



# TRIBALS REBELLION IN KANDHAMAL SPARKED FOR FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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## Abstract:

*This paper presents the rebellion of the Kandha tribe in the Kandhamal district of Odisha which fueled the freedom movement in India during the colonial period. The tribals are the man of the soil, they were used to enjoy their own social and economic policy and power to control over their land, forest, and territories. The traditional knowledge system of Kandhas is now necessary to guide the present society in maintaining social and communal harmony with nature. Freedom is the very essence of the life- philosophy, and livelihood of Kandhas. During the colonial period, the British rule and administration the function of tribal leaders changed considerably. The land titles on forests they were using from generation to generation, lost their social and administrative power over them. The British people were not in a position to see any social practice that was opposed to their laws and ethics. The Kandhas were forced to follow the laws introduced by British officials in India. The unsuitability of the British laws and regulations, the economic sufferings of the Kandhas, and the intervention in their socio-religious life by the British united them to rebel against the British. Ghumusar rebellion is an important landmark of the freedom movement in Odisha by Kandhas which was followed by other rebellions by the Kandh tribe against the powerful British administration in India. These rebellions gathered mixed results for the freedom movement in India during the British administration.*

## Keywords:

**Community, Culture, Freedom Movement, Indigenous knowledge, Rebellion, and Social governance.**

## Introduction:

The Kandhas were one of the principal aboriginal or primal communities that dwell in the hills and forest in Odisha. "They are called the Khond or the Kandha or the Kond, according to the usage of the term in vogue in different places in which they live. But whatever the terminology used, it refers to the same tribe".<sup>i</sup> They used to reside in Vijayanagar under the Madras presidency, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Boudh, Kalahandi, and Nayagah district of Odisha. The word 'Kandh', 'Khond' is derived from the Telugu language 'Kodu Vandlu' in Odiya 'Kondho Loko' and the Khonds call themselves 'Kui' which is 'Kuinga' in the plural form.<sup>ii</sup> Macpherson has suggested, is derived from the Telugu word 'Konda', a hill.<sup>iii</sup> The Geography determines their way of life and livelihood. Most of the parts of their habitation are the hills and dense forest areas. They practised the haunting of animals and collection of minor forest produce for their daily food requirements. Kandhs are unique for their braveness activities. The name district 'Kandhamal' is derived from 'Kandh' because a large number of Kandh tribal communities are living in this region from generation to generation. As per the local demand by the Kandhs the then Chief Minister of Odisha S.J. Biju Pattnaik renamed and divided the district Phulbani as Kandhamal and Boudh on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1994.

When the Britishers established their colonies in India and occupied the Indian territories by subordination of indigenous rulers, provincial kings, and Mughals by their subsidiary alliance system on the way of divide and rule policy, gradually the Britishers introduced various rules and regulations which were not suitable for Indians to follow it. The Indian society suffered a lot during the colonial period of the British administrators in India. The rigorous policy introduced by the Britishers was not favourable to the tribal people as they were governed by their own customs and belief systems. So, the tribal people rebel against the Britishers in their way to convey the message of freedom from the alien system. "For the tribal people, freedom means liberation from an alien system".<sup>iv</sup> Kandhs were the first who raised their arms against the British in the Paik rebellion of 1817. Till 1836 the present Kandhamal was ruled under the division of three kingdoms of Boudh, Ghumusar, and Sanakhemundi.

## Aims and Objectives of the study:

- To study the traditional knowledge system of Kandhs in Odisha during colonial Indian Society.
- To study the 'Meriah sacrifice' and infanticide practice by Kandhs and its suppression during colonial Indian society.
- To study the rebellion of Kandhs against the British administration towards their freedom from the external system of control.

## Colonialisation in India:

Colonization is a process of practice to acquire political and administrative control over another country or people by establishing colonies in the targeted territories. During the colonization process, it is said that **"The Sun never sets in the British Empire"**. The colonization process in India by foreign countries is divided into the period when the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British came to India to establish a commercial empire in India. *Vasco de Gama* was a Portuguese explorer from the European countries who reached Calicut (presently at Kerala state) on the south coast of India on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1498 through Cape of Good Hope (Cape town of South Africa) and then Europeans established their control over the mercantile business between India and Europe as they discovered the sea route to India. However, their monopoly business was challenged by Dutch and British corporate merchants. The British East India Company was formed in 1600 and Dutch East India Company was formed in 1602 and the French East India Company was established in 1664. The French people had made their initial attempt to establish some territorial empire in India. But they could not be sustained in India, they were vanquished by the British East India Company of the United Kingdom which successfully established the foundation of a territorial empire in India. The main purpose was commercial gain and transformed itself into a ruling territorial power over India. Through this process, the British colonial power exercised its superior military arms, and capabilities their political stability and economic prosperity in India. The Britishers had entered India and colonized almost all parts of Hindustan by capturing the local kings and provincial leaders. But it took a long time for them to enter Kandhamal through Durgaprasad Gallery, Badangi, and Saroda after a terrible fight with the Kandhs. The Kandhas were always to be free from external agency. They did not want to be come under British control as they were the man of nature and social governance by their birth. In the year 1836, the Britishers were able to enter into Kandhamal and they tried to abolish the brutal **'Meriah sacrifice' (human sacrifice, the person**

**sacrificed is called Meriah to satisfy the mother earth for yielding bumper crop)** system prevailing in this region. The Britishers established their headquarters at Russelkonda which is nowadays known as Bhanjanagar.<sup>v</sup> The Britisher Col. Johan Campbell named “Kandhistan” as the majority of Kandh tribe people are residing in this area.

The Britishers introduced various Acts between the period from 1773 to 1858 in India to establish parliamentary control over the government in India. The British policy was an attempt to devise a balance between the traditional Indian society and the British capitalist system based on the rule of law in India. In the early colonial state, the main concern was to ensure the smooth appropriation and collection of land revenue. The British Army Officer Lord Cornwallis was appointed Commander in Chief as well as governor-general of India from 1786 to 1793, he assigned the right to collect revenue, as an inheritable, transferable right of ownership of the estates, to the Zamindars during 1793. The Zamindars were expected to collect the land revenue from the land cultivators and remit a major part of it as revenue to the British East India Company’s treasury. Lord Cornwallis was popular for his clever policy **“fish fry in fish oil”**. His objective was to win the provinces by defeating the local kings in India. Lord William Bentinck, in full William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, was appointed as British governor-general of Bengal as well as India for the period from 1828-35. He stopped war against provincial leaders and introduced many social reforms in India including the introduction of the English language in education, he stopped infanticide and human sacrifice. He was convinced that the British language was the key to empowerment in India. With the support of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, he stopped the custom of **“Sati daaha”**( the wife of the deceased person is forced to die by jumping the funeral fire of her husband) in India. Lord Dalhousie was appointed as governor-general of India during the period from 1848 to 1856. He established the foundation of the modern education system in India, he introduced the passenger railway, electric telegraph, and uniform postal system in India which he called **“three great engines of social improvement”**. Lord Dalhousie rigorously implemented the British laws in India, which treated the Indian customs, traditions, and culture. Over time, a message spread over India that the British administration was trying to lose and kill the Indian culture, united the Indians to rebel against the British administration.

### **Tribal Community:**

India is the land of indigenous people as they constitute 9.7 per cent of the total population with around seven hundred species of tribal groups living in India in various states including seventy-five groups that are identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) and are endangered due to their primitiveness and low economic status in our society. In Odisha, there are sixty-two types of tribal groups living out of which thirteen groups are identified as PVTG. Tribal groups are unique due to their distinctive cultural practice and living style which are environment and nature friendly. By way of their life, they enjoy the freedom to live in the forest in a community life, worship nature, and adopt the social governance system. Kandhamal is one of the districts, headquarters at Phulbani (previous name of the district) of Odisha state, named after a majority Kandh tribe who lives in the district. The Kandhs are divided into three types, Dangaria Kandh who live on the top of hills, Kutia Kandh who live in the hole of the forest ie. below the earth and the third category Desia Kandh who live in plane areas other people who live in the district. The demography explains that the Kandh constitute 54 percent of the total population which indicates the tribal populous district of the state.

### **Indigenous Knowledge System:**

Kandh people are unique in their practice of indigenous knowledge systems. They worship nature, trees, forests, earth, and hills as their god. They live in community life in isolated places ie distance from common habitation of people. They practice organic farming with their traditional seeds which were adopted from generation to generation as a result the traditional seeds were preserved. Shifting cultivation (*Podu cultivation*) was practised by the Kandhs from the initial period. By this practice, rare species of cereals, pulses, and plants were continued to preserve the seeds for future generations. Podu cultivation needs special technical knowledge to raise the various crops in the land adopted for cultivation as a result the natural resources are managed by the local tribal people very effectively. As per tradition, they offer the first produce crops like vegetables, cereals, and pulses to Mother Earth. This is celebrated locally in a festival which is called **“Nuakhai”**. As they maintain a community life, in village meetings lot of discussions were made on value-based society which promotes the formulation of

knowledge in the society. The intellectual persons of the local area gave their valuable views on specific issues which facilitated the formulation of knowledge in their society. The myth and mythology play a crucial role in educating the people in society. The Great Indian epics like Ramayan, Mahabharat, and Bhagwat Gita were written on palm leaf chant by spiritual leaders of the locality. Prof Tritha Jani, the retired Professor of History says that the Baishnaba caste people inscribed it on the palm leaf and preserved it for future generations. There was a ***Bhagab Gaudi (Center of learning on lord Krishan)*** at Jalangapadar village under Gudari gram panchayat, 7 KM from Khajuripada Block maintained by a rich man Pitambar Sahu the ***Sundhi*** caste (who sales country liquor in the village). Sri Chaitanya brings consciousness of love among tribal people towards Lord Krishna and Radha. The spiritual verse in the shape of Radha Krishna Bhajan and Jagannath Bhajan spread the moral values in the society. The spiritual gurus from the Subarnapur area spread the message of *Radha Krishna Prema* by “**Kirtan**” in the Boud and Khondmal areas. As a result, the Tribal people stopped eating buffalo meat which was taken earlier period. Prof Jani said his father got an education up to class III and preserved some books on the ***Kui*** language written in English script at that time, but he could not keep them due to his less care in the time of his childhood. The printing press was introduced by the Britishers in 1837 to spread education and better administration in India.

### **Meriah sacrifice:**

The Phulbani ( Khondmal) was under the king of Boudh till 1855 during British rule in India. The Kandhs worship the sky and earth as their main deity. They think that God would not be pleased unless they offer human blood to earth. The Kandh tribal people used to sacrifice human beings to Mother Earth to please their mother deity and to get a bumper crop. The scheduled caste people i.e.- *Panas* and *dramas* were engaged as slaves of Kandhs. So, it was decided in the community meeting that it was the foremost duty of the scheduled caste people to supply human beings who were to be sacrificed to the deities. This puja with human sacrifice was being organized in a great spirit among tribal people in their village. The person who is sacrificed brutally before Earth God (***Dharani Penu***) is called “**Meriah**”. This festival was taking place during the full moon day during the winter season, particularly in January or February. The head hair of the victim was shorn and dedicated to the goddess. On the second day in a procession around the village, the victim was moved before being taken to the sacred grove of the village. “A Kondh child called the *Roomba* garlanded him (Russell 11<sup>th</sup> May 1837 and WM) and everyone touched his feet, or collected the turmeric paste he was anointed with, as if he was a god, or his identity was beginning to merge with Earth Goddess. The victim was offered palm wine and opium, breaking a long fast, and the night was one of dancing and excitement”.<sup>vi</sup> As learned from myth long-long ago there was a beautiful adolescent girl named ‘PHULBATI’ who belonged to the Pana community (Schedule Caste) in their locality. Both Pana and Kandh community members decided to organize a festival locally called ***Kedu/Jagdi*** where a human being is to be sacrificed in the function to satisfy the mother earth god. Panas and Damas were weaker sections in comparison to Kandhs so they were following the decision of community members dominated by Kandhs. So as per the decision, the meriah was to be sacrificed from the pana community where the beautiful girl 'PHULBATI' was sacrificed as meriah. Therefore, Kandhs decided the place where the beautiful girl 'Phulbati' was sacrificed would be renamed Phulbani. This meriah sacrifice practice was opposed by the British administration who ordered the king of Boudh to stop this type of merciless and cruel activity. To control such activities the British administration imposed strict action against such activities. The tribal people also replaced infants in place of adults for sacrifice. This was called infanticide. Gradually the infant sacrifice became controlled by the British administrators. As reported by Prof Tirtha Jani from the oral history he came to know that a person Bande Ghasi was collecting the human beings or children of a weaker section of people for sacrifice as per demand of local people. Once a day was fixed for human sacrifice at Patharkanali village in the Khajuripada area of Phulbani, but Bande Ghasi was not able to arrange an adult or child for the sacrifice he reached to the villagers on that scheduled date and explained his inefficiency and requested to reschedule another day for human sacrifice. The villagers feed him plenty of country alcohol to Bande Ghasi. When he became drunken said that you all get rice when you remove a big stone from your field. The villagers sacrificed Bande Ghasi on that day to please Mother Earth. Now the human sacrifice practice has stopped, in the case of human sacrifice the Kandh people sacrifice buffalo on the eve of ***Dusuhera Puja*** at Barala Devi temple to satisfy the goddess when their human desire is fulfilled by the goddess and for the wellbeing of the local people as told by the local people.

“In the year 1845 British administration created a special Meriah Agency under the Act XXI of 1845 for suppression of Meriah sacrifices and female infanticide throughout Khonds tracts”.<sup>vii</sup> The Kandhas thought that the Britishers were trying to pollute their own religion, tradition, and customs which had prevailed and been practised from generation to generation by their ancestors.

### Education facility :

Education is the key to bringing development to society. Education is derived from the Latin word 'Educare' which means to nourish, to cause to grow. During the colonial period, the Britishers had given importance to improving the literacy status in India as well as in Kandhamal. The main purpose of spreading education in India by Britishers was to produce educated persons who would support them in administrative services. "From the history, it is learned that Captain Mac Viccar first showed the seeds of education in Kandhamal under Balliguda Sub-division of the then undivided Ganjam District in 1851 according to the decision of Henery Pottinger, who was in charge of the Education Department under Madras Presidency in 1845. Captain Mac Viccar established three schools at different places in the Baliguda subdivision like Kurmingia, Udayagiri, and Mahasingi, but due to the prevalence of acute conservative mentality and non-cooperation from nearby inhabitants, the initial steps for education was a dismissal failure".<sup>viii</sup> Superstitions and blind beliefs play an important role in the nonacceptance of education by the Kandhas like, "reading would make their eyes drop out of their sockets". Kandhas believed that if they acquired education then their religion would be lost. Another reason for the failure of the education system in Kandhamal due to faulty education policy of the British administration, where unqualified non-tribal teachers were appointed with the Odiya language as a medium of study in the place where Kui was the mother tongue of Kandha tribals. The British administrators were using police force to bring students to the schools. Prof Tirtha Jani says Britishers were punishing those who were violating the education system, the British force had taken away the brass utensils from the house where students were not attending the schools. This practice was continued till 1851 but there was no remarkable progress was achieved. As a part of good measure, the British administrator increased the salary of teachers from Rs 15/- to Rs 25/- per month to get a good result in the education system. Despite the non-cooperation and non-conducive atmosphere at Kandhamal the Britishers once again set up four primary schools in the Ghumusar Tahasil area with a direct control British assistant agent for Meriah agency in 1855-56. Due to constant and continuous follow-up by the British government as well as the intervention of Christian Missionary agencies during 1860 some good result was noticed in the field of education. Between the period 1855 to 1880 many primary schools were set up in Kandhamal and later on the schools were upgraded to Upper Primary School status in 1885. Lord Dalhousie, the then Viceroy, and the Governor General of the British empire in India engaged Charles Wood as the Chairman of Board of Controller on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1853 to access and review the progress of education status in India and for any recommendation and imposition of new policy relating to education. Charles Wood submitted his detailed report to the British government in 1854, it is commonly known as **Wood's Despatch**. He recommended the medium of instruction and education be on mother language. In 1882 another commission popularly known as **Hunter Commission** was introduced in India for the reformation of education. In 1901 Lord Curzon organized first an all-India seminar at Simla to review the progress and difficulties of the education system in India, the proceedings were published in 1904, popularly known as Curzon's Proclamation. The major recommendation includes the design of the syllabus, appointment of qualified teachers, financial assistance to schools, and importance to the provincial government for the promotion of mass education in India. A.J.O(Alfred James Olenbetch) High School was established in Phulbani the district HQ in 1904 in the name of a British local administrator in Kandhamal. Based upon the recommendation Montague Chelmsford administrative reformation law was enacted in 1919 to hand over the responsibility to the provincial government for education. In Education Act of the Madras Presidency was constituted to provide financial assistance to schools and complete responsibility to district and local Boards. Another Commission was set up in 1929 known as the Hartog Commission to promote mass education and eradicate bottlenecks in the education system.

The missionaries have played an important role in educating Kandhs towards their socio-economic development. They had established schools at Mandasaru, Katingia, and other places to promote mass education in backward classes in the Kandhamal district.

## Rebellion of Kandhas against Britishers:

Kandhas the scheduled tribe and Pana the scheduled caste living in the Kandhamal from generation to generation from the very initial period. The Khonds were a war-like tribe.<sup>ix</sup> The Khonds were very excitable and jealous of any encroachment on their village properties. Hence, they were continually at war with one another.<sup>x</sup> The Kandhs are the most powerful community regarded as '**Raja**' (King) and **Panas** are regarded as '**Mantri**' (Minister) for their cleverness and continue to serve under Kandhs. Both communities were living a peaceful life with forest and animals in Kandhamal. They thought that Kandhamal was their land to survive in it. For the tribal people, freedom means liberation from an alien system. It also means a demand for some concessions from their rulers; and restoration of traditional rights over lands and forests (Srivastava A R N, 1986). The tribals have a strong conviction that the forest is their home where they live and maintain their livelihood with freedom of natural justice and the adoption of a social governance system. The Khonds considered themselves the proprietors of the lands and they were not mentally prepared to pay and tax to the government.<sup>xi</sup> The local landlords of nearby areas like Ghumusar, Sanakhekundi, Dharakote, and Sorada were called the provincial kings of the particular area and were trying to coordinate with Kandhas and they had won their hearts, so the Kandhas considered them kings. When their rights were denied, they violated against the external agencies including British rulers in India.

Over time, the British colonized many countries of the world including India by defeating local leaders and kings. The Britishers forcefully entered Kandhamal after a terrible fight with the Kandhas and won over the Ghumusar king. The then British Collector of Ganjam, Stevenson fixed a high tribute upon the king of Ghumusar to pay. When the king could not pay the fixed amount, the Stevenson attacked with British army over the king and invaded him in 1835 where Lt Col Hodgson had also joined in the invasion process. The rights and privileges which the king of Ghumusar had been enjoying were restricted by the British authorities. The laws and regulations introduced in Ghumusar by the British Government were also not suitable to the nature and condition of the state and the character of its people.<sup>xii</sup> The Ghumusar king Dhananjaya took shelter at G. Udayagiri in Kandhamal with his family, members rescued by Kandhas. The Kandhas extended all kinds of support and protected the king and his family. The British army under the leadership of Captain Butler and Lt. Col. John Campbell tried to attack Kandhas but they were not successful. As reported by Stevenson the then Collector of Ganjam the Madras Presidency sent George Edward Russell of the Madras Board of Revenue to take action on Ghumusar, who reached Ghumusar on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1836. The refuge king Dhananjaya while taking shelter at G. Udayagiri with his family members, became sick due to malaria fever and lost his life on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1835.

## Kandha Rebellion under Kamalalochan Dora Bisoye:

Kamalalochan was born in the Khond tribal family of village Binjigiri near Kulada of the lower Ghumusar area. Due to his leadership quality, excellent swordsman, braveness, and charming personality, he was elected as '**Dora Bisoye**' or the '**federal patriarch**' in place of his elder brother Ramsingh Bakshi. The king of Ghumusar, Dhanjaya Bhanja awarded him the title 'Birabara Patro'. The king also engaged him as the 'Maliah Bisoye' or the 'Head Agent' to represent all Maliah Khonds of his ruled province, who became Commander in Chief of the Ghumusar state for management of the army with the title "**Bahadur Bakshi**".

George Edward Russell proceeded to march with his army to G Udayagiri where Capt. John Campbell and Capt Butler had also joined in this campaign to suppress the Kandha rebellions at G Udayagiri. While approaching G. Udayagiri both British captains faced a group of tribals obstructing them to cross the ghat area. The Dora Bisoye the dewan of King Dhanjaya and Jagannath Bhanja with tribal groups made war against the British army. Finally, Edward Russell with his army reached G Udayagiri with great difficulty and established an army camp at G Udayagiri under the command of Ensign Wapshire on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1836. Suddenly a group of Kandha militants attacked the army camp and killed eight (08 Nos) British soldiers. While escorting the royal women towards the plain area, two army officers Lt. Gibbon and Lt. Bromley confronted 200 nos militant Kandhas who attacked them on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1836 and killed both army officers including 13 nos sepoy out of 38 sepoy and 4 nos Ranis also killed.

This matter was reported by Gen. Taylor to the Madras Presidency from his camp on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1836. In the leadership of Captain Campbell and Captain Wapshire, the British army attacked the revolutionary Kandhas at G Udayagiri. In the meantime, the British army under the leadership of George Edward Russel was able to arrest Shyam Bisoye of Hadagarh and Uttan Singh of Tentuligarh who were heading the Kandhas rebellion against the Britishers. Some other leaders including Brundaban Bhanja also surrendered to the British army. George Edward Russell was known for his diplomacy policy, in his happiness he convened a big gathering of Kandhas at G Udayagiri and appealed not to cooperate with the revolutionary Kandhas. But, again the militant Kandhas secretly organized themselves to fight against the Britishers. To know this news the British army headed by General Taylor took severe and barbaric action against the Kandhas. So, the angry militant Kandhas made their systematic battle against the Britishers. The British army under the leadership of Major Walter, Lt. Davidson, Captain Leget, and Captain Allan attacked the secret field camps of Kandhas and they set fire to many villages including Ambajoda.

General Taylor who was stationed at Nuagaon wanted to make them fear and ordered them to hang and kill the Kandhas who were arrested by the British army. In his command, the Kandhas and other militants like 'Pana' and "Dama' were brutally killed. Brundaban Bhanja along with his fifteen followers were hanged before public view at Nuagaon on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1836 and it was reported to Madras Presidency about the massacre of revolutionary Kandhas. Despite suppression activity by the Britishers over the Kandha militants, the revolution spread like fire to neighboring areas such as Daspalla, Nayagah, and Boudh areas. Edward Russel with his army entered into Daspalla area and arrested some Kandha leaders who opposed the British administration. The then Collector of Cuttack Wilkinson warned the local king of Nayagarh not to extend any support to the Kandhas and *Paiks* (warriors of Dasapalla). The British army tried to arrest or kill Dora Bisoye and Bhanja Mallick from the Chakapad and Sanakhemudi area, but they were not successful. The Britishers took repressive action at Sarangagada and Nuagaon area and they occupied Nuagaon on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1836. Then, around 500 Kandhas unitedly attacked the British camp at Nuagaon where many Kandhas and British army personnel were died and wounded. The British army set fire to many villages in Nuagaon localities. On 29<sup>th</sup> May 1836 by the joint effort of Captain Campbell, Captain Butler, and Captain Gills, Bangu Mallick was arrested and charged him that he had planned to kill Lt. Gibbon and Lt. Bromley, then as per the order of Captain Toad, he was hanged in the village Kurmingia village on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1836. The camp office of General Tylor was transferred from Nuagaon to Kurmingia village. During the month of November 1836, under the leadership of George Edward Russell, Captain Campbell, and General Taylor the British army personnel covering 1000 soldiers attacked Kandhas and hanged the local leaders like Goura Nayak, Dardia Nayak, and Barai Mallick before the public. When the British army forcefully occupied the local villages like Kalinga, Gunjibadi, and Kurmingia under the command of General Taylor, the Kandhas became very furious and they attacked the camp office of General Taylor at Kurminga and soldiers of George Edward Russell at Kalinga. In both incidents, many British soldiers were killed and wounded.

When the Dora Bisoye (The Dewan of King) and his warrior group of Ghumusar could not succeed in breaking the British army, they fled Ghumusar and took shelter in a dense forest at Kandhamal in 1837. With the help of conspirator Shyam Bisoye some of his group members and Nanda Bisoye, Bahubalendra of Ghumusar were arrested by the British army. Fortunately, Dora Bisoye and his nephew Chakara Bisoye escaped and they took shelter under Somanath Singh the then king of Angul. When the British army was fighting with militants at Ghumusar, Nabaghan Kanhar a Kandh tribal leader had formed a militant group at Ratabari village under Boudh-Kandhamal during 1835-37 to fight against the British army. Some of the tribal leaders who fled away from Ghumusar took shelter at Ratabari village.

When the situation was difficult and furious George Edward Russell requested Rickett the British commissioner of Cuttack to control the revolutionary militant Kandhas. On his command, the British army of Bengal proceeded towards Boudh-Kandhamal and stationed camp at Adenigarh. The army of George Edward Russell also halted at Baragochha of the Khajuripada area. In both camps, the British army was able to arrest so many kandha leaders of both places and sealed the main entrance of Boudh-Kandhamal Road. The British administrators engaged conspirator Shyam Bisoye to persuade militant groups to surrender near British authorities. By the conspiracy of Raja Somanath Sing, the king of Angul, Dora Bisoye had to surrender before the British authorities in October 1837, on return the king received rupees five thousand from the British as award money, and the British authorities prisoned him for a lifetime at Madrass jail where he died in 1846. This revolution of Kandhas could not be fully successful due to the intervention of conspirator Shyam Bisoye. The Shyam Bisoye of Hadagarh was rewarded

as ‘Chief Bisoye’ and the additional honorary title ‘Bahadur Bakshi’ by British authority for his continuous assistance to Britishers in place of Dora Bisoye.

### **Kandha Rebellion under Chakara Bisoye:**

After the death of Dora Bisoye, the then Dewan of King Ghumusar at Madrass jail in 1846, his nephew Chakara Bisoi, another courageous, daring personality of his family took the responsibility of the rebellion by uniting the young Kandha leaders to fight against the Britishers. “His father, Ram Singh Bakshi, was killed in a skirmish with the British troops in 1837”<sup>xiii</sup>. He was well known that despite suppression by Britishers, the spirit of Kandhs had not died. The movement was awakened when the Britishers wanted to stop the meriah sacrifice which was the deep-rooted custom of the Kandha people by appointing the S. C. Macpherson, the meriah agent. The punishment of Macpherson fixed to the meriah sacrifice culprits created more displeasure among Kandhs. “He posed himself as the Champion of the Meriah”<sup>xiv</sup>. So the Kandhs relied upon Chakara Bisoye as their leader to fight against the Britishers. Naturally, Chakara Bisoi wanted to take revenge for his father's death. "He took a vow with a 'tika' or a blood spot on his forehead to resume struggle against the Britishers".<sup>xv</sup> Captain Macpherson rescued 170 nos of victims relating to the Meriah sacrifice in February 1846. So, the Kandhas became furious to fight against the Britishers and organized secret council meetings and the rebellious Kandhas gathered at Macpherson’s camp office at Bisipada on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1846 with a demand to release the victims, which was fulfilled. This incident encouraged the kandhs to attack Macpherson’s camp office for a second time but Macpherson could not counter it. Macpherson had returned to his headquarters in the rainy season. It was an insult to the British army. Again, on his return with his army in November 1846, Macpherson attacked the villages and burnt many Kandha villages in the Boudh area. So, the Kandhas extended their hand of support for the Ghumusar rebellion. In connection with the meriah sacrifice, Macpherson arrested Bira Kanhar the son of Nabaghan Kanhar the Kandha leader of Boud- Kandhamal on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1846. So, the Kandhas became furious to fight against the Britishers. In this incident Chakara Bisoi led the movement, he started a rebellion at Ghumusar with the support of Kandhas and Pikas of neighbouring areas and they attacked the soldiers of Macpherson in the Kulada area of Ghumusar under the leadership of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1846. They killed the British soldiers, and businessmen and burnt many villages those who were supplied food materials, and supported Macpherson and his soldiers. At that time the centre of the Ghumusar rebellion was Khandum 'mutha' of the Chakapad area. The mutha is a council of tribal communities where the Kandha community organizes meetings for their social advancement. To suppress the rebellion the Madras Presidency of British administration replaced Captain Macpherson and appointed John Campbell as the agent in April 1847. He followed and framed many policies relating to Kandh friendly. But the Chakara Bisoye continued to resist against British. The British government was able to know that the king of Angul, Somanath Singh was supporting and encouraging Chakara Bisoi to fight against the British government. So, the British army marched towards Angul in 1848, King Somanath was removed forcefully from his throne and the Angul state brought direct control under British administration.<sup>xvi</sup> But Chakara Bisoye was not powerless, he continued to adopt guerrilla warfare and harass the British government so he became the centre of worry of the then Governor-General Lord Dalhousie. In April 1848 Lord Dalhousie wrote a letter to the President of the Board to control "Chkara Bisoye hunted from hill to valley, had now taken refuge in the wild tracts behind Boad. At present he is inaccessible, but shall catch him some day".<sup>xvii</sup> So the British Government in Bengal made a strong plan to arrest Chakara Bisoye and announced a reward of rupees three thousand to arrest him. The British Government came to know that with the support of the queen of Sonepur Chakara Bisoye was hiding at Sonepur state. Lord Dalhousie warned the queen of Sonepur and the king of Boudh not to extend support to Chakara Bisoye and John Campbell started negotiations with the queen of Sonepur to mobilize Chakara Bisoye to surrender but there was no fruitful result. Chakara Bisoye remained free from the control of the British for a few succeeding years. Chakara Bisoye was able to agitate rebellious activities with local Khonds in May 1854 at village Tulasinghee in Ghumusar Maliahs and disorder the civil activities. The Magistrate of Ganjam, Stephenson guessed that Chakara Bisoye might be behind these rebellious activities. So, he wrote a letter to E.A. Samuells the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahalas about his activities at Khondmals. He replied that Chakara Bisoi had hidden himself in Khondmals in the villages Damasingha and Kallabaree under the protection of Bira Kanhar and the crime at Tulasinghee was committed by other people but Chakara Bisoye was not involved in this incident. E. A. Samuel also reported on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1855 states that “Whereas the Khonds have ceased for some years to be the subject of Boudh Raja and the Raja himself states that he has no power in the country”. After receiving this report, the British Government in Bengal ordered for



additional charge of Khondmals lying under the control of the Boud Raja. E. A. Samuels, the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahalas took over its administration at Khondmals.

This administrative reformation compelled Chakara Bisoye to leave the Khondmals and he came to Ghumusar Malihās and supported the prince Pitambar Bhanja (Raja Pilla), whom Khonds accepted as the king of Ghumusar after the death of his father king Dhananjya Bhanja at G Udayagiri when he was taking shelter. It was a matter of regret that the young king could not protect his throne, he maintained jungle life and got the option to surrender before the British administration with a British government pension to leave in peace.<sup>xviii</sup> This decision of Prince Pitambar Bhanja shocked Chakara Bisoye and he decided to join with the king of Boudh as he had no other alternative. To know this news E. A. Samuels ordered to the king of Boudh to expel Chakara Bisoye from his territory, accordingly, the king of Boudh expelled the Chakara Bisoye from his territory against his will with great difficulty. So, Chakara Bisoye took shelter at the bank of river Tel and Madanpur area under a Zamindar in Kalahandi state and Jarasingha state in Patna state. The E. A., Samuels had requested both commissioners of Nagpur and Chotnagpur to order the zamindar of Madanpur and the king of Patna to capture Chakara Bisoye who was agitating against the British administration. The zamindar of Madanpur expressed that he was not aware of the Chakara Bisoye, but it was not believed by Britishers, because John Campbell the Meriah Agent had arrested Rendo Majhi who was leader of Khonds at Borikia in Tumudibandha for Meriah sacrifice incidence. The British army arrested Rendo Majhi and his son Palaso Majhi and they were imprisoned and directed not to be involved in Meriah's sacrifice. In its reaction, the Khonds of Borikia attacked the camp of the British army of Mac Neill at Orladhoni in Madanpur Zamindary on 10 December 1855. When the Kutia Kandha joined their hand with Borikia Kandh they attacked a second time on Mac Neill's camp but Mac Neill escaped to Russelkonda. The British administration accused Chakara Bisoye of uniting both Kandha communities to rebel against the British. An inquiry order was issued to study the rebellious activity along with the role of Zamindar Madanpur in which G.F Cockburn was appointed as inquiry officer, who succeeded E A Samuels as Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals in 1856. On this inquiry, the zamindar of Madanpur was accused as he had not reported the existence of Chakara Bisoye and rebellious activity by Kandha against Britishers at Madanpur. So, the zamindar of Madanpur was removed from his activity and kept detained under the observation of the king of Kalahandi. Then Chakara Bisoye travelled to Patna state to take shelter under Dharam Singh Mandhata the head man (Majhi) of Athagaon. The British administrator R.M. Macdoland, Assistant to the Agent to the hill tracts of Orissa sent force under the Tahasildar Dinabandhu Pattnaik to capture him. But Chakara Bisoye escaped into the forest, and only his main follower Bhitār Sardar Bhorī with another supporter were arrested. Chakara Bisoye moved to Paralakhemundi zamindary of Orissa state to fight against the British in the leadership of Dandasena Gaiba in May 1856. Chakara Bisoye organized the local tribals like Sabara and Khonds to set fire to the villages that were not supporting them in rebellious action against the British. The British army under Captain Wilson reached there to control the agitation. The leader Dandasena Gaiba was arrested and hanged by the British administration. Then Chakara Bisoye escaped and took shelter in the jungle at Khondmals. The W. King, Magistrate Ganjam wrote a letter to G.F Cockburn, the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1856 that Chakara Bisoye was hiding at Khondmals and the king of Boudh and local Kandha leaders were supporting him. So G.F. Cockburn summoned the King Boudh and Kandha leaders to get their support for the arrest of Chakara Bisoye. After October 1856 there is no information in history about Chakara Bisoye, he disappeared before the first freedom movement in India in 1857. Some historian says Chakara Bisoye might have moved to the central part of India to hide himself as an unknown person. His disappearance created a gap in rebellion against the Britishers and the movement became paused. It was a remarkable journey for a great brave tribal leader Chakara Bisoye to unite the tribals to fight against the British administration and faulty policy imposed upon them. It is observed that the way he fought against the British army inspired the Khonds is a landmark in Orissa's History. His contribution has made tremendous and remarkable extraordinary achievements in history to fuel the freedom movement in India.

### **Some other Rebellions by Khonds:**

The rebellion led by Chakara Bisoi inspired other Khonds to fight against the Britishers. During 1860 the Khonds of Boud rebelled against the unjust activity towards Khonds. But the king of Boud expressed that the Khonds were instigated by the king of Sonepur, as some Khond villages of Boud were claimed in his possession by King Sonepur. After getting a report from the king of Boud, the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals sent the British army from Cuttack to Boud to control the rebellion. The Khond leader Narayan Mallick and insurgent

Khond along with their chief followers surrender before the British after a terrible fight. In 1862 the Khonds of Khondmals took rebellion against the oppressive British Tahasildar. In 1863 a Khond rebellion was exhibited due to severe action over Khonds in connection with the infanticide case at Kirkebadi Mutha, when one father put a newborn baby over a funeral fire of her wife who had died during the delivery of the child. In another case, the parents killed their first child as it was girl baby. These incidents were reported by the Digal the village watchman of Komerabadi to the head constable of Degi on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1863. Based on the report the Deputy Head Constable with other police officials arrested the convicted persons on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1863. During their return with the culprits at Kirkebadi and Kallingabadi, the community members of Patros and various Muthas obstructed with their traditional arms and used abusive language towards British police. The Khonds said that infanticide is their traditional custom which are practiced from generation to generation, since their inception. In this incident, the British police were forced to make them free the culprits. But then the police team reported this matter to their higher authorities and the magistrate sent an inspector, Chetan Singh with twenty-five constables to the Degi to rearrest the culprits. When the police team with culprits were returning, they again faced the confrontation of Khonds at night where three Khonds died of which one was the son of the Patro community of Daringibadi. Chetan Singh sent a mediator, Dasu Mohanty to Khonds for mediation but the Khonds did not allow him for discussion. Then the Khonds attacked the out-post police station Badaduga. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1863, a group of Khonds of 11 muthas also attacked the Bramhanigaon Police station which is 32 miles from Degi, where the Paiks of Tat Raja of Gadapur supported the policemen, so the Khonds could not face the British police and they returned. In June 1865 the Patro of Subarnagiri made a contract with Captain Stuart the Superintendent of Police of Ganjam District to clear a forest area for the construction of a village road via Mahasinghi Mutha which is covered by Kutia Kandha. The Patro of Subarnagiri received financial support for the construction of the road with the support of local Patros, Khonds, and Oriyas. So, the village road clearance with the cutting of trees was started by neighbouring Khonds. But the Kutia Khonds opposed this work and murdered two Digal(Pana- SC) the village watchman on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1865 at Bollampallam a Kutia Khond village. The Muthas (the community organization of Khonds) of Subarnagiri, Mahasingi, and Kalahandi boycotted the Oriys from their territory set fire to the Oriya villages and killed the Oriyas and Panas(SC) people irrespectively men, and women, and child of the area. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1865, the Khonds of Berumolikia and Sadakia attacked the Sub-divisional Magistrate at Tumudibandh. With the support of Paiks and the police, he was able to back the Kutia Khonds. Captain Stuart, the Superintendent of Police, and Mr Goodrich, the Assistant Magistrate reached the rebellion place to control it, as a result, the rebellion was controlled by the end of December 1856. It shows that Khonds raised their voice against the alien system.

## Conclusions:

From the above presentation, it is concluded that Khonds are one of the primary groups of people who raised their voices against the British empire in Khondmal. The Kandhas were unique for their ethnic practices and Merriah's sacrifices to satisfy Mother Earth and the sky. The Khonds are more culture-oriented. The shifting cultivation was one major source of livelihood for them. The status of education was very low. They used to learn from the intellectual people from the village meetings. The spiritual *gurus* were educating them through *sankirtan* relating to the love between Radha & Krishna. They raised their voice against the British empire in Kandhamal, when the British administration imposed their brutal policy upon them by dethroning the local kings in Khondmals. The Khonds realized that the British administration was trying to destroy their religion and customs which were continued from generation to generation. The Khond leaders have sacrificed their lives to protect their own culture and values.

The Khond tribal leaders like Dora Bisoye, Chakara Bisoye, and Rindo Majhi were able to unite the Khonds to rebel against the British administration which experienced and fueled for freedom movement in India. This rebellion is a landmark in Odisha's history.

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