

The State of Odisha, is regarded as the homeland of the tribals comprising of 22.85% of the total population of the State and having 62 Scheduled Tribe Communities including 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Historical evidences indicate that the tribals have fought against the British regime for the tyranny and also have led many rebellions and uprisings which have contributed enormously to the Country's independence. In the entire Country, the tribal freedom struggles can be broadly classified under three different phases and Odisha is no different from this.

In 1759 the English forces of East India Company entered Ganjam upon the invitation of Narayan Deo - the Zamindar of Parlakhemundi and drove out the French. They finally took possession of Ganjam in 1766. During that period the territory of Ganjam comprised three estates viz Parlakhemundi, Ghumsar and Kandhamal. The Zamindars collectively had 34 forts and an army of about 32,000 un-organized soldiers.

In 1767 when the British officers finally marched into Paralakhemundi to take it over, the Zamindar of Parlakhemundi Narayan Deo refused submission to them. He was defeated by the British and sent to exile in 1768. Like Narayan Deo, many other Zamindars and the residents of Ganjam including the tribals refused to accept the British rule and pay tributes to them and rose

against the British. The agitations continued till 1837. The British had to use military forces to accomplish the task.⁷

Krushna Bhanj, the Raja of Ghumsar died in 1773 and he was succeeded by his second son Bikram Bhanj who revolted against the foreign rule for a very long time. In 1782, the Britishers replaced him by his elder brother, Laxman Bhanj who died in 1788. He was succeeded by his son Srikara Bhanj who and his son Dhananjay Bhanj challenged the authority of British government. Srikara Bhanj disliked the system of payment of taxes and tributes imposed by the British. Eventually he handed over his zamindari to his son Dhananjay and went on pilgrimage. He returned in 1795 and resumed his zamindari. Then he refused to pay tax to the East India Company from 1797 to 1800.

In 1794, the office of the Collector, Ganjam was established.

Though the British attacked Ghumsar and captured it on 9th May 1801, they could not suppress the revolution. In October, 1801, the British removed Srikara Bhanj from zamindari and handed it over to his son Dhananjay Bhanj. The people of Ganjam and Ghumsar including the tribals could not accept the British and joined the



Tribal Freedom Struggle Phase 1:
The initial phase of tribal freedom struggle belongs to the movements up to 1857 that is during the regime of the East India Company. These were basically in the form of crude agitations of primitive character for securing some concessions from the rulers.



⁶ N.P. Panigrahi; "Tribal Resistance Movement in Orissa : Some Reflections", *Odisha Review*, August - 2011, pp.52

⁷ R. Ratha, "Tribal Freedom Fighters of Odisha", *The Odisha Historical Research Journal*, Vol. LVIII, Nos 1&2, 2019, pp.119-129

zamindars to continue their revolt against the British.

In 1803, during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley the British East India Company, occupied coastal Odisha after breaking down the feeble Maratha resistance. The kingdom of Khurda plunged into a rebellion in 1804 under the leadership of Jayee Rajguru, the powerful reagent of King Mukunda Dev II who was a minor. Consequently, Jayee Rajguru was brutally executed in 1806 by the British.

The defective land revenue system and the administrative vagaries of the British rulers continued to cause discontent among the people of Odisha. As a result, there

broke out an armed rebellion under the leadership of Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mahapatra in 1817 known as Paika Rebellion of Khurda.

About 400 Kandha tribals from Ghumusar entered Khurda and joined the rebellious Dalbeheras and Paikas under Jagabandhu's leadership. They plundered Banpur and adjoining areas, reducing the Government buildings and Police Stations to ashes. From Banpur the insurgents proceeded towards Khurda where office buildings were set on fire and the treasury was looted. But the Britishers were successful in quelling the rebellion.⁸

The Kandhas of Odisha were the first tribe who raised their arms

against the British in the Paik rebellion of 1817. But it was the 2nd Kandha rebellion of 1835 which brought to the forefront the first tribal freedom fighter of Odisha named **Kamala Lochan Dora Bissoyi**.

Annexation of Ghumsar zamindari, removal of the local feudal authorities from power; introduction of new administration and new land revenue system; imposition of new taxes; activities of Christian missionaries; arbitrary incursion into some of their age-old customs like *Meriah* (human sacrifice) and female infanticide and exploitation of intermediaries and moneylenders provoked the Kandhas to rise in revolt against



⁸ R. Ratha, "Tribal Freedom Fighters of Odisha", *The Odisha Historical Research Journal*, Vol. LVIII, Nos 1&2, 2019, pp.119-129

the British. It was one of the early tribal movements in India against the British which continued for a long time in which both Rajas and ethnic tribals like the Kandhas fought in tandem against the foreign rule.

Kamala Lochan Dora Bissoyi

popularly known as Dora Bissoyi was a Benuiah Kandha born in Binjigiri village, located near Kullad of the lower Ghumsar area presently known as Bhanjanagar in Ganjam district of Odisha. Raja Dhananjay Bhanj conferred on him the title of 'Birabara Patro' and appointed him as the 'Maliah Bissoyi' or the 'Head Agent' to represent the Maliah Kandhas of his estate. The Raja also appointed him as the 'Commander-in-Chief' of the Ghumsar army conferring on him the title of 'Bahadur Bakshi'.⁹

Under his leadership, the Kandha uprising started in September, 1835 and continued till February 1837 which left an unforgettable chapter in the history of modern Odisha. He organized the Kandha rebellion in Ghumsar, geared it up from 1835-1837. He was committed to save his motherland from the foreign rule and subjugation and urged upon the Government for re-establishment of Rajas administration in Ghumsar and protection of their tribal socio-religious customs like the Meriah Sacrifice.



Kamal Lochan Dora Bissoyi

During the agitation, the Kandhas became violent and attacked a British detachment between G. Udaygiri and Durgaprasad village. In that encounter, thirteen soldiers and two European officers, Lieutenant Broomly and Ensign Gibbon were killed. In order to capture Dora Bissoyi and his supporters, the British undertook a vigorous military operation and most of the rebels were either shot dead or hung from trees. Martial law was imposed but the rebellion could not be extinguished. Dora Bissoyi escaped from Ghumsar and took shelter in Angul.

The rebellion was suppressed for a while, but the authorities could not apprehend Dora Bissoyi in spite of having announced a reward of 5000/- rupees for his capture. At the instigation of

Henry Ricketts, the Commissioner of Odisha, Raja Somnath Singh Jagadev of Angul handed over Dora Bissoyi to the British forces in 1837 when Dora visited him to seek military assistance. He was arrested and sent to prison in Ooty near Madras. There he breathed his last in 1846 as a state prisoner, leaving behind a glorious legacy of brave and resolute struggle against the British.

In the very year of the death of the illustrious Kandha leader Dora Bissoyi, another fearless, courageous and daring member of his family emerged to cause havoc for the British in the hill tracts of Odisha. His life and activities formed another sensational chapter in the history of modern Odisha. He was none

⁹. Ibid

else than **Chakra Bissoyi**, the nephew of Dora Bissoyi. He was also a Benniah Kandha born in 1823 in the native village of Dora Bissoyi.

After the arrest of his uncle Dora Bissoyi, **Chakra Bissoyi** began to nourish a desire to revive the Kandha resistance against the British rule. He took the commanding charge of *Kandha* rebellion in 1846 after death of his uncle Dora Bissoyi and continued till 1856. He knew that the rebellious spirit of the *Kandhas* had not died in spite of the suppression of earlier revolts. He could also see the development of fresh complications in the wake of the suppression of Meriah by the British and the appointment of Captain S.C. Macpherson as the *Meriah* Agent. The excesses committed by Macpherson in punishing the culprits of *Meriah* created a strong resentment among the Kandhas. Chakra Bissoyi took advantage of the situation. He posed himself as the "Champion of Meriah" and the *Kandhas* rallied round him.

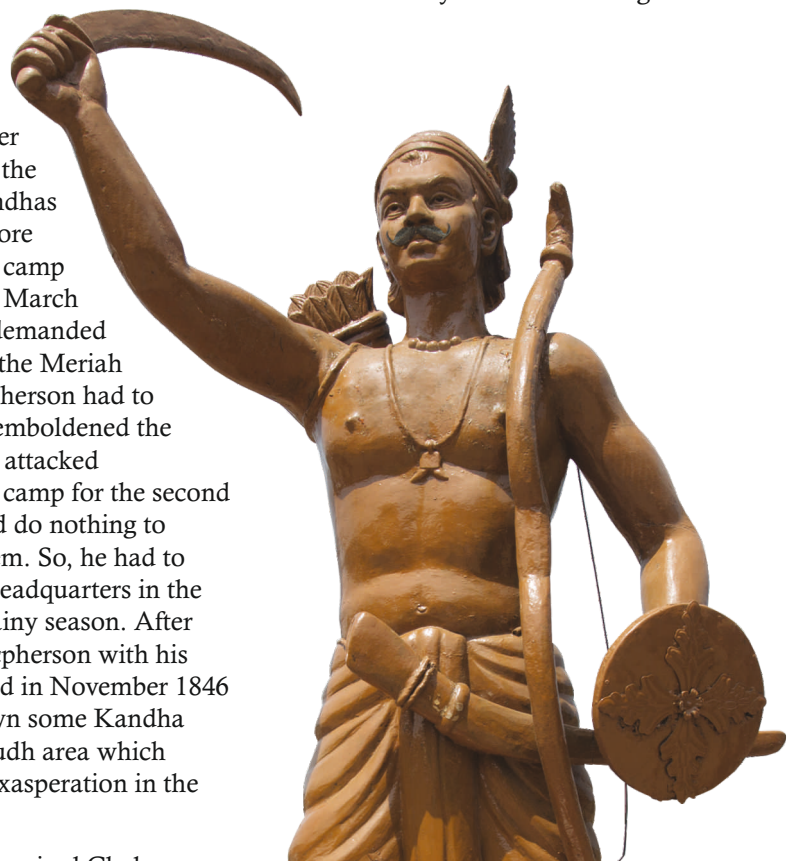
Since the end of the *Kandha* rebellion under Dora *Bissoyi*, there had been no improvement in their economic conditions. On the contrary there had been more and more economic exploitation and their liberties had been curtailed. Being politically backward, these Kandhas resented any encroachment on their liberty.

Chakra Bissoyi made use of this discontent. He could also see the development of some fresh complications and it developed in the wake of the suppression of the Meriah sacrifice, a deep-rooted custom of the Khond community, and the appointment of S.C. Macpherson as the Meriah Agent.

Captain Macpherson captured and liberated 170 Meriah victims within a week in February, 1846. It was provocation enough for the Kandhas to revolt. Chakra Bissoyi came to the forefront and organised secret councils. Under his leadership the rebellious Kandhas assembled before Macpherson's camp at Bisipara on March 14, 1846 and demanded the release of the Meriah victims. Macpherson had to comply. This emboldened the Kandhas who attacked Macpherson's camp for the second time. He could do nothing to counteract them. So, he had to return to his headquarters in the wake of the rainy season. After the rains, Macpherson with his troops returned in November 1846 and burnt down some Kandha villages in Boudh area which caused huge exasperation in the region.¹⁰

This cruelty inspired Chakra

Bissoyi to mobilize the Kandhas living around Boudh, Daspatha, Kandhmal, Ghumsar and adjoining areas. Under his leadership a massive Kandha movement erupted in Ghumsar area towards the end of 1846. He was supported by the Paikas and Bissoyis of Chakapaada, the Kandhas of the western Muthas including the Kandhas of Boudh and the Paikas of Ghumsar. The British General Dyce was brought in to quell the rebellion, but Chakra Bissoyi remained at large.



Chakra Bissoyi

¹⁰ Patnaik, N.R.: History & Culture of Khond Tribes, New Delhi, Common Wealth Publishers, 1992, pp.357-358



Lord Wellesely (Governor General during British occupation of Odisha in 1803)

In April 1847 John Campbell succeeded Macpherson. He followed, by and large, a conciliatory policy towards the Kandhas and succeeded in his attempts to rescue many Meriah victims tactfully. However, he could not bring Chakra Bissoyi to surrender. The British authorities suspected that the Raja of Angul, Somanath Singh, extended secret help to Chakra Bissoyi and another valiant Kandha leader, Nabaghana Kanhara of Ratabira, who had led the Kandha uprising in the Boudh region. Raja Somnath Singh was deposed in 1848 and Angul was brought under the direct administration of the British Government.

Resorting to guerrilla warfare, Chakra Bissoyi went on challenging the British from time to time, which worried the then Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie. Government of Bengal declared a reward of three thousand rupees for Chakra's capture. Chakra Bissoyi remained underground in the Kandhamalas from 1849 to 1855 for a span of six years.

Inspired and helped by Dora Bissoyi and Chakra Bissoyi, another tribal leader, **Nabaghana Kanhara** of Ratabira in Boudh-Kandhamal area took the commanding charge of Kandha movement in Boudh from 1837 to

1846. The rebellion spread like wild-fire in the entire Boudh region. Under his leadership, the Kandhas opposed the tax system of 'Raja of Boudh, resented the exploitative and oppressive acts of British authority and raised their voice against the abolition of Meriah (human sacrifice).

Nabaghana organised the Kandhas of Ghumsar, Dasapalla and Banpur against the Raja and the British. He received support and cooperation from the Kandha rebel leaders Dora Bissoyi and Chakra Bissoyi and Somnath Singh, the King of Angul. On account of the organisational skill of Dora Bissoyi and Nabaghana

Kanhar, the uprising assumed a gigantic proportion in the Kandha country. Hence the British government had to requisition military forces from Madras, Nagpur and Bengal Divisions to quell the Kandha movement.

The British could not apprehend Nabaghana although they managed to arrest his brother Madhaba Kanhar and two sons Bira and Maheswar. Nabaghan continued his rebellion with the help from 'Raja of Angul'. However, his two years revolt came to an end due to the conspiracy of Sam Bissoyi, a British supporter. Sam Bissoyi handed over some Ghumsar insurgents to the British, who had taken shelter under him. The British later captured the other rebels and their leader Nabaghana. His revolt made the British to take conciliatory development measures for the region. Yet the Kandhas did not trust the Britishers and continued their agitation.

The Kandhas of Kalahandi also revolted against the colonial rulers under the leadership of **Rindo Majhi** who was born at Urladani, in a tribal family. After the British captured Kalahandi, the Kings and Zamindars of Kalahandi collected tax from the Kandhas and their age-old tradition of Meriah sacrifice was banned. The aggrieved Kandhas rose in revolt against the

foreign rulers. The tribals rallied round their Borikiya Kandha leader Rindo Majhi. Though he was well aware of the power and strength of the British forces, he never hesitated rather repeatedly attacked them and their supporters. At that time, he was also getting support from Kandha leader Chakra Bissoyi, who was attacking the Britishers repeatedly by adopting guerrilla warfare tactic.

John Campbell was succeeded by Lt. Colonel A.C. Macneill as the Meriah Agent who arrested Rindo Majhi and his son Palaso Majhi in 1853 and kept them in Jail at Russelkonda without trial.



The Kandha uprising became intense after the capture of their leader. In December, 1855, during his annual tour of the Kalahandi State, Macneill, paraded the prisoner, Rindo Majhi, in chains from village to village to create a sense of fear among the Kandhas. The Borikiya Kandhas could not stand this humiliation hurled on their chief by the British agent. On 10th December, 1855 they attacked the camp of Macneill. However, the attack was repulsed with some casualties on both the sides.¹¹

Few days later, the Kutia Kandhas of Kandhmal area joined the Borikiya Kandhas, and together they made the second attack on the Agent's camp. It was due to the wisdom and help of Dinabandhu Patnaik, the Tahsildar that Macneill could escape to Russelkonda. Later, the British killed leaders like Tada Domba and hanged Rindo Majhi.¹²

¹¹. Patnaik, N.R.: History & Culture of Khond Tribes, New Delhi, Common Wealth Publishers, 1992, pp.362-363

¹². Ibid

Superintendent, Samuells believed that Chakra Bissoyi was responsible for uniting the two tribes. So, the British authorities started a massive hunt for his capture. He had to move from place to place to elude their grasp. He took shelter on the bank of the Tel river and alternatively he lived in Madanpur, a zamindari in Kalahandi State and Jarasingha. After the Kalahandi incident he retreated from Madanpur. E.A. Samuells requested the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals to order the Zamindar of Madanpur to deliver the rebel

chief. The Zamindar expressed his ignorance of Chakra Bissoyi's presence.

In March, 1856 Chakra was reported to be hiding in Athagaon in Patna State under the shelter of Majhi Dharam Singh Mandhata, the Zamindar of Athagaon. To arrest him Dinabandhu Patnaik marched to Athagaon with a force of seventy soldiers. Chakra Bissoyi, however, managed to escape, but his principal assistant, Bhutia Sardar and many other followers with their families were captured. Dharam Singh Mandhata, languished in prison.¹³

Mysteriously, he disappeared into oblivion before the beginning of the Great Revolt of 1857.

Chakra Bissoyi remained the most predominant figure in the history of Ghumsar and Kandha uprisings from 1846 to 1856. His brave adventures and daring actions, his indomitable courage, uncommon vigour, inordinate zeal and towering personality have added luster and glory to the name of Ghumsar. After Chakra Bissoyi the Kandha risings did not come to an end. The Kandhas rose against the foreign rulers from time to time in 1860, 1862, 1863, 1865 and 1882. It was a spontaneous reaction of the tribals against British administration. Chakra Bissoyi, therefore, occupies a significant place in the history of popular resistance tribal movement in the State of Odisha.

The Great Indian Revolt of 1857 is one of the greatest events of Modern Indian History. The effect of this revolt was seen in Odisha also.

The tribal uprising in Mayurbhanj Tributary Mahal in 1857 under the leadership of Dayanidhi Dharua, a leader of Dharua tribe, was another important movement in the history tribal's freedom struggle in Odisha. The unjust revenue policy of Raja of Mayurbhanj and the oppressive actions of the Amalas (government officials) prompted the tribal people to revolt against the Raja and the British authority.



Madanpur-rampur Palace

All attempts to arrest Chakra Bissoyi proved futile. Nothing was heard of the great Kandha leader, after October 1856.



Tribal Freedom Struggle Phase 2:

The second phase belongs to the movements from 1857 up to the beginning of the 20th century against the British economic and political policies in the background of new land revenue system, civil and criminal regulations and widespread famines. Both tribals and their neighbouring non-tribals together rose against the colonial power.



¹³ R. Ratha, "Tribal Freedom Fighters of Odisha", The Odisha Historical Research Journal, Vol. LVIII, Nos 1&2, 2019, pp.119-129

The administration tried to suppress the movement and captured some leaders, but they could not quash it completely which continued till 1866. This movement made the authorities to reconsider their revenue policy.

Veer Surendra Sai of Sambalpur was an illustrious freedom fighter of Odisha. He started his revolt earlier against the British rule long before 1857 and fought his guerrilla war from 1837 to 1864 with the support of local Zamindars and Gountias against the British. He himself was a tribal leader belonging to Raj Gond tribe. One of the major causes of his revolt was exploitation of tribals for which



Surendra Sai

many local tribal Zamindars joined with him.

Surendra Sai revolted against British rule vigorously challenging the motives of the British Government on the grounds of Doctrine of Lapse when Narayan Singh, an old and incapable scion of Barpali zamindar family was elevated the king of Sambalpur by the Britishers in 1833 A.D. The struggle was taken to every corners of Sambalpur kingdom and other neighbouring States. The tribal zamindars participated in the movement. Surendra Sai and his brother Udanta Sai and uncle Balabhadra were arrested in 1840 A.D. by the British and sent to Hazaribagh jail in Bihar.

The second phase of his revolution started in 1857 with the outbreak of Sepoy Mutiny in India. The mutineers attacked Hazaribagh jail and released all the inmates including Surendra Sai and his brother Udanta Sai on 30th July 1857. After that, the Sai brothers returned to their native district Sambalpur by the end of August and received a grand ovation as the region was seething with discontent. They reorganized the tribal people and the zamindars and raised a fighting force of about 1,500 people.

Surendra and his close associates including the Gond Zamindars, created many disturbances. On 7th October, 1857, the Senior Assistant Commissioner, Captain R. T. Leigh tried to negotiate with Surendra for peace. Surendra

bargained for cancellation of the remaining period of his and his brother's sentence and his enthronement as the king of Sambalpur which was rejected and he was asked to stay as a political prisoner. In the mean time the British reinforced their troops. Smelling something odd Surendra declared open revolt against the British in November 1857.

The rebellion that broke out in Sambalpur in 1857 under the leadership of Surendra Sai was mainly a tribal rebellion. Espousing the cause of Surendra, the tribal Zamindars of Bheden, Ghens, Kolabira, Kodabaga, Lakhanpur, Loisinga, Laida, Machhida, Paharsirgiria, Patkhulanda, etc. joined with him. They gave up their comforts and embraced jungle life. Some of them lost their estates, some were killed, some were arrested and hanged and many were imprisoned. The tribal people were noted for their sacrifice and heroism. Surendra could challenge the mighty British power relying solely on their strength and support.

Major Impey joined as Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur in April 1861. Reviewing the situation he declared the policy of British amnesty. Accordingly Mitrabhanu Sai, son of Surendra Sai, with his uncle Udanta and Dhruva surrendered in 1862. Lastly Veer Surendra Sai surrendered on 16th May 1862. Major Impey granted him pardon and sanctioned him a pension of Rs 4,600/- per anum and he was

permitted to stay in the village Bargaon.

However, after the death of Impey, situations suddenly changed and the British administrators revived their hostility towards the great hero. They made sudden arrest of Surendra Sai and all his people on 23rd January 1864. Sai and six of his followers were subsequently detained in the Asirgarh hill fort on the Satpura hill range in Madhya Pradesh. Sai spent the last part of his life i.e. 20 years in captivity. In 23rd February 1884, Surendra Sai died in the Asirgarh fort away from his native land.

Veer Surendra Sai and his associates fought an unequal battle in the most adverse circumstances for the urge of freedom. In the history of India, it is difficult to find the name of another martyr, who languished in jails for a period of thirty-seven years and who spent so many years of his life in jungle warfare.

Ratna Naik was a revolutionary tribal leader of Bhuyan tribe of Keonjhar. He was born in 1820 at Banspal in Bhuyan Pirh of Keonjhargarh (Odisha). Being a dynamic personality he dreamt of establishing a democratic set-up in which every individual in the society would enjoy his rights without any hassles setting aside the old traditions.

Towards the end of April 1868, the *Bhuyan Sardars* revolted in Keonjhar under the leadership of **Ratna Naik** against the newly appointed King of Keonjhar 'Dhanurjay Bhanja' and the

British. The main causes of their dissatisfaction were: withdrawal of royal patronage from the *Bhuyan* people; breaking up of the tradition of participation of Bhuyan people in the Keonjhar King's coronation ceremony; engagement of non-Bhuyan people as revenue collectors; collection of revenue in cash instead of crops; engagement of non-*Bhuyan* people for works in the kingdom and imposition of compulsory and unjustified taxes.

The town of Keonjhar was besieged and the oppressive Dewan, Nanda Dhal along with some of his associates were abducted. Ratna Naik was captured by the Paikas of Pallahara on 15th August, 1868. The rebellion was suppressed with a strong hand and most of the *Bhuyan* Sardars surrendered. The captured rebels, were sent for trial. Ravenshaw, the British Administrator tried the case at Keonjhar. Among them Ratna Naik and six others were sentenced to death and the rest to imprisonment. Ratna Naik was hanged by the British authority.

Ratna Naik stood for protection of human rights and against the despotic action of the King and he fought against the British super power. He wanted to make Keonjhar a democratic state where there would be no hereditary Kings and the people of Keonjhar will enjoy all fundamental rights under a popular Government. Ratna Naik, was a great tribal leader and a brave son of Keonjhar and Odisha who

sacrificed his life for the people and the cause of his motherland.

The second phase of Keonjhar tribal uprising began in 1890 against the despotic rule of Raja Dhanunjay Bhanj and his officers and lasted for five years under the leadership of **Dharanidhar Nayak**, an educated young Bhuyan. He was born on 5th May, 1864 in a Paudi Bhuyan family in Kusumita village of Keonjhar. He studied up to ME school standard.

The immediate cause of the rebellion was the construction of a canal known as "Machhakandana Jora" from Bararaon Pahar (hillock) to Keonjhargarh which would carry the stream water to the Keonjhar State capital. The cutting of stone was done completely by the "bethi" (free labour) system in which the Bhuyans were required to render inhuman physical labour.

Dharanidhar Nayak fought against slavery for the tribal communities. And he strongly instigated the Bhuyans and other tribals like Juang, Bathudi, Kolha and Saunti to rise in revolt against the tyrannical rule of the Raja. He led the tribal people against British oppression and dominance. The Bhuyans looted the granaries and procured guns and cannons to wage war. The revolt took a violent turn. But at last he was arrested and imprisoned for 7 years in Cuttack jail. He was released in 1897 and led the life of a Sanyasi (saint) till his death.

His indomitable will and spirit to resist the oppression and



Dharani Naik with supporters

exploitation of the innocent people has added a glorious chapter in the annals of Odisha. His mobilisation of the people against the continuance of the abominable 'bethi' system and other illegal exactions became an eye-opener for others to emulate.

During the agitations of Veer Surendra Sai of Sambalpur and the Bhuyans of Keonjhar, a tribal uprising took place in Malkangiri located in the southern most part of Odisha. Its leader was a brave Koya young man **Tama Dora**. He was born in 1838 in Kondapalli village of Padia Block in Malkangiri district of Odisha. His father was Rama Dora, who was a Peda (village headman). After his father's death, Tama Dora succeeded as the Peda of his village. Then he started visiting different villages and organized agitation against the British

administration. Thus, he became a popular leader among the Koya people.

At this time, the tribes of Malkangiri were protesting against the annexation policy and

oppressive revenue system of the British. The last Queen of Malkangiri, Bangaru Devi, defeated King Ramachandra Deva III of Jeypore with her powerful and large Koya army. She fought bravely against the mighty British. But she was finally deposed in 1872. Consequently, there was complete accession of Malkangiri State into the Madras Presidency. The valiant Queen fought unsuccessfully for another 8 years. Finally, in 1885 she breathed her last at the age of 70 after a prolonged illness of 5 years.

At this juncture **Tama Dora** emerged as a revolutionary in Champakhari war in 1860 and Rampa revolution in 1862 against the unjust and oppressive policies of the feudal chiefs and British administration. He entered in to the stage and took command of the tribal people of Malkangiri especially of the Koya tribe against



Cuttack Jail

British maladministration and demanded justice for his people.

Leading the Koya troops, Tama Dora defeated the British Police of Malkangiri in 1880 and proclaimed himself as the ruler of Padia and Motu in Malkangiri district. In this incident, one Inspector and six policemen of Podia Police Station were killed. This incident is known as the 'Koya Revolution' and had a great impact throughout the country. Colonel Macquoid of Hyderabad contingent marched with 100 men but was confronted with a severe attack by the Koya Army, under the leadership of Tama Dora. However, the efforts of this brave young man came to an end when he was brutally killed in the Rampa Forests near Motu on 28th July, 1880 by the Military Police of Hyderabad. In the absence of a dynamic leader the Koya Army got fragmented.

The second half of 19th century was one of the most eventful periods in the history of modern Odisha. The discontentment rising among the people against the oppressive Garhjat administration was heading towards a conflagration. This discontent gradually flared up in the form of popular protest and the period witnessed a series of peasant and tribal uprisings against their native rulers who were protected by their colonial masters.

Gangpur, one of the biggest princely states of Odisha, experienced a violent uprising of tribal peasants in 1897. The new land revenue settlement which was

introduced by King Raghunath Sekhar Deo ignited the tribal flare-up under the leadership of Madri Kalo.

Born in 1848, **Madri Kalo**, a tribal Gauntia (village headman) of Kureibaga village, organized this movement against the king of Gangapur, who was being supported by the British. This was the first popular awakening to challenge the perpetrated inhuman and exploitative socio-economic system in the society. But attempts have been made in the administrative records of the colonial government to marginalize the significance of this movement by branding it as a mere "Gauntia Meli" or uprising of some disgruntled intermediaries.

Madri Kalo operated from

Mahabir Hill of Bargaon which was the nerve centre of the rebellion from where he directed his operations. Despite all efforts, it became difficult on the part of the Durbar administration to nab the rebels who took shelter in the inaccessible hills and forests of the region.

It was a rare co-incidence that the rebellion of Birsa Munda at this point of time was also posing serious challenge to the British authorities in Chhotnagpur region of Bihar. Gangpur and Chhotnagpur being two contiguous regions, the Government feared that in case, any link was established between these two rebel groups, the situation would go out of control.



Gangpur Palace

The British Government deputed a contingent of troops under the command of the Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhum to assist the Gangpur State police in suppressing this rebellion. But it was difficult to apprehend Madri Kalo and his followers who continued their depredations from hideouts in remote hills and forests. Hence the State administration resorted to diplomacy and with the assistance of the Gauntia of Kuranga, succeeded in arresting Madri Kalo in 1900. He was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment of which he spent 6 years in Sundargarh Jail and the rest in Ranchi. He was released in 1910. Four years after his release, he breathed his last in 1914 in the village Lamboi near Rajgangpur.

The last part of his life was miserable. Being apprehensive of the renewal of the rebellion after his release from the jail, the Gangpur State authority had virtually rendered him paralytic by amputating the femoral artery of his leg.

For the tribal tenants of Gangpur, Madri Kalo left behind a rich tradition of popular resistance against hegemonic oppression of the state administration. As the torch bearer of the first insurrection against the oppressive Durbar administration, he inculcated in the minds of his compatriots, a sense of courage and moral strength to fight for justice which expressed itself in a violent form and later in form of the Munda rebellion of 1939

nearly a quarter century after his death. Madri Kalo, has become a living legend in the history of peasant's movement in the State of Gangpur and therefore, he occupies a significant place in the history of popular resistance movement in the Garhjat States of Odisha.



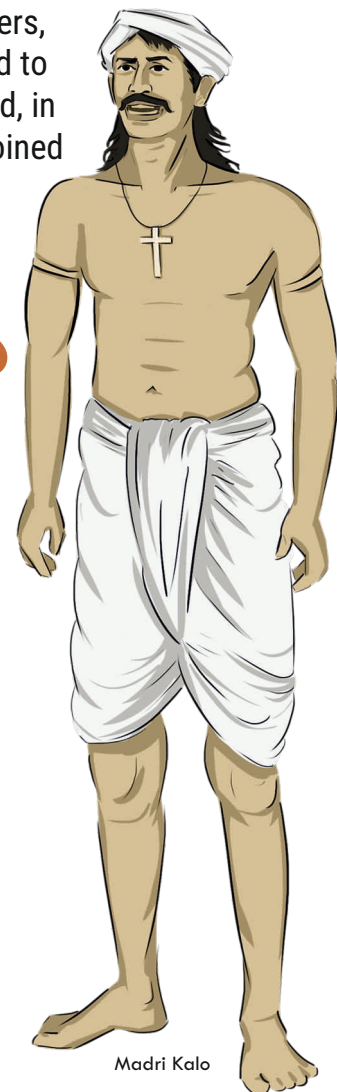
Tribal Freedom Struggle Phase 3:

The third phase of tribal freedom struggle belongs to the struggles during the first three decades of the twentieth century. These were economic struggles against the non-tribal intruders, moneylenders, traders, zamindars, administrators who tried to exploit the tribals. During this period, in some parts of the country, tribals joined the groups led by Indian National Congress taking up specific issues and struggles launched by Mahatma Gandhi.



After the death of Madri Kalo, another tribal uprising called "Munda Rebellion of 1939" occurred in the Gangpur State under the stewardship of Nirmal Munda. He was born in 1893 in a gauntia family of Bartoli village of Biramitrapur in Sundergarh district of Odisha. His father's name was Murha Munda and mother's name was Gomi. He studied up to High School. He emerged as the leader of the Munda uprising and intensified the agitation in the princely State of Gangpur.

The general complaint in the State of Gangpur was mostly the exorbitant land rent. The tribals of Gangpur appealed against the abnormal increase, but no relief was granted. It gave rise to popular discontent. The tribals started a no-rent campaign and it spread all over the state.



Madri Kalo

The village Dahijira became the centre of the storm. The movement was strengthened with the inclusion of the Munda Christians of the Lutheran mission, the Oraons, the Hindus; and also had the support of the tribal leaders and pleaders of Ranchi.

The administration took coercive measures for the recovery of arrear rents. Criminal cases were instituted against the leaders of the agitation. But the arrests were opposed by the people who were armed with indigenous weapons. And in early 1939, the State almost found it impossible to collect the land revenue from the peasants.

Consequently, the Queen Regent announced certain minor concessions, which were not acceptable to the people. The No-Rent campaign continued. On 9th February, 1939, the Maharani convened a meeting at Sergipalli to listen to the people's grievances and to induce them to make payment. Around four to five thousand people from 30 villages attended the meeting and presented a charter of demands. Their demands included not only restitution of the land rent and forest rights of 1910 settlement but also abolition of "Choukidari Tax" and monopoly on the trade of hides. Total abolition of "Bethi, Bheti, Rasad and Magan" was also demanded. Introduction of responsible government in which the people could exercise the right to vote was also asked for. But the Queen paid no heed to these demands.

The tribals continued their agitation under the leadership of Nirmal Munda. The rebel Mundas openly revolted against the Queen of Gangpur and British and continued the No-rent Campaign. Dahijiri village became the nerve-centre of the agitation and non-Christian tribal leaders joined hands with Nirmal Munda. Finding the situation difficult, the State administration requisitioned joint police force to apprehend the

leaders. Few of them were arrested.

On 25th April, 1939, two platoons of armed forces along with the Assistant Political Agent, the SDO etc. were sent to the village AMKO-SIMKO of Sundergarh district, to arrest Nirmal Munda on the grounds of holding seditious meetings and assaulting a village chowkidar. But, a crowd of defiant tribal people armed with lathis, axes and other crude



AMKO-SIMKO Firing



AMKO-SIMKO Sahid Minar

weapons resisted the arrest of their leader. Consequently, scuffles broke out and the police resorted to firing. According to non-official report, 3000 people were present at Amko-Simko. The firing continued for two to three minutes. Thirty-nine people fell dead and fifty wounded. Some of the dead bodies were kept in the military vans under the cover of tarpaulins and they were thrown in to the limekiln of Birsa stone lime factory at Biramitrapur. Nirmal Munda and some of his associates were arrested. He was sentenced to six years of imprisonment in Sundargarh and Sambalpur. He was released from Jail on 15th August, 1947 i.e. on the day of India's Independence.¹⁵

The terrible bloodbath caused due to the Amko-Simko firing on 25th April 1939 would always be remembered as a significant event in the history of modern India. The tragic loss of lives of innocent tribals on that fateful day for raising certain socio-economic grievances can be construed as an inseparable aspect of the struggle against the colonial administration.

The Munda uprising in the State of Gangpur under the leadership of **Nirmal Munda** was very significant not only in the history of resistance movement in Odisha but also in the freedom movement of India. Nirmal Munda, a converted Christian and a brave tribal leader of Gangpur led the aggrieved tribals against land



Nirmal Munda with Supporters

revenue system in 1934 and demanded a revision of the land settlement. His prime aim was to achieve economic freedom. After independence, he was elected as MLA in 1957 from Birsa Constituency in Sundargarh. He died on 2nd January, 1973.

Inspired by Gandhiji's call for "Quit India Movement" on the 8th August, 1942, hundreds of tribals of Koraput district participated in the freedom struggle and several rallies were organised in support of Congress Party during that period. The District Congress Committee of Koraput decided to start the Civil Disobedience Movement under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. But the government declared the action of Congress party as unlawful and arrested all the leaders as a result of which there was a spontaneous outbreak of violence throughout the region. Several movements erupted in places like Umerkote,

Raighar, Gunupur, Padwa, Nandapur, Nabarangpur, Jeypore and Malkangiri.

Malkangiri attracted the national attention when a charismatic leader of Bhumia tribe named **Laxman Naik** led the tribals in this movement against the British. He was born in 22nd November 1899 in a Bhumia family in Tentuliguma village under Boipariguda police station in Malkangiri taluk. His father Padlam Naik was the headman of the village. Though Laxman had not received any formal education, he had some rudimentary schooling in his childhood. He was amicable, patient, upright and was endowed with the qualities of a good leader. After his father's death he succeeded his father as the village headman.

Laxman Naik was deeply influenced by the National Movement. He subscribed to the

¹⁵. R. Ratha, "Tribal Freedom Fighters of Odisha", The Odisha Historical Research Journal, Vol. LVIII, Nos. 1&2, 2019, pp.119-129

Congress doctrine being influenced by the Congress leaders of the district like Radhakrushna Biswas Roy, Radhamohan Sahu and Sadashiba Tripathy. He became a disciplined member of Congress Party, gave up hunting as a measure of non-violence and became a complete vegetarian. He introduced cotton growing in the locality and started spinning of Khadi. He injected the Congress ideology and the spirit of freedom into the minds of the people and soon gathered a number of followers who became the agents of Congress mobilisation in the area. He was made the president of Tentuligumma Primary Congress Committee and subsequently a member of the Koraput District Congress Committee. His elitist background coupled with the sense of service and dedication made him a natural leader among his fellowmen. He had the guts to lead the people against the exploitation and extortion of the masses by the unscrupulous officials, moneylenders and other agencies of oppression. He was successful in inculcating in the innocent tribal population a sense of revolt against the imperialist administration.

He could mobilise the tribal people for various development works like construction of roads, building bridges and establishing schools. He asked the villagers not to pay any taxes. He spearheaded the fight against oppression, sufferings and exploitation. He used Gandhiji's principle of



nonviolence as the main weapon against colonial power. The tribal people called him “Gandhi of Malkangiri”.

In 1936, he was arrested for the first time for launching a no-tax campaign in Mathili. In 1940-41 again he courted arrest for offering individual satyagraha. When the Congress gave a call to boycott the war-preparations of the British, Laxman took the leadership in his area. The tribal movement created an unprecedented public awakening in Koraput.

On 8th August, 1942, the Quit India Movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi at the Bombay session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC).

Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to 'do or die'.

As a consequence of the Quit

India resolution, the Congress organisation was declared unlawful throughout the country. The Congress office at Jeypore was sieged. The prominent Congress leaders of Koraput district were put behind the bar by 12th August 1942. Some others who escaped arrest managed to continue the movement. The message of Quit India Movement was circulated among the people of Koraput. The Bonda tribe of this region became violent.

Laxman was not arrested. He organised the movement in Mathili area. He was supported by his friend Balaram Pujari, a teacher who could mobilise a force of about 200 strong men armed with cudgels and lathis. They carried Congress flags and marched through dense forests for destroying liquor shop at Kongrabeda, Kuntapalli and Chandrabeda.

On 16th August, 1942, a large crowd marched to Jeypore from different directions and Laxman participated in it. But they were strongly dealt with by the authorities. After this incident an arrest warrant was issued against Laxman Naik and as advised by his friends he absconded. He sneaked in the forest and reached Ghumsar, the native village of his friend Nilo Patra. Both of them decided to organise a march to Mathili on 21st August, 1942. The authorities could come to know about this march to Mathili which was considered highly explosive because of the presence of the ferocious Bonda highlanders and they (authorities) grew panicky. During the process of mobilisation Laxman had incited the people not to pay the plough-tax, road-tax, shandy-tax and other obnoxious impositions. His family members were harassed in various ways by the government agencies; yet they did not deter him from organising the masses against the imperialist administration.

On 21st August, 1942 a large crowd of about 2000 people including the tribals of Nabarangpur sub division under the leadership of Laxman Naik congregated at Mathili. While proceeding to Mathili, the crowd was intercepted at Turi River Bridge near Papadahandi. But the crowd managed to enter Mathili where they held a public meeting at the weekly market place about half a mile from the police station. Laxman presided over the meeting. He appealed the people to establish people's raj and not to



Mathili Firing

cooperate with the British government. The people then marched towards the police station singing 'Randhun' and chanting slogans in favour of Congress and Gandhiji. Their aim was to unfurl the Congress tri-colour over the police station. When the crowd forcibly entered the compound of Mathili police station and tried to hoist the flag. The Magistrate Mujibur Rahman ordered 'Lathi' charge on the demonstrators and subsequently ordered firing.

The crowd could not escape the unprovoked lathi charge and the indiscriminate firing by the British police. 5 persons died on the spot, 17 were injured and many were speared and bayoneted. The demonstrators killed were Nakula Pujari, Samara Nayak, Narasingha Bhumia, Linga Bhumia along with a forest guard named G. Ramaiya. Hundreds were arrested and many were washed away in the flood waters

of the river. It is widely believed that large number of dead bodies were burnt by the police in an orchard near police station.

The firing took place around mid-day. After the firing when the crowd dispersed in panic it was found that the forest guard G. Ramaiya was lying dead in the drain. It was a blessing in disguise for the police to accuse Laxman in a murder case of forest guard G. Ramaiya.

In this tragic event, Laxman was first beaten and then a bayonet was pushed into his mouth which made him unconscious. The police took him to be dead and threw him into the drain nearby. His fellowmen carried Laxman and other wounded persons into the forest and treated them. Laxman recovered. This incident in Mathili proved to be turning point in the history of freedom struggle in Koraput.



Mathili Police Station

In a swoop on 28th August 1942, a large contingent of police personnel arrested hundreds of persons from different villages who were either the members of the Congress or its sympathisers. A reign of terror was unleashed. Laxman's house was besieged. He and his family members were arrested on 2nd September. He was then taken to Mathili police station and declared persona-non-grata by the administration. He and his associates were charged with the murder of the forest guard Ramaiya. It was alleged that the mob was incited by Laxman to loot the shops, burn the houses and properties, destroy the police station and kill the government officials. He was alleged to have killed Ramaiya, the forest guard by giving severe blow on his head by a steel lathi. The charges were

no doubt fabricated and concocted. In fact, the forest guard was an opium-addict and he was seen beating the crowd at Mathili beyond the fence of the police station. When firing started from different directions, most probably Ramaiya was hit by a bullet and fell in the drain. Because by then Laxman was already lying unconscious after receiving a bayonet injury in the same drain in front of the police station. So, the charges against Laxman were unfounded and baseless.

All those arrested were tortured and kept outside during rains at the police station. After some days, all of them tortured at Mathili including those who had bullet injuries were ordered to march to Jeypore on foot, a distance of about 40 miles. Laxman protested against this

inhuman order and when all pressures on him proved futile, police van was deployed to transport the arrested persons to Koraput.

The police submitted the charge sheet in case no: 58/1942 of Mathili police station against Laxman and 53 others in the charges of murder, arson, loot etc. The case was tried by the Additional Sessions Judge V. Ramnathan, I.C.S. in a special court at Koraput. (V. Ramnathan, I.C.S. subsequently became the Member, Board of Revenue, Odisha). A mock trial by fake witnesses was conducted speedily. On 13th November, 1942, by the verdict of the Additional Sessions Judge 4 persons were acquitted, 18 were convicted to lesser terms, 30 were sentenced to life imprisonment and Laxman was awarded death sentence. Advocate Radha Charan Das of Berhampur and famous freedom fighter Uma Charan Pattnaik of Berhampur went to Patna High Court for an appeal. But the appeal was rejected.

Laxman was transferred to Berhampur Central Jail where other Congress leaders were detained. He was kept confined in cell no. 14 of the jail and executed on the morning of 29th March, 1943. Though the date of execution was kept secret, everybody in the jail could come to know about it on the day before. All the inmates in the jail observed fast on the day of the supreme sacrifice and in the evening, a

prayer meeting was organised in the jail premises. Laxman Naik accepted martyrdom so that millions of his fellow countrymen could see the light of freedom. He became a symbol of sacrifice for the cause of people.

A venerated revolutionary, Laxman Naik was not only a hero, but a great brave freedom fighter and leader of masses. His short life, full of action, heroism, nobility, humility, good deeds, is really memorable and adorable. Laxman was a role-model to live such a life. Mother Odisha feels proud of him forever.

In the time of British Raj, no other communities in India offered such a heroic resistance to British rule or faced such tragic consequences as did the numerous tribal communities of Odisha. Simple, hardworking, and peace-loving folks who lived mainly off their agricultural lands or forests, these communities rebelled fiercely against the land grabbing and economic exploitation that came with colonial rule. Though these movements were not very successful in uprooting the British, they could prepare the ground for the struggle that ultimately led to the Country's independence.



Berhampur Jail



Cell of Laxman Naik at Berhampur Jail



TRIBAL MOVEMENT & FREEDOM FIGHTERS



T RIBAL MOVEMENT IN GANJAM

(1757-1815)

Leaders

Zamindars of Ganjam including Narayan Deo - Zamindar of Parlakhemundi, Srikar Bhanj & Dhananjay Bhanj - Zamindars of Ghumsar

Territory & Time

Undivided Ganjam and Phulbani districts, Odisha, 1757-1815

Cause

Zamindars supported by their tribal subjects rose in revolt against the maladministration of French and the British

Background & Events

The territory of Ganjam including the estates of Parlakhemundi, Ghumsar and Kandhamals were a scene of continuous rebellions and uprisings against foreign rule spanning over one hundred and thirteen years. The revolts occurred first against the French as early as in 1757 and then against the British from 1767 till 1856 in which year they were partly suppressed. Thereafter the Kandha tribe of Ganjam rose again and again against the foreign rulers from time to time in 1860, 1862, 1863, 1865 and 1882.

The history of the struggle for freedom in Ganjam was full of most thrilling events and heroic feats and fights. The Rajas / Zamindars and the heroic tribal



people of the area equally showed their inordinate bravery and uncommon gallantry in battling with the foreign authorities with the sole aim of liberating their Motherland from the shackles of bondage and slavery. Much before the other parts of India had raised any standard of rebellion against the foreign rule, the Rajas and the tribal people of Ganjam and especially of Ghumsar estate had put up the most heroic struggle to end the foreign rule. Such a continuous struggle for freedom with great momentum and gusto mainly organized and led by the zamindars and people themselves with spontaneous spirits of service and sacrifice for the cause of freedom, was perhaps first of its kind in Indian history, and this very fact amply speaks for itself

about the uniqueness and remarkability of the rebellions that occurred in Ganjam for possibly the largest length of time.

The Ganjam area was a part of ancient Kalinga which was occupied by Ashok in 261 B.C. From the 16th century to the first half of 18th Century it was under Muslim rulers of Hyderabad named as Chikakel Circar - the northern most Circar of the State. In 1752, the northern circars including the Chikakel Circar was ceded to the French though continued to be administered by a Muslim Fouzdar under the authority of French officers. In 1757 French Commander DeBussy, marched into Ganjam and realized areas of tribute from federal chiefs (Zamindars).

DeBussy crossed the threshold of Ghumusar but could not enter into the Ghumusar Kingdom due to staunch protest from the patriot tenants. The Raja of Ghumsar revolted and refused to oblige. Later he reached a compromise with the French Commander. This was the first resistance thrown to foreign ruler by a Zamindar of Ganjam.

The estate remained under the French authority from 1753 till 1757. It finally came under the authority of the British East India Company in 1766, and in 1836 it was brought under the direct British administration consequently upon termination of the line of the Bhanja rulers with the death of Dhananjaya Bhanja, the last Raja, in 1835.

In 1759 A.D, upon the invitation of Narayan Deo - the Zamindar of Parlakhemundi, Lord Clive the Viceroy, sent Colonel Ford to Northern Circar against the French in order to check their influence in Ganjam. The English forces of East India Company entered Ganjam and drove away the French from the territory. In apprehension of British aggression, the French handed over all the Factories of Ganjam along with the Ghumusar Malihās in the hands of the British East India Company.

Finally in 1766 Ganjam came under the control of the British. It became a part of the Madras Presidency. Mr Cotsford was appointed as the first Collector of

Ganjam district. In 1767 when the British officers entered Parlakhemundi, Zamindar Narayan Deo refused to submit to their authority. The British defeated him in 1768 and sent him on exile.

Many other Zamindars of Ganjam also refused to obey the British who found it very difficult to collect tributes from them and sometimes used military forces to accomplish the task. One among them was Krushna Bhanj, the king of Ghumsar. He paid no heed to the demands of the British and delayed paying taxes. He also took into custody of 23 villages from the British possession. But later on Cotsford recovered all the 13 villages from Krushna Bhanja. After a compromise in 1767 Krushna Bhanja paid a sum of 30,000 Rupees to the British as land revenue. Krushna Bhanja had a cordial relation with the Marathas. The British was afraid of the Marathas. Krushna Bhanja stopped to pay the revenue in 1768 when he heard a rumour that Marathas were attacking Ganjam. The British planned a sturdy action against Krushna Bhanja and in 17th December 1768 Bishnuchakragada was attacked with four companies of British soldiers. The result was in favour of the British side. They captured the Bishnuchakragada and it was fully under the control of British forces. As a result, an agreement was signed between Krushna Bhanja and Collector, Cotsford. By this treaty Krushna Bhanja

agreed to pay allegiance and land revenue to the British. In 1771 A.D. when the British administration hoisted the cost of land revenue, Krushna Bhanja revolted once more against the British authority.

In 1773 Krushna Bhanja, died and he was succeeded by his second son Bikram Bhanja who revolted against the foreign rulers for a very long time and his post was given to his elder brother, Lachmana Bhanj in 1782. Lachmana Bhanj died in 1788 and he was succeeded by his son Srikara Bhanj who and his son Dhananjay Bhanj later gave a lot of trouble to the British.

The office of the Collector of Ganjam was established in 1794.

Many of the Zamindars of the Ganjam district participated in the struggle against the British. Moreover the residents of Ganjam refused to accept the British rule. Ganjam became a melting pot of political turmoil due to the revolt of Zamindars against the British authorities which continued till 1836.

The Zamindars collectively had 34 forts and an army of about 32,000 un-organized soldiers. One of them was Srikara Bhanj, the Zamindar of Ghumsar. Srikar Bhanj instigated by the zamindars of Parlakhemundi and Jalantara refused to pay tax to the British government. The tax used to be collected by the money lenders and contractors which made them influential and rich. Srikar Bhanj disliked the existing system.



Eventually he gave up his zamindari to his son Dhananjay and left for pilgrimage. Srikar Bhanj returned in 1795 and resumed his zamindari. He refused to pay tax to the Company from 1797 to 1800. He had the support of Manidev of Vijaynagar and Jagannath Dev of Pratapgiri.

The British attacked Ghumsar and captured it on 9 May 1801. They also announced an award of ten thousand rupees on Srikar Bhanj. They did not succeed in stalling the revolution and decided to drive a wedge between son and father. In October, 1801, the British removed Srikara Bhanj from zamindari and handed it over to his son Dhananjay Bhanj. The farmers of Ganjam including the tribals however continued their revolt against the British.

In 1804, Jagannath Dev, an associate of Srikara Bhanj, was captured. However Srikara Bhanj still did not surrender. The East India Company government took a different approach this time and compromised with him and it was decided that Srikara will have certain districts for a living. The revolt subsided for some time after which Dhananjay forced his father to leave the country. It was unfortunate for Srikara Bhanj to be sent on pilgrimage again in 1808. Till 1815 he wandered outside in the disguise of a sanyasi (saint) before he staged his come back to his homeland. He was confined under a military guard till 1818 in Berhampur.

In 1814, Dhananjay Bhanj accused of multiple murders and atrocities surrendered to the

British in June 1815 after putting up a stiff resistance and facing military action. In 1818 Srikara Bhanj escaped from his confinement, returned to Ghumsar and recovered his zamindari which he managed for next 14 years. His son Dhananjay Bhanj then in confinement in Chingleput was granted a pension of Rs 8000/- out of the revenues of the zamindari.

With this the resistances of the zamindars did not end, but it continued further.

This may be called the first phase of tribal movement in Ganjam against the French and the British.

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KANDHA MOVEMENT IN GHUMSAR

(1835-56)

Led by Kamala Lochan Dora Bissoyi and Chakra Bissoyi

Cause

Annexation of Ghumsar zamindary, removal of the Bhanja ruling family of Ghumsar from their estate; deprivation of the local feudal aristocracy from power and position; introduction of new administration; introduction of new land revenue system; imposition of the new taxes; activities of Christian missionaries; and the arbitrary incursion into some of their age-old customary practices like Meria (human) sacrifice to worship Darni Penu, the Mother Goddess of Earth and female infanticide; exploitation of intermediaries and moneylenders were the most important causes which provoked the Kandhas to rise in revolt against the British Government.

Background & Events

The Kandhas of Odisha were the first tribe who raised their arms against the British in the Paik rebellion of 1817. It was followed by two other glorious rebellions of the Kandhas. Of those one was led by the famous Kamala Lochan Dora Bissoyi and the other by the valiant leader Chakra Bissoyi. Apart from these two, for various other reasons, the Kandhas also rose in rebellion several times in different regions of the Kandha tracts throughout the later part of the eighteenth century and nineteenth century.

It was the early freedom movement in India against British

which continued for long time and in which both Rajas and ethnic tribals like the Kandhas fought together against the foreign rule. Kandhas of the Ghumsar Zamindary started a vigorous revolt under the leadership of Dora Bissoyi from 1835 to 1846 and Chakra Bissoyi from 1846 to 1856. As a continuation of the resistance of the Rajas of Ghumsar (1757-1815) described earlier as "Revolt of Ganjam" this may be called the second phase of the revolt.

The ex-zamindary called Ghumsar was situated in the southern part of Odisha. It was the oldest of the zamindari of Ganjam which traditionally enjoyed the status of an independent state. It subsequently became the northern-most zamindary estate of the Kutab Shahee State of Golkonda. Later on it formed the North Western Taluk in Ganjam district of Madras Presidency under the British Government. The Ghumsar Zamindary proper constituted of eighteen muthas (territorial divisions), had 80 villages, 32,401 houses and a growing population of 1,58,061 in 1871 and 1,81,390 in 1881 with 89,407 males and 91,983 females. The other part of the zamindari called "the Maliah Hill Tracts" located above the Ghats, was inhabited by the aboriginal tribes, numerically most dominant among them being the Kandhas. The hill tracts with 24 muthas consisted of 433 villages, which yielded no revenue to the Raja of

Ghumsar although the people acknowledged his supremacy and owed him their feudal services. The aboriginal Kandhas, whose roots could be traced back to the pre-historic times regarded the Bhanja Rajas of Ghumsar as their protectors who used to decide their tribal disputes. They assisted the Rajas in wars and campaigns at the time of need. With their help and support the Rajas felt formidably powerful.

The Kandha movement started with the annexation of Ghumsar zamindary by the British in 1835. Till 1831 Srikar Bhanj remained as the zamindar of Ghumsar but being unable to pay the accumulating arrears of tributes to the British Government he requested the Collector, Ganjam to allow him to retire and his son Dhanjay Bhanj then in confinement to succeed him. Granting his request his son Dhananjay took charge of the zamindary but defaulted in paying the tribute to government as he and his father has done before. The British authorities took action. After issuing him the ultimatum and following its non compliance, they occupied Ghumsar on 3rd November 1835 and forfeited the zamindary. Raja Dhananjay Bhanj fled to the forests. He died at Udayagiri on 31st December, 1836. After his death the British administration declared Ghumsar as a part of British administration. Then they arrested Brajaraja Bhanja, the last kinsman of the Bhanja ruling

dynasty and took over the charge of the Ghumusar estate and declared it as a part of British Empire in 1837. Brajaraja was imprisoned in the Vellore jail where he breathed his last. Ghumsar lost its all rulers and the kingdom also lost its entity.

After the annexation of Ghumsar the loyalists of Raja Dhananjay Bhanj including the famous tribal rebel leader Kamal Lochan Dora Bissoyi who had earlier managed the affairs of the zamindari for three years from 1815 till 1818 started revolt against the British supported by the followers of his own tribe, the Kandhas. The British could not dare to enter into the remote hilly areas of the Kandhas from where the latter launched guerilla warfare.

Kamala Lochan Dora Bissoyi (1835-1846)

Kamala Lochan Dora Bissoyi popularly known as Dora Bissoyi took the commanding charge of Kandha uprising in 1835, has left an unforgettable chapter in the history of modern Odisha. He organized the Kandha rebellion in Ghumsar, geared up the uprising against British from 1835-1846; committed to save his motherland from the foreign rule and subjugation and urged upon the Government for re-establishment

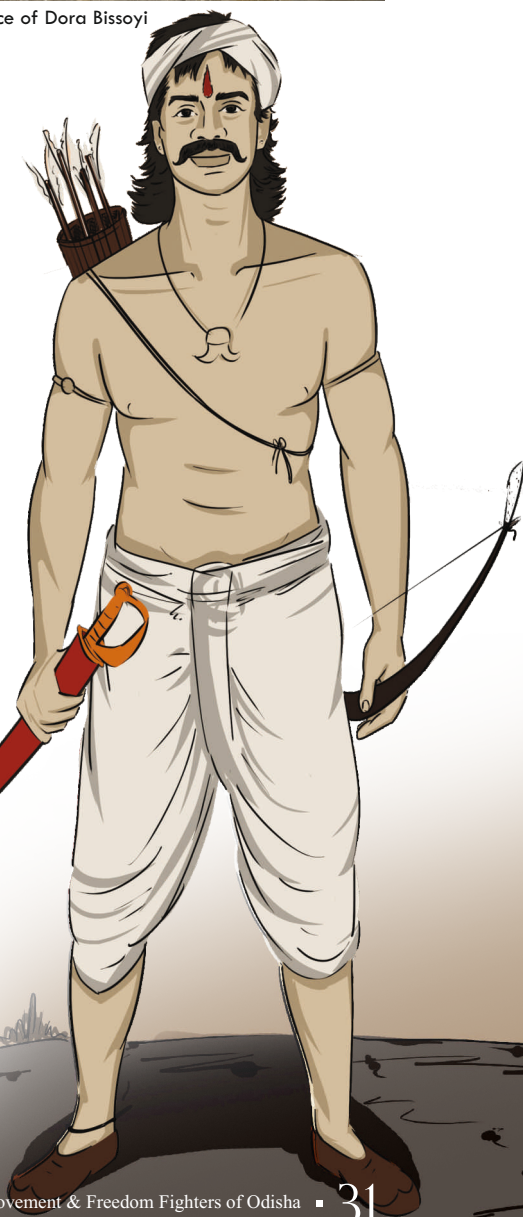


Binjigiri Village, Kullada-Birth Place of Dora Bissoyi

of Raja's administration in their territory. Under his leadership, the Kandhas, the Paikas and other people of Ghumsar did whatever was possible for them to disturb and disrupt the normal functioning of the Government. The chief aim of this movement was for restoration of native rules of Bhanja family and for protection of their tribal socio-religious customs like the Meriah Sacrifice.

He was Bennisah Kandha born in the village Binjigiri, located near

Kullada of the lower Ghumsar area. He was a well built, handsome, fearless and chivalrous person, a good sword-fighter and a mighty wrestler. Because of his many sided talents and charming personality he was elected as 'Dora Bissoyi' or 'federal patriarch' of the Kandhas of Ghumsar area. Besides, Raja Dhananjay Bhanj conferred on him the title of 'Birabara Patro' and appointed him as the 'Maliah Bissoyi' or the 'Head Agent' to represent all the





Malia Kandhas of his estate. The Raja also appointed him as the 'Commander-in-Chief' of the Ghumsar army conferring on him the title of 'Bahadur Bakshi'. He had managed the military affairs of Ghumsar in an efficient manner. While fighting the British army, he had given a very tough time to them.

Under his leadership, the Kandha uprising started in September, 1835 and continued till February, 1837 i.e. the time of his arrest. In order to suppress the rebellion, the British authorities took several measures.

The British Government of the Madras Presidency sent George

Edward Russel as the Special Commissioner in 1835 to handle the situation. During this time, Raja Dhananjay Bhanja disposed of his zamindari left Ghumsar, took shelter in the jungles of Ghumsar among the Kandhas and died there in December 31, 1836 leaving his family to the care of the Kandhas.

At this critical hour, persons like Brundaban Bhanja, Jagannath Bhanja, Madhu Bhanja, Nanda Bissoyi, Sundaray Bissoyi, Baliarsingh, Sangram Singh and many others came forward to strengthen the hands of Dora Bissoyi, in the rebellion against the British authority. As these tribal

leaders were denizens of the forest, they were quite acquainted with the area. Taking advantage of their position they resorted to guerrilla warfare against the British army.

Russel reached Ghumsar with a large army on 11 January 1836 to suppress the rebellion. In order to capture Dora Bissoyi and his supporters, the British forces started their hunt ceaselessly but failed every time. In their pursuit they entered into Dora's hideouts in many places namely Sankhemundi, Ambhajhara, Jiripada, Daspalla, Ronaba, Suruda, China Khemundi but could not succeed. Though many



rebel leaders were captured Dora remained at large. He moved from place to place and at last took refuge in Angul.

Being unsuccessful to capture Dora Bissoyi, the British, declared a prize of 5,000 rupees for the person who would help his arrest. In this connection, the Tributary Chief of Angul betrayed him. Threatened by the instruction of Henry Ricketts, the Commissioner of Odisha, Raja Somnath Singh of Angul handed over Dora Bissoyi to the British in 1837.

After the capture of Dora Bissoyi, other captured rebel leaders were tried and awarded severe punishments. 40 persons were awarded death sentences, 29 received transportation for life,

3- confinement for life,
2- imprisonment for life,
17 - confinement for 8 years,
17 - imprisonment for 7 years,
5 - imprisonment for 6 and
1- imprisonment for 5 years.
After suppressing the rebellion, the British Government made new agreements with the Kandhas. They appointed Sam Bissoyi as the Chief of the Kandhas who had played a great role to incarcerate Kamal Lochan Dora Bissoyi.

Though the British authorities suppressed this rebellion; arrested Dora Bissoyi in 1837 from Angul; destroyed many Kandha villages; captured most of the rebel leaders and imposed martial law, they could not put it down completely.

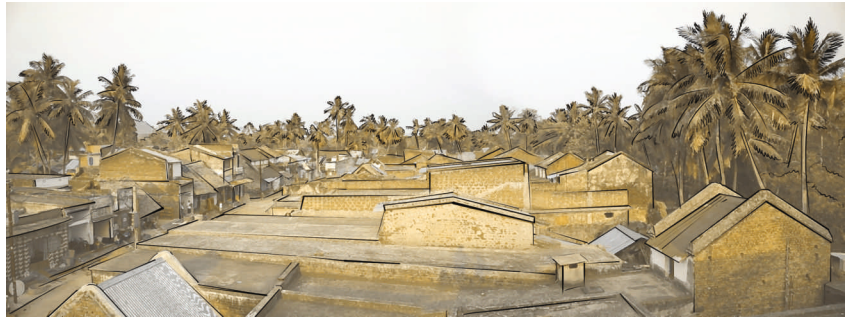
His nephew Chakra Bissoyi succeeded him and continued the revolt against the British from 1846 to 1856. Sentenced for life, Dora Bissoyi was sent to Ooty near Madras where he died in 1846 as a state prisoner, leaving behind a glorious legacy of brave and resolute struggle against the British. His death had left behind an immortal legacy of irresistible bravery of a man who fought for his people and the Raja withstanding all the ordeals and hurdles that came in on the way. It may be said that, he was a unique figure in the history of modern Odisha. Though born in a Kandha family and lived in forest, Dora Bissoyi showed his talent and indomitable spirit to the British authority.

Chakra Bissoyi (1846-1856)

The capture and imprisonment of Dora Bissoyi in 1837 did not end the Kandha struggle against the British. In the very year of death of Dora Bissoyi, another fearless, courageous and daring member of his family emerged to cause havoc for the British in the hill tracts of Odisha. His life and activities formed a sensational chapter in the history of Odisha.

The place of "Dora Bissoyi" as the "the federal patriarch" of the Kandhas was taken over by his nephew Chakra Bissoyi. Ram Singh Bukshi, the father of Chakra Bissoyi was killed in cold blood in a skirmish against the British troops in 1837 and this incident left a bitter scar on the mind of his son, and since then the latter nourished a deep sense of revenge against the British government. Chakra accompanied his uncle Dora Bissoyi to Angul state where both spent their time together in underground, and he received his 'military baptism' and 'political indoctrination' under the latter during the days of haunt and wander in the jungles as fugitives.

After the confinement of his uncle Dora Bissoyi in Madras, Chakra began to nourish a desire to revive the Kandha resistance against the British rule. He was in search of an opportunity and it came in



Binjigiri Village, Kullada-Birth Place of Chakra Bissoyi

1846. Chakra Bissoyi knew that the rebellious spirit of the Kandhas had not died inspite of their suppression in earlier revolts. He could also see the development of some fresh complications and it developed in the wake of the suppression of the Meriah (Human) sacrifice, a deep-rooted and age-old custom of the Kandha tribe by the British and the appointment of Captain S.C. Macpherson as the Meriah Agent. Some of his injudicious and rash actions hurt the religious sentiments of the Kandhas, and they persisted in

celebrating the Meriah rite. Every time they were asked to stop it, they would reply that they have to do it to appease their Earth Goddess (Darni Penu) and its stoppage would bring death to them. Further, some excesses committed by Macpherson in punishing the culprits of Meriah sacrifice, created a strong resentment among the Kandhas.



Chakra Bissoyi took advantage of the situation. He posed himself as the "Champion of the Meriah." So the Kandhas rallied round him and he emerged as their new leader.

There was yet another factor for the fresh discontent of the Kandhas against the British. Since the end of the Kandha rebellion under Dora Bissoyi, there had been no improvement in their economic conditions. On the contrary there had been more and more economic exploitation and curtailment of their liberties. Being politically backward, the Kandhas, resented any encroachment on their liberty. Chakra Bissoyi who had the objective of restoring the Ghumsar Raj family to the throne made use of this discontent of the Kandhas. Because he had known

from his uncle the injustice and humiliation meted out to the Raja of Ghumsar and his Kandha brothers during the previous Kandha rebellion. He took a vow with a 'tika' or a blood-spot on his forehead to resume struggle against the British."

This was not something new for him. Resistance to British rule had been his family's tradition. He had not forgotten his illustrious uncle, Dora Bissoyi's fight with the British in face of insurmountable difficulties. He also wanted to revive the prestige of his family, which had been driven out of the Ghumsar Maliahs. Chakra Bissoyi was waiting for the right moment. Fortunately it came when Captain Macpherson arrested Bira Kanhara, son of Nabaghana Kanhara, the Kandha leader of

Baud-Kandhamals, in connection with the Meriah sacrifice. This action enraged the Kandhas against the British. In this hour Chakra Bissoyi came to the front and enlisted the support of the Kandhas to start a rebellion in Ghumsar. He was assured of the help of the Kandhas of other neighbouring feudatory States.

Captain Macpherson captured and liberated 170 Meriah victims within a week in the month of February, 1846. It was provocation enough for the Kandhas to revolt. Chakra Bissoyi assumed the leadership and organised secret councils. Under his leadership the rebellious Kandhas assembled before Macpherson's camp at Bisipara on March 14, 1846 and demanded the release of the victims. Macpherson had to yield to their demand. This emboldened the rebellious Kandhas who attacked Macpherson's camp for the second time. He could do nothing to counteract them. So he had to return to his headquarters in the wake of the rainy season. But it was an insult never to be forgotten. So after the end of the rains, Macpherson with his troops marched to those areas in November 1846. On the way, Macpherson burnt down some Kandha village in Baud area. This humiliation inspired Chakra Bissoyi to organise Kandhas living around Boudh, Daspalla, Kandhmal, Ghumsar and adjoining areas.



In consequence a massive Kandha revolt erupted in Ghumsar area towards the end of 1846, under the leadership of Chakra Bissoyi. He was supported by the Chakapaad Paikas and Bissoyis, the Kandhas of the western Muthas including the aggrieved Kandhas of Baud and the Paikas of Ghumsar. His supporters were a group of warlike people "who habitually lived by plunder and violence".

In this critical situation the British Government was alarmed and at once instructed the Madras authorities to send an experienced Officer to Ghumsar to deal with and pacify the situation carefully. The officer selected for the purpose was General Dyce. He somehow succeeded in quelling the disturbances. Yet Chakra Bissoyi like his uncle before him grew from strength to strength. With Chakapad Khandum Mutha of Ghumsar as the centre of the rebellion, he continued to resist the British with the aid of the Kandhas. It was reported that Chakra Bissoyi was found at Chakapad in the Ghumsar Malliahs in April 1847 and could not be captured. In September 1847, R. Bannerman, Collector of Ganjam reported to the Madras Government that Chakra Bissoyi had organized some matchlock men and attacked the Government detachments at Gallery and Gaticodh by surprise.

The British government wanted to induce the Kandhas to give up the



inhuman Meriah practice without using force. Campbell, who succeeded Macpherson in April 1847 followed, by and large, a conciliatory policy towards the Kandhas and prevailed in his attempts to rescue many Meriah victims tactfully. However, he could not bring Chakra Bissoyi to surrender. The British authorities believed that the Raja of Anugul, Somanath Singh, had extended secret help to Chakra Bissoyi and Nabaghana Kanhara, another leader of Boudh. The government proposed to pardon them but Chakara Bissoyi ignored the offer. So the British authorities marched their army to Angul in 1848. Raja Somnath Singh was deposed and Angul was brought under the direct administration of the British Government.

In 1848, relentless efforts were made to apprehend Chakra, who was hiding alternatively in Baud and Sonapur and in other neighbouring states which bordered Ghumsar. The British officers could not catch Chakra. His power lay untarnished. Adopting guerrilla warfare, he went on harassing the British from time to time, so much so that the then Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie, became worried. A reward of three thousand rupees was declared by the Government of Bengal for Chakra's capture.

Subsequently, it was reported that: "Chakra Bissoyi was hiding in the Sonapur State with the connivance of the ruler, the Rani of Sonapur". But the Rani denied the report. Chakra Bissoyi maintained his sway over the Ghumsar Malliahs

although he retired from active confrontation with the Government for 4 years since 1848.

J.P. Frye officiating Agent in the hill tracts of the Meriah Agency reported to the Government of India, in 13th November, 1849, that the Kandhas and their Sardars had transferred their allegiance again to Chakra Bissoyi and as a result, he stated, that uncertainty was found to creep into the Maliahs.

From 1849 to 1855 Chakra remained underground. In 1854 the Magistrate of Ganjam wrote to E.A. Samuells, Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, to apprehend him and his other accomplices who had taken shelter in the Kandhamals. In his reply Samuells wrote that to his

knowledge ever since the occupation of Angul, Chakra Bissoyi had been living in the Kandhamals, in the villages Damasingha and Kallabaree under the protection of Bira Kanhar.

During 1855-56 the British Government annexed the Kandhamals lying under the State of Boudhh and appointed Dinabandhu Patnaik as the Tahasildar to remain in charge of that territory. After this annexation, Chakra Bissoyi had to leave the Kandhamals. He came to Ghumsar Maliahs where he supported the case of a boy named Pitambar Bhanja, known as 'Raja Pilla', whom the Kandhas would accept as the Raja of Ghumsar. But this young pretender to the throne of Ghumsar was soon tired

of jungle life and preferred to surrender. He accepted a Government pension to live in peace. It shocked Chakra and he had no other alternative than to take refuge in the depth of the jungle at Dekangi close to Phulbani in Kandhamals and then moved to Boudh.

As the authorities were in search of him, he had to move from place to place to elude their grasp and he took shelter on the bank of the Tel river and alternatively he lived in Madanpur, a zamindari in Kalahandi State and Jarasingha, a dependency of the Patna State that came under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Nagpur and Commissioner of Chotanagpur respectively. Both the Commissioners were requested by E.A. Samuells, Superintendent of



the Tributary Mahals to order the Zamindar of Madanpur and the Raja of Patna to deliver the rebel chief. The Zamindar of Madanpur expressed his ignorance of Chakra's presence in his State which was disbelieved because of the following incident.

A.C. Macneill who succeeded John Campbell as the Meriah Agent arrested Rindo Majhi and his son Palaso Majhi the leader of Borikiya Kandhas of Kalahandi in 1853 in connection with Meriah sacrifice. Both were imprisoned for two years with a view to coerce the Kandhas to give up such inhuman practices. In December, 1855, during his annual tour of Kalahandi State, the Agent, Lt. Colonel Macneill took the prisoner, Rendo Majhi in chains along with him and paraded him publicly with a view to warn the Kandhas by this deterrent example.

The Borikiya Kandhas could not stand to humiliation hurled on their chief by the British Agent and decided to pay him back in the same coin. On the 10th December, 1855 they attacked the camp of Lt. Colonel Macneill. However, the attack was repulsed with some casualties on both the sides. 2 or 3 days later, the Kuttia Kandhas joined the Borikiya Kandhas, and they together made the second attack on the Agent's camp. It was due to the wisdom and help of Dinabandhu Patnaik, the Tahsildar that Macneill could escape to Russelkonda.

Superintendent, Samuells believed that Chakra Bissoyi was responsible for uniting the two tribes of the Kandhas, the Borikiya and the Kuttiya Kandhas and after this incident he had quitted the country and retreated from Madanpur in the direction of the Jeypore estate.

In March, 1856 he was reported to be hiding in Athagaon in Patna State under the shelter of Majhi Dharam Singh Mandhata, the Zamindar of Athagaon. To arrest him Dinabandhu Patnaik, Tahsildar marched to Athagaon with a force of seventy soldiers.

Chakra Bissoyi, however, managed to escape from there, but his principal assistant, Bhutia Sardar along with another Sardars and many other adherents with their families were captured. Among those captured, there was a mendicant who thought to be Chakra Bissoyi. But the mendicant was discovered to be different person. Dharam Singh Mandhata, who gave shelter and defended him, languished in prison.

Then Chakra was reported to have gone into the jungles of Parlakhemundi zamindari and to have joined hands with Radhakrishna Dandasena, the leader of the Savara rebels. Dandasena was caught and hanged as a rebel. Chakra escaped to the border of the Patna state, and was reported to have been seen once again on the banks of the Tel River.

Frantic and vigorous efforts were

made for apprehension of Chakra Bissoyi who remained still at large and all attempts to arrest him proved fiasco. The British sought the cooperation of the Raja and the Kandha Sardars of Boudh and all the Kandha chiefs of the Ghumsar Maliahs and the Kandhamals to capture Chakra Bissoyi but in vain. Nothing heard of the great Kandha leader, Chakra Bissoyi, after October 1856. Mysteriously, he disappeared into the oblivion of history sometime before the beginning of the Great Revolt of 1857.

Cockburn, the Commissioner of Orissa, wrote on the disappearance of Chakra Bissoyi from the political scenario of Ghumsar and the Kandhamals that: Chakra Bissoyi could not be heard or seen for about 18 months, and his followers were either in prisons or were spread over the Kandhamals. He thus recorded "It is nearly certain that Chakra Bissoyi has entirely left his former haunts where he could be no longer safe and no one appears to have the least idea as to where he has gone. My impression is that he has abandoned this part of the country and sought refuge in the more central parts of India, where he is comparatively unknown and without influence."

It appears that Chakra Bissoyi, breathed his last before the outbreak of the Great Revolt of 1857. It was quite evident that he was not present in Ghumsar or in

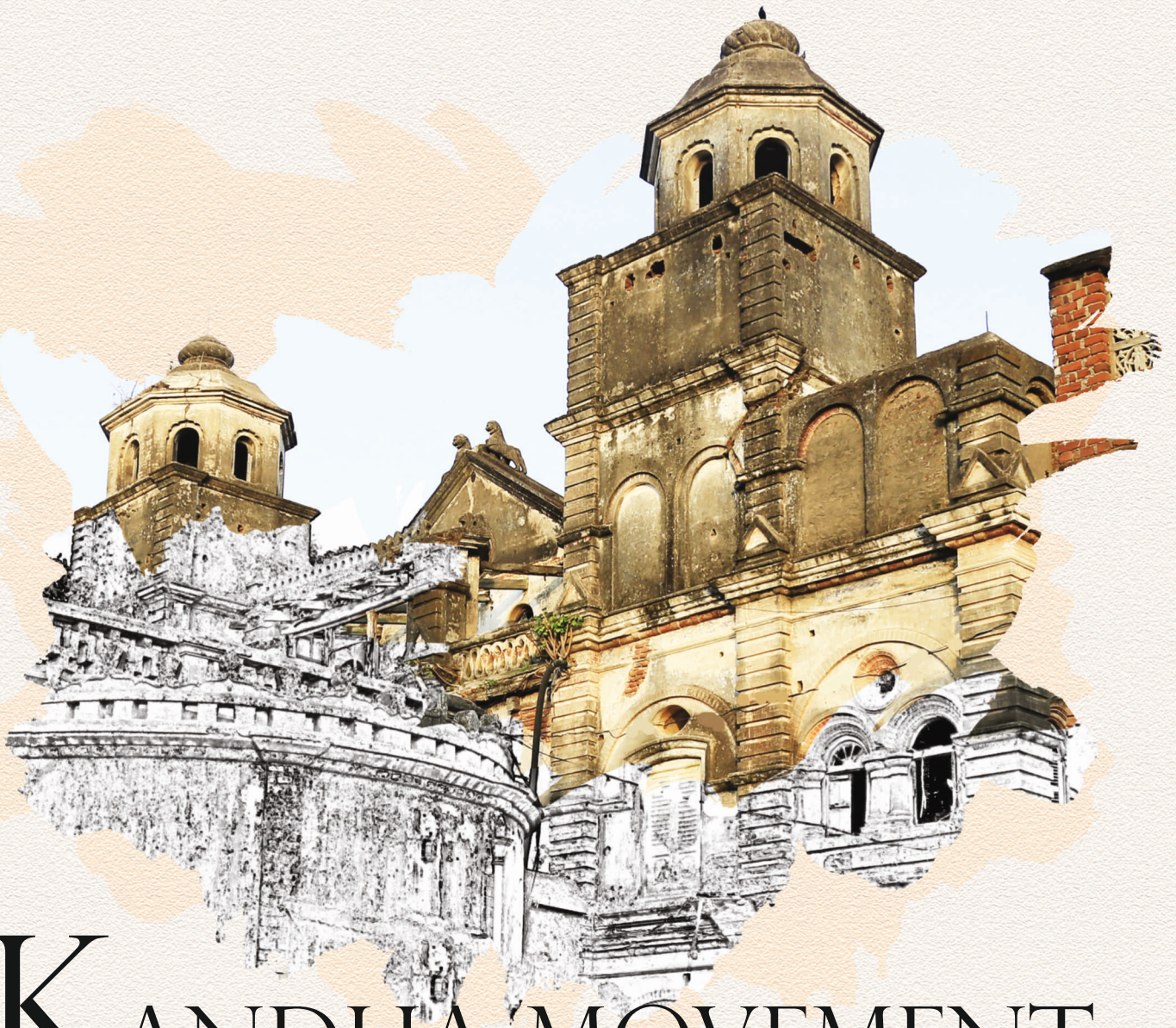
the Kandhamals when the Revolt of 1857 was in progress in the north-eastern Central India. When the Gonds, another aboriginal tribe, had joined the Mutiny and fought against the Government under the leadership of Surendra Sai, and the Kols joined the Raja of Porahat in his fight against Government, the Kandhas of Ghumsar and the Maliahs remained quiet and peaceful. From this one could presume that the rebel chief, Chakra Bissoyi was certainly not alive by then.

Chakra Bissoyi had no personal motive. For more than ten years he carried on intermittent struggle against the British power. He led the life of a fugitive hunted from place to place from Athagada to Parlakhemundi and from Angul to Ghumsar, turning down the offer of pardon. He eluded capture in spite of the efforts of the Commissioner of Cuttack, Chotanagpur and of Nagpur, which belied the expectations of Lord Dalhousie. He was never captured. Chakra Bissoyi remained the most predominant figure in the history of Ghumsar and Kandha Maliahs from 1846 to 1856. His brave adventures and daring actions, his indomitable courage, uncommon vigour, inordinate zeal and towering personality have added luster and glory to the name of Ghumsar. He deserves to be ranked with the illustrious freedom fighters of Odisha namely, Buxi Jagabandhu Vidyadhar, Veer Surendra Sai and Martyr Laxman Naik.

After Chakra Bissoyi the Kandha movement did not come to an end. They rose against the foreign rulers from time to time in 1860, 1862, 1863, 1865, 1882

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KANDHA MOVEMENT IN BOUDH

(1835-1846)

Led by Nabaghan Kanhar

Nabaghan Kanhar of Ratabira in Boudh-Kandhamal area emerged as a leader of Kandha revolt against the King of Boudh and the British in 1835. He was deeply influenced and inspired by the illustrious Kandha rebel leaders of Ghumsar, Dora Bissoyi and Chakra Bissoyi. As a tribal leader he commanded the Kandha uprising in Boudh from 1837 to 1846. The rebellion spread like wild-fire in the entire Boudh region.

Under his leadership, the Kandhas opposed the tax system of the Raja of Boudh. They resented the exploitative and oppressive behaviour of British authority and raised their voice against the abolition of human sacrifice. The Kondhas of Boudh-Kandhamal area rose up in arms against the British power as their land and liberty were at stake. They also resented the interference of the British in their social and cultural activities and religious rituals.

Nabaghan supported and organised the Kandhas of Ghumsar, Dasapalla and Banpur against the Raja and the British. He received support and cooperation from the the Kandha rebel leaders Dora Bissoyi and Chakra Bissoyi and the King of Angul. On account of the organisational skill of Dora Bissoi and Nabaghan Kanhar, the uprising had assumed a gigantic



proportion in the Kandha inhabited areas. The British government offered pardon but Nabaghan refused it and continued in his pursuit. Hence the British government had to bring in military forces from Madras, Nagpur and Bengal Divisions to quell the Kandha uprising.

Though the British suppressed the rebellion and captured Madhaba Kanhar, the brother of Nabaghan and his two sons named Bira and Maheswar, they could not arrest Nabaghan and check the unrest completely. Nabaghan continued his rebellion with the help of 'Raja of Angul'. However, his two years revolt came to an end when Sam Bissoyi, a British supporter, handed over to the British some Ghumsar insurgents who had taken shelter under him. His two sons, Bira and Maheswar also surrendered. Later the British captured the rebels and their leader Nabaghan.

His leadership forced British authority to reconsider their policy

in order to establish permanent peace in Boudh region. In spite of all development measures taken by the British, the Kandhas of Boudh did not take the British into confidence and continued their protest for a long time.

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KANDHA MOVEMENT IN KALAHANDI

(1853-55)

Led by Rindo Majhi



Bhabanipatna Palace Front Meeting Place Tax Collection Scene



After the British captured Kalahandi, the Kings and Zamindars of Kalahandi collected tax from the Kandhas and their age old tradition of Meriah sacrifice was banned. Being aggrieved the Kandhas rose in revolt against the foreign rulers and their leader was **Rindo Majhi**. Though he knew well about the power of the British, he repeatedly attacked them and their supporters with the support of the Kandhas.

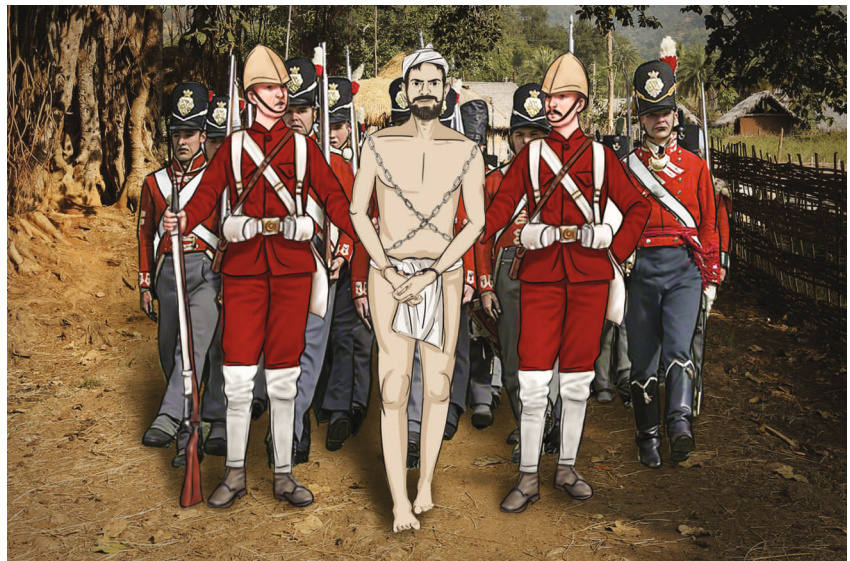
Rindo was born at Urladani Bondagada and brought up in a tribal family. His father was Dabisa Majhi and his mother was Jageri Majhi from the village of Lubengarh. Majhi often went to his uncle's house in Lubengarh. He was associated by Balaram Patra of Urladani while revolting against the British. At that time another Kandha rebel chief named Chakra Bissoyi attacked the British repeatedly.



In 1853, Lt. Macnieill the Meriah Agent arrested Rindo Majhi the head of the Borikiya Kandhas of Kalahandi and his son Palaso Majhi on suspicion of complicity with a Meriah sacrifice in the village of Kidilli of Borikia Mutha and kept him and his son in Jail at Russellkonda without trial. In December, 1855, during his annual tour of the Kalahandi State, the Meriah Agent, paraded the prisoner, Rindo Majhi, in chains from village to village to create fear among the Kondha leaders with a view to warn them against the Meriah rite by this deterrent example.

This tactic backfired. The Borikiya Kandhas could not stand the humiliation hurled on their chief

by the Agent. They, therefore, made a determined bid to counteract the humiliation of their chief by dealing with the Agent in a similar manner and by paying the latter back with his own coins.



The revolution grew much stronger after Majhi's arrest. As planned, the Borikiya Kandhas refused to come in for the customary visit to the Agent and on the 10th December, 1855. Rather, on that day, they attacked the camp of Lt. Colonel Macneill at Urladani. The British forces opened fire. There were casualties on both sides.

Then the Kuttia Kandhas joined with the Borikiya Kandhas and together they made a second attack on Macneill's camp. It was due to the wisdom and help of Dinabandhu Patnaik, the Tahsildar that Macneill could escape to Russelkonda. Thereafter, the British killed Tada Domba and hanged Rindo Majhi and the movement in Kalahandi was suppressed.

The suppression of the Kandha movement in Kalahandi did not end their resistance to the colonial rulers. They continued their resistance in different regions of Boudh-Kandhamals and the surrounding Kandha inhabited regions in 1860, 1862, 1863, 1865 and 1882.



Bhanjagar Jail Interior



Bhawanipatna Palace

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DHARUA MOVEMENT

(1857-66)

Led by Dayanidhi Dharua

The Tribal uprising in Mayurbhanj tributary mahal in 1857 led by the Dharua tribal leader named Dayanidhi Dharua was another important resistance movement in the history of freedom struggle of modern Odisha. The Dharua tribe rose in rebellion on account of their un-willingness to submit to any

form of exploitation and started movement against the Raja of Mayurbhanj and the British authority. The oppressive revenue policy of Raja and Amalas influenced the tribal people to launch rebellion against the Raja who was a staunch supporter of the British during the Great Revolt of 1857. Dayanidhi Dharua became the champion of their cause.

Though the British rulers and the Raja of Mayurbhanja suppressed the rebellion and captured the leaders, they could not suppress it completely which continued till 1866. After that the British authority changed their policies towards tribals and made new settlement of land.



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T RIBAL MOVEMENT LED BY VEER SURENDRA SAI

(1839-1862)

The resistance movement led by Veer Surendra Sai of Sambalpur against the British imperialism is a landmark in the history of Freedom struggle of Odisha. He was an Indian freedom fighter who sacrificed his life fighting against the British. He himself was a tribal leader belonging to the Raj Gond tribe. One of the major causes of his revolt was exploitation of tribals for which many local tribal Zamindars joined hands with him. He espoused the cause of the downtrodden tribal people in Sambalpur by promoting their language and culture in opposition to the higher castes and the British trying to exploit them to establish their political power in Sambalpur region.

He started his revolt against the British rule long before 1857 and fought his guerrilla war from 1857 to 1864. He had suffered a great loss in his family by losing his brother Chhabila who was killed in an encounter with the British army. Surendra Sai and his associates Madho Singh, Kunjal Singh, Airi Singh, Bairi Singh, Uddant Sai, Ujjal Sai, Khageswar Dao, Salegram Bariha, Govind Singh, Pahar Singh, Rajee Ghasia, Kamal Singh, Hati Singh, Salik Ram Bariha, Loknath Panda/Gadtiya, Mrutunjaya Panigrahi, Jagabandu Hota, Padmanave Guru, Trilochan Panigrahi and many others



resisted the British and successfully protected most parts of Western Odisha for some time from the British rule. Most of them died unnoticed fighting for freedom. Many of them were hanged by the British; a few died in the Cellular Jail in the Andamans. Surendra Sai himself

died in Asirgarh Jail on 28th February 1884.

He began protesting the British at age 18 in 1827, moved operations to the hilly tracts of Western Odisha in 1857 and continued his freedom struggle until he surrendered in 1862 and granted

pardon. Then he was finally arrested in 1864 sent to Asirgarh Jail. Before his surrender he spent 17 years in prison and after his final arrest served another 20 years term until he died in 1884.

The battle fought between Veer Surendra Sai and the the British Imperialists for more than three decades was an unequal battle. It was fought by Surendra Sai and his brother Udanta Sai and a band of dedicated follower-fighters under the most adverse and excruciatingly painful circumstances. They did not have regular and trained armed forces, they did not have the advanced equipments and ammunition which the British had in their possession in abundance. Besides, the British had the formidable authority of a paramount sovereign power at their command. As against this, Surendra Sai and his brother Udant Sai practically had nothing to defend themselves. But they were master strategists and adept in the art of guerilla warfare. They were thoroughly conversant with the topography and geography of Sambalpur and adjoining tracts. Almost all the tribal Zamindars and the village headmen of the district were on their side. The manner in which they escaped from Hazaribagh Jail after long seventeen years of detention, the fortitude with which they braved the hazards of intractable forests and hills with an extreme and inhospitable climate and the manner in which they withstood

all the onslaughts un-leashed by the British are matters of history.

Sai was born on 23 January 1809 in Khinda village near Lapanga of Sambalpur in Odisha. He was one of the seven children of his father Dharma Singh. He was a direct descendant from Madhukar Sai, the fourth Chauhan king of Sambalpur and therefore was eligible as a candidate to be crowned as the king of Sambalpur after demise of King Maharaja Sai in 1827. He had six brothers, namely Udant, Dhruva, Ujjala, Chhabila, Jajjala and Medini. All of them took active part in the rebellion.

King Maharaja Sai died in 1827 without an heir. The British Government allowed his widow Rani Mohan Kumari to succeed him, as a result of which disturbance broke out and conflict increased between the recognised ruler and other claimants the most prominent among whom was Surendra Sai. At that time, Surendra was only eighteen years old. He had been trained in horsemanship and guerrilla warfare by his uncle Balaram. Many Zamindars, Gountias rallied round the leadership of Surendra Sai. Prominent among them were Balabhadra Deo of Lakhanpur, Kunjal Singh of Ghens, Karunakar Naik of Jajpur (Kolabira) and others.

He came into eminence in 1828 when he challenged the claim of Rani Mohan Kumari to the throne

of Sambalpur. In Being supported by the Zamindars of Khinda, Barpali, Sonepur and the Gauntias and his brother Udant, he revolted against the queen Mohan Kumari. The military operation of Captain Wilkinson against Surendra and his associates was a failure.

In course of time Rani Mohan Kumari became unpopular. Her land revenue policy displeased the Gond people and Binjhal tribal zamindars and subjects. To solve the problem in 1833, Wilkinson removed Rani Mohan Kumari and enthroned Narayan Singh, a descendant of royal family but born of a low caste, as the king of Sambalpur ignoring again the claim of Surendra Sai for succession. Narayan Singh became a puppet in the hands of the British. This gave rise to great resentment among the people of Sambalpur. Rebellion broke out in the regime of Narayan Singh.

In September 1837, Balabhadra Deo of Lakhanpur a close aide of Surendra was killed by the British in a skirmish at Debrigarh hills while Surendra escaped. In 1940, Surendra and his brother Udant supported by his uncle Balram Singh killed Durjoy Singh and his son. Durjoy, the then zamindar of Rampur was a supporter of the King Narayan Singh. This gave the British an opportunity to punish Surendra and his supporters. In an encounter with the British troops Surendra, his brother Udanta and Uncle Balaram Singh were captured.

After trial, they were awarded life imprisonment and sent to Hazaribagh Jail where Balaram Singh died. Surendra and Udanta suffered in jail from 1840 till 1857.

Narayan Singh died on 10th September, 1849 without leaving any heir to succeed him. By application of the "Doctrine of Lapse", Lord Dalhousie annexed Sambalpur in 1849, as Narayan Singh had no male successor. During a short period, the land rent was increased five times and free Jagirs were abolished by the British rulers. The misrule of the British gave rise to great resentment among the people of Sambalpur. They had to wait till the release of Surendra from jail in 1857.

During the Great Revolt of 1857 on July 30, the sepoys of Ramgarh battalion broke open the Hazaribagh jail and set free Surendra Sai, his brother Udant and others. After that, the Sai brothers proceeded to their native district Sambalpur by the end of August and received a grand ovation as the region was seething with discontent. They reorganized the tribal people and the zamindars. Sai had then a fighting force of about 1,500 people.

Surendra and his close associates including the Gond Zamindars, created many disturbances. The Senior Assistant Commissioner Captain R. T. Leigh was panicky, because he had few security men with him. He tried to negotiate for

peace with Surendra on 7th October, 1857. Surendra bargained for cancellation of the remaining period of his and his brother's sentence and his enthronement as the king of Sambalpur which was rejected and he was asked to stay as a political prisoner. In the mean time the British reinforced their troops. Smelling something odd Surendra declared open revolt against the British in November 1857.

The rebellion that broke out in Sambalpur in 1857 under the leadership of Surendra Sai was mainly a tribal rebellion. Espousing the cause of Surendra, the tribal Zamindars of Bheden, Ghens, Kolabira, Kodabaga, Lakhanpur, Loisinga, Laida, Machhida, Paharsirgira, Patkhulanda, etc. joined with him. They gave up their comforts and embraced jungle life. Some of them lost their estates, some were killed, some were arrested and hanged and many were imprisoned. The tribal people were noted for their sacrifice and heroism. Surendra could challenge the mighty British Power relying solely on their strength and support.

Surendra Sai carried on guerrilla war from 1857 till 1862. He followed the strategy of cutting off all lines of communications for the British force as it was difficult for him to face them openly without the necessary weapons. In November 1857, Surendra made a night raid on the British force in

Sambalpur killing two and wounding eight others. There was a pitched battle between the British force and Surendra's men in Kudopali in December 1857 in which Surendra's brother Chhabila was killed and Captain Woodbridge was seriously injured and he was killed in February, 1858 while attempting to attack the main fort at Debrigarh and his dead body was recovered with great difficulty by Ensign Warlow. Dr. Muir was killed at Jujomura while coming from Cuttack side. There was also a confrontation in the Gadpati hills, where the British troops were routed.

Surendra Sai organized the rebels into several groups. One group under Udanta stayed at Jharghaty Pass where they cut off the connection of Sambalpur with Hazaribagh and Ranchi. Another group under the Zamindar of Loisinga was in charge of Barhapati Pass where they obstructed the road to Cuttack. The Zamindar of Ghens, Madho Singh guarded the Singhora Pass on the road to Nagpur. He was captured and hanged in the later part of 1858, but his 3 brave sons Kamal Singh, Nilambar Singh, and Khageswar Singh extended their support to Surendra and remained in charge of Debrigarh, Barhpati, Papanga, Paharsingira etc., the strategic centers of the rebels.

These strategic posts were further fortified by constructing high and thick walls with mud and boulders

and advance guards were posted in each place to watch the movement of enemy. The walls were so built as to facilitate the troops from beyond the top most wall to correctly visualize the lower walls. All the trees lining the pass were removed so that there was no obstruction in spotting the enemy within the firing range. It bears eloquent testimony to the sound organizational ability and military tactic of Surendra.

For the first time, he could successfully mobilize the resources of the tribal people of Sambalpur such as the Gonds, the Sauras, the Binjhals and others against the British. The master strategist in him always got the better of his adversaries and as a matter of fact, he often eluded and baffled them. Bereft of home and the comforts of family life and living amidst the harshness of a hilly terrain, like Rana Pratap, Surendra and his followers had undergone untold sufferings. Though his brother was killed in action, he was unruffled.

The revolution of 1857-58 marked the end of the regime of the East India Company and the consequent assumption of the direct administration of this country by the British Crown. It is a matter of pride and distinction that although the Sepoy Mutiny rightly described by many as the First War of Indian Independence collapsed by the end of 1858, Veer Surendra Sai and his band of followers carried on the relentless fight against the imperialist forces

with heavy odds. The British brought reinforcements to Sambalpur to fight Surendra could not capture him nor could they check the raids of his followers. Surendra would cover long distances on horseback and always kept close contact with his associate fighters.

When the British officers found that Surendra Sai was determined to fight them till the last in the face of all tribulations, they adopted a policy of harassment and isolation of Surendra from his sympathisers and supporters using the instruments of coercion and torture in connivance with the Rulers of some of the ex-states like Sonapur, Rairakhol, Sundergarh, Balangir, Patna and few Zamindars. The authorities confiscated the property of people who helped Surendra and even burnt their villages. Women and children were not spared. But Surendra continued his operations from the fastness of Debrigarh and other hills. His supporters swelled in number and he pursued his cause from 1858 to 1862, like Tantia Tope, with a rugged tenacity.

The military resources of the British were pulled up against him and the brilliant Generals like Major Forster, Capt. L. Smith and others who had earned credit in suppressing the rebellion elsewhere in India were brought to Sambalpur to stamp out the revolution. But all attempts failed and Surendra Sai succeeded in

foiling strategy of the British for a long time. Major Forster, the reputed general who was vested with full military and civil power and the authorities of a Commissioner to suppress Surendra Sai and his followers, was removed by the British authority in 1861 after three years in Sambalpur.

In April 1861, Major Impey succeeding Major Forster came to Sambalpur as the Deputy Commissioner and he could not defeat Sai. Hence, he followed the policy of conciliation with the approval of the British Government of India. On 24th September and 11th October 1861, proclamations were issued granting pardons to all rebels who would surrender. Before that Major Impey had seized the entire supply lines of the rebels. Surendra could no longer meet the demands of his supporters for necessities. Surendra saw the futility of continuing the struggle and at last surrendered on the historic day of 16th May 1862 along with his 40 followers. Major Impey granted him pardon and sanctioned him a pension of Rs 4,600/- per anum and he was permitted to stay in the village Bargaon.

Surendra Sai, one of the greatest revolutionaries in history, and a warrior who knew no defeat in his life surrendered with full faith in the honesty and integrity of the British Government. However, after the death of Impey,

situations suddenly changed and the British administrators revived their hostility towards the great hero. Surendra was disillusioned by the change of policy. The administrators found that the surrender of Surendra Sai did not bring the revolution to an end. They stepped down to organise a conspiracy and made sudden arrest of Surendra Sai and all his people on 23rd January 1864. Sai and six of his followers were subsequently detained in the Asirgarh hill fort on the Satpura hill range in Madhya Pradesh. Sai spent the last part of his life i.e. 20 years in captivity. In 1884 on 28th February, Surendra Sai died in the Asirgarh fort away from his native land.

In the history of India, it is difficult to find the name of

another martyr, who languished in jails for a period of thirty-seven years and who spent so many years in jungle warfare. Surendra paid his debt to the motherland to the last breath of his life, to the last drop of his blood and to the last ounce of his energy. People of the region affectionately call him as Bira or "Veer" (meaning courageous) Surendra Sai.

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BHUYAN MOVEMENT(I) IN KEONJHAR

(1867-1868)

Led by Ratna Naik

The second half of the 19th Century witnessed the Bhuyan movement in Keonjhar under the leadership of Ratna Naik against the newly appointed King of Keonjhar - Dhanurjaya Bhanja, and the British. At that time the Bhuyans were deprived of their political and traditional rights. This movement began in 1867 and continued till 1868. The center of revolt was Banspal in Bhuyan Pirha of Keonjhargarh in Odisha. The major causes of revolt were breaking up of the tradition of participation of Bhuyan people in the Keonjhar King's coronation ceremony, engagement of non-Bhuyan people as revenue collectors, collection of revenue in shape of cash instead of crops, withdrawal of royal patronage from the Bhuyan people, engagement of non-Bhuyan people for the work in the kingdom and Imposition of compulsory unjustified taxes.

Towards the end of April 1868, the Bhuyan Sardars revolted in Keonjhar under the leadership of 'Ratna Naik' against the feudal and foreign rulers. The town of Keonjhar was besieged and the oppressive Dewan, Nanda Dhal along with some of his associates were abducted. 'Ratna Naik' was captured by the Paiks of Pallahara on 15th August, 1868. The rebellion was suppressed with a strong hand and most of the Bhuyan Sardars surrendered.



Kendujhar Palace



Collection of Taxes



But, it showed a path to the future generation who revived the movement two decades after. The captured rebels, numbering 183, were sent for trial. Ravenshaw, the then British Administrator tried the case of the Bhuyan leaders at Keonjhar. Among them Ratna Naik and six others were sentenced to death and the rest to imprisonment. Ratna Naik was hanged by the British authority on 30th November, 1878.

Ratna Naik was born in 1820 at Banspal in Bhuyan Pirah of Keonjhar (Odisha). He was a progressive personality who dreamt of a democratic Government and wanted all individuals in the society to get individual rights keeping aside old

traditions. He stood for human rights and against the despotic will of the King and fought against the British super power. He wanted to make Keonjhar a democratic state where there will be no hereditary Kings and the people of Keonjhar will enjoy all fundamental rights under a popular Government. Ratna Naik, the great tribal leader of Keonjhar sacrificed his life for the people of Keonjhar. He was a brave son of Keonjhar and Odisha, who died for his motherland.

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BHUYAN MOVEMENT (II) IN KEONJHAR

(1891-1893)

Led by Dharanidhar Nayak

The second phase of Keonjhar uprising was a unique event in the history of freedom struggle in Odisha. It began in 1891 and lasted for three years under the leadership of Dharanidhar Nayak, a literate youngman of Bhuyan tribe. He fought against slavery for the Kolha, Juang and Bhuinya tribal communities. He led the tribal people against British oppression and dominance. But at last he was arrested by the British officer Downson and was imprisoned for 7 years in Cuttack jail. He was released in 1897 and after that a great change was seen in his life. He led the life of a Sanyasi (saint) at Ali in Cuttack district and died

there on 16th May, 1914.

Dharanidhar was born in a Pahadi (Hill) Bhuyan family in Kusumita village. His father's name was Laichan Nayak and mother's name, Baigani Devi. He was the youngest son of the family. He studied up to ME school standard. Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja, the then King of Keonjhar, sent him to Cuttack for higher education on Land Survey. After completion of his study he was engaged as Survey Overseer by the King. He was disengaged from the service due to the conspiracy of the Assistant Dewan of the King, Bichitrnanda Das. Then he served as Surveyor under the King of Mayurbhanj. Later he left the job and returned to his own

village, Kusumita. There he heard the plights the Bhuyan brothers and the bethi (free labour) system and exploitation and imposition of unjustified tax by the King of Keonjhar and resolved to fight against the evil.

The king Dhanurjaya Bhanja's policies were very oppressive for his subjects. Policies such as forced labour (Bethi) and the law on grain sales that forced farmers to sell grains to the state at low rates were particularly oppressive. This led to an uprising in Keonjhar in 1891 in which the tribals like Kols, Bhuyans and the Juangs participated. Dharanidhar was leader of this uprising. This rising continued for about three years from 1891 to 1893.



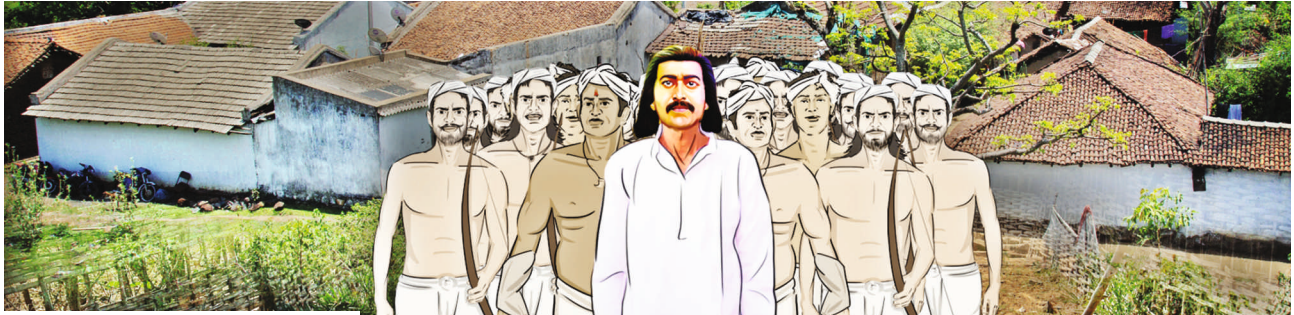


Bethi

The immediate cause of the rebellion was the construction of a canal known as "Machhakandana Jora" from Bararaon Pahar (hillock) to Keonjhar which would flow the stream water to the State capital. The cutting of stone was done completely by the "bethi" (free labour) system in which the Bhuyans were required to render inhuman physical labour.



Machha Kandana Jora-Kendujhar



His bravery and rebellious mind to stop the oppression and exploitation of the king and the British, had added a glorious chapter in the annals of Odisha. Though he had got his higher education with the assistance of the king, he organized movement against the king. A young man of immense moral courage, Dharanidhar kindled the fire of a new hope among the tribals in the dark Gadajhat region of Keonjhar and planted the seeds of liberty and freedom. He mobilized the Bhuyans and other tribals like Juang, Bathudi, Kolha and Saunti to rise in revolt against the tyrannical rule of the King. Under his leadership the tribals looted the granaries and procured guns and cannons to wage war. They captured the dewan of the state Fakirmohan Senapati. The king fled to Cuttack. The revolt of the tribals took a violent turn. The British sent forces and ultimately crushed the rebellion.



The British captured Dharanidhar Nayak and imprisoned him in Cuttack jail. After his release from Jail in 1897, he led the life of a saint; began to preach his philosophy and delivered sermons to the people how to free the country from the foreign rule. He died on 16th May, 1914 at Ali, in Cuttack. Dharanidhar, who sacrificed his life for the people, was a lover of humanity and equality. He was a peace lover; protector of the poor and a true human being who saved the life of Fakirmohan Senapati, the champion of Odia literature. His motto was service to humanity is service to God'. As a true patriot, he gave shelter to many freedom fighters in his Ashram at Ali in his last days. He saved the tribal people of Kendujhar from the oppression, tyranny and humiliation of the King. He would remain as a great revolutionary leader in the hearts of the people of Odisha.



Cuttack Jail

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Collectorate of Keundujhar





KOYA MOVEMENT IN MALKANGIRI

(1870-1880)

Led by Tama Dora

Tama Dora was born in 1838 in Kondapalli village of Padia Block in Malkangiri district of Odisha in a Koya family. His father Rama Dora was a Peda (village headman). After his death, Tama became the Peda and started visiting different villages to organize revolt against the British rulers. That made him a popular leader among the people of Koya tribe.

He emerged as a revolutionary in Champakhari war during 1860 and Rampa revolution in 1862. Further, the tribal people of Malkangiri district especially the Koya tribe rose in revolt in 1870

against the unjust and oppressive policies of the feudal chief and British rulers who exploited the tribal people socially and economically. Tama Dora took the commanding charge of this movement; waged war against maladministration and exploitation and organized the Koya tribes against British administration and demanded justice for his people from the Queen and the British.

During this time, the tribes of Malkangiri were protesting against the annexation policy and oppressive revenue system of the British. The last Queen of Malkangiri, Bangaru Devi, defeated King Ramachandra Deva

III of Jeypore and also fought bravely against the mighty British. But she was finally deposed in 1872. Consequently, Malkangiri State was annexed into the Madras Presidency. The valiant Queen fought unsuccessfully for another 8 years. Finally, in 1885 she died at the age of 70 after a prolonged illness of 5 years.

On 24th April 1880, Tama Dora led the Koya troops, defeated the British Police of Malkangiri and declared himself as the ruler of Podia and Motu. In this incident one Police Inspector and six policemen of Podia Police Station were killed by the Koya Army of Tama Dora. The Koya people



Jeypore Palace



Podia Police Station

declared Tama Dora as the King of Malknagiri. This incident is famous as 'Koya movement' and had a great impact throughout the country. Colonel Macquoid of Hyderabad contingent marched with 100 men, but was confronted with a severe attack of the Koya Army commanded by Tama Dora.

However, the British authority took repressive measures against the Koya rebels. The Military Police of Hyderabad fired on them in the Rampa Forests near Motu and killed the Koya leader Tama Dora on 28th July, 1880. Then the Koya Army was disintegrated in the absence of their brave leader.

Tama Dora was a fearless leader of Malkangiri and real freedom

fighter of Odisha, who sacrificed his life for the freedom of his motherland from the oppressive and exploitative policies of the feudal chief and British authority. He will remain in the hearts of the tribal people as a brave Koya leader who resisted against the oppressive and exploitative policies of the then rulers.

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TRIBAL MOVEMENT IN GANGPUR STATE

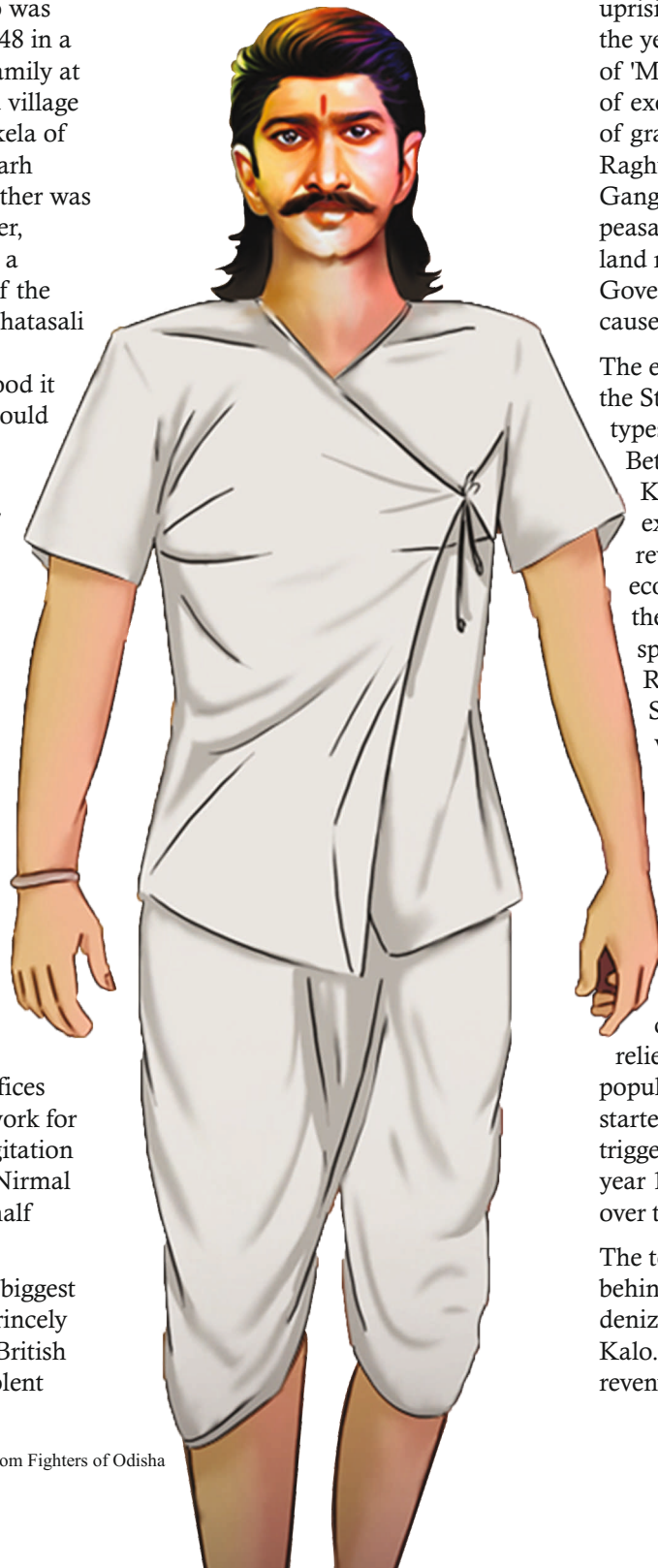
(1897-1900)

Led by Madri Kalo

Madri Kalo was born in 1848 in a Gauntia family at Kureibaga village of Rourkela of Sundargarh district in Odisha. His father was Laxman Kalo and mother, Harabati. His father was a Gauntia, the headman of the area. Madri studied in Chatasali and completed primary education. In his childhood it was forecasted that he would be a ferocious warrior in future.

As a popular Gauntia of Bhuyan tribe, he took the commanding charge of this movement against the king of Gangapur, Raghunath Sekhar Deo who was supported by the British. This was the first awakening of the sons of the soils from their dormant slumber. This movement is known as 'Gauntia Meli' in the history of Odisha. Madri Kalo will chiefly be remembered as one who through his selfless sacrifices prepared a solid frame work for a future tribal peasant agitation on massive scale led by Nirmal Munda nearly two and half decades after his death.

Gangapur was the fourth biggest of the eleven, class 'A' princely states of Odisha during British rule. It experienced a violent



uprising of the tribal peasants in the year 1897 under the leadership of 'Madri Kalo'. The introduction of exorbitant land rent and denial of grant of relief by the King, Raghunath Sekhar Deo of Gangapur, landlessness, de-peasantization and exploitative land revenue policy of the colonial Government were the major causes that led to the uprising.

The exploitation of the subjects in the State were rooted in various types of feudal extractions like Bethi, Magan, Rasad, Karchawl, in addition to the exorbitant rates of land revenues. Besides, the economic disparities between the denizens and domiciled was sponsored by the ruling chief Raghunath Sekhar Deo. Several tribal village chiefs were forcibly replaced by the feudal chief who installed the aristocratic oligarchy of Sambalpur in charge of the tribals. The general complaint in the state was mostly against the exorbitant land rent. The tribals of Gangapur appealed to the chief against this, but no relief was granted. It gave rise to popular discontent. The tribals started a no-rent campaign. It triggered up an agitation in the year 1897 and it was spread all over the state.

The torch bearer of this rebellion, behind whose leadership, the denizen rebels rallied was Madri Kalo. He was the Gauntia of six revenue villages namely

Kureibaga, Gudhiali, Jampalli, Liploi, Sialjor and Lamloi and for his Gaonitari service, he enjoyed large chunks of Bhogra (rent free) lands in twenty villages. As the Bhuyans like the Gonds were the local militia in the States of Bonai and Gangpur, serving under the king's army, Madri Kalo had expertise in the traditional art of warfare. He was a very popular tribal leader and a powerful organizer.

In 1895, when Gauntia tenures were renewed, like many other original tribal Gauntias, Madri Kalo was removed and his Gauntia was transferred to a new bidder named Bhagabatia Teli by the durbar administration. Misfortune did not come alone for Madri Kalo. Adding more disgrace to his humiliation, one Ghasinumu, a royal protégée encroached some of his Zagir lands. Under the circumstances, Madri Kalo had no way out but to rise in arms with his friends and followers in 1897.

He operated from Mahabir Hill of Bargaon which was the nerve centre of the rebellion from where he directed his operations. Despite all efforts, it became difficult on the part of the Durbar administration to nab the rebels who took shelter in the inhospitable hills and forests of the region. The British Government deputed a contingent of troops under the command of the Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhum to assist the state's



Arrest of Madri Kalo by Gountia of Kurang

police in suppressing this rebellion. But it was difficult to apprehend Madri Kalo and his followers who continued their depredatory operations from their hideouts in the inaccessible hills and forests. Hence the state administration resorted to diplomacy and with the assistance of his



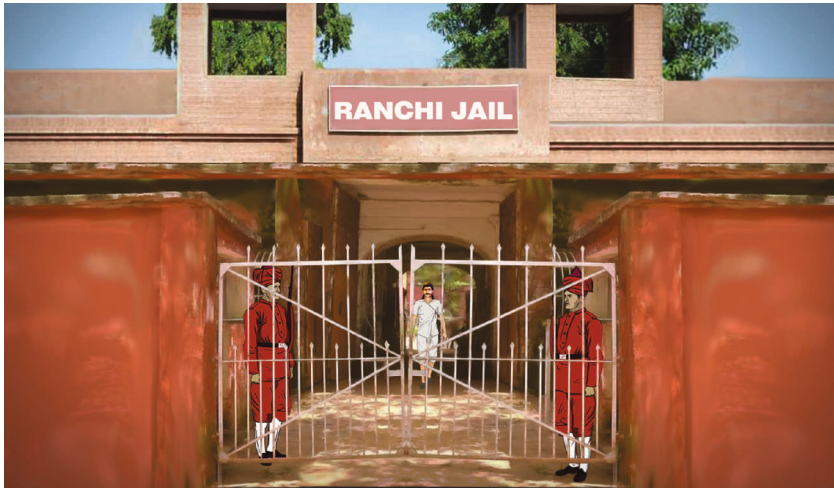
Arrest of Madri Kalo by Gountia of Kurang

reliable friend the Gauntia of Kuranga succeeded in arresting Madri Kalo in 1900.

He was sentenced for 10 years of imprisonment of which he spent 6 years in Sundargarh Jail and the rest 4 years at Ranchi. He was released from Jail in 1910. The last part of his life was miserable. Being apprehensive of the renewal of the rebellion after his release from the jail, the Gangpur state authority had virtually rendered him paralytic by amputating the femoral artery of his leg. Four years after his release from the jail, in this deplorable paralytic condition he breathed his last in 1914 in the village Lamboi near Rajgangpur.



Gangpur Palace



Madri Kalo released from Ranchi Jail



Though he died in critical condition, he left behind for the tribal tenants of Gangapur a rich tradition of popular resistance against hegemonic oppression of the State's administration. He fought for justice and generated a sense of courage and moral strength among his friends who violently waged war against Durbar administration. As a brave leader, he compelled the British to bring changes in their administration. Really he was a charismatic leader of Gangpur who through his movement exposed the evils of age old Durbar administration and forced British Government to check the mal-administration in the state. For his sacrifice he will remain in the heart of tribal peasants as the first tribal leader and a living legend who revolted against the oppressive policies of Gangpur King and the British.

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A portrait of Nirmal Munda, a prominent leader of the Munda Movement. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a light purple shirt. His hair is grey and short, and he has a mustache. He has a serious, determined expression. The portrait is set against a background of a map of Odisha, which is partially obscured by a dark, textured shape that looks like a hand or a shadow. The overall style is a mix of realism and graphic design.

MUNDA MOVEMENT IN GANGPUR STATE

(1934-1939)

Led by Nirmal Munda

The Munda uprising in the State of Gangpur under the leadership of Nirmal Munda' was very significant in the history of resistance movement in Odisha. Nirmal Munda was born in 1893 in a Gauntia family at Bartoli village of Biramitrapur in Sundargarh district of Odisha.

His father's name was Murha Munda and mother's name was



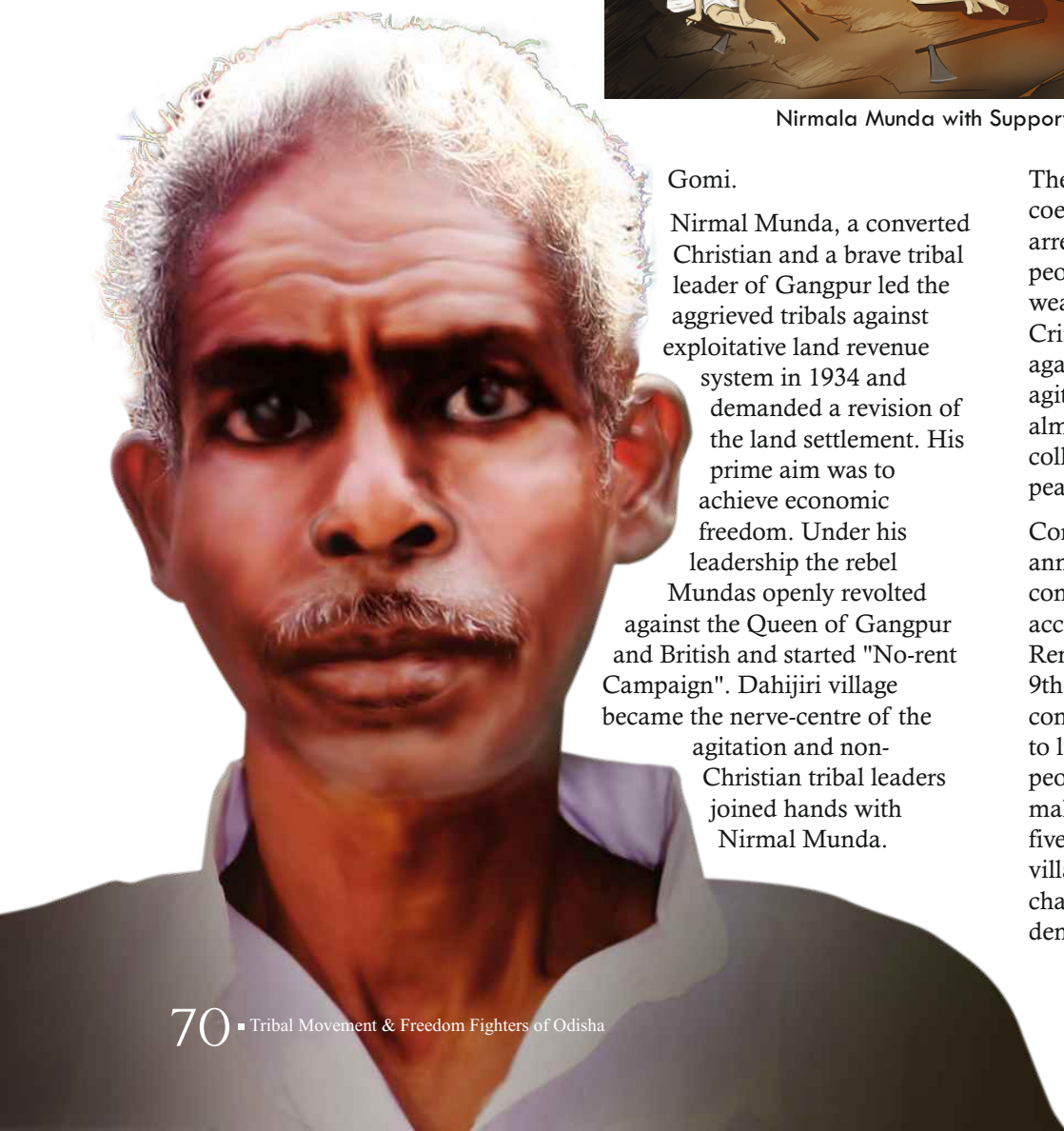
Nirmala Munda with Supporters in a Meeting

Gomi.

Nirmal Munda, a converted Christian and a brave tribal leader of Gangpur led the aggrieved tribals against exploitative land revenue system in 1934 and demanded a revision of the land settlement. His prime aim was to achieve economic freedom. Under his leadership the rebel Mundas openly revolted against the Queen of Gangpur and British and started "No-rent Campaign". Dahijiri village became the nerve-centre of the agitation and non-Christian tribal leaders joined hands with Nirmal Munda.

The Durbar administration took coercive measures to recover arrear rents from the peasants. The people armed with indigenous weapons resisted the move. Criminal cases were instituted against the leaders of the agitation. In early 1939, the State almost found it impossible to collect the land revenue from the peasants.

Consequently, the Queen Regent announced certain very minor concessions, which were not acceptable to the people. The "No-Rent Campaign" continued. On 9th February, 1939, the Queen convened a meeting at Sergipalli to listen to the grievances of the people and to induce them to make payment. Around four to five thousand people from 30 villages attended and presented a charter of demands. The popular demands included not only



restitution of the land rent and forest rights of 1910 settlement but also, abolition of "Choukidari Tax" and monopoly on the trade of hides. Total abolition of "Bethi, Bheti, Rasad and Magan" was also demanded. Introduction of responsible government in which the people could exercise the right to vote was also pleaded.

But the Queen rejected the demands. That aggravated the situation. The tribals continued their agitation under the leadership of Nirmal Munda. Finding it difficult, the state administration requisitioned joint police force to apprehend the leaders. Few of them were arrested.

On 25th April, 1939, two platoons



Queen of Gangpur in a meeting with peasants



British Firing - AMKO-SIMKO



Captain Bisco at AMKO-SIMKO ground





AMKO-SIMKO

of the armed forces along with the Assistant Political Agent, the SDO etc. were sent to the village AMKO-SIMKO closer to Raiboga, 11K.M from Birmitrapur of Sundergarh district, to arrest Nirmal Munda on the grounds of holding seditious meetings and assaulting a village Chowkidar (watchman). But, a crowd of around 3000 defiant tribal people armed with lathis, axes and other crude weapons resisted the arrest of their leader. Consequently, scuffles broke out and the police resorted to firing. Thirty-Nine people fell dead and fifty were wounded. (The official version was 28 Munda tribals were killed and 25 injured, of whom four died

in hospital). This incident is known as 'AMKO-SIMKO' firing in the history of resistance movement in Odisha.

Nirmal Munda was arrested and his remained in jail till country achieved independence. He was released on 15th August 1947.

Nirmal Munda was a fearless freedom fighter well known in Chhota Nagpur and Bonei area, who sacrificed his life for the economic development and political freedom of tribal people of Gangpur state.

After independence, he was elected as MLA in 1957 from Birsa Constituency in Sundargarh. He had done many welfare and

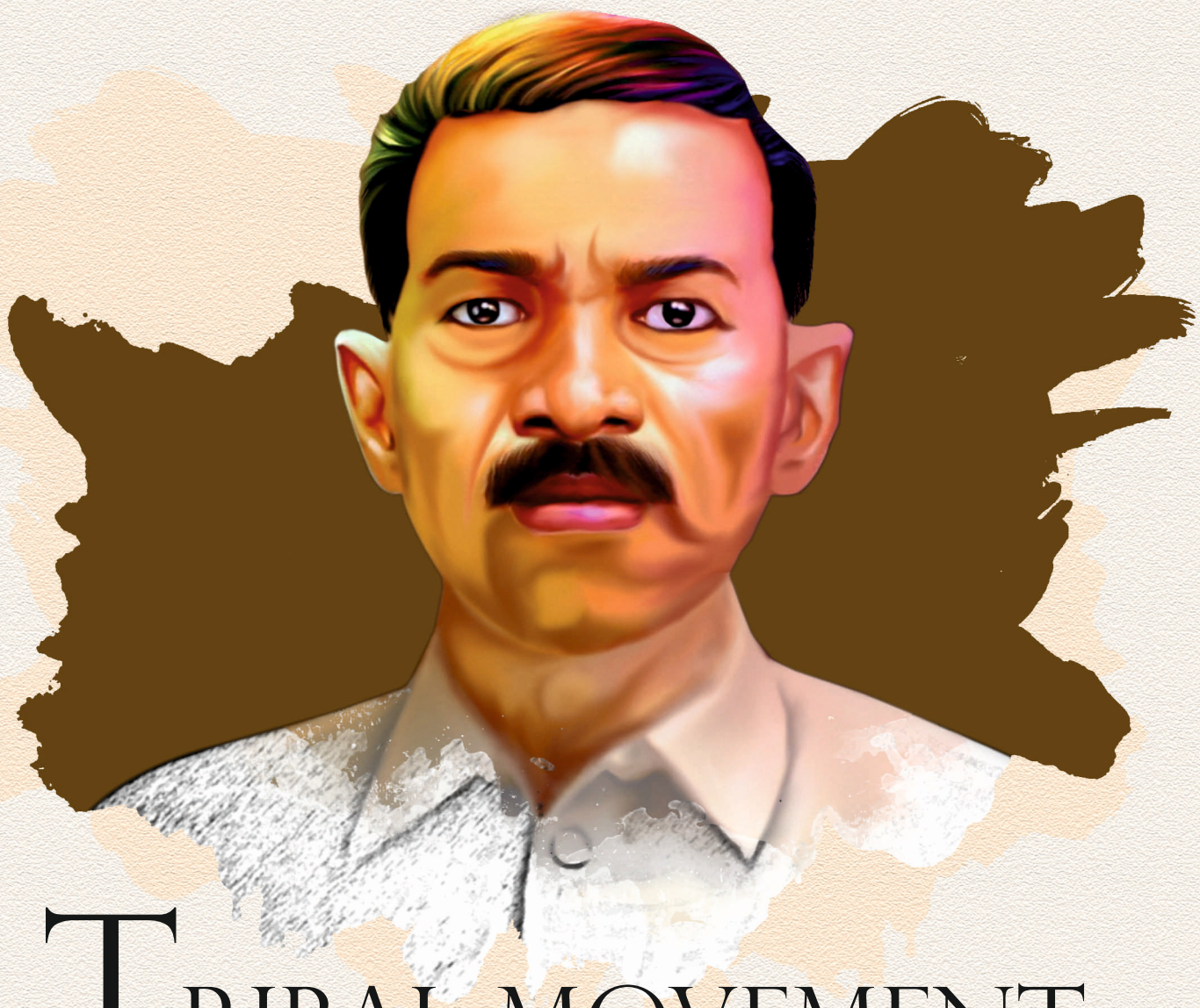
development activities of the area. He died on 2nd January, 1973.

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T RIBAL MOVEMENT IN MALKANGIRI

(1936-1942)

Led by Laxman Naik

Laxman Naik, a tribal hero of Koraput in the southern most part of Odisha and a cult-figure among his community, was born in Tentuliguma village of the Koraput district. He was a legendary figure and a celebrated freedom fighter of Odisha and India. Responding to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, He led a procession on August 21, 1942 and demonstrated peacefully in front of Mathili Police Station. The police, however fired at the demonstrators indiscriminately, which killed and injured many



House of Laxman Naik At Tentuliguma

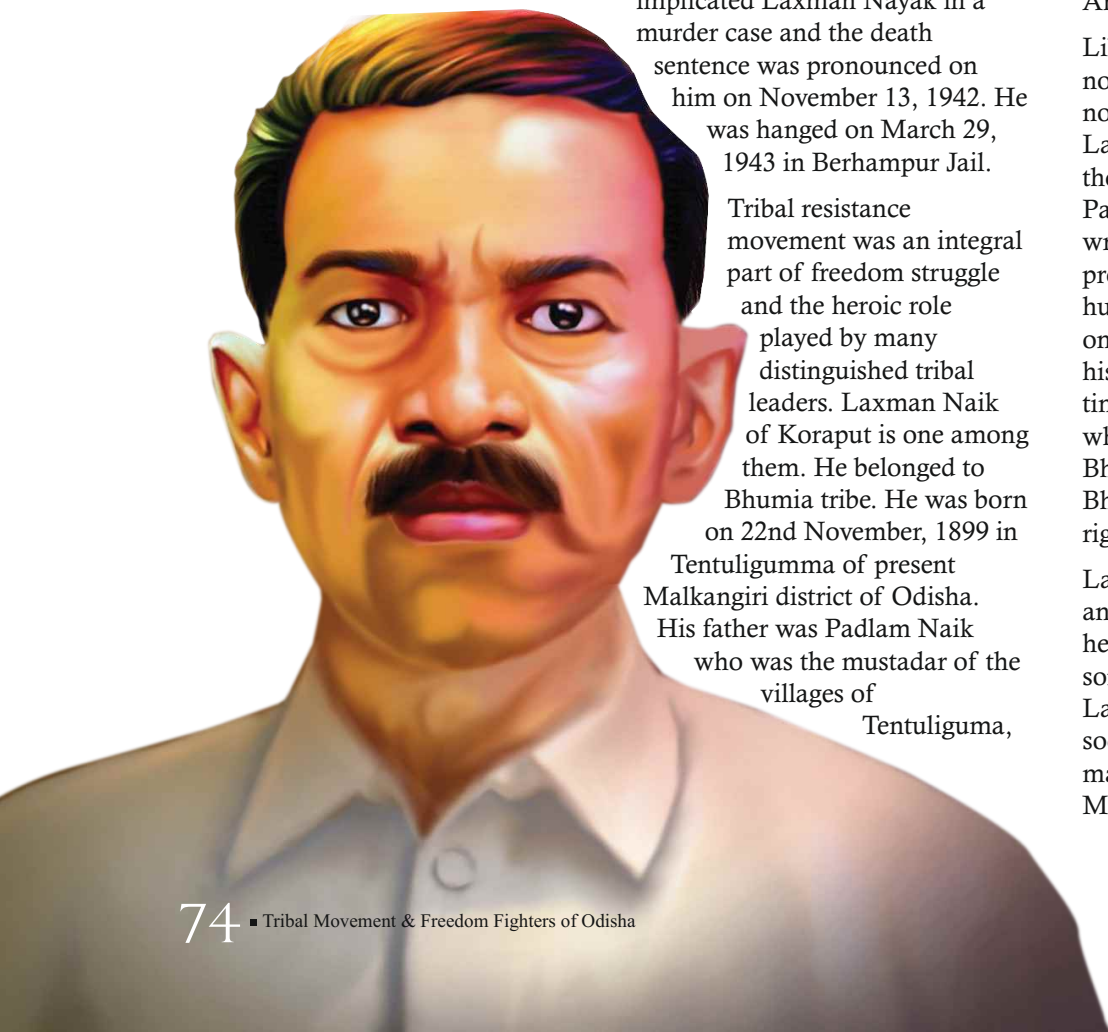
people. The administration implicated Laxman Nayak in a murder case and the death sentence was pronounced on him on November 13, 1942. He was hanged on March 29, 1943 in Berhampur Jail.

Tribal resistance movement was an integral part of freedom struggle and the heroic role played by many distinguished tribal leaders. Laxman Naik of Koraput is one among them. He belonged to Bhumia tribe. He was born on 22nd November, 1899 in Tentuliguma of present Malkangiri district of Odisha. His father was Padlam Naik who was the mustadar of the villages of Tentuliguma,

Bejuniguda, Lekiguda and Analaguda.

Like other tribal children, he had no formal school education, went not beyond writing his name. Laxman was initiated into study at the age of twelve. His father Padlam taught Laxman the letter writings, reading books. The boy preferred to roam around and hunt in the forests of Ramgiri or on the bank of river Kolab with his village mates. He spent his time with his friends, chief among whom were Gobinda Pujari, Bhalu Domb and Ban Singh Bhumia. He was a lover of nature right from his childhood.

Laxman grew up as a tall broad and solidly built young man and he had a great fascination for songs. Another character of Laxman was his disbelief in the social practice of casteism. He got married at the age of nineteen to Manguli Bhumia. He was blessed



with a son Raghunath and daughter Kaushalya.

Right from his youth Laxman protested against oppression and injustice inflicted by the British officials. He turned his ire against Officers, Rajas and the Government. He wanted the tribals to get rid of superstitions deeply rooted in their customs. He was influenced by the 1879 uprising in Rumpa of Andhra Pradesh. His companionship with Chandra Kutia taught him the technique of guerilla warfare. During that period, constructive works played an important role in Gandhian strategy of India's National Movement. Training camps were organised on behalf of the Congress. Back from the training camp Laxman Naik lived a new life. Commenting on his personality the famous Oriya novelist Gopinath Mohanty once wrote, "He was peace-loving, non-violent, simple and innocent in his thought, belief and action."

Malkangiri attracted the national attention when Laxman Naik, the freedom fighter, led the tribals in a movement against the British. This innocent tribal hero Laxman Naik was deeply influenced by the National Movement, and the message of Indian National Congress. He enrolled as a charanna (four annas) member of the Indian National Congress. When he was an energetic young blood of 22 years, the Non-co-operation movement against the British was then gaining momentum. Fascinated by

Gandhiji's charismatic personality, Laxman joined the movement. He came in contact with rebellious leaders like Sitaram Raju and Chandra Kutia. Along with them he revolted against the local Tahsildar, who was oppressing the poor farmers of the area.

In 1936, the Raja of Jeypore made lavish arrangements to welcome Sir John Hubback, the Governor of Orissa to Koraput. Rice, hens, cows were snatched from village to village, labourers were picked up to help the government party in conducting tiger hunting. Healthy cattle were chosen as tiger baits. Laxman was deeply hurt by this. He considered this as a plunder by the government. He accompanied friend Nilakantha Patra for an audience with Radhakrishna Biswasray, the president of district congress committee, and told him about the plight of the people. Biswasray suggested them to send a letter to a news-paper. All the matter was brought out in a news paper, and every where it aroused a sharp reaction against these illegal activities. The governor realised his mistake and people got compensation for their loss.

After this incident, Laxman became popular among tribal villagers. They expressed their grievances freely before him and asked for solutions. Laxman also tried his best to solve their problems. Very soon, he appeared as a brave and compassionate tribal leader. He organized the tribal people to fight against old

and inhuman practices like bonded labour. The tribal people of Koraput and its surrounding areas like Malkangiri, Tentulipada accepted him as their hero and devoted themselves for the cause of national freedom. He promoted 'Khadi' and made people aware of the Congress plan of action. He tried to inculcate a sense of unity among people to fight for liberation. The mass participation of tribals in this area took a new dimension after Congress formed the ministry in 1937. They were infused with fresh courage and carried on their movement.

Laxman Naik was made the President of the Congress primary committee at Mathili in Koraput in 1942. He managed to mobilize the tribal people for various development works like construction of roads, building bridges and establishing schools. He asked the villagers not to pay any taxes. He spearheaded the fight against oppression, sufferings and exploitation. He used nonviolence as the main weapon against colonial power. The tribal people called him "Gandhi of Malkangiri".

In 1936, he was arrested for the first time for launching a no-tax campaign in Mathili. In 1940-41 again he courted arrest for offering individual satyagraha. When the Congress gave a call to boycott the war-preparations of the British, Laxman took the leadership in his area. The tribal movement created

an unprecedented public awakening in Koraput.

The Quit India movement started by Mahatma Gandhi on 8th August 1942 at the Bombay session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC). The National Congress gave a clarion call to 'Do or Die' to attain freedom. As a consequence of the Quit India resolution, the Congress organisation was declared unlawful throughout the country. The Congress office at Jeypore was sieged. The prominent Congress leaders of Koraput district were put behind the bar by 12th August 1942. Some others who escaped arrest managed to continue the movement. Laxman was not arrested. He organised the movement in Mathili area. The message of Quit India Movement was circulated among the people of Koraput. The Bonda tribe of this region became violent. Laxman Naik and Congress workers attacked liquor shops at Kongrabeda, Muntipalli, Sindhabela.

August 21 was fixed as the day of district wide movement in Koraput. Laxman took the leadership in Malkangiri area. There was a plan to put the tri-colour flag on the roof of the police station at Mathili and hold a meeting in front of it. It was the day of weekly market. A large crowd assembled there. Tribals from different villages moved towards Mathili, led by Laxman Naik, holding Congress flags,

chanting 'Ramdhun'. Having flags in their hands, the crowd marched towards the police station. They managed to enter the compound of police station and tried to hoist the flag.

Sub-Inspector Jagannath Dora was then the officer-in-charge of the Mathili police station. Due to prior information counter measures had already been taken to tackle the situation. The gathering was declared illegal. Police threatened the people to go away. But the public were not in a mood to leave their leader alone. The Magistrate Mujibur Rahman ordered 'Lathi' charge on the demonstrators. One of the police-

officers dragged Laxman out and beat him black and blue. The police expected that the people would get panicky and runaway. But there was a rage of fury. Two police officials Ram Murty and constable Mohanty were injured. As the police opened fire, 5 persons died on the spot and 17 were injured. Again, Laxman was tortured. One policeman pushed a bayonet into his mouth and he lost his sense. The police took him to be dead and threw him to the drain nearby. The demonstrators killed were Nakula Pujari, Samara Nayak, Narasingha Bhumia, Linga Bhumia along with a forest guard named G. Ramaiya.



Mathili Firing-Laxman Naik

However, on that night Laxman recovered and escaped to Jeypore. There he got the treatment of a hero. Again he returned to his village on 28 August. A local liquor vendor informed the police regarding this and he was arrested on 2nd September.

He was then taken to Mathili police station and declared persona-non-grata by the administration. He and his associates were charged with the murder of the forest guard Ramaiya. It was alleged that the mob was incited by Laxman to loot the shops, burn the houses and properties, destroy the police station and kill the government officials. He was alleged to have killed Ramaiya, the forest guard by giving severe blow on his head by a steel lathi. The charges were no doubt fabricated and concocted. In fact, the forest guard was an opium-addict and he was



Mathili Police Station

seen beating the crowd at Mathili beyond the fence of the police station. When firing started from different directions, most probably Ramaiya was hit by a bullet and fell in the drain. Because by then Laxman was already lying unconscious after receiving a bayonet injury in the same drain in front of the police station. So, the charges against Laxman were unfounded and baseless.

The British police implicated Laxman Naik in the murder case of forest guard G. Ramaiya. The trial continued for four months and on 13th November, 1942, the then Sessions Judge V. Ramanathan put forward his verdict: "Accused No.1, Sri Laxman Naik is convicted under section 302 I.P.C. and sentenced to death subject to confirmation by the Hon'ble High Court".



Berhampur Jail.



Patna High Court

On November 16, 1942, he was then sent to Berhampur Jail for execution. Advocate Radha Charan Das of Berhampur and famous freedom fighter Uma Charan Pattnaik of Berhampur went to Patna High Court for an appeal, which was finally rejected.

Laxman Naik was in the cell since November 16, 1942. When his execution date drew nearer, he wished to see his fellow prisoners and eat what they were given. All the inmates of Berhampur jail offered prayer for him. His fellow prisoners wept throughout night of March 28, 1943.



Cell of Laxman Naik-berhampur Jail

The morning sun of 29th March 1943 witnessed the immortal death of a legendary tribal leader in Berhampur jail. At the break of dawn on March 29, 1943 by 5.30 a.m., Laxman Naik gallantly marched towards the Gallows. He wished his last. "If the sun is true, and so is the moon, it is then equally true that mother India shall be independent." Rammurty, the Zamadar of jail pulled the lever bringing the iron plate under his feet down. Being the victim of a false conspiracy lodged against him, he was sentenced to death and hanged. Repeatedly uttering the sacred name 'Ram', he breathed his last; and mother Odisha lost one of her jewels for ever. He was buried inside the Berhampur jail compound.

Like other freedom fighters of Odisha, Laxman Naik became a symbol of sacrifice for the cause of the people and accepted martyrdom so that millions of his fellow countrymen could see the light of freedom. He fought for truth, non-violence and justice. Though, he did not live to see free India he remained imprinted in the minds of millions of people of India as the leader of leaders.



Hanging Place-Berhampur Jail

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