



A CHRONOLOGICAL REVIEW OF THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

The Non-Cooperation Movement of Mahatma Gandhi had a profound effect on Odisha's intelligentsia. Pandit Gopabandhu Das was elected President of the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee in 1921. He was the organiser of Odisha's Satyagraha Movement. Gandhi broke the Salt Law in 1930 by removing a lump of natural salt from the Dandi shore. The Civil Disobedience Movement instilled a new sense of national identity in the citizens of Odisha. In various Princely States, Prajamandals (People's Associations) were formed to address citizens' grievances to the rulers. On August 8, 1942, the Bombay Session of the Indian National Congress adopted the Quit India resolution and issued a call to mass struggle led by Gandhiji. In the district of Koraput, the Quit India Movement assumed the appearance of a formidable mass rebellion. Laxman Naik was falsely accused of murdering a forest guard, and police opened fire, killing five people. In the Odisha district of Balasore, 28 people were killed in Eram. Residents of Talchar abandoned nonviolent resistance in favour of guerilla warfare against the ruler's forces.

KEYWORDS : India, Independence, Gandhi, Odisha, Satyabadi, Gopabandhu

The Swadeshi Movement, which began on October 16, 1905, as a protest against Bengal's partition, had a profound effect on Odisha's intelligentsia. In response to the Swadeshi Movement, protest meetings were held in Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, and Sambalpur, among other locations, to demonstrate solidarity with the movement in Bengal. Individuals from all walks of life enthusiastically joined the campaign, which inspired them to support local businesses and boycott imported goods.

Mahatma Gandhi's acceptance into India's political mainstream in 1919 marked the beginning of a new era in India's freedom struggle. On April 13, 1919, following the passage of the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianawala Bagh Massacre, he issued his first war cry against the British. Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation Movement reverberated throughout India, and its repercussions were also felt in Odisha. In 1921, Pandit Gopabandhu Das was elected President of the Congress Committee of Utkal Pradesh. He was the organiser of the Satyagraha Movement in Odisha. In March 1921, Gandhiji paid his first visit to Odisha. His visit was instrumental in reviving Odisha's Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhiji addressed a public meeting in Cuttack on the sand bank of the Kathajori River. In addition to Cuttack, he visited Bhadrak, Satyabadi, Puri, and Berhampur. In the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement, college students such as Harekrushna Mahatab, Nityananda Kanungo, Nanda Kishore Das, and Raj Kishore Bose left the Govt. Zilla School. Bhagirathi Mohapatra and Jagabandhu Singh both resigned from the bar. Gopabandhu Choudhury resigned from his position as Deputy Collector to join the movement. National schools were established in the districts of Cuttack, Puri, and Sambalpur. Satyabadi Grove School was elevated to the status of a national school. Godabarish Mishra is the director. Chakradharpur High School was elevated to the status of a national institution. Citizens voted in favour of a boycott of international clothing. In Puri, it was prohibited to offer international clothes to Lord Jagannath. Seven centres for training and directing Congress workers and volunteers have been established in Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Sakshigopal, Balasore, Bhadrak, and Soro. The Cuttack Swaraj Ashram was devoted to the distribution of spinning wheels, the promotion of spinning, and the training of workers to carry out the Congress programme.

Gandhiji began his historic march to Dandi on March 12, 1930, at 6.30 a.m., followed by 78 Satyagrahis from Sabarmati Ashram. He violated the Salt Law on April 6, 1930, by taking a

lump of natural salt from the Dandi shore. This symbolic act initiated the Salt Satyagraha, the precursor to the widespread Civil Disobedience Movement. On the same day, the first batch of 21 Satyagrahis under the leadership of Gopabandhu Choudhury and Acharya Harihar Das began their march from Cuttack's Swaraj Ashram to Inchudi. The Satyagrahis arrived in batches in Inchudi in order to overthrow the Salt Rule. Hindu women such as Smt. Rama Devi and Smt. Malati Devi were prominent figures during the Satyagraha in Odisha. They led a lengthy procession of women to the Satyagraha centre on April 20, where they violated the salt law by collecting salt earth directly in front of the stationed police party. In June 1930, Rani Bhagyabati, the Patamaheshi of Kujanga, and 500 women satyagrahis violated the salt law. Pandit Nilakantha Das led the Puri district's Salt Satyagraha. Congress leaders such as Biswanath Das and Niranjan Patnaik led the campaign in Ganjam district. Thus, the Odisha Civil Disobedience Movement exposed British rule in India while also encouraging people to join the national mainstream in order to teach the British a lesson.

The Civil Disobedience Movement instilled in the citizens of the Princely States a new sense of national identity. In Odisha, Prajamandals (People's Associations) were formed in various Princely States to address citizens' grievances to the rulers. In July 1938, the agitation began in Nilgiri, but the state authorities reacted with repressive measures. The Talcher State's campaign against feudal exploitation made significant progress. The Raja's repressive policies became intolerable, and thousands fled Talcher for the Angul Refugee camp. Dhenkanal's ruler used harsh measures to quell the Prajamandal unrest. 18 people were killed in a police shooting, including a boatman boy named Baji Rout. Rampur's situation was dire. In January 1939, Major Bazzelgette, Odisha's political agent, was assassinated in Rampur by a mob. Following that, the British government established a virtual reign of terror. Raghu Mohanty and Dibakar Parida, two well-known Prajamandal practitioners, were wrongfully accused of murdering Bazzelgette and hanged at dawn on April 4, 1941, in Bhagalpur Jail, Bihar.

The Indian National Congress's Bombay Session adopted the Quit India resolution and issued a call to mass struggle led by Gandhiji on August 8, 1942. The following day, all of India's Congress leaders gathered in Bombay were arrested. In Odisha, all Congress bodies, their offices, and associated organisations have been declared illegal. Within two weeks, several prominent members of Congress had been arrested. Around 200 Ravenshaw College students set fire to the office

room on 15 August 1942, destroying the furniture and other equipment. Notable leaders include Banamali Patnaik, Ashok Das, Birendra Mitra, Suraj Mal Saha, and Bibhudendu Mishra. Following an investigation, Bibhudendu Mishra and Suraj Mal Saha were arrested and lodged in the Berhampur Central Jail under the Defence of India Act. On August 16, 1942, a crowd stormed the Bari Congress Ashram, which had been taken over by the police. Additionally, they set fire to police-seized property and burned Choukidar and Dafadar uniforms.

In the district of Koraput, which was primarily populated by Adivasis or aborigines, the Quit India Movement assumed the appearance of a formidable mass rebellion. The daring incident occurred at Koraput's Mathili Police Station, when a mob led by Laxman Naik attempted to seize the station. On the other hand, the crowd was mercilessly beaten. During the altercation, a forest guard was killed, and the police opened fire, instantly killing five people. Laxman Naik was wrongfully charged with the guard's murder. He was later sentenced to death in Berhampur Central Jail on March 29, 1943. He was discovered chanting "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai" until he expired. On September 22, 1942, nine people were killed and five others were injured in a police shooting in an open field near the village of Lunia. Two people were killed and one was wounded in Tudigadia and Kahiradhia as a result of police fire. The most heinous massacre, which occurred in Eram in the Balasore district, is a defining moment in India's freedom struggle, and is appropriately referred to as the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy in Odisha, where 28 people were killed and 56 were injured. True, nowhere else in India was such a high number of people killed in a single police action during the Quit India Movement, for which Eram was dubbed "Rakta Tirtha." In Cuttack, Surendra Nath Dwivedi began underground operations. He distributed progressive bulletins, which infused the atmosphere with a strong sense of patriotism. He was quickly apprehended, however. The Quit India Movement had a significant impact on Odisha's Garjat States. Talchar's residents abandoned nonviolence in favour of guerilla warfare against the ruler's forces. In Dhenkanal, the Satyagrahis engaged in armed clashes with the police, torching the police station, jail, and other institutions. Nayagarh, Athagarh, and Mayurbhanj residents became agitated. Despite their violent nature, these movements were more or less Gandhian in nature.

Odisha's political situation improved significantly following the Quit India Movement. In 1946, India held general elections, and in Odisha, the Congress Party won a majority of seats in the Odisha Legislative Assembly and formed a government on April 23, 1946, led by Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab. The new ministry was instrumental in bringing the Princely States into Odisha. By January 1, 1949, Odisha had taken up all of the Princely States.

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