CHAPTER - II

DR. H.K. MAHTAB AND
FREEDOM STRUGGLE
2.1 NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT
AND Dr. H.K. MAHTAB
The philosophy of freedom movement in Orissa, history in the primafacie, appeared as unsatisfactory, inadequate and disappointing as a sunless dawn. It achieved the worthwhile and reached the pinnacle of aggressive activity only when Dr. Mahtab joined the movement and guided the freedom struggle in Orissa.

The Pre-independence period was a period of frustration among Indian intellectuals and elites who could not do what they intended to. Only one overriding objective was fixed for the Indians when young Mahtab entered into Indian political scenario in 1920. In the wake of the non-cooperation movement called by Gandhiji that independence would have to be achieved.

Really his political career germinated when he was studying at the Ravenshaw College in 1920. His political ideas conceptualised during this period.
"Having been influenced by the circumstances, some students of the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack established a reading club, known as the 'Bharati Mandir' in the town." 71 The sources of inspiration behind this cultural organisation were H.K Mahtab, Mr. Gopabandhu Choudhury, Nityananda Kanungo and Naba Krushna Choudhury. Bharati Mandir was a spiritual platform where youth and enthusiasm flowed through every person's veins. "On behalf of 'Bharati Mandir', it was decided to depute Mahtab to Calcutta Congress Session in 1920." 72

"Calcutta Congress was in many senses an eye opener for Mahtab. It is here that the idea of launching a non-cooperation movement was resolved amidst severe opposition. This novel and noble way of agitation caught the imagination of Mahtab and equally was Gandhiji's personality. The idea of non-cooperation movement was a fascinating attempt which should be given effect to paralyse the existing system of administration and every aspect of it by a non-violent process of boycott. It took a firm pledge for the attainment of Swaraj and adopted the policy.

of progressive non-violent, non-cooperation. H.K. Mahtab came back baptised in the new philosophy, ready to jump into the fire any time at any cost. All that he needed was a proverbial last straw.

"Dr. H.K. Mahtab's arrival at Cuttack from Calcutta gave an impetus to 'Bharati Mandir's activities and its members. Within a very short time Naba Krushna Choudhury made up his mind to plunge into the movement. The atmosphere of Non-cooperation Movement had pervaded the whole country and attracted many women too. It was also being discussed at many places of Orissa.

"The regular session of the Congress was held at Nagpur on twenty sixth December, 1920 under the Presidency of C.Vijiaraghabchariar, the final decision on the launching of Non-cooperation Movement took place."

The Indian people now entered the decisive phase of their freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Accordingly the non-violent, Non-cooperation

74. Mahtab, H.K. 'Sadhana Patha' (Oriya), Opp. Cit. p. 27.
75. Patra K.M., 'Oriissa Legislative and Freedom Struggle'. New Delhi, Indian Council of Historical Research, 1979 pp 33-34
Movement was sponsored by the nationalist leaders throughout the country. Likewise thirty five delegates from Orissa including H.K.Mahtab, Gopabandhu Das, Niranjan Pattnaik, Bhagirathi Mohapatra, Jagabandhu Singh, Mukund Prasad Das and Jadumani Mangaraj had attended the historic session at Nagpur. H.K.Mahtab and Bhagirathi Mohapatra were the two to represent the Congress Session on behalf of 'Bharati Mandir'. The Nagpur Congress Session saw a more bitter clash of opinion between pros and cons of non-cooperation movement. Notwithstanding, C.R.Das's different opinion non-cooperation movement motion saw its way through and Mahtab decided once for all to quit college and joined active politics of freedom struggle.76.

"At Nagpur, he came in contact with Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das who had since long given up the lucrative law practice to devote all his time to social service and Mahtab, no doubt, was impressed by the selfless personality of Gopabandhu Das. Then when Gopabandhu Das was elected as the President of the Orissa Congress Party, Mahtab was inducted into its Executive Committee as a Member in 1921 when he was only twenty two years

old". That practically sealed his College life once for all and virtually left him an under graduate. Of course his action had another justification as he joined Non-cooperation Programme which led to the boycott of government educational institutions; law courts and legislatures.

Mahatma Gandhi's all India Non-cooperation Movement was picking up momentum and Mahtab jumped into it heart and soul.

"In the wake of Non-cooperation Movement hundreds of students left their schools and colleges. Lawyers such as Bhagirathi Mohapatra and Jagabandhu Singh gave up their legal practices and Gopabandhu Choudhury resigned from government service. Under the leadership of Mahtab strong waves of Non-cooperation movement began to flood Orissa".

The Non-cooperation Movement in Orissa with the swelling tide of nationalism received a boost after Gandhi's visit to Orissa on Twenty Third March, 1921. Some centres were also established at different parts of Orissa to organise

78. Ibid., p. 35.
the Congress activities, to train workers and volunteers for the movement. Some prominent Centres like 'Swaraj Ashram' at Cuttack, 'Alka Ashram' at Jagatsinghpur and 'Swaraj Mandir' at Balasore were established. Swaraj Mandir was directly under the guidance of Dr. H.K. Mahtab. He set up a 'Swaraj Ashram' at Cuttack and ran it in association with his other colleagues of the freedom movement. In those centres the Congress volunteers were taught how to spread among the villagers the ideas of Non-cooperation and to convince them the desirability of using charakha and establishing Panchayats including national schools.

From Sixth to thirteenth April, 1921 there were many incidents of hartals, picketing and boycott. The election to the legislative assembly was totally boycotted.

Boycott of Schools and Colleges:

"One of the items of the Non-cooperation Programme was the gradual withdrawal of students from government and government-aided schools and colleges. As a response to this appeal of the Congress about two-thirds of the students of Sambalpur Zilla School deserted it on third
January, 1921. They were perhaps the first batch of students in Orissa who withdrew themselves from their educational institution. It is a matter of pride on the part of Orissa that Sambalpur became an example before Calcutta. "Next came the turn of students of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri. From the government records, it is known that 'students' of Orissa withdrew from government schools, and colleges. There was a noisy demonstration in Sambalpur Zilla School and strike at Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. Young Congress leaders like Mahtab played a vital role in making the students boycott a success.

Thus, the non-cooperation Movement in Orissa under the leadership of Dr. H.K. Mahtab attracted a large number of students who later on played important role as freedom fighters.

ASHRAM

"Besides these educational institutions, another set of institutions grew up all over Orissa. These were called Ashrama. "They housed the Non-cooperators.

80. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
The mess of the students Non-cooperators in Cuttack was named as Swaraj Ashram\(^83\). It became the centre of all political activities in Orissa. Mahtab, Surendranath Das, Karunakar Panigrahi and others established the Swaraj Mandir at Balasore.

**BOYCOTT OF FOREIGN GOODS, LAW COURTS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE ARBITRATION COURTS**

"The boycott of foreign goods was an important item of the non-cooperation programmes. Gandhiji had made his ideas clear about the boycott of foreign goods in the Young India"\(^84\). "So also boycott of the law Courts followed by the establishment of Private Arbitration Courts. With the boycott of foreign goods, hand-spinning became popular. Having obtained training the Congress several activist toured the rural areas in order to popularise the Charkha and Khadi\(^85\). Mahtab took active part in making the boycott effective and popularising Swadeshi.

From Sixth to thirteenth April, 1921 incidents of hartals, picketing and boycott became numerous.

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\(^{84}\) Young India, 25th August, 1920, Boycott of Goods and Non-Cooperation.

\(^{85}\) Ibid.
"A regular Constitution of the Congress was adopted and it came into force immediately. Gandhiji toured Orissa in April, 1921. His speeches were like electric shock. Gandhiji took care to see that a hard-working generation is created not only to fight for freedom but also to maintain it after it is achieved.  

During his discussions with Mahtab, he advised the latter not to think of so many things. To think of one aim and to act accordingly, is the only way and the best way to achieve the goal, Mahatma suggested. In pursuance of the party Constitution, the first Provincial Congress Committee was established at Cuttack. Pandit Gopabandhu Das was the President. Dr. Ekrama Rasul was the Vice-President and Sri Bhagirathi Mohapatra became the General Secretary.

Although the spirit was there, the Congress was yet to become an organised strong, well-knit instrument in Orissa suitable for the great fight. It was felt that Mahtab should go to his home district Balasore and organised the party, there. When he alongwith three others reached Balasore, there was a complete 'Bandh' in response to

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86. Mahtab, H.K.; 'While Serving My Nation'; Opp. Cit., p. VI.
a call given by Mahatma Gandhi, for observation of 'National week' from April sixth to April thirteenth, 1921"87. Dr. Mahtab instantly realised 'Gandhiji's powerful influence on the public life even in the absence of a strong political organisation.

"In the pattern of Cuttack 'Swarajya Ashram' he set up a 'Swarajya Mandir' at Balasore, a synonym for Congress Office in those days"88. The Congress Committee at Balasore was formed with Mahtab as the Secretary and Bipin Das as the President.

To propagate the ideals of non-violent, non-cooperation movement he had made arrangements for the publication of a weekly newspaper 'Swarajya Samachar' within a week Congress organisations were opened throughout Balasore District due to the sincere efforts of H.K. Mahtab. He moved from door to door, village to village and addressed public meetings to propagate the Congress idealism and the messages of Gandiji. Thus the course of his freedom struggle movement was in accordance with Gandhian line.

88. Ibid., p. 42.
"Even in an incident, H.K. Mahtab was sent to jail for fifteen days along with five others while protesting against the use of foreign clothes and obstructing the moving trains". Meetings were organised. Mahtab and Krushna Prasad Panigrahi addressed the people narrating how hundreds of people were shot dead at Jallianawallah in protest against Roulatt Act, how new administrative reforms of the British were useless and how to carry on non-violent, non-cooperation movement to achieve Swaraj.

The Government hoped that the movement would not last long to merit any drastic measures. Soon, however, it proved to be a vain hope. The movement showed no signs of abatement. H.K. Mahtab was arrested for spreading disaffection against the government. He was treated as a political prisoner.

"H.K. Mahtab, Gopabandhu Das, Niranjan Pattanaik and Bhagirathi Mohapatra attended the next sitting of the AICC in Bombay on twenty eighth July, 1921. It gave a call for complete boycott of foreign goods by the

91. Ibid. p. 48.
end of September and to boycott the visit of the Prince of Wales. After their return from Bombay, Vigorous Programmes were launched to set fire to heaps of foreign clothes and to start picketing in Orissa. The government officials adopted strong and repressive measures.

On the wake of the non-cooperation movement called by Gandhiji, what H.K. Mahtab learnt from Calcutta and Bombay Sessions of the Indian National Congress was that 'Independence' or 'Swaraj' was the basic goal of a man which keeps him safe against bondage. In order to be free all Indians had a solemn duty to fight with the British. However, as he learnt from Gandhi, he came to terms with all of those one by one under the leadership of Nehru and Sardar Patel.

"On seventeenth November 1921, the day the Prince of Wales landed at Bombay, complete hartal was observed throughout Orissa. At Cuttack, the hartal led to complete suspension of business, but the occasion was not marked by any out-break of lawlessness."

On thirteenth November, 1921 a new provincial working committee was formed under the Presidentship of Dr. H. K. Mahtab and Gopabandhu Das was taken as a member of the Working Committee. In December about one hundred twenty seven delegates from Orissa attended the Annual Congress Session at Ahmedabad. They returned with much enthusiasm to start Civil Disobedience as the next phase of the Movement.
2.2 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT
AND Dr. MAHTAB
2.2 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT AND MAHTAB

"During the non-cooperation movement Gandhiji gave a clarion call for peaceful Civil Disobedience Movement".\(^{94}\). For this of course, the Civil Disobedience Movement was launched in the year 1930 throughout the country. But during 1920-22 Gandhiji gave a call for the same and revoked it subsequently thinking that opportune moment was yet to come. Gandhiji imposed certain conditions that who ever would participate in the Disobedience Movement, should be free from drinking, communal feelings, should be weaving Khadi and Spinning. Everything was ready to launch the movement. But the directive came to suspend the agitation over some violent incident in Chaurichaura".\(^{95}\).

"Some incidents happened immediately after the movement where houses were set on fire at different places in Cuttack. The fire spread to Balasore also. It was like a natural calamity created not occurred by some unnatural process.

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\(^{94}\) Mahtab, H.K.; 'Sadhanara Pathe' (Oriya), Opp. Cit. pp. 53-54.

A fear psychosis spread and people did not leave their houses to go to work. Dr. H.K. Mahtab played a very humane but politically controversial role. He formed a town security committee to oversee the security of the town, provided help to those who did not go to work and to supplied water places to put off the fire.

By all these activities the calamity ended and it was found that a deliberate mischief was made by the police authorities to create a feeling of lawlessness because of the Disobedience Movement.

At that time a tenant movement was gaining momentum in Kanika areas against the oppression of the King of Kanika who was a friend of Britishers. It was obvious that on account of his humanitarianism Mahtab had all his sympathy for the tenants in the movement. Due to this sympathy as well as due to the activities in the Congress Mahtab was arrested and tried for conspiracy against the state under Section 108 of Cr. P.C. He was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment in 1922. After remaining

96. Parida, Bisuambar; 'Prajatantra Itibruta' in Prajatantra Silver Jubilee Special (Oriya (ed.), 1972, p. 211.
two months in Cuttack Jail he was transferred to Bhagalpur Central Jail where he spent the rest of the term. Mahtab did not care at all for jail life. He said, in this connection, "Life is the arena of battle field, and success lies with the person who faces such danger for making mother India free from bondage".

"After his release in 1923, the situation in Orissa and elsewhere also was depressing". He had to see that the Congress spirit was kept up Mahtab did not stop at this point. He started the weekly Prajatantra in Oriya at Cuttack which was shifted to Balasore to keep the non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi alive.

Mahatma Gandhi toured in Orissa in 1927 and stayed in a village in Bhadrak for three days. Mahtab was convinced that Mahatma Gandhi meant non-cooperation movement as some action. Here Mahtab acquainted Gandhi with the economic situation of Orissa. Besides agriculture salt making was the subsidiary industry which was maintaining the peasantry. "Gandhi perhaps took up the case for salt Satyagraha as he was convinced by Mahtab that salt was

While Salt Satyagraha was started in 1930, H.K. Mahtab was charged with organising it in Balasore as it was not feasible elsewhere. The Salt Satyagraha was an impressive success in Orissa especially in the district of Balasore, thanks to the efforts of H.K. Mahtab.

"Then a new chapter was opened in the history of the struggle for freedom in India as the famous resolution of Civil Disobedience was adopted in the historical session of the Congress at Lahore". Again Gandhi gave a fervent call to the countrymen. It also gathered momentum in Orissa. In the meanwhile after the death of Gopabandhu Das, H.K. Mahtab was nominated as the new President of the Congress in Orissa with Gopabandhu Choudhury as the Secretary.

"Violation of Salt Law was adopted as the first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement. H.K. Mahtab thought of such a violation much before". In 1927, while Gandhiji visited Orissa during the month of December, Mahtab told him during the process of conversation that

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98. Ibid., p. viii.
for the coastalites of Balasore a Salt Satyagraha was a matter of necessity.

"However, the most anxious moment came on March thirtieth of 1930 when Orissa Congress Committee under the Presidentship of Mahtab passed the resolution for the violation of the Salt Law. As Mahtab was quite firm regarding its success at Balasore, so Balasore was chosen of the first place for this movement". H.K. Mahtab was a man of action. A Committee was constituted under the Presidentship of Dr. H.K. Mahtab to launch Civil Disobedience Movement. The Congress leaders Dr. Mahtab and Surendranath Das prepared the ground of Inchuri for the beginning of the movement in the province. In fact, they could so thoroughly inject the spirit of nationalism into the minds of the villagers and rouse their patriotic sentiments that their exemplary tenacity and courage throughout the movement were much appreciated. "On the basis of the government report, it was claimed that the Salt Satyagraha at Inchuri occupied the second place in India the first being Gujrat where Gandhiji himself led the movement."

101. Ibid.

"After the breaking of Salt Law by Gandhiji at Dandi, hundreds of volunteers men and women poured into Inchuri urged by the passionate desire to participate in the Salt campaign. Thus started the Civil Disobedience Movement. The volunteers defied laws tolerated, police Zoolum and courted arrest. In spite of the arrest of the leaders and Sundry breakers of Salt Laws, the movement continued unabated. It spread to Basta, Bhadrak, Kujanga, Astaranj, and the Chilika area, undaunted by the arrest, several successive batches of Satyagrahis proceeded towards Inchuri from different parts of Orissa. On seventeenth April, 1930, H.K.Mahtab and Gopabandhu Choudhury were arrested and sent to Hazaribag Jail for one and half years".

The arrest of H.K.Mahtab and Mr. Choudhury led to a hartal in Balasore, Cuttack and Puri meetings, demonstration, boycott of examinations by the students and such other disturbances. Undaunted by Police repression, the woman folk, Satyagrahis of the neighbouring villages and towns joined the movement to break the government's Salt Law.

103. Ibid, P. 130.
The Salt Satyagraha was a great success for Mahtab in the district of Balasore where it was conducted by the Pradesh Congress Committee. Inchuri was the Second Dandi in the history of the freedom movement in India. "The mass Civil Disobediance in Orissa was considered only second to the movement in Gujarat where Gandhiji himself had taken the lead."^104.

When the movement was in the highest crescendo, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of fifth March, 1931 came like anti-climax dampening the spirit of Nationalism.

As a result of Gandhi-Irwin Pact Mahtab was released alongwith others before the expiry of the term.

Orissa invited the Annual Session of the Congress to be held at Puri in 1931. H.K.Mahtab was put in-charge. of organising the session. Again after Gandhiji return from the Round Table Conference.

"Satyagraha started in 1932, Mahtab was sentenced to six months imprisonment while Mahtab was in Hazaribag

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Jail with his wife, his father died causing him a great shock." This was one of many personal losses he suffered during freedom movement but nothing could divert him.

"When Mahtab was set free from imprisonment he came back to Orissa. Gandhi had already suspended Satyagraha due to unsatisfactory response and "advised all workers to adopt some village for carrying on constructive work as much as they could even individually." 106.

"At the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee held at Balasore it was resolved to urge the Indian National Congress to expedite the formation of the Separate Orissa Province. He urged the Orissa Congress to fight first for 'Swaraj' Attainment of the country's independence, he was sure, would be followed by the redressal of the Orissa grievances." 107. "He said that the creation of separate Orissa Province would automatically follow 'Swaraj' like day following dawn." 108. "The Utkal Provincial Congress Committee at its meetings held on third May 1931 adopted the resolution moved by Mahtab which urged upon the

Government to establish separate Orissa Province. In order to pursue the matter at all India levels, a Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Pandit Nilakantha Dash who was empowered even to cooperate with the British authorities on this matter without, of course any deviation from the Congress principles.\(^{109}\)

"Finally on the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee in November, 1934, the New Province of Orissa emerged on first April 1936 raising its total area from 21,545 to 32,925 square miles.\(^{110}\) For this the credit should go to Dr. H.K. Mahtab. Thus Mahtab as the undisputed leader of Congress could be justifiably termed as Maker of Orissa State.

"The formation of a separate province created a new situation. In 1937 the Congress decided to participate in elections in order to work out the Government of India Act, 1935. As the President of the Orissa Congress Committee Mahtab organised the election and the Congress won in

\(^{109}\) The Samaj; 6-5-1931.

Orissa. However, in 1938, Subash Chandra Bose, the President of the Indian National Congress nominated Mahtab to the Working Committee of the All India Congress. Then Mahtab was the youngest member of the Committee. Thus it was Netaji who brought Mahtab into national politics"\textsuperscript{111}.

"In 1940 it was decided by Mahatma Gandhi to launch individual disobedience in place of mass disobedience. Though the movement of such type was started in November 1940, Orissa, under the leadership of Mahtab, started it on December one, 1940. On that day the following the speeches in a meeting at Remuna in the district of Balasore, Mahtab was arrested and was awarded one year jail term. He was imprisoned in Berhampur jail and had a chance to come in close contact with other grassroots leaders"\textsuperscript{112}. However, during 1941 Mahatma Gandhi, apprehending a critical situation during the Great War (Second World War) called it off.

Mahtab was released from jail. During this time a fear psychosis prevailed throughout the state about the

\textsuperscript{111} Mahtab, H.K.; 'While Servin My Nation', Opp. Cit. p. ix.
\textsuperscript{112} Nayak, Mohan; 'Sanskaraka Mahatabji', Jayanti Abhinandan Granth (ed.): 1982, n. 67.
Japanese occupation of India. For Mahtab it was slavery in another form with a new master. Mahtab and Miraben travelled extensively throughout Orissa in order to awaken people and prepare themselves both mentally and physically to protest if such apprehension came true.

Mahtab was a man of action. He always considered the political life as a challenge. He felt politicians should face it with courage. He therefore, fought like a true Kshyatriya.

However, after long practical deliberations, the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch Quit India Movement.

One thing Mahtab assiduously inculcated in the minds of Oriyas during Civil Disobedience Movement was creation and crystallisation of fearlessness. He and his followers reached the people in time of any provocation, any case of panic Mahtab and his colleagues identified themselves with common people. Whether it was fire at Cuttack or Balasore, peasant movement at Kanika he stood by the people which gave them courage and confidence.
to face the problem. Salt Movement was an issue which had positive impact in generating sense of freedom from fear, tenacity to protest against something unjust, the conviction for the rightful demand and above all rejecting fear as if it was something phoney. But more important was that the issue of Salt Movement which became known as Gandhiji's unique way of creating a cause of action on common man's problems in countryside, really originated from Mahtab in this part of the country. Though the world came to know about this from Gandhiji's famous Dandi March, but the pilot project of experiment in Orissa was at Inchuri in Balasore where Mahtab organised it in his own humble way. This was one of the issues which helped Mahtab come closer to Mahatma.
2.3 QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT AND MAHTAB
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The Quit India Movement is an important landmark in the freedom struggle of India, in which Orissa played a very significant role. It assumed the character of a mass movement in many places of Orissa. This way "the last phase of the struggle for the attainment of freedom in India, Orissa played a special role in this movement", only for H.K. Mahtab. A Session was held on August seventh, 1942 at Bombay to give effect to resolution of Quit India Movement.

The freedom struggle in Orissa between the Orissan aggressive and the European scientific generated a spirit of revivalism in it.

"At the Bombay Session held on eight August, 1942, All India Congress Committee resolved to launch the Quit India Movement to cast final blow against the British Imperialism. It was the culmination of Mahtab's philosophy for freedom struggle. Dr. Mahtab, Radhakrushna Biswas Roy, Smt. Malti Devi and Surendra Dwivedi attended the

Session of the Congress on ninth August, 1942. Dr. Mahtab and Pandit Govind Ballav Pant were the guests of Raja Govindalal Pivi. There, Mahtab was arrested by the Police and was imprisoned at Ahmedanagar Fort from August, 1942 to April 1945. From April 1945, solitary imprisonment was also given to him at Sambalpur Jail.\textsuperscript{114}

At the same time, in Orissa, the government by Gazettee notification declared all Congress institutions in the Province as illegal. All the Provinces were seized by the Police by tenth August 1942. All the district level, prominent Congress Workers were arrested by the police.

"Dr. Mahtab spent his prison life with much stress and strain". The period of confinement was a suitable time for developing the habit of reading, writing, including gardening.\textsuperscript{115} In his day to day work, he was practising "Asana" and 'Pranayam'. In his routine life, he was very helpful and affectionate to others. "During three years of his confinement, he was regularly reading Sanskrit under the guidance of Acharya Narendra Dev. He got an

\textsuperscript{114} Mahtab, H.K.; 'Sadhanara Patna' (Oriya), Opp. Cit. pp. 238-42.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 241.
apportunity there to write the History of Orissa besides his three books on poetry, three novels and a number of poems. He laboured hard for two and half years to complete his work on the History of Orissa. He wrote a dictionary from English to Oriya". Imprisonment either at Ahmedanagar or Sambalpur did not have any adverse impact on Mahtab. Neither the glow in him mellowed nor the urge to conquer waned. He daringly withstood this period of confinement with his inimitable courage, calm temperament and grace. Rather he converted this phase of British cruelty to a period of opportunity by producing volumes in Oriya literature, culture, and history. H.K.Mahtab did not care at all for 'Jail Life'. He said, in this connection; "Life is the arena of battle field, and success lies with the persons who face such danger for freeing mother Utkal from bondage".

"Mahtab's arrest in August 1942 alongwith other national leaders had a widespread reaction in Orissa. The Quit India Movement assumed the character of a formidable mass uprising in the backward district of Koraput which

was mostly inhabited by the Adivasis. After the suppression of the movement by the arrest of leaders, the movement was started at Jeypore. Meanwhile the Congress workers started picketing before the excise shops, courts and the government institutions in Sonepur. At the Lakshmipur Police Station some records were burnt by the furious mob at the instigation of Mahtab. At papadahandi Police Station due to police firing twelve persons died on the spot and three succumbed to injuries in hospital later on. In Cuttack district after the arrest of the leaders, the students of the Ravenshaw College and other educational institutions carried on the movement. They resorted to strikes. The Congress volunteers pasted posters in various places asking the Government officials to resign and the people to stop payment of taxes and carry on various subversive activities. For this the credit should go to Dr. Mahtab since these activities were planned by him. In Balasore district the Police oppression became most horrible. At several places of the Balasore district clashes took place between the Police and the revolutionary mob. The heroic personality of H.K. Mahtab was beyond challenge.

117. Ibid. p. 247.
"The most ghastly act of the police oppression took place in the Eram Village situated in the Basudevpur area. Eram is one of the twenty five villages in the Basudevpur area. The area according to the official report had become a strong centre of Congress activity. On twenty eighth September 1942 a Police Party came to the village Eram to arrest some leaders. On the arrival of the Police, armed with lathis several people gathered. The police asked the mob to disperse. But the aggressive mob, instead of dispersing attacked the police. Police started firing. They fired one hundred thirty rounds.\textsuperscript{118} Eventhough the fighting was going on, Mahtab did not lose hope. It appeared to him that the crimson rays of the departing sun focussing through the hill gaps of Orissa begged farewell from the Bondage India..................

The sentiment of Mahtab is clearly evidenced from this statement. To what extent he is a patriot, it is impossible to measure but he is more anxious to attain Swaraj than anything else.

Mahtab was entirely in accord with the views of Tilak while he believed that "Swaraj is must, and I will have it".

Dr. Mahtab was conceived with resolutionary thoughts. His ideas turned out as bullets. "According to the official report twenty six persons were killed and fifty four persons injured and according to the unofficial estimate thirty persons were killed and one hundred seven persons were injured. The Eram tragedy is similar to the Jallianawalabagh incident of the Punjab". It may be mentioned here that Mahtab had maximum influence in this area, since Mahtab was more a politician than a political philosopher.

"Dr. H.K. Mahtab was a man of blood and iron policy so far his vision towards Swaraj was concerned. Therefore an underground organisation was formed by the Congress socialist leaders of Orissa to carry on the Civil Disobedience Movement. On behalf of this underground organisation, Surendranath Dwivedi and H.K. Mahtab issued secret bulletins, appealing to the Police to give up their jobs and not to persecute the Congress workers, and asking the public to cut off communications and destruct governmental records, stopping of payment of taxes and burn the police uniforms".

119. Ibid., p. 335.
120. Ibid p. 336.
"In 1943, the political situation of Orissa had become quiet. The end of the Second World War and the Victory of the Labour Party in the Post-War election of England almost made it certain that the British would give Independence to India in near future"121.

Thus the dawn of Swaraj approached Orissa. On May, 1944 Mahatma Gandhi was released from jail. The other leaders were also released. After the release of Mahtab, the people of Orissa were awakened with a ray of hope for freedom, peace and prosperity under the banner of his towering personality and leadership.

The teeming lakhs of poor had reposed faith on this man that he had lead them to see the light of freedom was again to lead them on the path of progress and stability. But this was more a herculean task before Mahtab. Of course he was prepared to pick up the gauntlet with his usual calm and quiet, courage, mentally equipped to start his second phase of public activity. The first was to attain independence where as the second one was to justify and retain independence.

"Dr. H.K. Mahtab and the Congress leaders were released from jail for the purpose of holding discussions with the Viceroy Lord Wavell at Simla. The Simla talks ended in frasco because of the adamant attitude of the Muslim League Leader Mahammed Alli Jinnah. Dr. Mahtab analysed the Congress stand and the reasons for the failure of Simla Conference. He exhorted the people to have courage and act as members of one nation irrespective of the profession they choose.\footnote{Mahtab, H.K., 'History of Orissa', Vol. II, Prajatantra Prachar Samiti, Cuttack, 1960, p. 500.}

The Congress had a clear victory in the elections held in 1946 to form an interim government. In Orissa, the Congress, under the towering leadership of H.K. Mahtab captured 47 seats out of 60 in the Provincial Legislative Election. The Congress formed the ministry with Dr. H.K. Mahtab as its Premier.

Dr. Mahtab had a passionate love for India's Independence. He always clamoured for the government of the people, by the people and for the people.
Though the country attained independence on fifteen August 1947, for the country in general and Orissa in particular the vital problem of merger of Princely States remained to be solved. The Independence of India on fifteen August was happy augury of that new era and the culmination of a long period of suffering and sacrifice.

Thus the history of Freedom Struggle Movement in Orissa under the leadership of Mahtab remained an exhaustive source of inspiration for future politicians in Orissa. Thus as a veteran freedom fighter, Mahtab had come into intimate contact with the great leaders like Patel, Azad, Nehru and followed Gandhian doctrines in Non-cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Quit India Movement to achieve 'Purna Swarajya'. He was a leader of the people in launching Gandhiji's extensive programmes in Orissa. His firmness and sterness in working out Gandhiji's ideas in Orissa, dauntless courage, indomitable will power and thirst to make India Independent from foreign domination had made him an undisputed leader in Orissa and India as a whole.