



QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT AND POPULAR UPSURGE IN ODISHA: 1940-42

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Abstract- The Quit India Movement of 1942 was one of a greatest mass movement waged against the mighty British imperialism in India. It was considered to be last phase of India's march towards freedom directed under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The all sections of Indians participated in movement against the mighty British power and forcing to withdraw. It was a fight to the finish. The provinces and states of India immensely contributed despite the British repressive policies. The movement narrowed down the gulf between villages and towns, tribals and non-tribals and provinces and the states. Undoubtedly enough the Quit India movement was unparalleled and historic in India's struggle for freedom.

(Key Words- Quit India, Mahatma Gandhi, Indian National Congress, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee, Princely States, Communist Party, Hindu Mahasabha, Kishan Sabha, Prajamandal, popular movement)

At Ramgarh (Hajaribagh) the 53 session of the Indian National Congress was convened with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as its President from March 19 to 20 1940. It was one of the eventful sessions which gave a call to the nation to prepare itself for a struggle under the leadership of Gandhi as negotiations with the British Government had failed regarding India's independence.¹ In the Wardha Congress Working Committee

¹. M.A. Zaidi, *The Story of Congress Pilgrimage 1940-55*, vol.IV, New Delhi, 1990, pp.10-1.

meeting conducted on 14 July, 1942, at the insistent of Gandhiji passed a historic resolution of complete independence. The Congress also declared that it would be bound to start a non-violent struggle against British imperialism under the guidance of Gandhiji if the British Government failed to act on this resolution. The masses of Odisha responded to the call with great enthusiasm.² But before we study the movement waged against the British, there were certain factors leading towards it.

On 3 September the World War-II began when Britain and France had declared war on Germany.³ Accordingly, India automatically became belligerent country in 1939. The Rulers of the state and non-Congress Ministries in the provinces extended their support to the British Government. The National Liberal Federation and Hindu Mahasasha offered their support to the colonial government. However, the Congress refused to co-operate, even if Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had deep sympathy for Britain in this hour of crisis. On 17 October 1939, Viceroy Lord Linlithgow had given a statement declaring grant of dominion status to India after the end of world war, in order to assuage Indian public opinion.

However, the Congress considered the above statement as a clear repetition of the old imperialist tactic. Consequently, the Congress affirmed itself not to give any support to Great Britain and the Congress Ministries resigned in various provinces between 27 October and 15 November 1939.⁴ Simultaneously, the Congress Ministry in Odisha tendered its resignation on 14 November, 1939.⁵ In January 1940 the anti-war agitation started in Odisha under the Congress leadership. The Congress made efforts to bring unity among all other political parties like the socialists and communists. In order to prepare for a mass movement volunteer groups were organised to impart training in politics and physical instruction to the youthful elements in different parts of Odisha. The main aim of the Congress was to create apathy of the people towards the war efforts of the Government. The Congress, Socialists and the Communists circulated secret pamphlets named *The Only War* published in Oriya in January 1940 from Balasore among the workers and sympathizers. It contained the views of Mahatma Gandhi regarding the national struggle and the formation of a Constituent Assembly that would solve the differences existing among different communities, particularly hindus and muslims.⁶

². Jagannath Pattnaik, *Quit India Movement in Orissa*, *Orissa Review*, vol. XLVI, no.1, August 1989, p.168.

³. Brajendra Narayan Patnaik, *The First Congress Ministry in Orissa: 1937-39*, *Orissa Review*, 1989, vol. XLVI, no.1, p.165.

⁴. R.C. Majumdar, *The History of Freedom Movement in India*, vol-III, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 596-9.

⁵. Brajendra Narayan Patnaik, op.cit., p.165.

⁶. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No. 31/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

During this phase a huge peasant protest was organised in the District of Ganjam on 24 January 1940, as Madras Estates Land Act (Amendment Bill) 1937 was withheld.⁷ The Inam Bill conferred occupancy rights on tenants come to a standstill in the Select Committee. The Sambalpur Tenancy Regulation had become stale, without any change in the last 54 years, and the government appointed the Sambalpur Land Law Committee to draw up an elaborate questionnaire. It had proposed to take up legislation soon after the report of the committee was finalized.⁸ However, the colonial government put pressure on the Congress Ministry for taking up any legislation by the Ministry when it was in power. In order to check the activities of the peasantry, the colonial government came down heavily on the Krushak Sangh in Odisha between the period 1940-41. It culminated in the Viceroy's rejection of the Madras Estates Land Bill 1939 in February 1941.⁹

With the onset of the war, the economic situation in Odisha became precarious. There was scarcity of food and other essential commodities, coupled with rise in the price of rice.¹⁰ The material condition of the peasantry of Odisha was also vulnerable as a whole. The war preparations led to inflation of money which had detrimental impact on poor peasantry of Odisha. The pressure on agriculture became high. The agricultural classes were hit hard due to rise of prices. The price of rice during the war-period was increased. During this decade, *i.e.* 1941-51, there was also a rise of population by 6.4 percent in Odisha.¹¹ Naturally, the burden fell on agricultural land.

The position of the landlords and the rulers of the princely states prior to the Quit India Movement were strengthened as they took all possible steps to realign the balance in their favour after the Congress Ministry resigned. Because of having a close tie with the colonial government they launched an attack on the Krushak Sangh and the Congress, as both these organisations had close links with each other.¹² To suppress the Congress mobilization, under the chairmanship of the Raja of Kanika, a meeting of All Odisha Land Holders Association was held in Madhupur House at Cuttack on the 14 February 1940. The zamindars and the rulers of the states attended the meeting and it resolved to fight against any anti-government movement in Odisha.¹³

Thus the war situation and repressive measures on Kisan Sangh by the colonial government had profound

7. Sushil Chandra De, *Dairy of Political Events in Orissa, 1st April, 1936 to 15th August 1947*, Government Press, Cuttack, 1964. p.29.

8. Jadunath Mohapatra, *Government of Orissa at Work, Work of the Congress Ministry from 19th July, 1938 to 31st March, 1939*, Cuttack, 1939, p.14.

9. Indian Annual Register, vol.I, 1941, p.232

10. *Desakatha*, (*Oriya Weekly Newspaper*), 22nd November, 1943.

11. Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting Domination, Peasants, Tribals and National Movement in Orissa, 1920-50*, New Delhi, 1993, P.145.

12. *Ibid.*, p.146.

13. Susil Chandra De, *op.cit.*, p.30.

impact on the peasants masses of Odisha. Right from government to the *Chaukidars*, they tried to reinforce their hegemony, which created further trouble for the marginalized peasantry of Odisha.¹⁴

The economic condition of the peasantry in the states of Odisha was even more precarious than that of British Odisha. On 12 and 13 July 1941, the Eastern States Rulers Council held a meeting at Calcutta and passed a resolution to support British war efforts. A number of rulers of the princely states of Odisha who attended in the meeting supported the move. The burden naturally fell on the people of the states.

Besides, it was during the war period, particularly from 1940 to 41 onwards that the Government of Odisha made provision to raise the police force, which cost Rs. 2.5 lakhs to meet the dangers arising from international political situation. The Government of Odisha also recruited 100 additional emergency forces that cost Rs. 50,000. The expenditure generally fell on the people of the province.¹⁵

Thus the economic situation created by the war left a general impression in the minds of the peasantry that the colonial rule was the root cause of all their troubles.

It was during this period that the government arrested a number of Congress leaders in Odisha under Defense of India Rules. Jagannath Mishra, President of Ganjam District Congress Committee and Laxmi Narayan Mishra were arrested in April 1940.¹⁶ In the district of Cuttack, the Government carried out searches in the houses of Bhagirathi Panigrahi, Purna Chandra Mohanty and many other leaders, who were arrested in July 1940, and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. At Potangi, in the district of Koraput, Bhagaban Khemundu, a Congress leader and Banamali Das, the ex-Secretary of Nilgiri *Prajamandal* were arrested. In June 1940, an internment order was served under the Defence of India Rules on Balai Bose of Bengal, a labour worker, directing him to leave the Odisha province within 24 hours. Thus, the war situation and the repressive measures on the Congress and Kisan Sabha by the colonial government had profound impact on the peasant masses of Odisha. All levels of the government, tried to reinforce their dominance.¹⁷

It was by the middle of 1940, that the war situation in Europe deteriorated and Adolf Hitler had over-run the whole of Western Europe. The Congress Working Committee at its meeting held in the first week of July 1940, renewed its demand for complete independence. In consideration to the Congress demands, the Viceroy

¹⁴. Biswamoy Pati, op.cit., p.146.

¹⁵. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.1, 1940, pp. 206-7.

¹⁶. *Indian Annual Register*, vol. I, 1940, p.259.

¹⁷. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.II, 1940, p. 240.

issued a Statement of policy on 8 August 1940, which was known as the August Offer. The Congress demand for a Constituent Assembly was conceded; it was proposed to be proposed after the war was over. However, the Viceroy also supported the claim of the Muslim League. The August Offer did not to satisfy either the Congress or the Muslim League. The Congress Working Committee, forbidden the offer. Accordingly the Congress declared to launch the Individual Satyagraha from October 1940.¹⁸

Individual Satyagraha

Hare Krushna Mahatab from Odisha attended the Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress in 1940. It was in this session that the Indian National Congress decided to offer Individual Satyagraha¹⁹ and Vinoba Bhave was chosen to offer Satyagraha.²⁰ The General Secretary of Indian National Congress issued a circular as instructed by Mahatma Gandhi on 25 March 1940 from Sevagram at Wardha to convert all Congress Committees in the provinces into Satyagraha Committees.²¹

In Odisha the Utkal Provincial Congress Executive Committee underwent a change in February 1940 with Radhakrishna Biswas Roy and Nilakantha Choudhury as President and Secretary respectively. In March 1940, the All India Congress Committee instructed Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee to get ready for a bigger mass struggle. As per directions of the All India Congress Committee the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee transformed itself into Satyagraha Committee in April 1940. It also directed the District Congress Committees to transform into Satyagraha Committees in the district levels and send its volunteers.²² The total number of active Satyagrahis enrolled till 2 May, 1940 was 108. The highest number of Satyagrahis in Odisha was from Cuttack and Koraput, *i.e.* 43 and 35 respectively. The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee also opened four departments, (1) Propaganda Department (2) Harijan Department (3) Minorities Department and (4) Charakha Department. These departments started functioning forth with.²³

In Odisha some prominent members of the Congress and Gandhi Seva Sangh under the leadership of Gopabandhu Chaudhury marched from village to village to spread the Congress message among the rural masses. Another meeting of the Congress leaders was convened on the 28 April 1940 deciding that all

¹⁸. K.M. Patra, *Orissa State Legislature and Freedom Struggle (1912-47)*, New Delhi, 1979, pp.168-9.

¹⁹. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.I, 1940, pp. 228-9.

²⁰. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.11, 1940, P. 170.

²¹. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.1, 1940, p.240.

²². History Freedom Movement Papers, File No.31/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

²³. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.1, 1940, p. 249

satyagrahis should spin and increase the sale of Khadi. Hare Krishna Mahatab, Radhakruhna Biswasray and Moulana Muhammad Attahar took all possible steps for a rigorous anti-war propaganda throughout the province. They explained to the people that India was unnecessarily dragged into the war and that India would gain nothing if the war was won.²⁴

The Communists of Odisha had also started preparations for the Individual Satyagraha Movement in their own way. They wanted to utilize the services of the students for contacting peasants through literary centres. They avoided public speeches in big meetings but went around the rural areas and held group discussions. However, on 12 July 1940, a number of houses were searched and a large quantity of Communist literature was seized and many Communist leaders were taken into custody. At the same time, the Socialists in Odisha also made preparation for the coming struggle. Surendranath Dwivedy, the President of the Utkal Congress Socialist Party, issued copies of circulars designed to attract the rightists and the communists. He hinted for a more aggressive programme than what the Congress had in mind.²⁵

The peasants of Odisha under the banner of Utkal Provincial Kisan Sabha made preparations for the Individual Satyagraha Movement. Short-term training camps for Satyagrahis were opened in five centres in the province. A kisan school providing training to Kisans was opened at Jankia in the Puri District.²⁶ On 8 June 1941, the All Utkal Provincial Peasants' Conference was held at Khurda. During this conference, they urged the peasants to be alert about their exploitation by the capitalists and imperialists. In coastal Odisha, after the Palasa (Andhra Pradesh) ²⁷ session of the All India Kisan Sabha the peasant movement in Odisha became more active. The Utkal Kisan Sabha planned to start a no-rent campaign. However, peasant movement got a set back due to the floods in July 1940, which devastated Cuttack and Balasore districts. Finally, with the arrest of some Communist leaders who worked for the Kisan Sabha, the peasant protest in Odisha was considerably marginalized. However, there were continuing tension between the landlords and peasants of Kanika, Aul and Dompara.. Puri district was most important centre of the peasant movement directed against levying of mutation fees on the peasants by the Raja of Puri.

²⁴ Ibid., pp.31-4.

²⁵ Ibid., pp.31-2.

²⁶ Ibid., pp.35-6.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 31-3.

The peasants of Puri district between the period 1939-40 violated the contraband salt law, which led to the serious conflict between an Excise Officer and the peasants. There was protest demonstration against the war collections in Puri district. Accordingly, the Puri District Congress Committee issued a circular in September 1940 and criticised forced war collection in rural areas.²⁸

In Balasore district and Nilgiri states there was much resentment of kisans under the leadership of Pranabandhu Agasti in September 1941. The kisans of Remuna area observed Kisan Day demanding reduction of revenue and punishment to the landlord against his tyrannical activities. A number of aboriginal tenants of Nilgiri and Murybhanj joined in the observations. Suraj Kumar Bhattacharya a *Prajamandal* worker of Nilgiri was arrested under Defence of India Act for spreading anti-war propaganda and persuading the masses not to help British war efforts. In Dhamnagar, on 10 March 1941 an association known as Dhamnagar Water Tax was formed demanding reduction of water tax by the government for the peasants.²⁹

Hare Krishna Mahatab and Biswanath Das, who toured various parts of Odisha for anti-war propaganda and persuading the peasants not to pay war tax, were convicted. Hare Krishna Mahatab was arrested at Remuna hat in December 1940. Jagannath Das offered Individual Satyagraha at Deula hat. Natu Sathpathy who held a meeting at Jaleswar hat (Balasore) and circulated a leaflet known as “*Ranabheri*” in June 1940 was convicted under the Defence of India Act.³⁰

In Odisha, Individual Satyagraha campaign started from 1 December 1940. Sarala Devi, Loknath Mishra, Radhakrushna Biswasray, Bodhram Dube, Nityananda Kanungo, Sadasiv Tripathy, Biswanath Das, Nabakrushna Chaudhury were prominent among those who attended Satyagraha in the first batch and many of them were arrested.³¹

Though the Individual Satyagraha launched in Odisha got wide support from various political parties however Nilakantha Das and Dibakar Patnaik who belonged to the Congree Swaraj Party (right wing) condemned the movement and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. M.N. Roy visited Odisha and held a meeting at Cuttack on 27 January 1941 and condemned Individual Satyagraha. Simultaneously, he blamed the Congress for

²⁸ Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting Domination, Peasants, Tribal and National Movement in Orissa 1920-50*, New Delhi, 1993, p.49.

²⁹ History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No. 75/3, 1941-42, NAI, New Delhi.

³⁰ History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No. 73/3, 1939 -1940, NAI, New Delhi.

³¹ Susil Chandra De, *op.cit.*, pp.40-41.

unruly elements in the organisation. However the youths assembled in the meeting condemned M.N. Roy as a traitor and an agent of the imperialist government.³²

In various parts of the princely states of Odisha, although there was a marked decline in the *Prajamandal* activities compared to the phase between 1936-39, there were signs of *Prajamandal* movement in Nilgiri, Dhenkanal, Talcher and few other states. In the Nilgiri States with the support of Communists, Banamali Das mobilized the aboriginal tenants against the state authority. The police seized the literature published by the Communist Party of Great Britain, Moscow and Communist Party Odisha. Banamali Das was finally arrested and expelled from the *Prajamandal*.³³

The timely visit of veteran Socialist leaders Jay Prakash Narayan and Swami Sahajananda Saraswati to Odisha had a tremendous influence over the *Prajamandal* movement in Odisha. Jay Prakash Narayan advised relentless agitation against the fascist and imperialist power. Sahajananda Saraswati denounced the activities of the ruling chiefs of the states, and advised all support to *Prajamandal* agitation. However, by that time some sort of calmness had prevailed as the refugees who had left the Princely states of Odisha between the period 1938-9 returned to their home. The Congress also advised the *Prajamandal* workers to engage themselves in constructive work such as formation of village panchayats, encouragement of home-industries and boycott of foreign goods.

As the Government adopted a repressive policy, most of the Satyagrahis courted arrest. Mohan Das received a sentence of rigorous imprisonment for one year.³⁴ There were no reports of disturbance in connection with these arrests. It was during the Individual Satyagrah Movement in Odisha that as many as 315 Individual Satyagrahis were imprisoned³⁵ and a fined of Rs. 8,176, till March 1941, as reported to the All India Congress Committee. Around 200 people gathered to see Sarala Devi offer Satyagraha.

In November 1941, the Satyagraha Movement was temporarily suspended in coastal Odisha. The released Satyagrahis were directed to concentrate on the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi.³⁶

³². History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No. 31/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

³³. Biswamoy Pati, op.cit., p.49.

³⁴. B.N. Pandey, (ed.), *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, vol. III, (1935-47), New Delhi, 1985, p.418.

³⁵. Pattabhi Sitaramaya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, vol.11, (1935-47), New Delhi, 1969, p.264.

³⁶. Susil Chandra De, op.cit. pp.30-40.

Formation of Coalition-Ministry in Odisha

As stated earlier, the Congress Ministry in Odisha resigned following the All India Congress Committee instruction, and the Governor John Hubback assumed administrative and legislative powers in November 1939. Eric C. Ansorage and Mukunda Prasad Das, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, assisted him.³⁷

The Governor of Odisha was willing to welcome the return to office of any political parties to undertake the responsibility of office, more particularly in view of the importance of the tasks in connection with Civil Defence, which fell within the purview of the Provincial Government.³⁸

When the Congress Ministry resigned, there was a serious dissension in the Congress circles led by Pandit Nilakantha Das and Pandit Godavarish Mishra, who started a pro-government and anti-Congress campaign. They urged the people to co-operate with the government and criticized the Satyagraha Movement as a foolish move and made earnest effort to form in Coalition Ministry in Odisha.³⁹

The Congress Working Committee condemned their move to form the ministry and demanded that they should resign from their constituencies. The Utkal Provincial Congress Committee held a number of meetings in various parts of Odisha and condemned the dissident members.⁴⁰ Subsequently, the Congress took disciplinary action against Godavarish Mishra and Dibakar Patnaik. A notice was sent to Dibakar Patnaik. The Congress Working Committee considered his conduct as condemnable as that of Godavarish Mishra and called upon him to resign.⁴¹ Nilakantha Das was also debarred from the Odisha Congress Party for his anti-Congress activities in August 1941.⁴²

The recalcitrant Congress legislators who attempted to form a Coalition Ministry in Odisha formed a new political party known as *Odisha Congress Swaraj Dal* in October 1940, with Godavarish Mishra and Dibakar Patnaik as President and Secretary respectively. Pandit Nilakantha Das was also an active supporter of this group. He joined the Forward Bloc Branch of Odisha. The Forward Block Branch of Odisha supported the move of the dissident Congress members to form a Coalition- Ministry, though such an attempt did not materialise till November 1941. Godavarish Mishra and the Maharaja of Paralakhemndi once again made a

³⁷. Indian Annual Registered, vol.1, 1940, p.3.

³⁸. N.Mansergh, (ed.), *Trnasfer of Power*, vol.I, No.15, *Amery to Attlee, 16th January, 194*, London, 1970, p.30.

³⁹. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.II, 1941, p.333.

⁴⁰. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.1, 1942, p.276.

⁴¹. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.11, 1940, pp.189-9.

⁴². Sushil Chandra De, op.cit., p.30.

fresh attempt on 4 November 1941. They met the new Governor, W.H. Lewis, in order to put forth their plans for forming the Ministry in Odisha. The Congress Working Committee as well as Mahatma Gandhi immediately condemned the move.⁴³ In spite of the criticism a Coalition Ministry was formed in Odisha on 24 November 1941, with Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati of Paralakhemndi as the Prime Minister. The other ministers were Pandit Godavarish Mishra, Maulavi Abdus Sobhan Khan and Mukund Prasad Das as Speaker.⁴⁴

On 27 October 1941 the British Government announced the release of Satyagrahis and most notable leaders were subsequently released. After that Viceroy Lord Linthithgow made two most important pronouncements in the middle of December 1941. Firstly, he repeated the offer of 8 August to the Indian National Congress, and said that if they accepted they shall inherit the kingdom of Hindusthan. The second was Rajagopalachari's Convocation address on 13 December 1941 at Lucknow University, where he declared that as a political strategy, he favoured the suspension of Individual Satyagraha at the present situation and advised a policy of neutrality.⁴⁵

In Odisha, towards the close of December 1941, some of the Congress leaders who were arrested during the Individual Satyagraha movement were released. On 4 December 1941, Biswanath Das, the ex-Prime Minister of Odisha was released from Cuttack jail after the expiry of his full term of imprisonment.⁴⁶ Hare Krishna Mahatab was released from Berhampur Jail on 1 December 1941. The Congress in Odisha now prepared to defeat the minority Coalition Ministry in the next Assembly session.⁴⁷

It was in this situation that the Coalition Ministry presented the budget (1940-41) and passed the following laws; (a) The Odisha Tenancy Second Amendment Act, 1941, (b) The Madras Estate Land (Odisha Amendment) Act, 1942, (c) Odisha Auditing and Validating Act, 1942, (d) Odisha Weights and Measures Bill, 1942 (e) The Bihar and Odisha State Aid to Industries (Odisha Amendment) Bill, 1942, and (f) The Odisha Forest Bill, 1942.⁴⁸

⁴³. Patra, K.M., op.cit., pp.171-2.

⁴⁴. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.11, 1942, p.3.

⁴⁵. Pattabhi Sitaramaya, op.cit., p.289.

⁴⁶. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 5th December, 1942.

⁴⁷. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 1st January, 1942.

⁴⁸. *India n Annual Register*, vol.II, 1942, p.164.

With regard to the above mentioned legislation, the Congress in Odisha vehemently attacked the Coalition Ministry and tried hard to dislodge it from power. Many changes were brought about more specifically to the Odisha Tenancy Amendment Act, 1942, and Madras Estate Land (Odisha Amendment) Act, 1942, which suited the landlords rather than the tenants. The Congress also brought a cut motion against the ministry. However, it was survived by a show of artificial majority.⁴⁹

It was during this period, particularly in the month of March 1942, that the scare of the Japanese invasion in Odisha was spread. Biswanath Das, the ex-Premier of Odisha had written to Vallabbhai Patel that the war at the door of Odisha and danger from Japan was much apprehended, since the province had an unprotected coastline suitable for landing.⁵⁰ There was a big port station at Balasore, and Odisha was not far from Calcutta, Kharagpur and Tatanagar.⁵¹ The loss of Rangoon on 8 March, 1942, made the situation more complicated. There was a close connection between Odisha and Burma, and a large number of evacuees started following from Burma to Odisha, which spread alarm in the province. Incendiaries continued to be reported from Puri in spite of police precautions. There was growing uneasiness, unsettlement and panic in that area. This was said to have been reported on 14 March 1942 to the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow by Lewis, the Governor of Odisha.⁵²

The Governor of Odisha, Lewis met the Viceroy at New Delhi on 2 March 1942, and discussed the general vulnerability of coastal parts of Odisha particularly Cuttack and Puri districts. However, the Viceroy expressed his inability to protect Odisha from a possible menace.

The Coalition Ministry, on the other hand was not at all prepared to face the possible Japanese menace, as coastal belt was not immune to risks of air raid. A draft was prepared by the Governor and handed over to the Ministry to make public about the increasingly alarming situation, but it was not intimated to the district officers and to the press to make the people aware of the situation.⁵³ It was on 14 March 1942, that the Ministry issued a press communiqué regarding the alarming situation. The problem was raised in the Odisha Legislative Assembly on 23 March, 1942 and the demand was made on the problem of evacuation and how the government proposed to tackle a matter of great public interest. The Parliamentary Secretary replied that

⁴⁹. K.M Patra., op.cit., pp.181-2.

⁵⁰. Pandey, B.N., op.cit., pp.477-8

⁵¹. Mansergh, N., op.cit., no.219, Lewis to Linlithgow, 14 March, 1942, London, 1970, p.418.

⁵². Ibid., Document no.219, Linlithgow to Amery, 2nd March 1942, pp.298-9.

⁵³. Ibid., Document no.322, Lewis to Linlithgow, 14 March, 1942, p.418.

the government would continue to watch the situation.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the All India Kisan sabha convened its 6th session at Bhitia (Patna) with Indulal Yagnik as President on 30 May 1942, and passed a resolution demanding the immediate evacuation of civilians in coastal areas of eastern India including Balasore, as it was an imperative necessity.⁵⁵

At this critical juncture, the Cripps Mission arrived in India on 22 March 1942, to discuss with the Indian leaders and to persuade them to support the British war effort and formation of new Indian Union.⁵⁶ The deliberations began at New Delhi after seven days of his arrival, with officials, members of Viceroy's Council, political leaders, and non-party leaders and the princes and representatives of religious communities to break the political deadlock in India.⁵⁷ The reaction of the province of Odisha as reported by the Governor Lewis to the Viceroy Linlithgo on 26 March 1942, "here the Ministry in power is anti-Congress and predominately pro-landlord. While Cripps visit is welcomed, the general feeling on the side was that care must be taken to see that Congress does not get away with it and that provisions are made so that landholders' interest is protected. The view of the local Congress as he said was they all wished well to Cripps and would do nothing to hamper him, but that his work would be judged in terms of the freedom and independence. Lewis also in his notes admitted that while Godavarish Mishra was now anti-Congress, his position is still pro-tenant".⁵⁸

Lewis also reported another interesting matter to the Viceroy on 26 March 1942. The Prime Minister of Odisha, with a party of six or seven zamindars met him and he received them informally to hear anything they wished to tell him on the present situation. The Maharaja of Paralakhemndi acted throughout as a spokesman on behalf of them. However, the Governor of Odisha declined to receive a formal deputation to transmit their views to Stafford Cripps.⁵⁹

On 1 April 1942 the Maharaja met Cripps and discussed the situation in Odisha. Cripps in his notes remarked that he was chiefly concerned with the protection of the landlord's interests and the extension of the boundaries of Odisha so as to include whole of the Oriya population which were being badly treated by the neighbouring provinces of Madras and Central Provinces. I pointed out to him, said Cripps, that it was impossible to change the boundaries of the Province at this stage. It could only be done by a Constitution

⁵⁴. Patra, K.M., op.cit., p.183.

⁵⁵. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.I, 1942, pp.300-51.

⁵⁶. Pattabhi Sitaramaya, op.cit., P.332

⁵⁷. N. Mansergh, op.cit., Lewis to Linlithgow, 25/26 March 1942, pp.485-6.

⁵⁸. *Ibid.*, p.486.

⁵⁹. *Ibid.*, p.487.

making authority. So far as the landlords were concerned, we did not regard them as a minority any more than any particular kind of trader and that they must make their protection with the other interests in the Constitution making Assembly. Again Cripps said to him that, “however much he would like to maintain the old systems and customs in India, it was impossible to arrest the advance of a civilization which would no doubt get a fresh impetus forward if self-government came to India.”⁶⁰

In the meanwhile, All India Congress Committee meeting was held at Allahabad from 29-30 April to May 1-2 1942, under the Presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. 170 members and four from Odisha attended it. In this meeting the negotiations of the Congress with Cripps was discussed. Finally, Rajendra Prasad moved a resolution, subsequently passed, rejecting the Cripps proposal.⁶¹ Similarly, the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Depressed Classes League, Indian Christians and the Sikhs, rejected the proposal. Thus the Cripps Mission ended in failure.

The Congress leadership and particularly Mahatma Gandhi were in an uncompromising mode as far as India’s Independence was concerned. With this backdrop Congress Working Committee conducted its session from 6 to 14 July 1942. The Congress⁶² reiterated that for the safety of the world and to end Nazism, Fascism, Militarism and British Imperialism. The British conscience was not stirred due to war situation or nor India’s protest through Individual Satyagraha (1940 October to 1941 October), As a result of which Cripps Mission failed to get any tangible result and set the immediate background for the Quit India Movement in 1942. Finally, the Congress adopted the historic Quit India Resolution, drafted by Mahatma Gandhi.⁶³ When Louis Fisher on 9 June 1942 asked Mahatma Gandhi, exactly when did the ideas (Quit India) occur to you? he replied: soon after the Cripps departure.⁶⁴

Jawaharlal Nehru, after his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha said in a press statement on 16 June 1942, that, he was in entire agreement with Gandhi when the latter asked the British to withdraw. He also remarked that, Britain must accept Independence of India in its entirety and there must be the complete transfer of political power into the Indian hands.⁶⁵

⁶⁰. N. Mansergh, op.cit., Notes by Sir S. Cripps, 1st April, 1942 (Interview with the Maharaja of Paralakhimedi), p.597.

⁶¹. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.I, 1942, pp.290-300.

⁶². Pattabhi Sitaramaya, op.cit., p.332.

⁶³. *Ibid.*, pp.337-41

⁶⁴. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 16th October, 1942

⁶⁵. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 16th October, 1942

After a short interval of two months the All India Congress Committee met on 7 and 8 August 1942 in Bombay under the leadership of Abdul Kalam Azad. It was in this meeting that the momentous decision of Quit India was arrived at unanimously by the Indian National Congress, demanding complete withdrawal of British from India.⁶⁶ The Congress appealed to the masses to carry out the struggle for freedom.⁶⁷

The Congress resolved to start a mass struggle to defeat British domination in India. on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale.⁶⁸

The All India Congress Committee requested Mahatma Gandhi to provide leadership and direct the nation to fight for freedom. Gandhiji appealed to the masses after taking the leadership that “I take up the task of leading you in this struggle, not as your commander, not as your controller, but as the humble servant of you and he who serves best becomes the Chief among them. I am the chief servant of the Nation that is how I look at it, declared Gandhi”, and winding up his speech, he added, “I want to share all the shocks that you have to face. Regarding the character and conduct of the movement, he said, let there be no secrecy. Secrecy is a sin. There should be no underground activity”. Finally, Gandhiji gave the call *Do or Die*.⁶⁹

Although the decision was already taken to launch Mass Civil Disobedience;⁷⁰ Mahatma Gandhi was hesitant to start the movement on moral grounds. Therefore, he had given an ultimatum to the Viceroy. No positive response came. Meanwhile, the British Government gathered all of its strength to put down the mass movement. There were the sudden and wholesale arrests that took place on 9 August 1942 and this marked the beginning of the historic movement.⁷¹

Programme of the August Movement:1942

Since the mass movement became imminent, the All India Congress Committee instructed all District Congress Committees to follow the guidelines, published in the confidential Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee of 29 July 1942.⁷²

The All India Kisan Sabha on the other hand, held its session at Bombay on 7th August, 1942 with Acharya Narendra Dev as its president. The All India Kisan Sabha passed a resolution supporting Congress decision

⁶⁶. *Indian Annual Register*, vol. II, 1942, p.17.

⁶⁷. *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁶⁸. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 8th August, 1942.

⁶⁹. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 8th August, 1942.

⁷⁰. Pattabhi Sitaramaya, op.cit., pp.343-4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.351-2.

⁷². *Indian Annual Register*, vol.II, 1942, pp.211-2.

to launch a mass struggle to attain independence. It called upon the Kisans to rally round the Congress when the call comes from Gandhi. The All India Kisan Sabha Council urged upon the All India Congress Committee to include the agrarian demands of the Kisans in their plan of action that they may formulate so that the Kisans can enthusiastically join the struggle for freedom.⁷³

The All India Congress Committee in order to mobilize the peasantry instructed for a no-tax, no rent and no-grain campaign to the government and to the zamindars. It also instructed the peasantry to resist the revenue and political officers, paralyse the communication, and start political propaganda at the village level.

The All India Congress Committee also declared a moratorium on agricultural debts and interest payments by natural agreement between the moneylenders and the peasants. Instruction was also given to each Congress Committee that the appended appeals of All India Congress Committee should reach the peasants, landlords, moneylenders, revenue and police officers in villages.⁷⁴

As has already been stated, on 9 August (Sunday) 1942, Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru and 20 other frontline Congress leaders were arrested and sent to Poona by a special train.⁷⁵ On the same day Rajendra Prasad was arrested at Patna. The All India Congress Committee Office at Allahabad was raided and locked up by the local police. The British government prohibited the printing and publishing of news relating to mass movement sanctioned by the Congress or steps undertaken by the colonial government.

Beginning of the Quit India Movement in Odisha, 1942

Although it is beyond the scope of this research to trace the real depth and intensity of the Quit India Revolution that was felt in Odisha, however, here an attempt has been made to give an account of the greatest mass movement, which we have ever had in the struggle for freedom, and the response it got from the peasantry of Odisha.

The tremors of the August Revolution, as elsewhere in India, were tremendous in Odisha. The visit of Mira Ben, the disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, in May and June 1942, to watch the war situation and to spread Congress views, had tremendously influenced the Congress circle of Odisha. She toured a number of places

⁷³. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 9th August, 1942.

⁷⁴. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.II, 1942, pp.211-2.

⁷⁵. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 10th August, 1942.

of Odisha accompanied by Hare Krishna Mahatab and suggested that Odisha is in imminent danger of being invaded by the Japanese. Therefore, she suggested the Congressmen to develop volunteers for national defence.⁷⁶ Biswanath Das and other Congress leaders held public meetings at various parts of Odisha.⁷⁷ The Governor of Odisha Sir Lewis wrote to the Viceroy on 29 July 1942 that the credit of the Coalition Ministry was declining and stands at low ebb. The estimate that comes to me from variety of sources is that the Congress would get from this province anything they would hope, but that local Congress leaders would certainly associate themselves without question in any campaign launched by Gandhi and that on sentimental grounds.⁷⁸

When Congress campaign was imminent, Lewis wrote to the Viceroy in the same letter that: anticipate that we should be able without any real difficulty to meet such situation that may arise and that military help would certainly not be needed.⁷⁹ Further, he communicated to the Viceroy on 30 July 1942, regarding the preparedness of the police force that, 'I am satisfied that Odisha Police will prove equal to demands that may be made upon by a Congress campaign. The morale of the police is as good as can be expected and there are no signs of deterioration'.⁸⁰

The Publicity Department of Government of Odisha also instructed all the Collectors and Sub-Divisional Officers to take immediate action against the 'Quit India Resolution.' As such action was taken at Wardha by mobilizing non-Congress organizations that existed in the districts of Cuttack, Balasore, Ganjam as well as the War Committees functioning in the State. The non-Congress organizations that existed in these of districts were:

Cuttack

- Oriya People's Association
- Oriya Muhammadan Association
- Oriya Landholders Association
- All Odisha Bengal Settlers Association
- Domiciled Bangalee's Association
- Odisha Women's League of Service

⁷⁶. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No.31/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

⁷⁷. N.Mansergh, *et.al.*, *Transfer of Power*, vol.II, No.85, Lewis to Linlithgow, 25th May, 1942, London, 1970, p.121.

⁷⁸. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.II, 1942,p.212.

⁷⁹. *Ibid.*, Document no.368, Lewis to Linlithgow, Cuttack, 29th July, 1942, p.500.

⁸⁰. *Ibid.*, p.500.

Balasore

Odisha Mill owners Association

Ganjam Landholders Association

All Odisha National Association

Andhra Mandali

Oriya Samaj

There were also directed to take prompt and effective actions against the Congress before the All India Congress Committee at Bombay on 8th August 1942.⁸¹

However, the Congress in Odisha made all preparations and started vigorous propaganda work in every nook and corner of the province. It also held public meetings in various parts of Odisha after the Wardha Resolution was endorsed.⁸² The instructions of Mahatma Gandhi concerning last struggle began to be secretly circulated in different parts of Odisha at the beginning of August 1942. The programme and policy adopted by Gandhi was accepted by all political parties except the Swarajists and the Radical Democrats.⁸³

Biswanath Das the ex-Premier of Odisha was convicted and sentenced to three months of imprisonment, on 5 August 1942 by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Russelkonda in connection with a speech delivered by him at Aska. The Congress vehemently protested against his conviction and on the day of the judgement the courtroom was overcrowded with Congress Workers.⁸⁴

There were large scale arrest in Bombay on 9 August 1942, in Odisha, on the same day, Nityananda Kanungo, Bhagirathi Mohapatra, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Rama Devi and Nabakrushna Choudhury were arrested and taken to the local jail for detention. The Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee Office at Cuttack was raided and locked up by the local police. The Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee and all District Congress Committees were banned and considered as unlawful, by a notification under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, Imperial Government of India. This marked the beginning of the August Revolution in Odisha.⁸⁵

The measures taken against the Congress and the unexpected arrest of all-important leaders in August 1942 had tremendously agitated the political circles of Odisha, including that of the Communists and the Socialists.

⁸¹. Pattabhi Sitaramaya, op.cit., pp.364-5.

⁸². *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 6th August, 1942.

⁸³. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No. 31/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

⁸⁴. H.K. Mahatab, *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, vol.IV, Cuttack, 1957, p.89.

⁸⁵. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 10th August, 1942.

The arrest of the leaders in the province roused strong resentment on a mass scale. The masses believed, as instructed by the local Congress, that, Swaraj was an accomplished fact. The masses of Odisha broke all bonds and restrictions and defied the authorities and resorted to acts of lawlessness, which they thought would result in the attainment of their cherished goal. Arson, looting and acts of sabotage were frequently committed by the uncontrolled mobs in different places in the province. Thus, a countrywide mass revolution was started. The Congress was declared as illegal organization.⁸⁶

The Socialists of Odisha appreciated this new move of Gandhi and pledged their support to his leadership. Ramachandra Mishra, the organising Secretary of the All India Congress Socialist Party, visited Odisha in July 1942 with an objective of studying the local political situation. The visit of Ramachandra Mishra had a salutary effect on the Congress Socialist Party. Its activities were intensified thereafter. Similarly, some Communists in Odisha expressed their opinion in favour of helping any movement directed against British imperialism. They accepted the leadership of Gandhi to start the movement under the guidance of the Utkal Provincial Kisan Sangh in the coming movement.

On 23 and 24 July 1942, Jagannath Das of Kantapani, Hare Krushna Mahatab and Nilambar Das of Balasore, convened a meeting in Bhadrak sub-division and the Wardha Resolution of the Congress Working Committee to discuss the political situation in India.⁸⁷

Hare Krishna Mahatab, Malati Devi Choudhury, Surendranath Dwivedy, Prahalad Ray and Laxmi Narayan Mishra who attended the All India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay, organised the masses against the British Imperialism. It was decided to set up an office of the August Revolution in Odisha at Nandi Sahu's house in Alisa Bazar, Cuttack. From there the movement was conducted throughout Odisha. Surendranath Dwivedy and another 86 most other prominent freedom fighters were arrested from various parts of the province. Uday Nath Rath and Nandi Sahu were detained.⁸⁸ Within a week, many Congress leaders were arrested. Hand written pamphlets were circulated secretly in various parts of Odisha to rouse the masses against the British. The peasants were asked to disobey the Rajas and zamindars. They were expected to demand zamindari lands and excess of paddy from the zamindars.⁸⁹

⁸⁶. H.K. Mahatab, op.cit., pp.87-8.

⁸⁷. Jagannath Patnaik, *Quit India Movement in Orissa, Souvenir*, 1989, p.169.

⁸⁸. Surendranath Dwivedy, op.cit., p.120.

⁸⁹. Susil Chandra De, op.cit., p.35.

At the beginning of the movement Cuttack, Puri, Koraput and Sambalpur districts were mostly affected.

Hartals, strikes, protest marches became the main activities at the initial stages of the movement.⁹⁰

Surendranath Dwivedy issued instructions to sabotage communications by removing railway lines so as to isolate certain parts of the country in order to make it easier for Congress in their area to carry on work.

Consequently, Surendranath Dwivedy remaining underground organized the Quit India Movement in ODISHA as all other top ranking leaders were imprisoned.⁹¹

The district of Cuttack was the storm centre of the Quit India Revolution in ODISHA. Hundreds of poor peasants came forward in response to the call of the nation and participated in the revolution.

The students of Ravenshaw College inaugurated the revolution by holding a meeting on 10 August 1942.

They called for a strike against the arrest of Gandhi and Manmohan Choudhury. Sudhir Ghose and Baikuntha Mohanty were arrested.⁹² With this, the movement gradually gathered momentum and engulfed the entire district.

The popular upsurge took place in Bari, Kaipada, Jeypore, Tritol and Ersama. According to Congress report there was police firing in Kaipada on the 26 August, 1942, resulting in the death of five persons while police reported only one dead. At Bari the revolutionary peasants burnt down the houses of two zamindars.

They forcibly snatched away and burnt the uniforms of the village *chawkidars* and *deffadars* near the police stations. Small post offices in many places including the records contained in them were attacked and burnt.

The canal revenue bungalows and rest houses in other places received similar fate. The telegraph and telephone lines were cut in many places. The police party escorting prisoners in the Binjharpur police station

was attacked by a mob of several thousands on 26 August 1942, whereupon the police opened fire on the mob.⁹³ This was followed by mass arrests in Bari area and about 60 local Congress workers were arrested and

brought to Cuttack by the end of August 1942. The Governor of Odisha imposed fines of Rs. 500 on four villages including Bari and seized the Congress office.⁹⁴ A group of young men of the village Bagalpur

protested against the arrest of the Congress leaders. An organisation called *Rakta Bahini*(blood sacrifices) was formed by the youths of the village Batimura with an idea to combat the police and to cut roads and telegraph

wires.⁹⁵

⁹⁰. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10th August, 1942.

⁹¹. Jagannath Patnaik, op.cit., p. 169.

⁹². *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 12th August, 1942.

⁹³. H.K. Mahatab, op.cit., p.93.

⁹⁴. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 1st September 1942.

⁹⁵. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No. 31/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

In Jeypore sub-division of Cuttack district there was large scale violence.⁹⁶ On 15 August 1942, Santan Kumar Das a local Congress leader was arrested at Jeypore on a charge of picketing before the local high school.⁹⁷ Towards the end of August 1942, Jagannath Das and Dwarkanath Das at Dhamanagar and Gadhandhar Dutta, Chairman of Jeypore Local Board at Dharmasal and other revolutionary local Congress workers were arrested. On 21 August 1942, the Secretary of Odisha Congress Socialist Party was arrested at Cuttack. Similarly Brajanath Mishra of Salepur of Cuttack district was arrested towards the end of August 1942.⁹⁸

During the August Revolution some important Congress workers of the district like Surendranath Dwivedy, Loknath Mishra, Banka Bihari Das, Narasingh Charan Mohanty, Baishnab Charan Mohanty and others led the masses and organized underground activities. They distributed bulletins, leaflets, *etc.* among the rural poor exhorting them to fight and strike in different ways. The members of this organization were ultimately arrested and tried in the court and convicted to various terms of imprisonment. The case was known as Cuttack Conspiracy Case.⁹⁹

In Puri district, the historic August revolution had a similar impact. The leaders of Puri District Congress Committee were arrested. Mohan Das, a Congress Worker, was arrested at Bhubaneswar and taken to Puri jail. The Chaulinganj police took possession of the Congress office at that place and seized khadi and spinning wheels and other article in the house. In Kakatpur area, there were signs of a popular movement, because of which a local Congress worker was arrested on 16 August 1942 and sent to jail for detention.¹⁰⁰ During the August Revolution no major incidents occurred from 15 to 31 August 1942, and only some telephone lines were cut near Bhubaneswar railway station. On the 16 September 1942 a meeting of the kisans was held at Nimapara¹⁰¹. The villagers of Hansapada, Bhatbanda, Chanarpada, Miniganj, Andhia, Diasahi, Villagram and some low caste (*bauries*) agricultural labourers of Dihrbari assembled at Parbati field (Nimapara) and held a meeting. It was at this meeting that the villagers decided not to pay rent and revenue to zamindars and governments. A mob of 500 people proceeded to the Nimapara police station, asked the sub-divisional inspector to give up his job and forcibly entered the compound. The crowd ransacked the police station though police tried to prevent them. To suppress the mob the police shot the people and accordingly one person was

⁹⁶. H.K. Mahatab op.cit., pp.92-3.

⁹⁷. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 16th August, 1942.

⁹⁸. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 1st September, 1942.

⁹⁹. N.K. Sahu, and Susil Chandra De,eds, *Who's Who of Freedom Works in Orissa, Cuttack District*, 1970, p.xii.

¹⁰⁰. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 16th August, 1942.

¹⁰¹. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 1st September, 1942.

killed and many of them injured. This case was known as Nimapara Firing Case in the history of the Quit India Revolution in Odisha.

On 19 September 1942, the police raided the village of Hansapada and Chaurapada. Many of the leaders were arrested, including three important leaders namely, Moheswar Mohanty, Lakhan Barik and Dharm Sahu. All of them were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. A collective fine of Rs. 1,500 was levied on the villages concerned.¹⁰²

Balasore district played a very significant role during the Quit India Movement. The arrest of Hare Krushna Mahatab infuriated the masses against the British Government. Mass strike, hartals and picketing were the main forms of demonstration in town and rural areas. The Congress workers at Balasore distributed leaflets containing the Congress programme. For the peasants, non-payment of taxes, violation of the forest laws, plunder of salt-golas and demand for more pay and wages were the most popular forms of expression during the Quit India Revolution.¹⁰³

Surenranath Dwivedy, who had gone underground at Cuttack, gave detailed instruction to Gour Charan Das, a Congress leader of Balasore saying yesterday a man came from All India Congress Committee I met him. They have received special instruction from Gandhiji that, the movement should anyhow be completed before October 1942.¹⁰⁴ Surenranath Dwivedy instructed the people to carry on campaign against non-payment of taxes, to seize police station and burn their uniforms and to desert the ranks of the army in Balasore district. Youths appealed to let a river of blood flow.

In the Gurpal area of Balasore district, a National Government was started in September 1942 and started a vigorous campaign in the rural areas of Balasore. By September and October 1942, the mass revolution in the district had become violent in nature. The agitated masses withheld the payment of taxes, refused all co-operations with the officers and combined to offer united resistance to police attacks and government oppression.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰². Home Political Department, Fortnightly Report, File No. 3/31/43, NAI, New Delhi.

¹⁰³. Jagannath Patnaik, *Quit India Movement in Orissa*, Orissa Review, vol.XLVI, no., 1989, p. 171.

¹⁰⁴. Pattabhi Sitarmaya, op. cit., pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.

¹⁰⁵. H.K. Mahatab, op. cit., p. 96.

Eram Firing (Balasore)

Every endeavour was made in Bashudevpur (Balasore), to set the police station on fire. According to an official report, villager-numbering 250 formed Maran Sena (Death Squad), which was ready to sacrifice their lives for the national cause. Three *Chaukidars* resigned and burnt their uniforms. In twelve villages, Swaraj Panchayats was formed. The villagers by beats of drums announced that they would not pay taxes and revenue till independence was achieved.¹⁰⁶

On 28 September 1942, an atrocious incident happened at Eram in Basudevpur police station of Balasore district of Odisha. The Congress workers of Balasore district wanted to establish a sort of parallel administration of their own. On the fateful day, a few hundred villagers had assembled in an open space; surrounded by thorny bushes, muddy fields and ponds. They had gathered on hearing the usual sound of conch-shells to listen to their leaders on the possible course of action against the police and local supporters of the British Raj. A strong police contingent headed by a Deputy Superintendent of Police, arrived on the scene and asked the people to disperse. The police had already decided to take strong action against them because of snatching the dak and the belongings of a police party. When the people refused to disperse, the police fired several rounds on the thick crowd, killing 29 people on the spot and injuring more than a hundred.¹⁰⁷ It was the most tragic moment in August moment.

After the firing at Eram, the British Government tightened its grip further to subdue the movement in the Balasore district. By October 1942, the Quit India Movement in Balasore became considerably subdued. Various measures were taken to suppress the movement. Nevertheless, the popular masses were asked to non-cooperative with the government.¹⁰⁸ However, when Surendranath Dwivedy was arrested in October 1942 signalled the end of the underground activities of the movement.¹⁰⁹ Alongwith Surendranath Dwivedy, Loknath Mishra and 14 others were convicted as they attempted to paralyse the operation of the government by underground activities. Surendranath Dwivedy was sentenced to 6 years of rigorous imprisonment and all others for four years each. Besides, Surendranath Dwivedy's house at Alisa Bazar, Cuttack was searched and

¹⁰⁶. Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁰⁷. B.N. Pandey, op.cit., pp.568-9.

¹⁰⁸. Biswamoy Pati, op.cit., p.152.

¹⁰⁹. Pattabhi Sitaramaya, op.cit., pp.lxxxii-lxxxiii.

a bulletin of All India Congress Committee was seized. Few pamphlets in English *India Declares War* and *Open Rebellion* were seized.¹¹⁰

Dhamnagar Firing (Balasore)

The situation in Dhamnagar of Balasore was quite tense. On 15 August 1942 about 300 to 400 people gathered at Dhamanagar in a meeting, supposed to be addressed by Jagannath Das but the *daffadar* prevented him and his followers to reach at their destination. Orders were passed to arrest Anirudha Mohanty and Sagar Bhuyan as they incited the peasants to agitate against the Mahajans, chaukidars and the *daffadars*. On 18 August 1942 the Manager of Chandbali Rice Mill who was going to Bhadrak was stopped by revolutionaries snatched away his belongings and burnt it. On 19 August 1942, the telephone line from Chandbali and Bhadrak was cut off. In order to quell the mass nature of the movement the police sent notice to Muralidhar Jena (a student leader) and Purna Chandra Giri to arrest them. Muralidhar Jena still mobilised the peasants in that area against Mahajans' and was moving in the village of Srijang.¹¹¹ The police party started indiscriminate firing on an unarmed mob of about 4000 people, eight of them died and injured many in Dhamnagar.¹¹²

On 17 August 1942 500 hundred villagers attacked the police station at Bhandaripukhari where they injured the police staff and set fire to the police station. A number of bulletins named *Congress Bulletin* and *True News* were circulated in Bhadrak area informing the masses about the August Movement and to get their support against the British imperialism.¹¹³

At Khaira there was a mass agitation supported by the aboriginal tenants. When their leader was arrested they came out with their traditional weapons and rescued him and continued the movement. To disperse them around eight rounds of firing were opened, but no deaths were reported. An additional force was sent from Cuttack to that area to control the situation. Besides, at Soro, Bhogarai, Jaleswar, Dahamunda and other palces of Balasore district the peasants carried on the no-tax and non-payment chaukidari tax, non-cooperation and burning the effigy of the British.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰. Ibid., pp. lxxxxiii.

¹¹¹. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No.76/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

¹¹². P.N. Chopra, ed., *Quit India Movement, (British Secret Documents)*, Documents, no. 64., 1st September, 1942, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 131-5.

¹¹³. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No.31/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

¹¹⁴. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No.76/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

However, in October 1942, Balasore was hit by a cyclone, which seriously damaged the life, property and livestock of the people. North Balasore, particularly Jaleswar, Bhogarai, Baliapal and Singala were the mostly affected areas. It also caused loss of agricultural crops. As the cyclone created havoc and left large rural masses homeless and without livestock a crowd of 2000 attacked the Laxmi Narayan Rice Mill with a desire to loot it because there was a scarcity of food. This was a setback to the movement in Balasore district.¹¹⁵

The district of Sambalpur did not lag behind during the Quit India movement of 1942. There was popular unrest against the British imperialism. It was not just confined to Sambalpur, Bargarh, and Jharsuguda but spread to the rural villages as well. Pandit Lakshmi Narayan Mishra who had attended the meeting of the All India Congress Committee was arrested in Sambalpur. Protest demonstration and *hartals* were organized at Sambalpur and Jharsuguda. A large number of Congress followers were arrested in various parts of the district. The jails at Sambalpur and Bargarh became over-crowded.¹¹⁶

From 1937-39, the popular consciousness of *swaraj* was entirely radicalised amongst the tribal peasants of Koraput.¹¹⁷ In August 1942, the District Congress Committee of Koraput conducted a meeting to start the Quit India movement under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. But the government took all possible measures to stop it. This led to a popular outburst in the district. The Congress workers went into the interiors of the district and inspired the tribal-tenants to rise against the authorities. The movement started with the tribal tenants' refusal to pay one-paisa tax on head-load of articles leading to a conflicting situation against the British imperialism. The police stations at Lakshampur, Maithili and Dusmantpur were attacked. The tribal-tenants also resented the odious tax, and so, they gladly joined the no-tax campaign. The colonial police authorities, as well as the zamindari officials, wielded rigorous oppression and arrested Congress workers in batches and perpetuated various kinds of atrocities. The situation gradually worsened. Authorities started their campaign of terror and oppression with all vigour and zeal. However, the tribal-tenants did not bow down which resulted in a police firing that took away many lives.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵. Biswamoy Pati, op.cit., p.153.

¹¹⁶. Nilamani Senapati, ed., *Orissa District Gazetteers, District Sambalpur*, Cuttack, 1971, p.81.

¹¹⁷. Chandni Prasad Nanda, *Mapping the Mahatma: Literary Tracts and Rumours in Late Colonial Orissa* in Martin Brandtner and Shishir Kumar Panda (ed), *Interrogating History: Essays for Hermann Kulke*, New Delhi, 2006, p.301.

¹¹⁸. N.K. Sahu, and Sushil Chandra De, eds, *Who's Who Freedom Works in Orissa*, Koraput District, Cuttack, 1969, p.iii.

Firing at Maithili Police Station (Koraput)

The colonial police force undertook strong repressive measures to suppress the Quit India Revolution. On 21 August 1942 about 2000 aboriginal tribal-peasants, under their popular leader Lakshman Naik of Tentuligumma in Malkangiri sub-division, marched to Maithili. Lakshman Naik motivated the tribal tenants to establish *Peoples Raj*.¹¹⁹ Although, the colonial police force asked the crowd to disperse peacefully, the tribals were in a violent mood and offered a stiff resistance to the police force. The crowd raided the police station. According to a police report forest guard named G. Ramaya, was brutally assaulted by Lakshman Naik, was later died. Some of the police men were also injured. The police force fired killing five and injuring seventeen others. Lakshman Naik was injured by a gun shoot. Finally, Lakshman Naik and 53 of his associates were arrested. Subsequently, the Additional Session Judges tried them for different charges.¹²⁰ In Berhampur jail Lakshman Naik on 29 March 1943 was hanged to death. He died a martyr's death at the hands of the colonial administration and became a legend.¹²¹

Firing at Papadahandi (Koraput)

After the Maithili incident on 24 August 1942, another popular upsurge took place in Papadahandi area of Koraput district. Though, there was a marked difference between the police report and popular version, but it could be said that a large crowd consisting of tribal-tenants (6000 to 7000) under the leadership of Madhab Pradhan, Rajnath Pradhan, Balaram Naik and others marched towards Dabugaon to free their popular leader, Lakshman Naik. As soon as the crowd reached the bridge across the Papadahandi River, a colonial police force intercepted the crowd and charged the agitators, 18 tribal-tenants died on the spot and about a hundred were injured. Around 150 persons were arrested. The oppression that started with firing further intensified and took the form of a reign of terror. People suspected of participating in the August Movement were arrested in large numbers and detained in jails. The jails became too over crowded resulting in many deaths due to unhygienic conditions. In the rural areas the tribal tenants were oppressed by police officials, estate officials and even by the headmen of the villages. The rural masses were mercilessly beaten, tortured in various ways, houses were looted and in some cases the sanctity of the women folk was violated.¹²²

¹¹⁹. Nilamani Senapati, and Nabin Kumar Sahu. op.cit., p.76.

¹²⁰. N.K.Sahu, and Sushil Chandra De, op.cit.,p. iv.

¹²¹.Nihar Ranjan Patnaik, *National Movement in Koraput District in Reflections on the National Movement in Orissa*, Orissa State Achieves, Cuttack, 1997, p.222.

¹²². N.K.Sahu, and Sushil Chandra De,eds, *Who's Who Freedom Works in Orissa* , Ganjam District, Cuttack, 1969, p.v.

The Ganjam District Congress Committee made all preparation to start Quit India Movement but it was declared unlawful. In 1942 no remarkable event occurred during August 1942, except picketing. The Congress leaders of the district were arrested by 15 August 1942 and sentenced to imprisonment. However, in September 1942 the aboriginal tenants violated the existing Forest Laws and cut down the trees in Ghumsar, which were under estate authorities. In October 1942, there was some picketing of liquor shops. The telegraph wires on the main road near Aska were disrupted. In November 1942, there was a lathi-charge on the political prisoners in Berhampur Jail. Some government buildings in the Agency area were burnt.¹²³ M.S. Mohapatra and Ghanshyam Patnaik (Secretary, Ganjam District Congress Committee) were imprisoned at Berhampur jail towards the close of October 1942.¹²⁴

The Quit India Revolution had its echo in many princely states of India. In the Bombay Congress, Mahatma Gandhi appealed to the princes as well as the masses of the states participate to in the revolution. He urged the rulers of the states to confer their subjects with responsible government The Congress claimed to represent the states' people.¹²⁵ He remarked that "the princes should rise to the occasion. If they failed to do this, they will have no quarter in a Free India. The destiny of the Free India will be decided by Jawaharlal and others who have no sympathy for feudalism". He further stated that, "let the Princes also not abuse their authority. Their only chance of survival depends on the goodwill of their people. Let them come forward and join in the movement. If the answer is in negative, then I do not hesitate to say that even the Paramount Power will not be able to come to their rescue, because the power itself will not be there. Responsible Government should immediately be conferred to their subjects".¹²⁶

The appeal of Mahatma Gandhi had tremendous impact on the people of the princely states of India and in Odisha too. The Quit India Movement caused an unprecedented popular upsurge against the state authorities. In some of the princely states of Odisha like Talcher and Dhenkanal, the movement assumed such proportions that the authorities had to resort to aerial bombing and use of machine-gun.

In Talcher, Pabitra Mohan Pradhan organised the Quit India Movement in the state. He fled away from jail. The *Prajamandal* organized the peasant-militias for fighting against the state force. The movement gradually

¹²³. Ibid., p.vi.

¹²⁴. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 1st November, 1942.

¹²⁵. *Indian Annual Register*, vol.II, 1942, p.242.

¹²⁶. Ibid., p.252.

became widespread and very threatening¹²⁷ and continued till May 1943, to set up peasant-workers raj in the Talcher state. They staged demonstration in Talcher town on 9 September 1942 against bethi, forest cess and dictatorial rule in the state.¹²⁸ A violent clash took place in the state resulted the death of two poor tenants. About 50 to 60 peasant-militia turned fugitive.¹²⁹

The agitation in Dhenkanal in 1942 was so widespread, as it was in Talcher on account of the fact that almost all the leaders of the *Prajamandal* had been arrested and put behind the bars. However, Baishnab Charan Patnaik managed to escape and organised an armed squad of 17 *peasant-militias* in Dhenkanal state. With the help of this small group, he carried out surprise attack on the Madhi sub-division head quarters (now Kamakhyanager) and arrested the armed police and the Magistrate. The small band of peasant-militia took possession of the Treasury and set up chasi-mulia raj (peasant-labour raj) for a period of 15 days only. However, the police force reached the spot to suppress the agitation. Baishnab Charan Patnaik and his co-workers undertook guerrilla warfare. There were some skirmishes between his party and the colonial police force. Police firing seriously wounded Baishnab Charan Patnaik and was compelled to leave Odisha.¹³⁰ As he remained untraced, the Durbar declared a reward Rs. 1000 to arrest him.¹³¹

In the Nayagarh states, tension mounted due to failure of the ruling chieff to meet the demands of the *Prajamandal*. In order to crush the movement, the leaders of *Prajamandal*; Sridhar Das, Lakhsman Maharana and Sukra Behera were arrested on 19 August 1942. The action against these leaders infuriated the situation. The peasant-militia was determined to secure their demands by means of a peaceful satyagraha. The raja adopted repressive measures to stop the movement. On 10 October 1942, there was a clash between the armed police force and the peasants. Police opened fire on the peasant-militia, as a consequence of which one person was killed and a number of them were wounded. Many of the peasant-militias were arrested and sent to jail and many others were severely oppressed.¹³²

¹²⁷. N.K. Sahu, and Susil Chandra De, eds, *Who's Who Freedom Works in Orissa*, Dhenkanal District, Cuttack, 1967, p.xiii.

¹²⁸. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, New Delhi, 2000 rpt. p.402.

¹²⁹. History of Freedom Movement Papers, File No.57/3, 1920-1947, NAI, New Delhi.

¹³⁰. N.K. Sahu, and Susil Chandra De, op.cit., p.xviii.

¹³¹. *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 20th September, 1942.

¹³². N.K. Sahu, and Sushil Chandra De, op.cit., p.viii.

In the princely state of Nilgiri, the Quit India Movement began on 15 August 1942, and turned violent due to arrest of some leaders. Banamali Das assumed the leadership of peasant masses in the state of Nilgiri. The significant features of the movement were the violation of forest laws and burning of uniforms *etc.*

The police force arrested the Congress leaders, including Kailash Chandra Mohanty and the *Prajamandal* activists. The Raja of Nilgiri took all preventive measures to quell the popular protest. The peasants of the states had close connection with the Kisan Sang therefore they were not provided loans by the moneylenders. The repressive policy of the Raja was directed against the communist leaders. Many of them were arrested or were forced to leave the state.

It was towards the close of September 1942 that the popular movement in Nilgiri state reached a boiling point. The situation was so grim that there was an air raid in Nilgiri state upon the popular agitators. Many of them were arrested and punished severely.¹³³ The Nilgiri Durbar imposed a collective fine of Rs. 75,204 on 100 villages.¹³⁴

In the Sonapur state a protest agitation was launched for security of civil and political liberty as well as against the various taxes, which were suspended in 1939 on the instruction of Mahatma Gandhi. However, with the trepidation of revival of the mass agitation in 1942, the state authorities arrested the *Prajamandal* leaders and detained them in jail. So there were no popular leaders left to organize and direct any movement.¹³⁵

In the state of Mayurbhanj the Quit India Movement had a considerable impact on the aboriginal peasant-militia. In June 1942, there was a popular resistance against the state authority for not allowing the *Prajamandal* leaders to construct a bigger dam at Silaghati in Pragana Khunta. The *Prajamandal*, however, started the work without seeking permission, which, everyone knew, would never be granted by the authorities. The sub-divisional police officer of Kaptipada promulgated Section 144 I.P.C. in the area and arrested many *Prajamandal* workers for defiance of the order. Some of them were fined and some were sent to jail.

¹³³. P.N. Chopra, op.cit., Document No.114, 1st October, 1942, pp.198-200.

¹³⁴. P.N. Chopra, *Quit India Movemen*’,New Delhi, 1987, pp.63-4.

¹³⁵. N.K. Sahu, and Sushil Chandra De, *Who's Who Freedom Works in Orissa*, Balangir-Patna District, Cuttack, 1969, p.v.

When the Quit India Revolution started, Sarat Chandra Das, who attended the All India State Peoples' Conference at Bombay, organized many meetings in various places Mayurbhanj state. The tribal peasant-militias violated the Forest Laws, picketed the liquor shops and boycotted the state authorities.¹³⁶

The echo of August Revolution of 1942, was also heard in many other princely states of Odisha. The colonial police force at the direction of the colonial government framed charges against the leaders leading to further trouble in the state. They were charged under various sections IPC, the Railway Act and the Defence of India Act. The trial took place in the court of the Special Judge, Cuttack and is known as the Congress Conspiracy Case. Surendranath Dwivedy was found to have implicated himself in many subversive measures against the colonial Government. He was arrested on 11 October 1942 at *Alishabazar* in Cuttack. A number of anti-governmental documents were seized from him. So he was further convicted under Section 120 (3) I.P.C. and sentenced for 5 years rigorous Imprisonment. Baisnab Charan Mohanty, Biswanath Parida, Ghanashyam Parida were sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment. Many other activists were put into the bar for long time, acquitting only few.¹³⁷

Concluding Remarks- The August revolt of 1942 was watershed in India's march towards freedom. The movement was the last mass struggle waged against mighty British Raj. It exceeded all other movements against British imperialism in its nature and character. It spread to almost all the provinces from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.¹³⁸ Although, the efforts failed to accomplish the colonial dominion but it was an unprecedented and unparalleled popular upsurge against British imperialism in various parts of India¹³⁹ including Odisha. It unified the villages and towns and the country and the tribal and non-tribal peasants of Odisha against the colonial bondage.

In British Odisha the Congress leadership shaped the popular peasant movement and Mahatma Gandhi emerged as the liberator from above, though the Kisan Sangh and the Communists had a strong base. The popular peasant upsurge at the beginning of the Quit India movement was against the immediate exploiters such as the zamindars, moneylenders, *etc.* However, the later stages of the historic movement became a mass based struggle against the British imperialism.

¹³⁶. N.K. Sahu, and Susil Chandra De, eds, *Who's Who Freedom Works in Orissa: Mayurbhanj*, Cuttack, 1967, pp. 5-6.

¹³⁷. H.K. Mahatab, H. K., *History of Freedom Movement in Orissa*, vol. IV, Cuttack, 1957, pp.98-9.

¹³⁸. P.N. Chopra, *Quit India Movement*, New Delhi, 1987. pp. 90-1.

¹³⁹. M.A. K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 81-2.

On the other hand, the popular protest of the states' people in Odisha was unparalleled during the August Revolution of 1942. The *Prajamandal* movement had a close link with mainstream nationalism. On the other hand, the rulers of the princely states of Odisha had close collaboration with the British colonialism; therefore both tried to reassert their hegemony by suppressing the movement in a highhanded manner.¹⁴⁰ Although the demands of the popular masses of the states remained unattended, however, the claim for self-government continued unabated. The direct action pursued by the *Prajamandal* leaders did not prove to be a success because the colonial government did not leave any stone unturned to suppress the movement. However, the Political Department, after pursuing a policy of ruthless suppression, had asked the princely states' rulers to establish an era of beneficent administration. But on the main issue of the introduction of responsible government, it (Political Department) preferred to maintain a stoical indifference.¹⁴¹

The coalition Ministry, which remained in power during the Quit India Revolution of 1942, did not make any positive contribution towards the movement. The Coalition Ministry in Odisha only justified their continuation by adopting certain legislative measures, but it was easier said than done to advocate their position in the broader acumen of the national movement in Odisha as well as India.¹⁴²



¹⁴⁰. Biswamoy Pati, op.cit., pp.188-9.

¹⁴¹. Bijay Chandra Rath, *Prajamandal Movement in Orissa, Orissa Review*, vol. vlvi, no.1, 1989, p.136.

¹⁴². K.M. Patra, op.cit., p. 222.