CHAPTER - IV

THE STATE PEOPLE’S AGITATION IN DHENKANAL

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CHAPTER - 1V

The State Peoples' Agitation in Dhenkanal

There were many strands in India's struggle for freedom. National Congress formed the main strand of the anti-imperialist struggle. The States Peoples' Movement and the Peasants Agitation in many states formed two major corollaries to the Congress-led national politics. At times, these two movements remained outside the organisational framework of the Congress and possessed the potential of being launched independently of the Congress. However, there was no Chinese wall separating these movements from the Congress and probably at no stage did they become serious alternatives to the main stream of the national movement. On the other hand, both the movements supplemented each other and enriched each other through mutual support and co-operation.

The biggest challenge to the Gandhi-led mainstream nationalist politics was probably posed by the States Peoples agitation. Because of the peculiar situation prevailing in the states, the Gandhian leadership throughout the 1930's showed exceptional hesitation in extending support to the movement in the states. Justifiably, it also received the flak for its undue reluctance.

The princely states of Orissa witnessed the worst repression and misrule than probably any other groups of states in India. The British Orissa province was surrounded by twenty-six Gadjat states of which Mayurbhanj was the biggest and Tigiria, the smallest. Many states didn't have any semblance of a civilized administration and the people in most states were subjected to medieval savagery.

and torture. Though, the people of these states had everything in common with their neighbours in the province of Orissa, a common culture, common social usages, religion, thought and mode of living, they were cut up in several political jurisdictions which brought them under different administrations.3

Because of time and resource constraints, our study on the States Peoples' Movement has been confined to only one state, i.e., Dhenkanal. It has drawn our attention primarily because of the fact that from among the Orissa group of states, the misrule of the Raja was at its worst in Dhenkanal and that it bordered the Cuttack district, which had a long history of high-intensity Congress-led agitations. The Dhenkanal State Peoples' Movement also marked the active involvement of both the Congress and non-Congress leaderships in the states.

The problem of the Indian states suddenly emerged on the political horizon of India in the year 1938. It was a struggle not only against the reactionary regimes in the states but was also an essential part of the struggle against imperialism. At the ideological level, the Indian National Congress had been undergoing a radical transformation over the years and the formation of the Congress Ministries in 1937 definitely provided a fillip to the Movement in the states. However, before going into the details of the States Peoples movements in the late 1930s, it would be proper to analyse the conditions of the people and the peculiar situation prevailing in many states, including that of Dhenkanal.

Almost till the 1930's the feudatory states were regarded as "dark areas of inaccessible tracts". People mockingly referred to the administration in Dhenkanal as dark administration (or Andhari Sasan).4 The prevailing form of Government in Dhenkanal state was autocratic and medieval.5 The ruling Chief was the supreme lord over the land and thus the entire land belonged to the Chief. The Raja was the fountain-head of all sources of power. He was the state and the

3. Ibid.
people were compelled to believe in the theory that he could do no wrong. There was no place for reason and anyone who differed from this practice trod a perilous ground. The theory of sovereignty, translated into practice, meant the unimpeachable divine right to do anything that was morally, socially and constitutionally wrong without interference from the paramount power or the consequences of its displeasure.\(^6\) The rulers of the tiny Orissan states had small incomes but they competed with the Maharajas of the bigger Indian states in leading life of glamour and luxury. They were taught to attach more value to pomp and pageantry than to the affection of the people.\(^7\) Since such extravagant and reckless princely life involved high costs, the rajas resorted to all-round exploitation and indiscriminate taxation, which in turn roused the people against them.\(^8\)

Obsessed with the notion that luxury and debauchery were the real attributes of princely life, the princes resorted to rack-renting and imposition of a variety of dues and cesses. Monopolies were introduced on the daily necessities of life. Then, there were forced exactions in the form of *bethi*, *beggar*, *rasad*, *magan* and *bhetti*. The services of night courts (*Andhari Kutchery*), Social and religions tribunals were made use of for the imposition of inequitable fines and punishments. Consequently, there was prostitution of justice and corruption in public services.\(^9\)

Compared to the British India, the states did not have any representative institutions. All the powers in the state centered around the ruler. He could pass or repeal any law and in practice violated many of them. The essential feature of the administration was the complete absence of any recognized rules


\(^{7}\) H.K. Mahatab, et al. (comp), *RECOS*, op. cit., p. 22.


and standards to which all must conform.\textsuperscript{10} Any public discussion of the administration or any protest was regarded as seditious. Since all the powers in the state like executive, Judiciary and legislative were concentrated in the hands of the ruler, often false cases were framed to stifle opposition.\textsuperscript{11}

Nor was there any security of the service in the states. The officers were appointed, promoted, degraded or dismissed as per the sweet will of the Raja.\textsuperscript{12} Bribery and corruption were rampant as most of the services were ill-paid and many in charge of these services unqualified.\textsuperscript{13} Anyone could be transferred and there were many instances of arbitrary inter-departmental transfers.\textsuperscript{14} Even more worse, was the fact that persons who had been dismissed or convicted by a provincial Government or by a neighboring state administration or the State itself, found themselves suitable for recruitment by the ruler in high positions.\textsuperscript{15}

Combined with the lack of any civil liberties was the reckless expenditure incurred by the ruler and the royal family members. There was virtually no (demarcation) budget for the palace expenditure. A considerable portion of the public money was diverted from the state expenditure head to be spent by the royal families. Many sources of income were not accounted for in the budget and swelled the private coffers of the ruler. The worst part of the privy purse was that in many states the Ruler's civil list was not clearly differentiated from the state finances and his personal expenditure was excessive.\textsuperscript{16} Commenting on

\textsuperscript{10} H.K. Mahatab, et al. (comp.), \textit{RECOS, op. cit.}, p. 80.
\textsuperscript{12} B.C. Rath, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{13} H.K. Mahatab, et al. (comp.), \textit{RECOS, op. cit.}, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{14} B.K. Dhal, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 19.
Bowstead's Report on the states, the Resident of the Eastern states remarked, "There is no doubt that in nearly all the states the ruler appropriates to the use of himself and his family far too large a percentage of the total revenues of the state". In the published budget heads there was concealment and evasion where literally any amount could be included in the head unforeseen expenditure."

An issue around which the popular agitation in the states veered was *bethi* or unpaid forced labor. A peasant used to spend over 100 days in a year in doing forced labour for the state or for the officials. He could be called up at any time of the day or night and he had to quit his own work (however urgent it might be) for fear of being beaten, fined or even imprisonment. If unable to attend to *bethi* work, the peasant had to send someone else on his behalf on payment. Personal or private works of the state officials and most of the works of the Royal family were managed through this labour. Of all the exactions, suffered by the peasants, *bethi* was the most oppressive. Ruthless suppression and exploitation reduced the peasants to a state of serfdom.

On a variety of occasions, *bethi* was demanded from the peasants in Dhenkanal. Construction of buildings and repair work, construction of school buildings and hostels, planting of gardens and hedges, clearing the boundaries of the 17 reserve forests, extinguishing forest fires, *shikar* (hunting) and *Kheda* (capturing elephants) operations, breaking stones for buildings, roads and bridges, manual work at the time of marriage in the palace and high officials of the state, spreading wooden planks or tatters across river beds to enable motor cars to go across were some of the common forms of *bethi* performed by the peasants. The *kheda* operations were carried during harvest time and this only added to the misfortune of the peasants. Their absence during the harvest left their paddy at the mercy of wild beasts and thieves. People were subject to beating and other punishments if they could not do certain kinds of work due to ignorance.

Oppression of the people crossed all limits, when the Pattayat (Second brother of the Raja) started construction of a palace known as Jatan Nagar on a hill top near the Dhenkanal town in 1932. Such was the hardship faced by the peasants that, they referred to it as "Jatana Nagar" or palace or torture. People were also compelled to work on _bethi_ for reclaiming land at Mahisapat and Kankadahada.  

A public declaration was made by the ruler of Dhenkanal abolishing _bethi_ with effect from 01.4.1936, keeping it only for certain special occasions like the annual Car festival, marriage and social ceremonies of the royal family, extinguishing forest fires and _Kheda_.  

 Bethi was substituted by the imposition of a local cess amounting to 4 annas per rupee of the annual rent. So, practically, the abolition of _bethi_ did not in any way improve the condition of the people. It was more of a gimmick played by the raja to placate the public opinion outside the state. 

_Rasad_ or forced requisition of provisions was another exaction which infuriated the people in the states. The peasants were compelled to supply provisions to the Raja, his friends, guests and all officials of the state passing through or touring the village. These provisions included rice, ghee, goats, chicken, eggs, fish, vegetables, flour, spices, oil, kerosene, sugar, milk, fruits, fuel, utensils etc. Failure to provide the Rasad implied fine or punishment. 

The State also levied _magan_ or compulsory contributions on the tenants at the rate of one fourth of their annual land rent on several ceremonial occasions. In Dhenkanal, _magan_ was levied and paid on occasions like the marriage ceremony of the ruler in 1903, ear-piercing ceremony of the two _kumars_ (sons of the ruler) and for higher studies of the king's younger brother in 1928. When the younger

19. B.K.Dhal, _op.cit._p.22.  
20. _Dhenkanal Durbar's order no.101, 9th December, 1935, File No.1.(b), 1936, District Record Room, Dhenkanal)  
22. _Ibid_  
23. H.K.Mahatab, et al. (comp.) _RECOS, op.cit._p.64.
brother of the ruler went to England for higher studies, magan was levied 'according to ability'. The total sum raised was around seven to eight thousand Rupees.

The peasants were also forced to undersell their produce at a much lower rate than the prevailing market price. Witnesses deposed before the Orissa States Enquiry Committee that the Raja's mother, and his brothers (Pattayat and Ninisaheb) bought from the peasants rice and ghee worth thousands of rupees at cheap rates. They demanded and got 100 manas when the market price was 50 or 60 manas a rupee. 24

Another form of tribute exacted from the peasants was bhetti or forced presents. On the New Years day, the peasants offered Sunia-bhetti which amounted to roughly one percent of the annual rent. Darsan Bhetti was another forced present which the peasant had to pay when the zamindar visited their village by offering him 5 rupees and a banana. Then, there was "Pariba bhetti", where vegetables were provided to the zamindars at one fourth of the original rates. 25 In theory bhetti was supposed to be voluntary, but in practice it had become compulsory. The responsibility of the collection of bhetti was entrusted to the Sarbarakar, headman of each village who presented the money to the Raja.

In addition, the forest rules went totally against the interest of the peasants. From time immemorial, people had been enjoying unrestricted rights in the forest close to the village for their domestic purposes and for the needs of their animals. But once everything became the ruler's personal property, restrictions were imposed. In Dhenkanal, every peasant was required to pay a forest cess which amounted to 5 price per rupee of rent, which increased the rent by nearly 8%. 26

Various other regulations were passed curtailing the rights of the peasants. Even when he paid a cess (nistar) the number of trees available to a cultivator were a

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few as quite a large number of species were reserved and could not be cut off. In Dhenkanal, the number of trees on the reserved category were twenty seven.  

Reservation of forests and leasing of forests were made with little consideration for the interests of the cultivators. The contractors acquired the sole right to purchase, collect or export the forest products like lac, cocoons, tendu or kendu leaves, myrobalans, hides and skins etc. In all cases of monopoly, even when prices were prescribed in the leases, it was very difficult to enforce payment of the proper price. The practice of leasing out forest products did not exist in the British provinces. Most of the agitation in the Dhenkanal state centered round the administration of the forest rules, particularly, the monopolies and the manner of dealing with forest offences. 

The system of monopolies which existed in the states with regard to certain commodities like salt, kerosene, betel leaf and other essential necessities of life added to the already existing grievances of the people against the royal family. In Dhenkanal, the principal commodities under monopoly before 1936 were salt, Kerosene and betel leaf. As these commodities were articles of daily consumption, it had a disastrous impact on the inhabitants. Any breach of monopoly regulations invited heavy fines and punishment. The system also empowered a host of petty officials to indulge in corruption. In 1937-38, Nanda Kishore Peskar, Court Reader to the Ruler of Dhenkanal, made use of his official position and prestige as a court favorite to earn a good amount of illegal money by the gross abuse of monopoly in selling of pan (betel leaves) and bidis (Country cigarettes made of kendu leaves). The average retail price of bidis was 50% higher in Dhenkanal than Cuttack, the adjacent British district, and the difference in the retail price of the betel leaves was even greater.

The life of an average peasant was hedged in with so many restrictions that he confronted a fine or physical assault at every turn. Unlawful exactions of money in shape of fines were numerous and the peasants at times were forced to sell their material assets like utensils, cattle and other goods for the payment of their fines. Default always meant a heavier penalty and physical torture.

Most of the fines were imposed by the Night Courts, outside the framework of regular administration. These Night courts were peculiar to Orissan states and they had acquired a sinister reputation. No regular procedure was followed. No attempt was made to enquire into the veracity of the fake and fabricated cases. The court fixed the fines usually at a very high figure. The accused used to protest and plead his inability to pay. Ultimately the fine was fixed at a reduced figure. By that time, physical assault and torture had reduced the peasant to a state of mind when he was prepared to escape at any cost. He had to sell his utensil, cattle or plot of land for payment of the fine. It is not surprising that these courts were called Andhari kachery or the courts of darkness by the peasants.

The most shocking feature of the Dhenkanal administration was frequent acts of rape and indecent assault on women by police officials and other officers of the state. Once a woman was arrested for whatever offence, she rarely escaped without being raped or assaulted. Rape and molestation in custody had become so frequent that the people had come to regard it as part of the normal routine. Sri Nanda Ram Singh, the sub-inspector of Motagan village had built-up a sinister reputation for ravaging the modesty of women. Interference by the state authorities in the social and the exercise of wide powers of control over them through caste panchayats and ecclesiastical courts impeded the march of progress and served as engines of oppression. In the social set-up Pradhans, Beheras, Dalbeheras, Nayaks, Garnayaks, Bisois and Dandpats exercised wide-ranging

32. H.K.Mahatab, et.al. (comp) *RECOS*, *op.cit.* p.69.
34. B.K.Dhal, *op.cit.*, p.63.
powers over the villagers. Anyone violating their regulations or defying their authority was subjected to harsh penalties.  

Traditionally, the relation between the ruler and the ruled had been a mai-baap (Both Father and Mother) kind of a relationship where there was reverence for the ruler and reciprocal attitude towards the subjects. Quality of administration depended very much on the attitude and personality of the ruler. Unfortunately in Dhenkanal, the transition from Surapratap's rule to Shankar Pratap's witnessed a sea change in terms of attitude and quality of administration. Rather than taking interest in uplifting the condition of the people in the state, Shankarpratap devised means which could possibly help him in the fulfillment of his desire and ambition. The crowd of evil-minded officers who surrounded Shankarpratap advised him with evil designs to fill his coffer and to fleece the peasantry even further.  

The introduction of certain schemes during Shankarpratap's period added to the ire of the people and embittered the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Compulsory training of drill, scout, and sankirtan was one such step. School sub-inspectors, primary school teachers, some police officials, and high school students, were compelled to take leading role in this training. The real motive behind this exercise was to bring the independent minded students under control and to divert their attention from the outside world. Leaving aside all their domestics work, people had to cover a distance of about four to five miles in order to be present at the training spot. Failure to turn up resulted in heavy fines and severe beatings.

"Trikhandi Majura" was another device to raise the status of the ruling chief during the period of Shankarpratap. It was a strange method of demanding "Rajabhakti" from the people. It consisted of three parts—One had to bow down

35. P.M.Pradhan, op.cit., p.35.
37. B.K.Dhal, op.cit., p.16.
38. Ibid, p.15.
to offer respect to the chiefs by putting his hands together, then he had to touch his head, the earth, and touch his head. This implied that his head, earth and body—everything belonged to the ruler.  

In 1937-38, the Dhenkanal king granted the monopoly of selling betel leaves and country cigarettes to the court reader Nanda Kishore Ray, the peskar. The decision proved to be the beginning of Sankarpratap's unpopularity and downfall. The issue of monopoly of paan and bidis can be said to have triggered off the peoples' movement in Dhenkanal. Of course, the persisting social and political grievances had been accumulated over the years and the pent up feelings only found a way out. Even Gandhiji, who kept aloof from the States Peoples affairs for a greater part of the 1930's remarked, “From Dhenkanal have come to me stories of fiendish cruelty exercised by the state under the shadow of the police supplied by the paramount power. I asked for evidence in support of some of the unnamable cruelties. And I have enough reasons to inspire belief.”

During 1938, the ruler had granted certain concessions and dismissed certain officials against whom serious charges had been brought since 1931. However, this was probably too little and too late and did not have any soothing effect on the people. As a matter of fact, for the misrule in the states and the subsequent uprising of the people, the responsibility lay more with the British than with the Rulers. The Rulers were merely creatures of political exigencies and requirements of the British Imperialism. The system under which the rulers had to work was more at fault.

Attempts were made by the British Government to protect the states from criticism of the nationalists. For reasons of imperial policy, the British avoided interfering with the administration of the Rulers, leaving them with enough scope for misrule and high-handedness. They desired in the princes the qualities of

being progressive, but not too progressive, taking part in the administration but not too big a part. 43

Thus, by not forcing political reforms on the states in the 1920's and 1930's, the Political Department virtually condemned the rulers to extinction. The pitiable condition of the Rulers of small states and the inevitable victory of the people was aptly analysed by Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo of Mayurbhanj in his letter to Maharaja of Durgapur in 1946. He wrote, "...We are nothing but anachronisms and feudalistic relics to the vast majority of our political minded countrymen."44 Again, in the same year on 19th September 1946, he wrote to the Nawab of Bhopal, "...during the long years of British suzerainty over Indian states, the Rulers have come to depend more and more upon the support of the paramount power and less and less on the support of their people. Indeed, one result of the British policy towards the Indian States, whether deliberately intended or not, has been to undermine the authority of the rulers over their people."45

Of course, this does not imply that prior to the 1938, uprising there weren't any protests against princely oppression. The continuance of bethi, magan, rasad and the increase of taxes were some of the issues against which there was a rising in Dhenkanal in 1920-21, under the leadership of Maheswar Subahu Singh, Purna Chandra Mohapatra and Benudhar Panda. 46 In many of the Orissa states there were protests against mal-administration and oppression. But they were all ruthlessly putdown with the help of the central Government. One reason of failure was that all these movements were not properly organised. 47 On the whole, there was no concerted action taken to undo the wrongs.

44. H.K. Mahatab, Beginning of the End, Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1974, pp. 1-2.
45. Ibid, p. 2.
46. P.M. Pradhan, op. cit. p. 51.
47. Ibid, p. 52.
By the 1920's, there was a growing consciousness among the students and the young mass in the states. In 1920-21, some students of Dhenkanal High school were greatly influenced by the Non-Co-operation Movement. Babaji Ramdas, Narayan Birabara Samanta, Sankara Pattanayak of Athagrah, Madhusudan Pattanaik of Tigiria, Sumanta Pattanaik of Baramba, Dinabandhu Acharya, Chakradhara Acharya, Bhagirathi Mishra took active part in the program of non-cooperation. In Dhenkanal High School, the lead was provided by Radha Mohan Pattanaik, Alekh Prasad Das, Krutibas Pradhan, Duryodhan Pati and Gobind Chandra Mohapatra. 48 There was a temporary set back when Gandhi called a halt after the Chauri chaura incident. But secret meetings were organised in the garb of 'Yagna' and other religious Samkirtans/Prabachans. Under the leadership of Maheswar Subahu Singh, huge 'yagnas' were held in the villages like Kualo, Manikmara and Parajang. Laxmidhar Sahoo, Harmohan Pattanaik, Baisnab Pattanaik and other young men tried to convene meeting in the town area. The first meeting was held under the Presidency of Bhubaneswar Mishra, where the activities of the Raja were bitterly criticized. 49

But these again, as mentioned earlier, were sporadic outbursts and there were no coordinated effort to sustain the movement. The need for an organisation was felt by the observers who visualised the fact that an organised movement conducted from outside under the auspices of an organisation would strengthen the cause of the people inside the states. 50

The political leaders of India, too were not unaware of the condition of the people in the states and were also not unsympathetic towards them. The actual initiative to organise the States Peoples' Movement was made in 1927, when the

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49. S., Mishra, op.cit., p.370
Indian States Peoples’ Conference was convened at Bombay.\textsuperscript{51} Through its activities the States peoples conference created new friends and contacts in the political circles, but its influence till the late 1930’s was confined only to the big states.

The official Congress policy towards the states’ people’s problems was one of non-interference. Gandhiji\textsuperscript{2} advocated non-intervention as a virtue of necessity.\textsuperscript{52} In defence of his policy, Gandhiji held the opinion that, at a time when the people of British India were fighting for their own freedom, it would betray impotence on their part to interfere with the affairs in the Indian states.\textsuperscript{53} In other words, he wanted the states people to learn to rely on themselves for all internal reforms. He wanted the states people to carry on ceaseless work in the States, but not in the name of the Congress. In the nature of things, he argued, the Congress could not step into each and every Indian state and protect those who agitated there.\textsuperscript{54} The policy of non-intervention was a wise recognition of the limited capacity of the Congress for doing good. The Congress could give only moral support.

On the other hand, non-interference did not mean absence of effort on the part of the Congressmen. Individual Congressmen could help the States people in their private capacity. He, therefore, hoped that the states people would realise that if the Congress did not offer any direct help, it was not for any want of ability and opportunity,\textsuperscript{55} It was probably his firm conviction that attempts by the Congress in the affairs of the states could only damage the cause of the people in the states.

\textsuperscript{51} File No.17/1947, AICC Papers, NMML, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{52} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{The Indian States Problem}, Ahmedabad, 1941, p.47.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid}, p.8.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid}, p.72.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid}, p.47.
However, with the growing radicalism inside the Congress in the 1930's, the left wing leaders severely criticized the congress policy towards the states. Urging a pro-active involvement in the states, Nehru voiced his opposition to Gandhi's views and suggested a change of attitude of the Congress. 56 Despite all opposition, the congress never officially reversed the Gandhian policy, although in practice; Congress workers in their private capacity rendered active assistance to the prajamandals in various states in leading the movement.

The years following the introduction of the Government of India Act, 1935, were marked by widespread mass movements in a number of states. The intensity with which the movement was carried on in the states for the redress of the grievances of the people, necessiated a review of the Congress policy. The All India States Peoples Conference (AISPC) also gathered added strength with the formation of a number of prajamandals in different princely states throughout India. The Civil Disobedience Movement had brought the political activists in the states into intimate contact with the Congress leaders and equipped them with the insight and necessary understanding for carrying out a massive mass mobilisation in the states. The Karachi session of the AISPC, under the Presidentship of Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya in July 1936 declared its aim as the "attainment for the people of the States fully and democratic responsible government by all peaceful and legitimate means. 57 Dr. Pattabhi, however, also advocated states peoples cause within the Congress at the risk of popularity with his own colleagues. 58 At the Haripura session of the AICC in February, 1938, the Congress declared complete independence as its objective for the whole of India inclusive of the states. The Resolution maintained that the only kind of federation acceptable to the Congress was one in which the states would participate as free units enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom, as the rest of India. 59


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change in the policy of the Congress. But side by side, it decided to call off all local Congress Committees in the states, thereby again disappointing the left wingers in the Congress who wanted the Congress to lead the struggles in the states.

The demand for a revolutionary policy with regard to the states grew once popular movements emerged in a number of states all over India. Subhash Bose, the Congress President spoke of the congress pursuing a more active policy and of taking a deeper interest in the affairs of the states. The new mass upsurge in the states also prompted Gandhiji to review his stand towards the states. In an interview with a special correspondent of Times of India, Gandhiji said, "The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion a perfect piece of statesmanship, when the people of states were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all round awakening among the people of the states and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights. If once this is recognized, the struggle for liberty, whenever it takes place, is the struggle for all India; whenever the Congress thinks it can usefully intervene, it must intervene."

With an attitudinal change in Gandhiji and a backdrop of a mass upsurge in the states, the INC held its 52nd session at Tripuri (Jubbalpur) in March, 1939. Emphasizing the need of a revision of the Congress attitude towards the states, Subhas Bose in his presidential address suggested guiding of popular movements in the states for civil liberty and responsible government. In the Resolution it was maintained that "...the great awakening that is taking place among the people of states may lead to a relaxation or to a complete removal of

the restraint which the Congress has imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever-increasing identification of the Congress with the States people."\(^{62}\)

In the meantime, the AISPC held its sixth session at Ludhiana under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru from 15th to 17th February 1939. It resolved that "In view of the development of the struggle and the Congress policy with regard to it, the time has come when the struggle should be co-ordinated with the wider struggle for Indian independence of which it is an integral part. Such an integrated all India struggle should necessarily be carried on under the guidance of the Congress and this conference pledges its loyal cooperation in it."\(^{63}\) Thus, the Tripuri resolution bridged the gulf between the Indian National Congress and the AISPC and led to a gradual identification of the AISPC with the Congress. The freedom struggle in the British India had its positive repercussions on the people in the princely states and the movement in the princely states can not be judged as isolated incidents away from the mainstream nationalist movement. As mentioned earlier, the impact of the Non-Cooperation movement was felt in Dhenkanal and the Dhenkanal High School with its reputed teachers and students played a significant role in awakening the people in Dhenkanal. With the starting of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway service from Cuttack to Talcher in January 1927, rail and road link increased the contact between Dhenkanal and Cuttack and led to an easy interaction between the people of both sides.

The students and teachers who played prominent part in organising the people against the state administration were compelled to leave the state and

\(^{62}\) _The Indian Annual Register_, Vol.1, Calcutta, 1939, pp.336-337.

\(^{63}\) File No. 187, AISPC Papers.
many of them moved to Cuttack, the nerve-centre of the nationalist politics in Orissa. By publishing articles and stories about the oppression in Dhenkanal in the newspapers and periodicals, young students like Harmohan Pattanaik and Laxmidhar Sahoo built up a strong organisation among the students in 1933-34. Students, leaders and eminent persons of Cuttack gradually took a keen interest in the Gadjat affairs. The protest against the oppression in Dhenkanal became a symbolic protest against mal-administration in the princely states of Orissa.

The Socialists and the Left leaders in the congress like Nabakrusna Choudhury, Malati Devi, Rabi Ghose, Bhagabati Panigrahi, Pranakrishna Padhiary, Gokul Chandra Ray Chudamani, Ananta Pattanaik, Gouranga chandra Das, Surendra Nath Dwibedi took active interest in the Dhenkanal affairs and in the weekly paper krushak gave a wide coverage to the plight of the people in Dhenkanal.

While the Enquiry committee of the states people's organisation was moving from place to place in British Orissa collecting evidence from the states people, the idea of a peoples organisation "Prajamandal" originated. A provisional Prajamandal was formed and its functionaries chosen. A working committee comprising of 13 members was elected with Artatrona patra of Manikmara village as president, Krutibas Subudhi of chandpur and Shyam Sundar Sahu of Kuanlo, two vice-presidents, Purna Chandra Mohapatra of Amba palas, secretary, Trilochan Pradhan of Jhilli, treasurer and eight other members. Hundreds of large mass meetings were held throughout the length and breadth of the state.

During August 1938, after much deliberation, the minimum demands of the Dhenkanal Prajamandal were formulated. The foremost demands were granting of civil liberties, establishment of rule of law, a responsible government.

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of elected representatives of people, land rights; abolition of magan and bethi, amendment of forest laws, abolition of monopoly in essential commodities etc.\textsuperscript{67} Establishment of the previous rights of the people, payment of cess and punishment of corrupt official were also some of the demands.

The state administration was initially taken aback by the sudden rise of the political consciousness and mass awakening among the people. In order to counter the mass uprising, meetings were held both in the palace and outside. Some facilities were granted to the people through the state Gazette of 21 July 1938. The Gazette among other things promised formation of an Enquiry committee to look into the grievances against the forest department but this could hardly generate any enthusiasm among the people as they had become skeptical about the Raja's promises.\textsuperscript{68} Again on 13th August 1938, an extra-ordinary State Gazette was published announcing some paltry concessions.\textsuperscript{69} Two more extra-ordinary state gazettes were brought out on 24th and 29th August 1938 promising some more relaxations.\textsuperscript{70} But neither the granting of minor concessions nor the threats of renewed repression could dissuade the people from rallying round the Prajamandal.

In the meantime a meeting of the Prajamandal was held on 10.08.1938. The Prajamandal was reorganised at Kuanlo in Parjang.\textsuperscript{71} Harmohan Pattanaik was made the president of the Prajamandal, Laxmidhar Sahoo, the secretary, and Gatikrushna Bhanja and Baisnab Pattanaik, the two organizing secretaries.

\textsuperscript{67} B.C.Rath, \textit{op.cit.} pp.155-156.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, p.156.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Extra-ordinary Gazette Notification, Dhenkanal State,} 13/8/1938.
\textsuperscript{71} Krusak, 13/8/1938.
Srikanta Rout was chosen as the captain of the volunteer corps.\textsuperscript{72}

Organised by the Cuttack District Kisan Sangh, a kisan rally was held on 1st September 1938 at Jenapur in Cuttack. Many of the prominent Congress leaders like Nabakrushna Choudhury, Malati Devi, Pranakrushna Padhiary, Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, Sarangadhar Das and Surendranath Dwibedi attended the rally. It was a huge demonstration of about fifteen thousand people and the second day was specially devoted to Dhenkanal affairs.\textsuperscript{73} The kisan-Day became a demonstration of solidarity for Dhenkanal Prajamandal and the representatives from the state accepted the Dhenkanal Prajamandal as their mouthpiece. Everyone expressed willingness to face all sufferings and privations to carry on the struggle to the end by peaceful and non-violent means.\textsuperscript{74}

When the prajamandal formulated its demands and circulated them among the people during meetings, the administration was embarrassed. Obviously it could not remain a silent spectator to all these developments. Outwardly, the Raja seemed willing to negotiate but he was just playing for time to prepare for a massive crackdown. When the Durbar felt that it was strong enough or sufficiently equipped to crush the movement of the people, the uncalled for repression was unleashed on the people.

On 6th September 1938 was the sunia (oriya New Years’ Day) and the people almost completely stopped the Sunia bheti.\textsuperscript{75} On 11th September 1938, a meeting between the ruler and the Prajamandal was scheduled to be held in connection with certain demands. When the preparation was going on for the discussion of the demands, the administration suddenly took the offensive. The

\textsuperscript{72} B.C.Rath, “Prajamandala Movement in Orissa” in Orissa review, Vol.XLVI, No.1, August, 1989, p.122. Also, B.C.Rath, Unrest In the Princely States, op.cit.pp.157-158.

\textsuperscript{73} B.C.Panigrahi, ‘Dhenkanal Movement’ in the Hindustan Standard, Congress Special, Calcutta, 10/3/1939, p.10.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid,p.5

\textsuperscript{75} Amrit Bazar Patrika,27/9/1938.
same evening several armed police raided the Prajamandal office and arrested the office bearers and other prominent members of the organisation.\textsuperscript{76}

The news of these arrests and provocations spread like wild fire all over the state and the people from all parts began to pour into Dhenkanal town in the early morning of 12th September 1938.\textsuperscript{77} There was a vast demonstration of thousands of people to protest against the unwarranted arrest and to secure the release of the arrested leaders. The entire atmosphere was surcharged with tension. The police had to open the fire thrice. Over a hundred people were injured and some very seriously.\textsuperscript{78}

The arrested leaders were released at midnight on 12 September because the authorities were afraid that the crowd would break the jail and release their leaders forcefully.\textsuperscript{79} In spite of the use of the brute force by the administrator, the crowd could not be dispensed and by evening of 12 September it had increased to 25,000.\textsuperscript{80}

Nabakrusna Choudhury, Sarangadhar Das and several other leaders reached Dhenkanal in the morning of 13 September 1938. They addressed a huge gathering and congratulated the people for the strength they had displayed. The leaders advised the people to go back to their villages and to wait for instruction from the Prajamandal.\textsuperscript{81}

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After the incidents of 11th and 12th September, there could be no looking back for the Prajamandal. The state administration was visibly shaken and
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\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 14/9/1938

\textsuperscript{77} S. C. De, \textit{Diary of Political Events in Orissa}, WWCC, Cuttack, 1964, p.20.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 14/9/1938. Harmohan Pattanaik, Laxmidhar Sahoo, Maheswar Subahu Singh and twelve members were arrested.

\textsuperscript{79} File No.G-35(pr. 1)/1938, \textit{AICC Papers}.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
demoralised. But even when the state was willing to enter into a dialogue with the Prajamandal, it was also planning for a great offensive. Negotiations were resumed on 16 and 17 September 1938.

In the meantime, The political agent of the Orissa States arrived at Dhenkanal on 15th September 1938. Between 14 and 20 September about 200 armed police in different batches reached Dhenkanal from Boud, Sareikella, Kalahandi, Patna, Keonjhar, Bastar, Khairagarh, Jashpur and other states in the Eastern States Agency. To make the matters worse, a contingent of about 200 European soldiers from the K.O.S.B (Kings Own Scottish Borders) Regiment arrived at Dhenkanal at 4.30 AM on 20th September 1938. The people of Dhenkanal town were panic-stricken at the sight of the European troops. Many of the agitators escaped to Cuttack to avoid repressions. The socialists and the youth league lent support to the agitators who were thus emboldened to carry on the agitation. A virtual reign of terror was unleashed in Dhenkanal and the ruler was supported at every step by the Political Department. The Prajamandal was declared unlawful on 22 September 1938 and large scale arrests were made. Armed forces in batches were sent to different parts of the state. The Prajamandal office at Dhenkanal town was destroyed and Harmohan Pattanaik, the president of Dhenkanal State Prajamandal was arrested at Cuttack.

In a bid to crack down the activities and sympathisers of the Prajamandal village after village were raided by the police and the soldiers along with the officers and some hooligans. The villages like Garh Parjang, Kuanlo,
Kharagprasad, Mangalpur and Bhuban were the worst affected. Houses were broken and cash and ornaments looted. The people were mercilessly beaten and tortured until they asked for pardon and took the loyalty tickets.  

On 20th September 1938, Parjang, the stronghold of the Prajamandal was raided. British tommies surrounded the village and armed police and goondas entered inside. Subahu Singh's house was razed to the ground by elephants. The young men of the village were ordered to fall in and lie flat on their stomachs. The booted police trampled them, kicked them as and where they liked till they all became senseless. Rape, arson, looting, violence of every kind and in every form was committed. The Raja of Dhenkanal and Talcher along with the political Agent were present in the area during these operations. After the Parjang outrage people became afraid of the police assault on their women and the idea of hijrat took form. It began from Bhuban village. Following the raids carried on by the state police with the assistance of the Prajamandal had issued instructions to leave the state in protest. About a lakh people, men, women and children migrated from the state as per the advice of the Prajamandal. They took shelter in number of camps in the neighbouring British Orissa. They not only settled in make shift camps in the adjoining territories in Jenapur, Chausathipara, Balarampur, Dalijora, Madhupur, Kalkala, Darpan, Banki and Angul but they were also accommodated in every home in those localities. The leading members of the Prajamandal were in charge of the different camps. Maheswar Subahu Singh, Purnachandra Mohapatra, Srikant Rout, Netrananda Nayak, Debraj Verma and Divakar Sahoo were in charge of the Budapank Camp Krutibas Pradhan,  

87. The State Durbar issued a kind of ticket and asked every subject to sign in order to show loyalty to the ruler. In this ticket, he pleaded innocence and admitted that he was compelled to join the movement against the ruler for fear of beating and social boycott.  
90. Ranabheri(Oriya leaflet issued by the Dhenkanal Prajamandal), No.2.dt.23/9/1938.
Sridhar Sahoo, Mahant Pradhan, Baisnab Pattanaik, Narottam Das, Dasarathi Satapathy, Dhaneswar Sahu, Baidhar Panda and Udaynath Ojha were in charge of kolando camp and Braja kishore Dhal, Brajabihari Pattanaik and Rajkishore Rout were in charge of the camps in Gholpur.91

Most of the refugees were determined not to return to the state unless the wrongs heaped on them were redressed. Hardship and torture of the people in Bhuban and Parjang and especially the dishonouring of women had unnerved the people and the Prajamandal decided to offer Satyagraha to protest against the ruler and his terror tactics. Thus compared to the exodus of people from the Talcher state, the hijrat of the people from Dhenkal state was short-lived. The exodus was for about a week and it was called off on 1 October 1938. 92

The short-lived hijrat had advantage of its own. The students and Congress workers in large numbers came in contact with the states people and a sense of solidarity grew. Many mass meetings were held everyday and they became means of mass political education for the agitators. As per the instruction of prajamandal, the people returned to their villages.

The prajamandal had chalked out a new plan of action. It resolved to

1. start Non-co-operation with the government by launching a massive social boycott of the state officials and supporters and to defy the government order at the pain of being assaulted or oppressed.
2. raise volunteer corps in every village for carrying on satyagraha.
3. strengthen the organisation by holding meetings and processions in defiance of the prohibitory orders and
4. to enroll all citizens as members of the prajamandal and to seek subscription according to one's capacity for meeting the expenses of prajamandal. 93

91. B.K.Dhal, op.cit.p.90.
93. B.K.Dhal.op.cit.p.120.
To intensify the satyagraha movement, the prajamandal took a number of measures, after the firing incident at Bhuban and Nilakanthapur on 10 October 1938. Prajamandal decided to open its branches in every village and a Director was appointed by the prajamandal to issue directions with regard to carrying out of satyagraha at different places. In case of his arrest, the director was supposed to nominate his successor. In every biso, a volunteer camp comprising of a minimum of 500 volunteers was to be established. The volunteers were required to organise meetings and processions and were to keep track of the police parties. The volunteers were also entrusted with the task of enforcing social boycott.

For about 20 days, batches consisting of 10 to 20 volunteers marched into Dhenkanal town, but were very cruelly dealt with. Many of them were arrested and after a while it was discontinued as it became difficult getting through the police cordons.

In the meantime, there had been two major cases of police firing at places which were considered by the administration as trouble spots. The police officials were allegedly threatened and assaulted in Bhuban and the state was hell bent on striking down the peoples movement through terror. On 10th October 1938, at midnight-Bhuban village was raided by forty armed police and some officers who went there to arrest some of the trouble-makers. Men, women and children were assaulted indiscriminately and eight people were arrested. As a crowd (villagers) gathered near the police station and pleaded to the authorities for their release, with out any warning, the police resorted to firing. One died on the spot, another at Jenapur on his way to cuttack hospital and six wounded from gun-shots were admitted at the cuttack hospital.

94. Ranabheri, No. 6. undated.
95. B.C. Rath, op. cit. p. 182.
96. Ibid.
97. File No. G-35 (Prl-1)/1938, AICC Papers. The two who died in the Bhuban firing were Raghu Naik and Guri Naik.
The firing at Nilakanthapur was a sequel to the Bhuban incident. The ferry ghat on river Brahmani was at Nilakanthapur and while coming with the arrested persons from Bhuban, the police party was refused by the villagers to use their boats for ferrying across the arrested persons. The state boats had been sunk to prevent the police from taking the arrested persons. The police had to snatch the ropes of the private boats forcibly and in the process fire was opened. Four died on the spot and two of the eight seriously wounded persons died at the Cuttack hospital. Among the four who died on the spot, there was a 12 year old boy, Baji Rout. His death shocked the people and he became a symbol of sacrifice for the people's cause.  

After the incident, the police party crossed the river by rowing the boat themselves. Repressive measures were also unleashed on the people of Hindol Road (17th October 1938) Tumusingha and Sirimula (21st October 1938) Kutumunda (2nd November 1938) and Kandar singha (11th November 1938). Every where the plea that was given for resorting to firing was that the policemen went in search of the ring-leaders or trouble-makers, they were attacked by the mob and the police party had to open fire in self-defence. Severe beatings, torture and destruction of property were common methods applied to enforce loyalty. While the state administration claimed that the police parties fired

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98. B.K.Dhal, *op.cit.* p.93. The persons who died on the spot were Baji Rout, Hrushi Pradhan, Nata, Raghu, Guri and Laxman. Also P.C.Nayak, *op.cit.* p.91. The name of Baji Rout has been shrouded in controversy. While he was projected by many as a martyr during the agitation and later became a household name in Orissa through Sachi Routray’s poem, serious research studies have placed it beyond doubt that he was just another young boy who had nothing to do with the people's agitation. It was pure coincidence that Baji Rout was present there at that particular point of time and succumbed to the chance gun-shot wound. Bhabani Shankar Mishra’s *interview of Ananda Behera, 1980.*

in self-defence, the pra jamandal and the Orissa StateS Peoples Conference maintained that the people remained unarmed and non-violent and the police resorted to firing without any provocation. Both sound highly unlikely and excesses were definitely committed on either side.100

Given the situation that there was a total denial of any civil rights in the state, it would be foolish to expect that the Gandhian creed of non-violence could be adhered to completely by the agitators in the state. There is no denying the fact that the movement was carried on in the name of Gandhi and strategically the leadership in Dhenkanal could not de-link the movement from such a name, but it was more a matter of convenience than of conviction. Over and above the Gandhian creed, two different levels of leadership operated in the movement, the regional and the local. The leadership was move inclined towards the Congress Socialists, the Kisan sabha and the Leftists. To get their demands fulfilled, the leaders believed in a struggle, but not necessarily non-violent. 101

With the formation of the volunteer corps, the young activists did not seem satisfied with the Gandhian type of non-violent social boycott. A considerable section of the corps was even ready to use force for achieving their objective. 102

The leadership of the movement was not prepared to drop Gandhi's name from the struggle, for the fear of being alienated, but nor were they willing to accept Gandhi and the rightists in the Congress, who invariably preferred to compromise with the authorities. That is why H.K.Mahatab and his supporters in Orissa Congress did not get much leverage in the Dhenkanal state peoples

100. B.C.Rath,op. cit.p.186.
101. The songs sung by the volunteers essentially veered around such themes.
102. Baisnab Pattanaik during the course of interview revealed that they were prepared to wage a well-devised guerilla warfare. Interview with Baisnab Charan Pattanaik,dt.12/8/1991.
Although, the official policy of the movement was to adhere to strict non-violence, in reality there were quite a few instances when force was used to harass the government and threats were hurled to intimidate the officers. In Bhuban, the police inspector, Tehshildar and forest officials were served with ultimatum to leave the place and threatened with dire consequences. There were also instances where the police parties in the interior were resisted by baton charges and pelting of stones. To make the boycott more effective, the pro-Administration elements were harassed and tortured.

From the beginning of the movement, the Durbar pursued a dual policy. On the one hand severe repressive measures were undertaken to crush the movement and on the other, attempts were made to divide the ranks of the people through grant of concessions. 31st October was the birthday of the ruler and certain concessions were announced. The local cess was reduced from Rs. 0.2.6. to Rs. 0.2.0. and monopoly of betel leaves was totally abolished. Free and unrestricted right of shooting of the wild animals damaging the crops was allowed. Agricultural tools such as ploughs were to be given free, some prisoners were also released from the jail on the occasion. However, the concessions also carried the threat that they would be liable to be cancelled if the people did not give up agitation within a month. And there was no mention of responsible government nor of the prajamandal. The ruler's aim was obviously to wean away the moderate elements through these minor concessions.

The Durbar again pursued a policy of repression as the people did not accept the offer of concessions. The ruler tried to prevent the people from joining the movement through terror tactics. The military and the armed police were formed into groups of fifty and sixty and operated from several base camps like Murhi, Parjang and Nijgarh etc.

104. B.C. Rath, *op. cit.* p. 188.
In all, 17 persons were killed and many more injured. There were no figures available for the injured during the numerous village raids. Total arrests were not less than a thousand and the arrested were beaten and forced to sign loyalty bonds. Handsome rewards were declared for providing information about the prajamandal activists like Maheswar Subahusingh, Srikant Rout, Bausnab Charam Pattnaik and twenty seven others who had absconded. The dictator of the prajamandal, Purna Chandra Mohapatra, was arrested in Bhuban on 23rd November 1938. Those who worked from outside the state, extradition warrants were issued against them on false charges, approved by the political Agent. All contacts with the outside world was cut off.

The Prajamandal was unprepared for such a massive crackdown. For the time being central direction broke down as new methods of countering the state terror could not be devised. Dhenkanal was under virtual martial law and terror was used to demoralise the people.

In such a situation, some of the leaders of Orissa decided to go to Dhenkanal with a view to offering Satyagraha in support of the states peoples agitation for civil liberties and for responsible government. In a statement they announced, "In accordance with the Haripura Congress Resolution, we as individual Congress men have been helping the Dhenkanal movement to the best of our abilities, but in the present unusual circumstances we find it impossible to render any further effective service from outside; we have, therefore, decided to adopt the only course left open to us, and that is to join the people in their struggle inside the state."
Nabakrusna Choudhury went to Allahbad to consult Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Kripalani and others on the Dhenkanal problem. After his return, he led the first batch of satyagrahis to Dhenkanal on 3rd December 1938. They were arrested and taken to Motanga police station. Subsequently, prominent leaders like Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, Gokul Chandra Roychudamani, Gouranga Charam Das, Pt. Laxmi Narayan Mishra etc. led a number of batches of satyagrahis from Bhuban and Parjang side. Several batches of volunteers also came from different parts of Orissa to offer satyagraha. Satyagrahis belonging to the Dhenkanal state were detained, while others from outside were beaten and released.

The Orissa state PCC did not take up a clear-cut stand in support of the people's agitation, on the grounds of outside interference, which was prohibited by the Haripura resolution. But several Congress Committees (DCCs) had sent volunteers and cash and organised meetings in support of the Dhenkanal movement.

Just at a time when the signs of a favourable impression were becoming visible Gandhi dissuaded the Satyagrahis from outside from offering satyagraha in Dhenkanal. Mahatab, who had gone to Wardha to attend the Congress Working Committee meeting had discussed the Dhenkanal problem with Gandhiji and had brought the message from him that the Congress workers could offer indirect assistance to the state subjects, but they were not to participate in the satyagraha. Gandhiji's advice created a great deal of consternation in the Orissa congress circles but there was no chance of defying Gandhi's directive.

13. The correspondence between Nabakrusna Choudhury and P.C.Joshi on being intercepted revealed that towards the second half of December 1938, both were planning to disregard Gandhi's advice against satyagraha. D.O.from Governor of Orissa to the Governor General, D.O.no.24, G-O,8/1/1939, Acc. No.2216, *Linlithgow Collection* (microfilm), NAI, New Delhi.
A new plan of action had to be devised. The struggle had to be carried on by the workers of Dhenkanal and training camps were to be opened in British Orissa to impart them the necessary training in principles and rules of satyagraha.

Just around that time, the Political Agent of Orissa, R.L. Bazalgatte was killed by a mob on 5th January 1939 at Ranpur. The ghastly murder of the Political Agent strengthened the hands of the rulers and the Dhenkanal administration also took a very tough posture towards the activists of the movement.

The agitation of the people brought pressure on the Political Agent, Orissa states to consider the grievances, which were to be brought to his notice. Gandhiji had advised the people to withhold satyagraha and to start negotiations with the rulers and the political Department in connection with the demands. The rulers of the states, on the other hand also felt the impact of the agitation and started adopting a conciliatory approach. The Ruler of Dhenkanal granted some more concessions with regard to forest matters on 3rd June 1939.114 Again on 26th June 1939, the Ruler announced a number of reform measures for improving the administration of the state.115 The new proposals included the formation of Panchayats, Praja Sabhas and Praja Parishads at different levels. But these declarations did not appease the agitators. Civil liberties were not ensured and warrants of arrest against many leaders and workers of the prajamandal were not withdrawn. The composition of the prajaparishad was also questioned by the prajamandal leaders. Half the members of the Praja Sabha and Praja Parishad were to be nominated. The concessions made by the Ruler fell far short of the demands of the Prajamandal.

Around the same time an equally powerful agitation rocked Talcher, a nearby princely state, where, to escape repression then people resorted to mass exodus and launched non-cooperation against the State Administration.116 Unrest in these two states Dhenkanal and Talcher combinedly put a terrible strain on the

115. Declarations of The Ruler of Dhenkanal,26/6/1939.
116. P.M.Pradhan,Muki Pathe Sainik,part-1,op.cit,p.65.
The Provincial Government was put in a tight corner throughout the period of the movement. It could not maintain an indifferent attitude to something that was happening right at its doorstep. On the other hand, it also had to tackle its party-men who did not approve the soft-line or moderate approach of the Government. The Congress Socialists and the Communists spurned the restraining measures and wanted to pursue a more vigorous policy in the states.

The agitation in Orissa states also drew attention of the national leadership. Prof. N.G. Ranga, M.L.A. Madras, arrived at Cuttack on 8th January 1939 to discuss the problems of the states. He visited the Angul refugee camps and appealed to the Congress president to start a State Refugee Relief Fund. Miss Agatha Harrison, Babu Rajendra Prasad and C.F. Andrews visited Orissa to see the condition of the refugees. Miss Agatha Harrison, as the leader of the Indian conciliation group took much interest in the refugee and tried to bring about a conciliation with the help of H.K. Mahatab.

The exodus of people from Talcher and Dhenkanal states continued during February 1939. Captain Woods of the Salvation Army tried to bring about

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117. Secretary to the Governor Orissa to the Secretary to the Governor General, secret D.O.No.532-SGC,20/7/1939, Acc.No.2216, Linlithgow Collection, NAI, New Delhi.
119. Ibid.

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conciliation but failed as the Rajas did not agree to withdraw extradition orders on the leaders and allow the tenants to participate in the administration.\textsuperscript{120} H.K. Mahatab, the Revenue Commissioner, Assistant Political Agent, representatives of the state peoples and Captain Woods met in a conference in Angul on 21st March 1939 with a view to bring about a compromise between the Raja of Talcher and his subjects. But the attempt failed as the Raja did not agree to the terms proposed.\textsuperscript{121}

One after another, seven batches of satyagrahis went into Dhenkanal. Encouraging reports also started coming from within the state. The tiny state could not afford to keep the military indefinitely and new prospects of struggle opened up when the Maratha contingent withdrew. In view of the inhuman treatment perpetrated in various states, Gandhiji had advised the suspension of the movement in Travancore, Jaipur and other states, but made it clear that the cessation of those activities could be regarded as provisional and indicated that he had in contemplation, a new orientation to the Civil Disobedience for use in the Indian states in certain eventualities.\textsuperscript{122} He pointed that each suspension had found the people better equipped for the fight and for the control over the forces of violence. He was of the opinion that this suspension would provide the rulers a breathing time and opportunity for thinking out their own course of action free from the burden of dealing with civil resistance. Simultaneously, he had also exhorted the Rulers of the Indian states to read the signs of the time and march with them.\textsuperscript{123}

Gandhiji's technique in face of a violent state administration was a strategic withdrawal. Many in the Congress including Subhash Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru did not appreciate Gandhiji's assertions.\textsuperscript{124} The king did not succeed in his nefarious

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid}, p.25
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid}, p.26
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{The Statesman}, 24/3/1939.
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Harijan}, 25/3/1939.
\textsuperscript{124} Quarterly Survey of the political and constitutional positioning British India, Acc.No.2329, \textit{Linlithgow Collection}.
designs of trampling the spirit of the people, nor did the people succeed in achieving a resounding victory. But the battle lines were clearly drawn and it was left to be fought to finish in near future.

The peoples’ movement in the states was spontaneous and near total in terms of participation. The degree and intensity of the involvement of the people depended on the degree and intensity of the official repression there. The Congress ideals and methods of political agitation had percolated into the states and the first phase of the mass agitation in the states made the people politically more conscious and psychologically more prepared for the tougher battles ahead.

The movement was directed not only towards the abolition of kingship but more towards the overhauling of the decadent socio-economic and political structure in the state. The Exodus or the *hijrat* of the people from the state not only displayed their capacity to endure hardships for their cause but it also brought about a drastic change in the attitude of the Congress towards the states problem. The ugly face of imperialism was also exposed before the people of the states during their agitation.

The leadership of the Dhenkanal movement in the first phase of the agitation comprised of many shades. While the moderate or the orthodox congress members of British Orissa were reluctant to pursue a pro-active approach towards the states problem, the leadership was virtually provided by the Socialists and the Communists. However, the schism or the ideological divide between the Communists and the Socialists had not originated during the first phase of the movement.

Caste or class distinction did not hinder or pose any obstacle during the course of the movement because majority of the population in the states whether Brahmins or *Harijans*, were peasants and all suffered the similar kind of socio-economic and political deprivations. Everyone irrespective of their origin was subjected to *bethi, bhetti, magan, rasad* and other forcible exactions.
The first phase of the movement in Dhenkanal was spread over a little more than a year. Roughly from September 1938 when the Prajamandal was officially formed. It continued vigorously till the middle of 1939. Once the World War broke out in 1939 September, the tempo of the movement slowed down a bit. But in the meantime many significant developments had taken place. The States Enquiry Committee had submitted its report and it made a graphic presentation of the misrule of the feudatory Chiefs. It made special mention of the names of three states where "....gross misrule for years gave occasion to popular risings and where the services of the British troops had been requisitioned to suppress the legitimate movements." They were Dhenkanal, Talcher and Gangpur.125

It was also recommended by the States Enquiry Committee that the Sanads granted to the Feudatory Chiefs should be annulled and they should be treated as the zamindars of the permanently-settled estates of the coastal tracts.126

An equally adverse report was submitted by the Military Intelligence Bureau in 1939. In accordance with it, the political Department withdrew the powers of Ruler and appointed a Dewan, Khan Bahadur A.K.Khan with full powers. The people expressed satisfaction over the minor changes introduced during his Dewanship. It was because of his initiative that the prajamandal workers assembled together to work out the future course of action of the Prjamandal movement. After his departure, the situation in Dhenkanal again deteriorated.127

The compromise of June, 1939 could not satisfy the people who demanded civil liberties and a more responsible government. Peoples' agitation, therefore, continued during the later half of the year 1939, in spite of the ruthless measures adopted by the Chiefs and their agents to suppress the vigour of the agitation.

In the first week of August, 1939, Lord Linlithgow visited Orissa and

126. Ibid,p.58.
127. B.K.Dhal,op.cit.,p.158.
discussed the problem of the states with the Ministry. He stressed upon the fact that there was no geographical boundary between the British Orissa and the neighbouring states and the people were closely interlinked in various ways. The expression of this view had a tremendous effect on the aspirations of the states people and gave a boost to their agitation.128

He had also said that "provinces and states are and must always be neighbours. They have each their own parts to play in the progress of India, but the parts must be played in harmony, and not in dissonance".129

H.K.Mahatab, who represented the orthodox Congress or the mainstream nationalist Congress group in Orissa was of the opinion that because of the smallness in size, poor finances and lack of public life it was not feasible to have any kind of representative government in the states. He thought that the only solution to the states problems was to amalgamate the states with the provinces.130

The States Enquiry Committee in its report had also recommended that, "...the sanads granted to the Rulers of the states by the paramount power should be cancelled and they may be treated as landlords of permanently settled estates such as Aul, Kujang and Kanika"131 The Viceroy; Lord Linlithgow seemed to have agreed to the proposal in principle, but he could not venture to bring about a drastic change all at once.132

Since the war broke out in 1939, everybody's attention turned towards the political future of India and the Congress had to carry on its movement for national liberation. The question of amalgamation of these states with the provinces thus receded to the background for the time being.

129. The Samaj,2/8/1939
132. Ibid.
With the outbreak of the War, in 1939, the Standing Committee of the AISPC met on 11th October 1939 at Wardha to consider the war crisis and its effect on the Indian states. The committee whole-heartedly endorsed the views expressed by the Congress Working Committee and the AICC on the attitude towards the World War.\(^{133}\) The request to the rulers for introduction of democratic institutions met with no response and repression went on unabated in the states. During the war the British authorities and the feudatory chiefs strengthened their grip over the states. The prominent leaders, who were suspected to create troubles were arrested under Defence of India Rules\(^{134}\)

Of course, it does not imply that the workers in the state of Dhenkanal sat idle. Local issues around which the people could be mobilised were taken up by the leaders to keep the fire of agitation burning. Reporting for the first half of January 1940, the Deputy Central Intelligence Officer, Orissa wrote "...a fresh agitation is on the foot owing to the Rulers' transference of some villages in the name of Rani Sahiba from the state property".\(^{135}\) Another report of the Central Intelligence Officer, Orissa stated that "on the night of 9th January 1940, Harmohan Pattnaik held a camera meeting in his house along with some other Prajamandal leaders and decided to observe the 'Independence Day' by reading the Independence pledge in every village by individual members in their own houses and deputed workers to distribute printed Oriya leaflets, issued by the Cuttack DCC for wider circulation among the subjects of Dhenkanal and neighbouring states".\(^{136}\)

The Independence Day was observed at Budapank camp on 26.1.1940 and on that occasion there was a large gathering of state subjects including some from

\(^{133}\) AISPC Papers, File No.176, NMML, New Delhi.


\(^{135}\) Extract from fort nightly reports of the Political Agent, Orissa States, second half of January 1940, Acc.No.354, CRR, Eastern States Agency, NAI, New Delhi.

\(^{136}\) Ibid.
Hindol. The Prajamandal leaders also urged the state subjects to take up the constructive programme of the Congress. Along with the efforts to educate the people on the constructive programme of the Congress the prajamandal leaders also went on mobilising the people against any contribution to the war-fund.

The state administration obviously did not remain a silent spectator to all these activities: Arrests were made on false charges or even for offences alleged to have been committed during the 1938 agitation. On 3rd February 1940, the Ruler also formed a committee called the 'Good Fellowship Committee' for discussing state affairs with some officials who were residents of the state and some agitators including Harmohan Pattnaik, Maheswar SubahuSingh, Krutibas Pradhan and Laxmidhar Sahoo.

Although, the agitation against the Durbar had been withdrawn, meetings continued to be organised by the prajamandal leaders. A public meeting of the people of Dhenkanal was organised at Budapank on 13th January 1941, where it was resolved to stop payment of bethi. Meetings were organised at different villages inside the state like Katni, Kandarsingha, Mendhapada, Jaka, Kankadahada etc. where the usual demands of the people were reiterated.

The movement of the people in the state entered a new phase with the passing of the Quit India Resolution at Bombay. As a sequel to the widespread arrests in British Orissa, notifications were issued by the Dhenkanal Durbar prohibiting public meetings and processions and declaring the Prajamandal unlawful on 16.8.1942.

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137. Ibid. Extract from the Deputy Central Intelligence Officer’s Report on the political situation in Orissa for the second half of January, 1940.
138. Ibid. Second fortnight of February 1940.
139. Ibid. Second fortnight of March 1940.
140. Narottami Das of Dhenkanal to the Secretary, AISPC, 29/1/1941, file No.128, AISPC Papers.
141. Ibid, 17/4/1941.
Anticipating trouble, the state issued orders for detaining Kisori Sahu, Bhagirathi Sahu, Dibakar Biswal, Baisnab Charan Pattnaik, Maheswar Subahu Singh, Purna Chandra Mohapatra and restricting the movement of Musa Mallick and Debraj Patra. Of these, only Maheswar Subahu Singh and Purna Chandra Mohapatra were arrested on 19th August 1942 and others absconded.

A detailed narrative account of the Quit India Movement in the princely states has been already given in the previous chapter on the Quit India Movement. It would probably suffice to say that in face of heavy odds Baisnab Pattnaik and his suicide squad of 21 persons created havoc in the Murhi and Parjang areas. The party attacked Murhi (Kamaksha Nagar) on 26th August 1942, raided Chandpur police station on 2nd September 1942, and clashed with the police on 4th September 1942 at Janhapara village. In the Janhapara police firing and exchange of firing Baisnab sustained a serious bullet injury. Baisnab then escaped to Calcutta and joined the Communist Party.

The areas like Murhi and Parjang bisos were deliberately chosen for creating a serious law and order problem as these areas were a little away from the headquarters and did not have convenient communication access. But as the movement was not a very well organised movement, after the Janhapara incident of 4th September 1942, no regulated action could be possible. There was no second line of leadership available to take up the challenge after the exit of Baisnab Pattnaik and his suicide squad.

The state administration again unleashed terror and repressive measures to suppress the movement. Troops marched through villages looting and plundering indiscriminately causing untold suffering and loss to the people. Collective fines were imposed on villages and were realised forcibly. Almost all the Prajamandal

144. Ibid.
145. B.K.Dhal, op.cit.,p.100.
146. Ibid.
147. B.C.Rath, op.cit.,p.246.
workers were detained and tortured in the jails. Intensive searches were made to apprehend the absconders and cash awards were announced for capturing them or for providing information about them.\textsuperscript{148} The agitation in Dhenkanal ended in the face of massive arrests, and stringent repressive measures.

With the change in the course of the Second World War, resulting in the success of the Allied powers, the political situation in India took a different turn. The Congress leaders were gradually released. In Dhenkanal not only the Prajamandal leaders were released but also the Crown Representative restricted the powers of the ruler of Dhenkanal from 17th January 1944, because of mal-administration in the state. This restriction continued till the lapse of paramountcy. Accordingly, the political Department appointed officers in Dhenkanal to carry on the administration.\textsuperscript{149} These officers served as agents of the Crown Representative and performed their duties throughout under the instruction and guidance of the political authorities.

These officials appointed by the Crown Representative tried their best to restore the confidence of the people and sought the help and cooperation of the Prajamandal leaders. A probe was ordered regarding the illegal activities of the ruler and his agents. A detailed enquiry was conducted about the monopoly business of the ruler and his brother in paddy and rice.\textsuperscript{150} As a result, the third brother of the ruler Sesa Pratap Singh Deo, and some of his servants like Nanda Kisore Roy were jailed. A probe was also carried out about the account of the collective fines imposed and collected and it was found that more than half the amount was not credited to the state treasury. A proper account was not even maintained. These confidence-building measures had a sobering impact on the people in the state.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid, p.249

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid, op.cit., p.250. Rai Sahib S.K.Srivastava as Chief Minister and Rai Sahib T.Satyanarayan as General Minister were appointed for a period of three years from 17/1/1944. Rai Sahib Rai Gopal Das was appointed as Special Officer from October 1944 to April 1945. Rai Bahadur D.K.Chatterjee was appointed as Superintendent of Police from August 1944.

\textsuperscript{150} B.K.Dhal, op.cit., p.106.
After the release of some Prajamandal leaders in August 1943, new office-bearers of the Prajamandal were elected. Braja Kishore Dhal had assumed the charge of the president, Krutibas Sahu and Mohammad Ayub were chosen as the secretary and the treasurer of the Prajamandal respectively.\textsuperscript{151} The state administration, in the meantime, had tried to organise a parallel organisation to counteract the influence of the Prajamandal. But this did not prove to be a success. Because of the actions taken by the officers appointed by the political Department, the state administration was literally demoralised and the pro-ruler elements were totally subdued.

In an attempt to take advantage of the favourable situation, the Prajamandal reorganised the volunteer corps. The demand for the withdrawal of the Eastern States Military forces from Dhenkanal was made and the state administration was asked to establish contacts with the Prajamandal. The volunteer corps carried on processions and organised meetings at different places demanding the introduction of responsible government. An interesting aspect of this phase of agitation in the state was the support, overt and covert, of a large majority of the employees to the cause of the Prajamandal. Even, the Superintendent of Police, D.K. Chatterjee had secretly assured the Prajamandal of all help.\textsuperscript{152}

The attitude of the Political Department towards the rulers was also not very supportive during this period. First of all, the Political Department had taken a serious note of the outbreak of disturbances in the states during the war and it had issued necessary instructions to deal with the situation. But not much initiative was shown by the ruler for tackling either through pacification, conciliation or punishment. The attitude of the Dhenkanal administration even after the Murhi incident was purely defensive.\textsuperscript{153} On the other hand, the Ruler of

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, p.114.  
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid, p.108.  
\textsuperscript{153} Home Deptt.(Pol.), File No.3/90/1942, NAI, New Delhi.
Dhenkanal also did not get along very well with the *Diwan* (Chief Minister) *Khan Bahadur* Abdul Kadir Khan who had been forced upon him by the Political Department. Consequently, the Ruler publicly expressed his displeasure on many occasions and attributed lapses and shortfalls in the administration to the Chief Minister and other subordinates. The Political Department was very much aware of this fact and cautioned the ruler of unpleasant consequences. In these circumstances, the Political Department stressed that the administration should be efficient, sympathetic and enlightened so that it can earn respect of the people and cripple Congress activity in the state. But on the fundamental issue of responsible Government in the state, the Political Department again preferred to maintain a stoical indifference.

With the cessation of hostilities at the end of the Second World War, the political developments in the Indian arena moved very fast. The Labour Party came to power in England and increasing international complications compelled Britain to change its policy towards India. In its pronounced aim of an early realisation of full self-government for India, the Labour Government sent three Cabinet ministers to India to settle with the Indian leaders the procedure of framing a new Constitution for India.

The Cabinet Mission in the process of negotiations consulted the rulers of the states and their representatives only. A suggestion that the Mission should talk to the representatives of the states' subjects was not accepted either by the Political Department or the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. The General Council of the AISPC expressed its displeasure about the fact that the representatives of the states people were completely ignored by the Cabinet.


156. V.P.Menon, *op.cit.*, p.58.

157. *Ibid*,p.59
delegation in their talks and consultations. The Council also demanded that in the proposed constituent Assembly, elected representatives of the people and not the nominated members of the rulers should participate.

Although a little hesitant in the beginning, most of the states and their representatives joined the Constituent Assembly. The states were of course, perfectly within their rights in refusing to have anything to do with the constituent Assembly.

In the meanwhile, both the Political Department and the Cabinet Mission stressed the necessity of grouping of small states into sizeable units and for their accession to the Indian Federation. Some of the rulers of Rajasthan proposed a scheme for the union of all the Rajput states. The Rulers of Punjab and Kathiawar also started thinking of forming unions in their respective regions. Some rulers of the Deccan states formed single union in May 1946. The rulers of Orissa and Chhatisgarh states met in a conference and desired to form Eastern States Union.

Along with the attempts at the creation of the Eastern States Union, some rulers systematically carried on activities against the plan of collaboration with the province.

The ruler of Patna propounded the theory that the district of Sambalpur was not a part of Orissa but at one point of time in History formed the so-called 'Koshal' territory. The movement for amalgamating Sambalpur with the Eastern States and forming the 'Koshal' province was designed cleverly to counter the


159. V.P. Menon, *op.cit.*, p.76. The Bhopal group of states wanted to keep away from the Constituent Assembly and the ruler of Bhopal tried to dissuade other states without any success.

attempts for amalgamation of the states with the province of Orissa.\textsuperscript{161} The anti-Hirakud Dam agitation created a lot of bitterness among the state ministry and there were attempts 'to make this an issue to separate Sambalpur from Orissa. The Orissa Government charged the ruler of Patna for inspiring this agitation.\textsuperscript{162}

However, a great majority of the people in the Oriya-speaking states were inclined to come under the same administration as the people in the province so that they could march together towards the goal of free and federal India.\textsuperscript{163} To that end in view, public meetings were organised in many of those states and resolutions were passed demanding the merger of the small states into the neighbouring provinces, popular representation of full democratic institutions as in the provinces.

In Dhenkanal, the approach of independence saw the political developments moving at a very fast pace. The two main demands of the Prajamandal were the restoration of civil liberties and an immediate introduction of representative government. The formation of the Gadjat chhatra Sammilani (States' Students' Conference) at Cuttack gave a massive boost to the last phase of the peoples movement in the states.\textsuperscript{164} The student leaders like Nanda Pattnaik, Gopal Mishra, Basant Mishra, Sribatsa Naik contributed a lot in carrying forward the States Peoples'Conference and the agitation in the states.\textsuperscript{165} Frequent clandestine meetings were organised to carry the deliberations for formulating the course of action. Most of the activities and sympathisers got together at the residence of Dayanidhi Pattnaik of Ravenshaw college, (where his brother Harmohan Pattnaik, the prominent leader of Dhenkanal Prajamandal was staying).\textsuperscript{166} Veteran Congress leaders like Nabakrusna Choudhuri, Malati Devi.

\textsuperscript{161} Letter from the ruler of Patna to Political Agent, Chhattisgarh states, Raipur, 10/2/1947, in H.K.Mahatab, \textit{Beginning of the End, op.cit.}, Appendix.XIX, P.238.
\textsuperscript{162} B.C.Rath, \textit{op.cit.},p.292.
\textsuperscript{163} Press statement of Sarangadhar Das, 2/11/1946, File No.216, \textit{AISPC Papers}.
\textsuperscript{164} Harmohan Pattanaik, \textit{op.cit.},p.44
\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Ibid.}
along with prominent Communists like Ramachandra Mishra and Lokanatha Chaudhuri actively guided and inspired the student leaders at Cuttack.\textsuperscript{167}

\textit{Prajamandal} leaders like Laxmidhara Sahu, Braja Pattnaik, Kailasa Mohanty established links with prominent individuals and institutions who were sympathetic to the cause of the state's people's movement. The formation of the Congress Ministry in 1946 in Orissa also gave a new fillip to the peoples agitation in the states. Difference of opinion did exist between the different political groups but that did not hinder the activities of the \textit{Prajamandal}. Laxmidhar Sahu, the prominent leader, with a group of non-aligned workers carried on the movement in Dhenkanl drawing support and cooperation all the political groups.\textsuperscript{168}

The volunteer camps, which had been raised with only 40 members swelled to a disciplined army of 1500.\textsuperscript{169} They strictly followed the principle of non-violence, total prohibition and rejection of untouchability. They were taught to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the people. They were adept in the art of offering non-violent \textit{Satyagraha} and they used to march in uniforms through different villages singing \textit{prajamandal} songs and chanting slogans against the state administration. Their main objective was to mobilise public opinion against the administration by organising meetings and other mass contact programmes.\textsuperscript{170}

A very significant feature of the movement in this phase was that cracks had appeared in the administrative apparatus of the state and a vast majority of the employees of the state administration openly or secretly sided with the \textit{Prajamandal} movement. The erosion of the authority of the ruler in the state administration which had been partially felt in 1942, became more obvious and during this phase. Bhabdev Sankar, the \textit{Diwan} of the state had established secret links with the \textit{Prajamandal} and had assured to handover power to the people's

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{169} B.K.Dhal, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 120

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Personal Interview} with Baisnab Pattnaik, dt. 12/8/1991.
organisation at the opportune moment by passing the authority of the ruler.\textsuperscript{171}

The \textit{prajamandal} went on in its task of exerting pressure on the administration. In a meeting held on 20th December 1946, under the presidency of Brajakishore Dhal, it was resolved that the people did not want their tyrant ruler but amalgamation of their state with the province.\textsuperscript{172}

In another meeting held at Annapurna \textit{hat} in the Parjang area on 6th January 1947, Baisnab Pattanaik explained to the people the necessity of amalgamation the states with the province.\textsuperscript{173} He demanded that only elected members of the people should go to the constituent Assembly and a similar kind of arrangement should be made in the state where only elected representatives of the state should be in committee proposed to be formed by the state administration for drafting the rules of the legislative assembly. On 15th January 1947, a meeting was organised at Dhalpur where Maheswar Shubhahu Singh and Narottam Das spoke on the same line.\textsuperscript{174}

Towards the end of March 1947, the Communists headed by Baisnab Pattnaik and Sarat chandra Pattnaik organised a meeting at Kharagprasad in Dhenkanal. Bisswanath Mukherjee, a Communist leaders from Calcutta, attended this meeting. The speakers criticised the arrangement for the distribution of the controlled commodities in the state. The \textit{Praja Parishad} was denounced on the ground that the majority of its members were nominees of the ruler. They also advocated equal distribution of land among the peasants and the abolition of rent-free grant.\textsuperscript{175} The state and the administration came under scathing criticism.

When such was the state of affairs, India became independent. After the

\textsuperscript{171} B.K. Dhal, \textit{op.cit.}, p.109.
\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{175} B.K. Dhal, \textit{op.cit.}, p.126.
The attainment of independence on 15th August 1947, the feudatory states assumed the attitude of sovereign states.

The rulers neither granted popular government to the people, nor were they willing to merge their states with Orissa. So the people of the states had to carry on their agitation on the advice of the Regional Council. The people of Dhenkanal and Talcher took a lead in this matter. Under the leadership of Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Braja Kishore Dhal, Maheswar Subahu Singh and others thousands of volunteers were enrolled with a view to wrest power from the chiefs by force.176

The massive mobilization of the people in the states created panic among the ruling chiefs. The rulers of the states in general and of Dhenkanal in particular sought the help of Gandhi and the Congress ministry in the state. They alleged that the Congress-controlled prajamandals were indulging in violence in the states. The chief of Dhenkanal fled to Wardha and then on Gandhi’s advice to Delhi to meet Sardar Patel, the Home Minister of independent India.177

Way back in 1946, Mahatab had met the members of the Cabinet Mission (6.4.1946) and placed a memorandum before them in which he had pleaded strongly in favour of amalgamation of the gadjat state with Orissa Province.178 Pt. Nehru had also agreed with Mahatab's views and sent a telegram on 12th June 1946: “Your telegram agree with you small states particularly Orissa states should be amalgamated with Province.”179

But with the attainment of independence the leaders of the Prajamandal were confronted with a crisis because of the divergence of opinion among them as regards the nature of the future set up of the state.180 While some wanted the Prajamandal to takeover the administration of the state, some others

177. B.K.Dhal, op. cit., p.128.
178. H.K.Mahatab, Beginning of the End, op. cit., p.17
179. Ibid.
180. Harmohan Pattanaik, op. cit., p.48
wanted the formation of a ministry comprising of both nominees of the ruler and the *Prajamandal*. Yet some others also advocated the idea of an outright merger of the state with the province of Orissa.

The presence of a number of small states in between the districts of the Province of Orissa, created enormous administrative difficulties and it was clear that unless the problem was effectively solved the existence of the states and the province of Orissa would be at stake.\(^{181}\)

The Regional Council of the AISPC, aided by the Provincial Government of Orissa, championed the cause of the merger. Sarangardhar Das, the president of the Regional Council suggested to withdraw the call for introduction of responsible Government and to demand for the merger of states with the Orissa Province.\(^{182}\) He also undertook extensive tours to the different states in order to mobilise the opinion in favour of the merger.

Some of the rulers led by Athagarh carried on a vigorous campaign of vilification against Orissa Ministry and pleaded against merger of states with the province. To thwart the designs of some *Prajamandal* leaders, Mahatab threatened to withdraw support if they supported the cause of the rulers working against the merger.\(^{183}\) On 13th December 1947, Sardar Patel, the Home Minister, V.P. Menon, the Secretary of States and some other officials reached Cuttack. The taking over of Nilgiri state on 14th November 1947 had served as a warning to the rulers.\(^{184}\) And the historic conference between the rulers and Sardar Patel began in the Raj Bhaban at Cuttack on the morning of 14th December 1947.\(^{185}\)

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the rulers of 'B' and 'C' class states and with a bit of persuasion twelve rulers signed the document for merger with the province.\textsuperscript{186}

It was more difficult to tackle eleven rulers of 'A' class states of Boudh, Dhenkanal, Gangpur, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Patna, Sareikala and Sonepur. In the afternoon of 14th December 1947, Patel met these rulers and tried to convince them about the utility of merger with the province. Sardar Patel said that the Orissa states were like ulcers on the body of the province and they had to be either cured or eliminated. If they listened to his advice, they could be cured otherwise, they might find themselves uprooted by the people.\textsuperscript{187} After a great deal of pressure and persuasion the rulers at last agreed to accept the plan of merger and the documents were signed by the morning of 15th December 1947.\textsuperscript{188}

The merger of the states was an event of great significance. It was a dramatic climax to the history of Gadjats which had maintained separate identities throughout the British rule. The bitter agitation of the people in the feudatory states of Orissa thus ended with advent of independence by their merger with the province.

Pt. Nehru, the Prime Minister is supposed to have been kept in the dark about the developments in Orissa. He was surprised by the chain of events and wrote a letter to Mahatab about the merger of the states with Orissa province.\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., p.344. The states were Athagarh, Baramba, Daspalla, Hindol, Khandapara, Kharswan, Narasinghpur, Nilgiri, Pallahara, Ranpur and Talcher.

\textsuperscript{187} V.P. Menon, \textit{op.cit.}, p.147.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid, p.160. The transfer of administration of the state to the Dominion Government became effective on 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1948. Only the state of Mayurbhanj merged with Orissa province a year later.

\textsuperscript{189} S.P. Tripathy, \textit{op.cit.}, p.43.
The total area of Orissa province was almost doubled and the population went up by 50 percent more. The emergence of a greater Orissa presented immense possibilities for a better future.

The twenty-five states which merged with Orissa included Sareikala and Kharswan. Soon after the merger, an agitation started in these states demanding their merger with Bihar on the ground that "the majority of the population were adibasis and that geographically the two states were part of the Singhbhum district of Bihar". The relations between the two provinces (Bihar and Orissa) got strained over the issue. The rajas also took part in the agitation and there was complete chaos for some time in these two states. The Central Government stepped in. But since the two states were island territories in the Singhbhum district the administration of these two states was taken away from the Government of Orissa and handed over to Bihar on 18th May 1948.

There was a lot of hue and cry over the episode. Many blamed the State Congress leadership for not taking up the case with the Central leadership. There were clear indications that owing to the clout which Dr. Rajendra Prasad as the first President of independent India enjoyed in the Congress circles, the fate of Sareikala and Kharswan was sealed. The ghost of Sareikala and Kharswan again raised its head during the Reorganisation of the states in 1956. The Oriya leadership, however, again squandered the possibilities of amalgamation of these two states by not forcing a crisis by taking up the issue seriously with the Central leadership.