CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION
Dr. H.K. Mahtab was to Orissa what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was to India and his political career was in fact half a century political history of Orissa. The profile of this titan, who emerged like a colossus in the Pre and Post-Independence political scene of Orissa is nothing but the politic-economic glossary of twentieth century Orissa. Not only he led this region in the movement to unsackle the motherland from foreign yoke, he also laid the foundation of modern Orissa and contributed to the nation building exercise that started after independence. That is why Sardar Patel while speaking high of him said, "A true patriot who not only loves Orissa but also loves India more. A practical and a born leader of men Dr. Mahtab has carved out for himself a name which will live in the history of Orissa". 307

When Dr. Mahtab was born, nineteenth century was bidding farewell, while twentieth century was dawning in and the first part of twentieth century turned to be the most important phase of India which witnessed struggle of Indians to be free from British Rule.

Interestingly Dr. Mahtab's arrival in Orissan political scene coincided with that during the same period. In the process he joined the galaxy of luminaries of freedom movement who fought the war under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi till its logical end. With independence achieved, the second phase of Dr. Mahtab's public life, i.e. the responsibility of government was thrust upon him automatically which he accomplishes with success in different capacities in post-independence era. "He had a chequered career with ups and downs till his end. But he never failed in behaving as a true patriotic son of mother India notwithstanding the circumstantial compulsions till his last moment of life."  

Dr. Mahtab was born in a feudal land-lord family having a small estate which was equivalent to tiny princely states. That was why the family was called Raja of Agarpada. Inspite of the royal blood in him and his parent's efforts to prepare him for the family hierarchy, Dr. Mahtab opted for public service and freedom movement which had a risky and uncertain future. Eventhough his family succeeded in getting Dr. Mahtab

308. Dr. Mahtab, H.K.; 'Sadhanara Pathe'; (0), Opp. Cit., p. 135.
married at an early age with a view to settling him in domestic life he slipped out of their clutch. He saw that, his family was neither interested in his academic career nor favourable to his inclination for politics. For a feudal family like that of Dr. Mahtab politics or joining freedom movement were somewhat unthinkable sacrificing the comfortable living style. Dr. Mahtab convinced his family that he ' needed college education and got admitted to Ravenshaw College. Though during his student days he was good at his studies, his interest in text books diminished as he grew. Thus it is said, "Rather his burning desire for public service brought him closer to other related books and periodicals of which he became a voracious reader in later years."

His political sensibility was roused when he was at Ravenshaw College, his passion against imperial rule was inflamed and his love for motherland in captivity kindled. That he had a national prospective

309. Ibid; p. 42.
was very much evident from his activities during college days. Before living college half way to join the freedom struggle he was attending Congress Session outside Orissa. He felt deeply concerned for the country and its ill-treated mass. He got association with like minded friends such as Nabakrushna Choudhury. They formed a group of free thinkers whose horizon was beyond the aims and aspirations of any college students brilliant or average. They were idealistic. They were inspired by great personalities like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Gopabandhu Das. Their action was soon characterised in the idea of liberation of India. Dr. Mahtab was also imbued with deep patriotic fervour and a desire to dedicate himself to the cause of country's liberation from foreign rule.

As morning shows the days likewise Dr. Mahtab's patriotism was lighted since the beginning of his political
career. "Thus Dr. Mahtab was involved in Utkal Sammilani activities and attended Congress Session at Calcutta and Nagpur. Mahatma Gandhi's method of non-violence and call for non-cooperation had tremendous impact on Mahtab's reasoning as he joined freedom struggle putting an end to his formal education." Yet few philosopher have had a greater effect on the everyday world then he had. For he displayed a remarkable insight into the political realities of his time.

Every political elite or public personality entertains certain ideas which crystalised into perceptions. He was a man of principle basing on which he proceeds. As an active political elite Dr. Mahtab was guided by some ideas and principles in his actions. An astute politicians with intellectual bent of mind he was an extra-ordinary personality, "many ascribed him the status of Channakya of Orissa Politics." If his life was broadly divided into two phases that is

310. Ibid; p. 45.
311. Sahoo, Dr. Basudev; 'Dr. Mahtabnaka Upanyasara Rajnitika Darshan'; Jhankar; Ed. 1987, p. 1824.
before and after independence then his success and failure can be analysed keeping in view the ideas and principles he tried to push through during the particular period. He was a man of time. He moved with time. His approach to an issue was based on the circumstances, peripheral development and above all on the need of the hour. He was never a dogmatic rather by and large down to earth. Before independence the emancipation of masses from the bondage of slavery and colonialism was his prime concern. His sole goal was independence like all freedom fighters. Even he did not dilute it though at the early phase of Dr. Mahtab's political activity, important leaders of Orissa were more concerned about making Orissa a separate province. That is why, it is remarked "Dr. Mahtab's ideas were something bigger, e.g. independence of the country etc.". Thus this was a simple proof that he was a visionary and philosopher.

312. Ibid.
Dr. Mahtab plunged into freedom movement wholeheartedly in his early twenties and there began a career devoted to the cause of public which spanned over next six decades.

"That he had a national perspective was very much evident from his activities during college days. Before leaving college half way to join the freedom struggle, he was attending Congress Session outside Orissa. In fact, he worked as a link between Orissa and the national leaders from a very young age. Orissa activists were getting feedback from him. He became very close to the then prominent Orissa leaders like Madhusudan Das, Gopabandhu Das and was influenced by their ideals of dedication and sacrifice. He also earned the trust of senior leaders and when Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee was formed under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das, he was made a member of the executive. When Mahatma Gandhi first visited
Orissa in 1921 this not only came as an encouragement to the independence movement but to the future leaders of the movement in the State. Mahtab came in close contact with the Mahatma Gandhi who expanded his outlook. The great leader was impressed with young Mahtab and seeing the potential in the twenty two year young man he gave Mahtab some advice aimed at achieving success. Mahatma Gandhi asked Mahtab to concentrate on one thing, not many. Mahtab's first experiment of direct action was in Balasore district. By that time he was given charge of Congress Party in his home district. The party was yet to become a closeknit organisation but under Mahtab the district became a main area of freedom movement. He was the leader of civil disobedience movement started by Mahatma Gandhi in the State. One of the unique feature of the civil disobedience movement was Salt Satyagraha. Before

313. Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'Sadhanara Patha'; (0), Opp. Cit.; p. 130.
Gandhiji decided on this and launched his famous Dandi March, Mahtab had put forth this as a local issue when Mahatma had come to Orissa in 1927. Thus it is said that the idea of Salt Satyagraha originated from him. Because of this, his stock before Gandhiji went up and his credo rose to height. "That is why the Inchuri Salt Satyagraha in Balasore which Mahtab personally conducted is judged at par with Gandhiji's Dandi March. During thirties Orissa became a separate province which was followed by election. Then Mahtab was the leader of Orissa Congress and brought victory to his party. During this period another feather in his cap was his nomination to the most prestigious All India Congress Working Committee, then under the Presidentship of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. While guiding the course of action during civil disobedience movement Mahtab meticulously saw to it that all

the programmes created a sense of freedom from fear among the people. He was not a utopian but a realist. He had a strong idealism but it was not warped by wrong consideration. The success of the salt movement was highly recommended by Gandhi and Jawaharlal who sent message to the people.315

On 17th February, 1931 Nehru wrote, "My greetings to the people of Utkal. I have heard of their sacrifice and sufferings in the national struggle for freedom. I congratulate them and trust, they will carry on a good fight till our motherland is free"316.

"When Gandhi suspended Satyagraha in 1933 unconditionally Congress leaders of Orissa interested themselves in constructive work. Mahtab formed a Krushak Sangha in Balasore with the intention of starting

315. Ibid.; p. 152.
316. The Samaj; 4th March, 1931.
tax campaign. Thus he was able to rekindle the dying flame of enthusiasm by organising Khaddar and Spinning Centres at different places.\textsuperscript{317}

"During Gandhiji's Orissa tour in December, 1927 Harakrushna Mahtab had discussed the prospect of a Salt campaign with him. Gandhiji's reaction was encouraging.\textsuperscript{318}

The Government's confidential report said "under the leadership of notorious H.K. Mahtab an attempt is being made to start Civil Disobedience Movement and illicit manufacture of Salt in Balasore and Puri Districts respectively.\textsuperscript{319}

In his home state there was sharp reaction to his arrest. Agitation followed by violent incidents were

\textsuperscript{317} Home Pol. Progs. Nos. 18/9, August 1933 12/12 November.

\textsuperscript{318} Kar, Purushottam; 'Indian National Congress and Orissa'; Opp. Cit. p. 153.

\textsuperscript{319} Home Pol. Progs. F.No.12/11, February, 1930.
part of the reactions by people to their beloved leader's imprisonment. On the other hand this period of imprisonment which was one among many in his life came as a blessing indiguise. He produced his famous History of Orissa and other books during this period.

"Inchuri in Balasore was the scene of Salt campaign in Orissa. Dr.Mahtab was the man behind this movement. He discussed this issue with Mahatma Gandhi much before the movement when the latter had come to Orissa. That is why it is said Dr.Mahtab was the originator of Salt Movement Issue."320.

"He became the young driving force of Congress Party in Orissa and Gandhiji not only trusted him but also his dependence on this young firebrand increased. Dr.Mahtab was elected as President of Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee when he was hardly thirty-eight

years old defeating a giant like Pandit Nilakantha Das in 1937. Dr. Mahtab contested Mr. Das for the office of the President and defeated him by 13-12 votes. When Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was elected as the AICC President he nominated Dr. Mahtab to Congress Working Committee which was a great honour to Orissa and Dr. Mahtab himself. Besides these important organisational assignments he also gathered administrative experience as Chairman of Balasore District Board and Member of Bihar-Orissa Legislative Council. He was part of Congress High Command which took the historic decision of quit India Movement under the guidance of Gandhiji and was imprisoned in Ahmednagar Jail along with the important leaders of Congress.

"In Quit India Movement Dr. Mahtab played a very prominent role. This was the last stage of India's
Freedom Movement after which the British left India. As a member of the Congress Working Committee which took the historic decision in August 1942 at Bombay Dr. Mahtab's name has been added to the Golden Chapter in History of India's Freedom Struggle. Mahatma Gandhi and the members of Congress Working Committee were arrested at Bombay after they asked British Government to Quit India. Dr. Mahtab was detained in Ahmednagar Fort Jail along with other top Congress leaders for three years. He was the only leader of Orissa to be ranked among the national leaders like Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel.  

A new Chapter opened in Dr. H.K. Mahtab's political career when he took over the reins of Orissa's administration in 1946. It was a career of administrator he took up one year before independence and in independent India he continued with the same career in different assignments. He played under Mahatma Gandhi a prominent role in the national struggle and after independence in his new responsibilities, which he performed ably. He consolidated unified Orissa and brought about stability in administration. Since he was the first ruler after independence he had to face all the problems of a new born baby. He had to tend it, take care of its ailments, ensure its growth so that it could stand up and compete with its contemporary states.

Before Mahtab the most delicate issue was government machinery i.e. bureaucracy. "The work had to be done through them who had shown enmity towards us in recent past".323 according to the Mahtab. But like his mentor

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323. Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; "Sadhanara Pathe" (0), Opp. Cit., p. 268.
Sardar Patel who thought that government could function only through its officers who were its eyes, ears, he showed keenness to make them as sharp and strong as possible. By tact, sympathy, understanding he revived the confidence of the officers and own their loyalty to the government, mind and spirit. He changed their outlook. He saw that attitude of all officers changed and "those who were known as turants turned to be patriots". As a disciple of Gandhi he was convinced that change of one's heart was easy.

People of Orissa had suffered under slavery for centuries, attainment of independence and installation of people's Government under their beloved leaders had raised their hopes and aspirations. They had bestowed their faith on Dr. Mahtab. It was his duty to stand up to their needs and desire, since he was

324. Ibid; p. 270.
moved by the poverty that stalked the land and was always thinking of means and methods to eradicate it. This earnestness in him had no wonder, made him the uncrowned king of the masses. New in the election people of Orissa sent him to power and he got the opportunity to give real shape to his dreams of a bright and prosperous Orissa.

One of the early problems that plagued the entire nation during that time was the communal frenzy in different parts of the country. Mahtab was free from any communal bias. He was far above these petty things. He was least tainted by communal or casteist feelings. But to his utter dismay he found that communal and parochial feelings were spreading. The first police firing during his government was at Bhadrak on communal issues. He ordered judicial inquiry into the incidents. He selected an English judge, who belonged to neither Hindu nor Muslim community. This showed that Mahtab was essentially an out and out nationalist and wanted to stop this canker. During Naukhali and Calcutta riots Orissa had a peaceful
time thanks to the above management by Dr. Mahtab.

During his four years stint as Prime Minister and Chief Minister in Orissa Mahtab laid the foundation of a welfare state in democratic pattern. His ideas and plan and things carried the imprint of his farsighted outlook. As a leader of the masses with his two and half decade long political career he knew what were the problems of the State. On this he had developed a clear concept about his future Orissa, a prosperous state with peace and affluence. Now at the helm of affairs he left no stone unturned to give shape to his ideas and dreams to make his native state a leading province in the country.

The most remarkable achievement of Mahtab during this period was amalgamation of Princely states into the main land. Not only in Orissa merger of Princely States was the biggest problem for India. Mahtab's efforts in Orissa showed the way for the entire country. Renowned Journalist Sri Durga Das in his book "India from Curzen to Nehru and after
wrote, "the merger of the smaller states began in Orissa by accident and the process spread from there to other areas. Narrating the story of the first merger Patel (Sardar Patel) told me that the idea had originated with Dr. H.K. Mahtab who formed in 1938 the State Prajamandal, an organisation of the people living in the states of Orissa. When India became independent the British departed leaving the states as they were. Mahtab convinced Gandhi and Patel of the soundness of his scheme and he suggested to Patel in November 1947 that he should set the process in motion in Orissa". 325

In collaboration with the then Deputy Prime Minister of India Sardar Vallabhbhav Bhai Patel, he accomplished this massive task and brought about unity of Oriya speaking people in one province. This is the greatest contribution of Dr. Mahtab to Orissa and Oriya people for which he finds the most adorable position in annals of Orissa history. Though himself a great historian he thus became a creator of history.

325. Mahtab Dr. H.K.; 'Sadhanara Pathe;' (0) Opp. Cit., p. 185.
In fact people of twenty six feudatory states owe their freedom to Dr. Mahtab. It came as a new hope for the poor, illiterate, oppressed downtrodden people of 'Garjat States' mostly inhabited by tribals and harijans. Otherwise they would have remained in subhuman condition of slavery which they were subjected to for centuries.

"Dr. H.K. Mahtab came to head Orissa Government in such a time when independence of the country was a matter of days only. So the political bosses and bureaucratic machinery started working in tandem for the betterment of the state. There was a unique compatibility and harmony in the entire system which Dr. Mahtab regretted to miss in later years". The dreams, vision, future goal and planning based on all these - which Dr. Mahtab had, were naturally reflected in state legislature, the supreme body in a democratic set up. If one glances through the assembly deliberations of this period may be tempted to call the leader of the House a some sort of utopian, though Mahtab has been known as a realist. He brought several bills in assembly with an objective to giving

326. Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'Sadhanara Patha' (0); Opp. Cit., p. 187.
social and administrative stimulus to desirable changes. The bills had far reaching impact in socio-economic scene of state. Whether it was Orissa temple entry authorisation and indemnity bills to facilitate the entry of harijans into temples or Zamindari abolition bills all these were milestones in legislative history of State. The budgets of every year which he placed in the assembly were carriage of people's need and desire. The budget covered important aspects of welfare measures and economic activities. Illiteracy was the bane for the State. So Mahtab laid specific stress on education particularly women education, which was made free. Since Orissa mainly depend upon agriculture he chalked out detail plans to increase food production. But he also gave equal stress on industry for which a number of industries came up in Orissa during his time. Pilot turned industrialist, Mr. Biju Pattanaik who lateron became one of the prominent politician of the country started his career of industrialist during
this time with all support and encouragement from Dr. Mahtab, Mahtab with his modern thinking was aware that power was the key to economic development of State whether for industry or agriculture. During his time hydel and thermal projects were planned.

One of the main project which Dr. Mahtab started against heavy odds was Hirakud River Valley Project. The Project not only came as a boon to western Orissa. Agriculture development it has multipurpose utility. It controlled flood in Mahanadi system which was ravaging coastal districts every year. Besides it provided cheapest power, which gave fill up to electrification programmes. In Pandit Nehru's language Dr. Mahtab built a "Modern Temple". Not only this, the modern Capital City of Bhubaneswar owed its present status to him. Out of three planned Capitals in the country this was the first for which Government of India gave grants for construction whereas others availed the fund in form of loan. Though Orissa was one of the poorest provinces of country its first Chief Minister Dr. Mahtab had no paucity of ideas to make his state prosperous.
Like a philosopher King Dr. Mahtab underscored the need of a strong socio-cultural platform for Orissa and Oriyas based on its rich heritage and tradition. Not only as Premier and Chief Minister but in his individual capacity he contributed to this which remained as a cause with him life long. He founded a trust that had a chain of publications including the premier daily 'Prajatantra'. The trust's annual literary fair Visuba Milan has been institutionalised in literary and Cultural sphere of state. On behalf of Government he set up three academies for literature, music and drama, fine art. So also to boost sports and games he formed Orissa Olympic Association and a Stadium was constructed at Cuttack. Dr. Mahtab's first Stint in Orissa Government was not for a very long period but he made all out efforts to shape the destiny of the state. The present Orissa owes its existence to him.

In reality Dr. Mahtab combined in himself the role of a social reformer, a political leader and a spiritual guide of Oriyas. He, therefore, played a
unique role in shaping the mind and the political outlook of his people. He was a man of the masses. The people were his kith and kin. This humility, affability, sincerity, integrity of character, selflessness, devotion to the nation were the chief factors that pushed him top and earned him well deserved popularity and love from people. His true greatness played in tremendous strength of character, absolute integrity, outspokenness, fearlessness and his great determination. He had sympathy and compassion for the down-trodden.
In many's Dr. H.K. Mahtab was the first Oriya to attain several glorious achievements when he was called upon to join Central Cabinet in 1950 he was the first Oriya to adorn that position. So far as Congress Party was concerned he was also first from Orissa to be a Union Cabinet Minister. interestingly, till 1980 no Congress leader from Orissa could got a berth in Central Cabinet. When the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi made a come back in 1980 she took Mr. J.B. Pattnaik, another discipline of Dr. Mahtab as a Central Cabinet Minister. But Mr. Pattnaik had very brief stint of four months only since he had to come over to Orissa as Chief Minister. So till now the only Congress leader from Orissa who had a maximum tenure as Central Cabinet Minister was Dr. Mahtab who functioned as Union Minister of Industry, Commerce and Supply from 1950 to 1952. This assignment didn't come to Dr. Mahtab all on a sudden. It was
a long standing offer for last years. Even when interim Council of Ministry was announced Mahtab's name was there. But Congress High Command and all leaders in Orissa did not allow Dr. Mahtab to leave Orissa.

Though Dr. Mahtab had a short stint of two years in Union Cabinet he made his presence conspicuous because of his unique style of functioning. When he went to Delhi he found entire set up in a mass. Of course that was a post war situation and phase of transition. But immediately Dr. Mahtab brought this to Prime Minister's notice. In a secret and personal note to Pandit Nehru on seventh July 1958 he wrote "on the first day I found out that there were no rules of business which are essential for efficient running of administration..... I had to make my own rules...... As Prime Minister I would request you to please see that the rules of business are framed as early as possible and they are enforced."

327. Mahtab Letter to Prime Minster, Mahtab Papers, p. 61, Teen Murty Bhawan, Delhi.
wrong, whether it was governmental or political. Perhaps that became his undoing and he was not taken in the new Cabinet after 1952 general election. But for Dr. Mahtab greed of power was overshadowed by his sense of duty to people and country, democratic spirit and teachings of Gandhiji regarding truthfulness. Not that all his suggestions went unheeded. He conveyed the feelings of young M.Ps. of party of Prime Minister. He wrote how some young M.Ps. wanted to undergo training under Prime Minister, but they had been denied the same, some of them offered to remain with you and work as volunteers without any remuneration he would remain with you and carry out your orders and thus train himself for responsible work...... will you please consider this and let me know your reactions."  

Nehru replied, "your letter about the younger members of Parliament. It is not quite clear to me what kind of work one can give them. But if they are anxious to do something and are earnest about it, then we shall try to find some ways of dealing with this situation. After return from England, we can discuss."  

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328. Dr. Mahtab's letter to Prime Minister (Pvt.)
D.O. No.437/Tim/S.D., Mahtab Papers, p. 171.

Dr. Mahtab's correspondences with Pandit Nehru on a host of problems covering various political and economic issues provided a deep insight into his intellectual acumen and wide horizon of thinking. As a senior member of the Party and government he, with all fairness contributed his ideas for the betterment of nation by strengthening the party and government. He suggested "the country was a beginner in the course of development to chalk out its own line which will be not only theoretically but practically sound." He was not happy with the goings on the economic fronts both production and distribution are admittedly unsatisfactory. In a letter to Krishna Menon, Indian High Commissioner in London he said "with regard to industry and agriculture because of absence of definite policy confusion is prevailing to some extent." He had observed that "the model of a highly developed

331. Mahtab's letter to Prime Minister, Mahtab Paper, Teen Murty Bhavan New Delhi, p. 194.
332. Ibid; p. 194.
capitalist economy does not evidently suit the conditions of India. Similarly, the model of a highly regimented communist economy also does not suit the conditions prevailing in India. In any kind of economy in India, agriculture must be the centre of it. With regard to administrative machinery particularly the I.A.S., the cream of Civil Service, his warning forty years back was prophetic. He found that though I.A.S. had replaced I.C.S. of British the former was giving the type of training which the latter had to undergo rigorously when "these untrained, young I.A.S. Officers are placed above experienced old provincial Civil Service Officers in the provinces and also in the Secretariat" result has been that the I.A.S. Officers do not know the work and the P.C.S. Officers do not do the work. All schemes evolved after so much labour and energy at the top became ineffective at bottom, because of the administrative machinery."334

"One speciality of Dr. Mahtab was his earnest love for Orissa. Inspite of his activities at Delhi

334. Dr. Mahtab’s letter to Prime Minister; D.O. No.70/HW/Res. 23.4.1952, Mahtab Papers, p. 326.
his Prime concern remained Orissa and its development. In his new capacity as a member of Union Government he invested his fully energy for getting new Projects for Orissa. He was serious about a steel plant in Orissa which he took up at different level.335 "Whether it was new railway lines or industry by private enterpreneurs he left no stone unturned, if the same were in the interest of Orissa."336

When Mahtab became victim of Delhi's murkey politics and Pandit Nehru get rid of him while forming the new ministry after 1952 election he rejected all other assignments. But party high command could not take the risk of keeping him outside and a special post of Secretary General in Congress Parliamentary Party was created for him which has abolished after three years when Dr. Mahtab was posted to Bombay as Governor. Though Dr. Mahtab accepted the new responsibility with a lot of reluctance he geared up

335. Dr. Mahtab's letter to Union Finance Minister Mr. C.D. Deshmukh, 17.2.1952, Mahtab Papers, p. 309.

the Parliamentary Wing of Congress Party. It became an aggressive organisation and in the process the ministers and even Prime Minister had to face the critical appraisal of party. Dr. Mahtab also created controversy because of his straightforward reactions on different national issues which put Pandit Nehru in a position of embarrassment but the former hardly bothered.

The appointment of Dr. Mahtab as Governor of Bombay was another feather in his cap. It was a very prestigious assignment though he was too young of it. During his brief tenure he became a people's Governor by being accessible. He was popular among political people. Leaders of different political parties respected him, because of his mediating and constructive role. During the short period he identified himself with the culture of different regions of Bombay province.

Governorship didn't keep him within the confines of non-political official head. He never lost touch
with the mainstream of national life, he did not give any chance to anybody that Dr. Mahtab had reconciled to a Cozy life of Governor retiring from politics. Always he acted a senior politician of nation giving his views of issues like administration, administrative reforms, planning in India, socialism, Kashmir Problem, land and village industry etc.

Dr. Mahtab could not complete full term in Bombay Raj Bhavan as he had to come back to Orissa in his second term of Chief Ministership. His four year regime this time was not a smooth affair because Congress lacked comfortable majority. During this period he first experienced with Coalition Government. Inspite of all hurdles which affected the very stability of government Dr. Mahtab pursued his pet projects to their fructification. Though during his first term Bhubaneswar had been chosen as Capital of the State, the construction had almost come to a stand still after he left. He had to start again and give a full shape to the
modern planned city with assembly, secretariat, raj Bhavan, Utkal University coming up during this period. Politically be came under let of stress and strain and got fed up in cossspoel of Orissa's murkey politics. His towaring personality which had remained unchallenged for two and half decades came under cloud. Even in Congress Party his cloud was in decline. In early sixties Mahtab quietly went to Parliament and Pandit Nehru made him the deputy leader of the party in Lok Sabha. There he became centre of activity for various Congress leaders who were not happy with the goings on in government and party. Nehru yielded to this group's pressure to drop Krishna Menon, the then defence minister after India's defeat in China War.

After the demise of Nehru which was followed by a brief prime Ministership of Lal Bahadur Sastri, Srimati Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister and Leader of Congress Party. Mahtab saw decay setting
in Congress. He was greatly disturbed at the clamour for office among Congressmen - the very thing he abhorred and wanted to avoid. In his home state, he found Congress deteriorating at a faster rate. All these led Mahtab to cut off his link with Congress with which he had been associated for five decades. Outside Congress he launched his own party which fought against Congress's misdeeds. The result was in 1967 elections Congress was routed in Orissa and a non-Congress Coalition led by Mahtab had resounding victory. Inspite of the fact that Mahtab's party came to power and he vindicated his position the matters were not as smooth as expected. He got embroiled in Commissions of inquiry in 1978. He came back to Congress again to lead it in elections. But power was eluding him. From 1967 onwards he remained a member of Orissa Assembly again for 10 years winning three consecutive elections but he could not come to power. Due to political compulsions he had to change parties. His home coming to Congress also did not favour him.
He was out of it. As an opposition leader he was jailed during emergency and after that he retired to a full socio-cultural life till his end. Thus the man who became a full time political activist at a very young age of twenty had almost a six decade chequered career of politics and became part of twentieth century luminaries of Indian Political Scene.
IV

A many faceted personality Dr. H.K. Mahtab was known as a man of letters. Politics remained his life long avocation. But beneath the hard stuffed realist, down to earth politician, who was more or less known as a philosopher king, remained a creative genius. He not only fought for creation of independent India and laid the foundation of modern Orissa for which he occupies a prominent place in history of India and specially that of Orissa, but his contribution to journalism and literature also places him in a distinct and unique position. He was different from others of his tribe, fellow politicians. He had two identities in politics, politician and political communist. As a politician he did his best to bright about socio-economic development. But he supplemented this effort by positively contributing to the psychological plan of society through his columns.
That he had a knack for journalism and literature was evident since his student days. With age and experience he became adept using both for building his own image as well as that of society. Through his columns in newspapers and periodicals, particularly in his popular column 'Gaon Majlis' and volumes of literary creations, he projected the current society. His distinctive style of writing and thought-provoking analysis of issues and trends gave him an image of great intellectual.

During freedom struggle, he found that every leader of repute started a newspaper. It was a weapon to propagate ideas and launch struggles against social and political tyranny. Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak started "The Keshari", Mahatma Gandhi started 'The Young India' and later, 'The Harijan', Lajpat Ray started "The People". Pandit Nehru organised 'The National Herald' at Lucknow, Mahtab started his 'The Prajatantra' first as a weekly and then converted it
to a daily. Before independence it had to go from one place to another and discontinued because of compulsions. During that period 'The Prajatantra' and Dr. Mahtab's columns in its pages furthered the cause of independence. It propagated message of Gandhiji. The Paper and its founder incurred the wrath of British Government because of critical writings. During that period he was writing in various publications including national papers. Even he worked a Orissa correspondent of several outside papers. His columns were full of political items like atrocity by police and government machinery and protest of people including congress activities.

Besides Dr. Mahtab authored many books of fictions, poetry, novels during freedom struggle which were based on contemporary society and misery of people. Some of those had been banned by British
Government. This showed that most of his writings during freedom struggle led two messages. One was ouster of British. The other was eradication of social maladies.

During the struggle for freedom the necessity of communication with people closely coincided with the writing ability of Dr. Mahtab. Out of this, the political columnist was born. He found print media as a strong medium of communication with the people notwithstanding the stringent measures. British Government was taking action against press. During that period literacy rate was very low, readership very low. Newspapers had lot of limitations. Within all these constraints Mahtab's writings had tremendous impact on the discerning readers, through whom the message was reaching nook and corner of the state.
After independence when Dr. Mahtab was in power he felt that print media should be used for independent government's constructive programme. In the new situation he identified a new role for media. Through this he communicated with people to prepare themselves for different development programmes of his government. His paper 'The Prajatantra re-appeared as a daily mainly to serve this purpose. When he found that the only other newspaper of state was critical of Government's welfare programmes. Hirakud multipurpose Dam was one of his projects. But a section of political people were against this. Mahtab was farsighted enough to see its utility for the area and also entire state. But people were to be convinced. He used print-media to tell the people real facts. He succeeded and the project came up as a modern temple' in the words of Pandit Nehru.
In the Post-independence period when Dr. Mahtab remained in opposition he continued to communicate with people through his columns in Print-media. He also used it as a vehicle of criticism of government. His paper Prajatantra under his leadership became a sharp critic of government with which its boss had fallen out. It unearthed many misdeeds of successive governments.

Dr. Mahtab's famous columns 'Gaon Majlis' has a special space in India's news literature. It had a higher identification with Indian culture and ethos since it always reflected commonman's viewpoint. The column was started by Dr. Mahtab in his own paper Prajatantra way back in 1950 and continued for four decades till the last days of the columnist. The column was a piece of simple prose, completely different from usual journalistic columns 'Gaon Majlis' meant the
discussion of villagers on different issues. Dr. Mahtab was writing the column in such a manner as if it was a synopsis of a discussion. But the column was being read seriously by intelligensia. People in position read it between the lines. Gradually this column became an analysis of all subjects involving people but the language was simple colloquial Oriya spoken by villagers that made the column popular and even carried respect of intelligensia. In political circle this column was being viewed as a source of guidance. The government as well as opposition were treating it as the opinion of a senior statsman like Dr. H.K. Mahtab, though the columnist always projected it as people's column.

Dr. Mahtab's primary mission was public service. He had taken a risk in his early life when he gave up a good academic career and comfortable life. He
joined the freedom movement as a political activist. Within years he was one of the top-ranking politicians of the country. After independence he held many important assignments in government. Whatever he achieved in public life was due to his close association with people and his deep compassion for them. The other side of Mahtab's personality had a distinctive image of a great journalist and literature. His close link with people and indepth understanding of their problems helped him a great deal to achieve excellence in this creative activity. In fact in most cases he was fighting for a cause through physical action, whether it was agitation or administrative measure and also through his columns in periodicals besides literary pieces. All his writings were rich with factual inputs, realistic assessment of men and matters. That showed how the columnist had link with the masses.
His column supplemented his efforts in public life. Both activities were like two sides of a coin, both had one common objectives. Service to people. It was natural that he had close link with public. In any issue involving people he stood by them. Towards the last decade of his life he was not in politics. But he was with people through his columns. Where it was agitation of Baliapal people against establishment of National Test Range or animal sacrifice as a so-called religious evil he wrote columns in favour of people and society. Because of his literary and journalistic flair, he was different from general politicians. So also because of his close link with people the columnist was different from other writers.