CHAPTER - III

DR. MAHTAB AS PRIME MINISTER
(1946-1950)
In Dr. H. K. Mahtab's long political career the four year period of '1946 - 1950' was the first taste of governance. This was the time when he was seated at the steering wheel of running the state as the head of a democratic government. This was a crucial phase for him as under his stewardship state would prepare itself to have an independent status and in the period of teething trouble the province had to face just after attaining freedom.

In Government of India Act of 1935, the foundation was laid for election of representatives to the Orissa Legislative Assembly. Dr. Mahtab was elected to the Assembly from east Bhadrak General Constituency as a member of Indian National Congress and formed the Ministry on the twenty-third April, 1946. The elected members belonging to Indian National Congress formed a majority in a house of sixty and Mahtab was elected as the leader of the House. Under the provisions of this Act, the Governor was the appointing authority of the ministers. But the instructions laid down that he was to appoint the ministers in consultation with the leader of the House. The Congress formed the ministry with H. K. Mahtab as its Premier.
Dr. H.K. Mahtab was the natural choice of everybody from Congressmen to legislators and party leaders in Orissa. Having taken up the reins of administration of Orissa with a lot of good-will Dr. Mahtab put his heart and soul into the work. The Premiership of Orissa at that time was not a bed of roses. There were all sorts of problems. But the man at the wheel displayed a strength of character and a will and determination to carry on the work inspite of all odds. He had a domineering personality and his knowledge of facts, practical commonsense, firmness, sympathetic understanding of every situation and a proper approach, enabled him to steer the ship of State steadily forward without allowing it to flounder. The most remarkable trait in him was that he had a temper that never felt tired and even in the midst of depressing situations he never showed any signs of irritation or mental agitation. He remained calm and composed with an indomitable will power to conquer every ill.

Socrates said that the greatest ideal of a man should be 'know thyself'. Knowledge of men and things is an essential attribute of an administrator. But in order to understand others one must understand one's own-self.
His varied experience before coming to power gave him the key to such knowledge. Besides he tried to seek knowledge from all sources and from all the four winds of heaven. He was never satisfied with what he knew. His thirst for knowledge was endless. Any administrator, specially one who deals with the development of the state, has to take risks. He should be very careful and tactful in all his dealings and in all his attempts to develop the states. Orissa, mostly in common with the rest of India had been for almost one and half centuries under the tutelage of a system of administration devised by the British wherein a portion was directly under the British Administration and the rest under its indirect rule was managed by the Princes. This link was very oppressive to the people in general. The new system of administration based on the will of the people expressed during election had to be in the closest touch with the needs, desires and the outlook of the masses - who were the voters. They needed food, they needed clothes, they needed shelter, they required more education, higher economic status and better health. All these required careful planning by the State. Keeping this in mind Dr.Mahtab went ahead with his mission of building a modern Orissa.
Before proceeding further to evaluate the achievement of Dr. H.K. Mahtab as Prime Minister and as Chief Minister of Orissa (after that the New Constitution came into force), let us have a look at the political developments in the feudatory states where people were living in abysmal conditions. "Most of the states were outside the pale of modern civilization. Even High Schools were non-existent. Outside newspapers were not allowed in, Khadi and Gandhi cap were banned and every thing was done to see that the 'subjects' did not establish contact with the Gandhians in the neighbouring provinces. The ruler was regarded as the 'moving incarnation of Lord Vishnu 'who must be worshipped by the people whenever he would come out of his palace. Some of the rulers were notorious for their savagery. There were, however, a few enlightened ones just exceptions to the rule".  

"But the people in the native states expectedly did not remain unaffected by the goings on in the neighbouring British Orissa. Gradually, political consciousness dawned on them and they could realise their helpless

position under the feudal lords. In Orissa the political awakening in the native states was noticed as early as 1931. Some enthusiasts among the political elements conceived the idea of forming a political organisation for preparing the people of the states to carry on agitations against the rulers.

In 1931 a small organisation called "Garajat Praja Sammilani" was set up by Balunkeswar Acharya, Radhanath Rath, H.K. Mahtab (who later played a prominent role in the politics of the State), and some others. But due to various reasons the organisation could not make much head-way until 1936 when the Congress took up the cause of the people of the States. The Praja Sammilani was revived. In 1937 Pattabhi Sitaramayya, one of the members of the All India States peoples Standing Committee, visited Orissa and presided over a meeting of the Praja Sammilani which was thereafter named Orissa States 'peoples Conference, popularly known as 'Praja Mandal'. Thus the struggle for freedom started in the states in an organised manner in 1938.

"Within a couple of years the Praja Mandal reaped the fruits of its popular agitations in Nilagiri, Dhenkanal and Talcher States". In Dhenkanal eighteen persons including Baji Rout, a brave and legendary boatman boy of 12 (twelve), was shot down by the Police. In Talcher, Bika Nayak, a Praja Mandal worker was killed by the Police in September 1938. The people of Talcher finding the repression too severe resorted to a mass exodus under the leadership of Pabitra Mohan Pradhan. At Ranpur in 1939 the political agent Major Bazəlgeçte was beaten to death by the people when he had gone there with a small police force to help the ruler. Likewise, the Prajamanda Movement spread to the States like Athagarh, Nayagarh, Khandapara and other Garjat States in Orissa.

"By this time, long before India attained Independence Congress under the leadership of Dr.H.K.Mahtab had been pleading for the merger of 26 Native States including Saraikal and Kharsuan with the 'British Orissa' in the common interest of people of both the areas. Dr.Mahtab was appointed the Chairman of the Committee, which the All India States

125. Rath, Bijay Chandra; 'Prajamandal Movement in Orissa', Orissa Review, August 1989, pp. 120-121.
Peoples' Conference had set up, to go into the grievances of the people of Orissa States. In 1939 the non-official Committee recommended. That 'in view of the inherent inability of Orissa States to support popular enlightened administration within their areas and in view of the inevitability of a strong and irresistible popular demand from the people of these states for the rights of self-government and self-determination the 'Sanands' 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, Kunjang, Kanika etc. That this could be done without doing any violence to the rights of these chiefs, will be clear from a perusal and examination of their original status. The acceptance of this recommendation will bring these states under the Jurisdiction of autonomous provinces and the people concerned will be enabled to join hands with their brethren in the Province of Orissa in their attempts to solve the problems common to them all'.

"The situation became complicated after Independence when the feudatory states in India were proclaimed as

sovereign and made the Independence Act, 1947. However, when Dr. Mahtab tried his best for amalgamation of these princely states with Orissa after Independence as the Premier of the State, R.N. Singh Deo, the King of Bolangir - Patna wanted to achieve political gain out of it by antimerger activities and slogans".128

"However, when the demand for responsible government took a definite turn and the administration in the States was on the verge of collapse, some of the rulers, in their anxiety to sabotage the popular movement, incited the adivasis, as a result of which violent disturbances occurred in Bamra, Pallahara, Bonai, Gangpur and other places and the State of Nilgiri figured prominently in this connection".129 As lawlessness and insecurity of life and property in this particular state became acute, the Central Government intervened and the State Administration was taken over by the Orissa Government in November, 1947. This was followed by the passing of the Extra Provincial Jurisdiction Act by the Dominion Parliament and then followed the Merger Plan of the Home Ministry. Dr. Mahtab played

128. Ibid., p. 61.
an active role in these matters both as the Premier of Orissa as well as the friend of the suffering people of Garjat States. It was due to Dr. Mahtab in particular that the Orissa States were the first to sign an agreement with the Government of India. On December fourteenth and fifteenth 1947 at Cuttack where the rulers handed over the administration of their states to the Dominion Government in perpetuity, who on their part delegated the administrative power to the provincial government of Orissa in order that these states should be merged with the province in due course. "Only Mayurbhanj was left out of the agreement on the ground that the ruler had then set up a Government composed of 'popular representatives' and so could not make any commitment without consulting his ministers". The government then delegated to the Government of Orissa the power to administer the Orissa States in the same manner as the districts in that province. "The merger of the twenty five states came into force from January First, 1948. But, in the course of the year, the Ruler of Mayurbhanj himself got disgusted with his own Government and pleaded for a take over of the State and

on January 1st 1949, the State was merged with the province of Orissa. But it was quite unfortunate that Saraikala and Kharsuan were returned to Bihar on May Sixteenth, 1948 which Dr. Mahtab after all his efforts, could not help.¹³¹

"For the amalgamation of the Princely States Sardar Patel is crowned as "Bismarck of India". But, behind it the role of Dr. Mahtab was quite significant not only in Orissa, but also in India. "Had Mahtab done only this without doing whatever he has done, definitely history would have remembered him."¹³³ If any leader of Orissa could claim any credit for the merger of the feudatory states with the Orissa Province, it was Dr. Mahtab who tenaciously worked to bring about the merger and ultimately succeeded in giving Orissa its present shape. "Dr. Mahtab can rightly be called the maker of Greater Orissa."¹³⁴

¹³² Ibid., p. 10.
¹³³ Ibid., p. 10
¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 10.
3.1 LEGISLATIVE ROLE
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A legislative leader's role is best reflected in the Bills introduced by Dr. Mahtab during his tenure as the leader of the house. During Dr. Mahtab's tenure many legislations were brought in pertaining to different sectors of administration. Dr. Mahtab himself piloted many bills. "Just before Independence in June, 1947, Orissa Agricultural Income Tax Bill, 1946 brought by Dr. Mahtab was passed wherein provision was made for imposition of Tax on those agriculturists whose income was more than Rs. 50,000/- (Fifty Thousand). But out of that Rs. 3,000/- (Rupees three thousand) was to be taxes" 135.

When he brought amendments to Orissa Stamp Act, he said "When the prices went up and tendency of inflation was noticed this act and some other acts were enacted in this province and elsewhere too. Now the prices continue to be high and inflation is also there. Therefore, we thought that these measures should continue as they are" 136.

"Before Independence, two bills, 'Orissa Opium Smoking Bill' and 'Bihar and Orissa Excise (Orissa Amendment) Bill, 'were passed in the House to check addiction to different kinds of intoxicants. On thirty first March, 1947 the Opium Smoking Bill was moved by Sri N.K. Choudhury, in the House and also was adopted on the same day".\textsuperscript{137} Dr. Mahtab's argument was that smoking is injurious to health\textsuperscript{a} provided punishment for the offenders. The Bihar and Orissa Excise (Orissa Amendment) Act, 1947 which was introduced and adopted in the House on Second June, 1947 empowered the Government to prohibit any or all kinds of intoxicants either in the whole province or any part of it.

"As measures of social reform Dr. Mahtab's Government passed Orissa temple entry authorisation and indemnity Bill, 1947 facilitating entry of Harijans into temples. Supporting his steps eminent Legislator Laxminarayan Mishra described him as "a reformer and sincere patriot"\textsuperscript{138} in house. Piloting these bills himself Dr. Mahtab stressed upon the social Malady of untouchability. He said, the

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., pp. 95–96.
problem can't be solved by any governmental measure. ......... That can be solved only by the activities of the reformers on a large scale. ......... "It is for the government to rise to the occasion only, as it arises from time to time. The rest is for the reformers to do." ¹³⁹ So also to give power to people it was thought to strengthen Gram Panchayat and for that purpose uniform Gram Panchayat Act for the entire State was passed in the Assembly along with subsequent amendments during 1948 to 1950." ¹⁴⁰

"Abolition of Zamindari was a major programme of Congress Party. Dr. Mahtab decided to implement it in the manner of merger of princely states after having a dialogue with all concerned. He discussed with Maharajas of Jajpur and Paralakhemundi and a prominent Zamindar of Orissa Sir M.M. Bose, the then advocate-general of West Bengal. He placed the Bill on the floor of Assembly wherein some compensation provision was there. But after he went to the Centre, this special provision was omitted from the Bill." ¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹. Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'Sadhanara Pathe', (0), Opp. Cit.; pp. 382-383.
"During Dr. Mahtab's premiership, a bill was brought for the proper management of Puri Sri Jagannath Temple."\textsuperscript{142}

**BUDGET**

In the budget estimates for the year 1946-47, Dr. Mahtab gave a detailed account of various projects to be undertaken in the province. He said, "Industries owned, controlled and financed by State industries and laissez faire are the alternatives that are before the government in any scheme which the Government may evolve, the interest of labour as such will be safe-guarded."\textsuperscript{143}

At the same time the Government did not like to neglect the development of small scale and cottage industries and large scale industries were made to work together on close co-operation. "A tentative scheme for development of village industries were framed."\textsuperscript{144}

Placing the budget for 1947-48 he said, "It is not the budget which should determine the needs of the

\textsuperscript{142} Orissa Legislative Assembly Proceedings, 1948, p. 138.
province but at in the needs of the people which should determine the budget. The Speciality of 1947-48 is on account of post-war development schemes and more than one-third of budgeted expenditure is on account of new post-war schemes. He gave special stress on education including college stage except to children of such parents assessed for income tax or agricultural tax who would be liable to pay fees at half rates.

"The major source of State's revenue i.e. sales tax was introduced through the Orissa Sales Tax Bill, in the Assembly on eleventh March, 1947. Dr. Mahtab's sincerity about expanding the revenue base of State was evident from his statement on the floor of the house. At present our Finance Department is engaged in finding out various other possible sources of increasing our revenue and this source is one of the main sources of revenue. He said while presenting the budget for 1948-49, Dr. mahtab termed the year 1947-48, "of epoch making history and such a year does hardly recure in hundreds of years in the life history of a nation. Besides independence of nation

146. Ibid., 1947, p. 108.
followed by the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi in Orissa amalgamation of princely States with province was a historic event. Another event which Dr. Mahtab termed as "historic" was "the opening of Great Jagannath Temple to the Harijans". Dr. Mahtab said, "the reform effected in the temple of Lord Jagannath is the beginning of the end of untouchability".

In 1948-49 budget a small but important major event worth mentioning was the abolition of the Sarbarkari System in Government estates in Khurda, Banki, Angul and Collection of Government revenues was made through the agency of paid officials. "In order to increase food production, a food production campaign was started with subsidy provided for those cultivators, who would participate in it".

In Industrial Sector, a number of new schemes were announced viz., establishment of wool-weaving demonstration, development of sericulture and tasser rearing, new industrial schools, leasing of hide monopoly of Angul establishment of a commercial Library at Cuttack, research in tannery and development

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149. Ibid., 1948, p. 19.
150. Ibid., 1949-50, p. 22.
of hand spinning and hand-weaving etc. Cottage Industry was given importance. Government decided to invest money in the shares of commercial concerns. It was announced that Orissa would soon have an engineering College. The Budget was solely for Orissa province as it was indicated that separate budgets were being prepared for the merged princely states.

"Presenting the budget for 1949-50, Dr. H.K. Mahtab said the state was faced with a critical financial situation which might develop into a crisis. The reasons were cut in centre's commitment and merger of States. So some new schemes were to be postponed and some modified" 151.

In the budget of 1949-50 a huge sum was provided for expending on Hirakud Project. Likewise provision was made for the construction of new Capital at Bhubaneswar. Dr. Mahtab expressed hope that within a year or so it would be possible to shift the Capital to Bhubaneswar. Funds were provided for Duduma Hydro-electric Project and Cuttack Thermal-Electric Schemes. In order to facilitate

Government recruitment it was decided to constitute a public Service Commission, Provision was made for new High Court. In health sector Government decided to open Ayurvedic School and Hospital at Puri and a T.B.Hospital. Efforts were made alongwith budgetary support for setting up of synthetic petrol from Coal Project, alloy and Steel factory, cement factory. Dr.Mahtab expected some special grants and loans from Centre for different schemes during the year.

While mentioning that financial crisis has over taken the entire country Dr.Mahtab told the Orissa legislative Assembly placing the budget for 1950-51 "I am glad to say that we have been able to run the show as best as we can and avoid a financial crisis". This showed his efficient budgeting for the fifth consecutive year and able financial management.

3.2 ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE
3.2 ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE

In the administrative side, the first task before Dr. Mahtab was to manage the bureaucracy which was till yesterday working against countrymen at the instance of British Bosses. Dr. Mahtab found that the officers who had earned bad name of being repressive immediately turned to be patriots. To put the bureaucracy to nation building work the political leadership had to be more competent in all spheres i.e. physical strength, ability to grasp and above all influence over masses, he observed. Accordingly he tuned his style of functioning.

Rarely it is found that a good legislators can become a good executive head. Unless one understanding the style of functioning in a bureaucracy inherited from a colonial rule, it is difficult for any executive head to be able to get the policies of the government translated into action. Dr. Mahtab with a strong base in grass-root politics and being actively associated with freedom struggle had wide experience in the understanding of the working methods. So as soon as he assumed the Premier-ship, he issued instructions from time to time to the erring
bureaucrats to change the functioning of the administrative machinery.

It would not be an exaggeration to mention Dr. Mahtab's efforts to encourage, inspire and advise his Government officers who were responsible for the smooth functioning of the Government Machinery.

He wrote to the Officers, "the work of the government is mainly to enunciate policies. But for the details, the officers must rely entirely on their own initiative. A policy enunciated by the government depends for its success on the ability of the local officers to whom its execution is entrusted".  

Dr. Mahtab as premier of Orissa, improved the administration of Orissa. His great advantage was his extraordinary capacity to have a clear conception of the problems confronting him as the administrative head of the State. He was not reluctant to take action against the defaulting officers of the State. In one of his letters on twenty-sixth January, 1949, addressed to all high officers,

he wrote, "As it appears to me for the improvement of
the administration it will be necessary to take drastic
steps against some officers who are found guilty of loosseness
and inefficiency". He had convinced his officers by writing
letters that. "Various development programme for which
money had been provided should be executed as expeditiously
as posible, on the execution of these works rests not
only the reputation of the Government but the confidence
of the people in the Government".154.

With an intention to eradicate corruption he wrote,
"Bribery and corruption must be rooted out at any cost.
I would not mind if our officers become overzealeus in
this matter and tend to go beyond the four corners of
the rule in awarding punishment of real culprit".155.

As per the notification of the President of the Executive Council, Dr. Mahtab was helped by an advisory body consisting of Kapileswar Nanda from Bolangir, Kailash Chandra Mohanty from Nilgiri and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan from Dhenkanal. All were members of Executive Council in administration of ex-state areas. Dr. Mahtab also represented as a member from Orissa in the Constituent Assembly of India for drafting the Indian Constitution. He kept very close and effective liaison with the Central Government and the Congress Parliamentary Board which paid him good dividends in public life.\textsuperscript{156}

The duties and responsibility of Ministers were enormous and they tried to play their role with courage.

and confidence. On the very day of their assuming office, orders were passed for the release of political prisoners and withdrawal of pending political cases and cancellation of warrants.

Orissa Government took steps for enrolment of Oriyas in the army. The then army-chief was invited to Orissa and he announced his decisions for immediate recruitment from the State. To bring the State at par with other developed states, Dr. Mahtab, as head of the Government took a decision to get experts from other places of the country. Likewise to send Oriya students and trainees to outside institute of learning, Dr. Mahtab created a loan stipend fund for them.

The Cabinet decided to give pension or financial assistance to the family members of the martyrs of the freedom movement and also to the freedom fighters who had become incapacitated participating in the movement. It was also decided to construct a hall as a memorial for the martyrs at Cuttack. Such was the works of Dr. Mahtab as head of the government.

Importance of Dr. Mahtab will be more visible from the Departments of the Government of Orissa of which he
had exclusive responsibility to see the kind of developmental activities, he initiated and implemented during his tenure.

During his four year tenure Dr. Mahtab directly managed many important portfolios like Home, Finance, Planning and Reconstruction, Revenue, River Valley Development, Public Relations etc.

**HOME**

"Dr. Mahtab's government was faced with the first law and order problem in 1946 when at Bhadrak there was a clash between Muslim Processionists and Police. Two persons were killed whereas and some were injured in police firing. Dr. Mahtab was shocked at this news and he immediately ordered for judicial inquiry by an English Judge. But the communal situation in other parts of the country had its reflection in Orissa and tension was mounting in Cuttack and Balasore Districts. It was due to Dr. Mahtab's subtle handling of the situation no untoward situation occurred."\(^{157}\). There was some tension in South Orissa on Telugu-Oriya question. Dr. Mahtab wrote

\(^{157}\) Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'Sandhanara Pathe', (Oriya) Opp. Cit. p.257.
to Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Patal "As you know, the Telugus are agitating for a separate province"\textsuperscript{158}.

On first July, 1949, Dr. Mahtab in a secret note to Prime Minister, Nehru referred about the problem in Ganjam District created by Andhras. He said "The Andhras are now the most communal minded people. Some of them have made it a business to preach communalism of the worst type"\textsuperscript{159}.

"In the communal riots at Calcutta during August, 1946, seven hundred fifty Oriyas were reportedly killed and fifteen hundred injured. Oriyas lost around rupees twenty five lakhs worth of properties. Dr. Mahtab took steps for adequate compensation and ensured security to Oriya students by Bengal Government"\textsuperscript{160}.

"In the administration of the State particularly in respect of law and order Dr. Mahtab's approach was that while law should be allowed to take its own course, human touch should also be there"\textsuperscript{161}.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{160} Routrery, Nilamani; 'Smriti and Anubhuti'(Oriya), Cuttack Grantha Mandir, p. 240.
\item\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p. 240.
\end{itemize}
"IN 1948-49 Dr. Mahtab said due to lawlessness and disorder the expansion of the present police force has been considered necessary. It has been decided to recognise and strengthen military police and add to it a Gorkha Company."

"In 1949-50, Dr. Mahtab said the enlargement of province has necessarily brought about a rapid expansion of the police department. In order to maintain law and order adequate forces with modern weapons and equipment at all district head-quarters and two battalions of military forces have been raised. All the new district head-quarters and number of sub-divisions have been connected by wireless. The Training School has been expanded and converted into a college to enable it to take up the training of untrained officers and men. In the newly managed princely states efforts were being made to raise the standard of police to the provincial level and to weed out corrupt practices prevalent in the states during pre-merger days, Mahtab said."


Apart from politics, Dr. Mahtab was also an educationist. He loved education. Therefore, during his premiership he had given emphasis on the promotion of "Basic Education"\textsuperscript{164}. In a backward state like Orissa "Ravenshaw Girls School was raised to the status of a Degree College and P.G. Classes in Oriya, Economics, Chemistry and Mathematics were opened in Ravenshaw College. Dr. Mahtab had laid stress on Industrial Schools and Colleges.

The scheme of Basic Education was also revised in the first budget proposals on ninth September while presenting a Revised Civil Budget estimates for 1946-47, Dr. Mahtab explained to the House that "We have accepted the basic system of education which is popularly known as "Sergent Scheme". It is almost the same known as Wardha System of Education"\textsuperscript{165}.

"As regards to the higher education, the policy of the government was to convert the existing High Schools

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into polytechnique institutions as far as early as possible. In pursuance of this policy, in the College Section, Science was given preferential treatment. In the budget provision, four of the Intermediate Colleges were to be raised to the status of first grade colleges.\textsuperscript{166}

There was no hostel provision for the students of Ravenshaw College except the East and West Hostels. It was due to his initiative and efforts two other hostels one each for the ladies and gents come up.

In 1949, fifteenth birthday of Dr. Mahtab was celebrated with a lot of fan-fare. The Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University Mr. Chintamani Acharya was the main organiser. On this occasion Dr. Mahtab was presented with a cash of Rupees fifty thousand. He donated half of it to Utkal University for the collection of old manuscripts.

"Besides giving scholarship and stipend to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes students, it was decided to meet the examination fees of those students who were sent up for various university examinations.\textsuperscript{167}

high schools were opened and visual education was given attention. A comprehensive scheme for the education and uplift of the backward classes was implemented. A wireless training school was established at Cuttack. "In the budget of 1949-50, provision was made for Utkal University to start classes in different foreign languages. Some money was provided to give aid to rural libraries".\footnote{168. Ibid., 1949-50, p. 38.}

**INDUSTRY**

"With a view to industrialise the State, Dr. Mahtab helped prospective entreprenuers. He wanted that Orissa should become an industrialised State and some of Oriyas should succeed as industrialists. His keen interest in the industrialisation of Orissa resulted in the establishment of the Orissa Textile Mills and Kalinga Tubes at Chowdar. The young entrepreneuer Mr. Bijayananda Pattnaik, who was also an M.L.A. was given maximum encouragement and incentive by Dr. Mahtab. In 1946 Mr. Pattnaik started a Private Airlines, Kalinga Airlines on State Government support. He also started the textile mills at Chowdar for which a license from Bombay was transferred. Dr. Mahtab had to face a lot of criticism for this including the displeasure..."
of Mahatma Gandhi. Mr. Pattnaik ventured upon an innovative project to get petrol from coal.\textsuperscript{169} Orissa Government sanctioned fifty thousand pounds for this purpose. Dr. Mahtab pleaded before Government of India that, since Orissa was poor, ten lakhs able bodied Oriya labourers were rotting in unhygienic condition at Calcutta. So there should be a number of industries in Orissa. He suggested for a steel plant. He also requested Government of India to set up Salt Industry in Ganjam District. Since cement was required in large quantity for Hirakud Project, Dalmia Group was persuaded to set up cement factory at Rajgangpur. For industrial planning, Dr. Mahtab brought an expert from Mysore as Director of Industry.

The Refractories of Rajgangpur and Belphar the Ferro Manganese Plants at Rayagada and Joda, the Kalinga Iron Works at Barbil, the Aluminium Plant at Hirakud and the large scale exploitation of the mineral resources of Orissa were Dr. Mahtab's contributions.

"By the time of independence, the province had not made much progress towards its industrialisation. Dr. Mahtab reorganised the industry department on the

lines of other industrialised advanced provinces. The Department was placed under a technical man. A Survey was made on the resources of province for some important industries. Since shortage of technical man was a major problem students were sent abroad for overseas training. The technical institutions of the state were reorganised. For the best utilisation of the locally available raw-materials crafts-schools were set up in different places.

The Machhakunda Duduma Hydro-electric Project was undertaken by Dr. Mahtab in the border of South Orissa. Ultimately an agreement was signed at Cuttack in January 1946, due to the intervention of the Central Government. However it was left to the ministry of Dr. Mahtab to workout the scheme.

"During the Congress rule, Mahanadi, the biggest river of Orissa attracted the attention of the Government of India. The representatives of the Government of India and the provincial government met in a Conference at Cuttack on eighth November, 1945, with Dr. Ambedkar, Labour Member of the Government of India in the Chair. Dr. Mahtab and

Dr. Ambedkar decided to consider the matter for the construction of multi-purpose dams which would solve Orissa's water problem. ¹⁷¹

In fact, Sir Hawthorne Lewis, the Governor of Orissa laid the foundation stone at the probable site of the dam on thirteenth March, 1946, just before Dr. Mahtab assumed power as the Premier of Orissa. To construct the dam and its reservoir, two hundred villages were to be evacuated to acquire land. The government's scheme of rehabilitation could not substitute their loss and miseries. As a result of which an anti-dam movement began to take shape on fifth September 1946, the matter was brought to the floor of the Assembly by the Premier along with a list.

"In spite of all oppositions the government was determined to implement the project. Dr. Mahtab conveyed the matter to Sardar Patel in a letter dated sixth September, 1946 mentioning that" As regards our work in the province, it is going on smoothly except for one thing. Construction of the Hirakud Dam of the Mahanadi Valley project. However, Sardarji enjoined upon the Premier that the decision of

¹⁷¹. Ibid.,
of the party was binding on the members and therefore the Congress members should not join in antidam agitation\textsuperscript{172}.

"Dr. Mahtab tried his best to convince the people of Sambalpur district about the benefits of the project. This movement did not sustain long and was neutralised through ceaseless campaigning by the Government machineries which made people conscious of the numerous advantages of the Mahanadi Valley Project\textsuperscript{173}. It is said, "on twenty eighth August, 1947 the Assembly unanimously resolved to take into consideration the report of the Mahanadi Valley Development, Hirakud Dam Project made by Rai Bahadur, A.N. Khosla, Chairman of the Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission and that the government be moved to take all necessary steps to give effect to the recommendations made in the report of the Mahanadi Valley Development, Hirakud Dam Project\textsuperscript{174}. It is said, "The Congress Ministry at least succeeded in getting the approval of the legislature for the construction of a multi-purpose

\textsuperscript{173} Mahtab, Dr. H.K. 'Sadhanara Pathe' (Oriya) Opp. Cit. p. 293.
dam in Orissa as the first step towards its economic and industrial prosperity. On twelvth April, 1949, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation stone of the Hirakud Dam. Pandit Nehru had also extended his helping hands for the construction work.\textsuperscript{175}

Thus, Mahtab's ideas were reflected on Hirakud Dam Project very deeply in this way. He took keen interest in developing industry for Orissa. Thus he is described as the architect of modern Orissa.

Since Orissa became a separate province, Cuttack was its Capital. Dr. Mahtab thought that the best place for the Capital from all points of view should be Bhubaneswar. Dr. Mahtab wanted to shift the Capital from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar. The Capital that he dreamt at this time would be novel one unlike the Metropolitan Cities in India. He chalked out a plan for the Capital on Thirteenth September, 1946 the Premier moved the motion regarding the location of the Capital of the province in the Assembly as follows.

"That the capital of the province be located at Bhubaneswar and steps be taken to construct the building

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
at the Capital as early as possible"\textsuperscript{176}. "The historical monuments which still stand as witness to the glorious epochs of the past, attracted Dr. Mahtab to select the site for the establishment of new capital at Bhubaneswar. The good climate of Bhubaneswar tempted him. There were practical considerations such as completion of high-ways and bridges towards Bhubaneswar availability of a number of buildings constructed at the time of the world war at a cheap rate and plenty of waste land and uncultivated land in Bhubaneswar Kasmahal area"\textsuperscript{177}.

"The convincing arguments of Dr. Mahtab, the Premier, in favour of the motion supported by the members of the Assembly, were felt that Bhubaneswar was the best site under the present circumstances. The resolution was unanimously passed in the Legislative Assembly on thirtyeth September 1946"\textsuperscript{178}. The Premier moved the Central authorities for necessary financial grants for the construction of the new Capital at Bhubaneswar. In India, Bhubaneswar was the only one and the first to receive grant from government of India to establish its provincial capital.

\textsuperscript{176} Orissa Legislative Assembly Proceedings; Vol.II, 1946-47, p. 965.
"He, being very ambitious for Orissa's development sought the advice of Pandit Nehru to negotiate with some foreign firms for the construction of the New Capital."\textsuperscript{179}

Dr. Mahtab was a far-sighted politician. He played very important role which was highly praiseworthy. His contribution for the Mahanadi Valley Project, Machhakund Duduma Project, New Capital at Bhubaneswar over-bridge and Platform at Cuttack Railway Station was quite remarkable. His initiation for the establishment of Rice Research Institute at Cuttack, Thermal Power Plant at Choudwar and Recruitment Centre for Army at Berhampur and Cuttack, Broadcasting Centre at Cuttack ranked him as the Chief Architect of Modern Orissa.

\textsuperscript{179} Mahtab, Dr. H.K. 'Sadhanara Patha' (O), Opp. Cit., p. 307.
3.3 MISCELLANEOUS ROLE
3.3 MISCELLANEOUS ROLE

The huge land of Orissa with a hoary and golden past had to lose its independence and power, and was reduced to a small state in the nineteenth century. It was disintegrated, dormant and passive. "Dr. Mahtab was one of those brave and illustrious men who made untiring efforts to resurrect Oriya Society, language, literature and politics from the abyss of degeneration." As a veteran freedom fighter and politician, his contribution to make Orissa, a rich and prosperous state was no less remarkable. His role in literature, journalism, socialism, history and culture such as drama, music, art and architecturer, was magnificent. People considered him as an institution rather than an individual in Orissa. He dominated the Socio-cultural scene in Orissa like a colossus for over half a century. The interest of Dr. Mahtab, who was active and alert till his death, spanned besides politics, literature, culture, journalism, sports etc.

"Dr. Mahtab, in his D.O. letter No.4075(67) of twenty-third September, 1948 wrote to all officers that a certain village reform movement would be started to remove untouchability. Before the temple of Lord Jagannath was thrown open to the Harijans Mahtab himself opened the temple of his own house to the Harijans, for the first time in 1948 in Orissa. For pioneering the cause of Harijans and Khadi works Mahtab has converted one of his temple to Karma-Mandir encouraged the workers to engage themselves for Khadi and Harijan work". 181

Mahtab was a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He was tremendously influenced by Gandhian Philosophy.

"As a man of Orissa H.K. Mahtab came into intimate contact with the tribals of Orissa and tried his best for the solution of their problems and all round development of their areas. In his autobiography he stated the Santal revolt of Mayurbhanj. Even after the merger of Mayurbhanj the Santals under their leader Sri Sonaram Soren, a minister of Mayurbhanj Durbar started a revolt against the merger of Mayurbhanj in Orissa Province. To suppress the revolt

181. Ibid., pp. 160-161.
was the great task for Mahtab who was not even reluctant to ask to use the rifles and stenguns.\textsuperscript{182} He had suppressed the tribal revolt in Mayurbhanj and became a friend to them.

Mahtab, a disciple of Gandhi was very active in following the message of Mahatmaji for social progress. He created a number of disciples of his own to follow Gandhiji's path of non-violence, abolition of untouchability and welfare of the Harijans. He thought that blind belief, ignorance, casteism and violence were the great impediments for the smooth progress of the society.

As a social reformer, he was always fighting against the beastial acts such as human sacrifice and animal sacrifice before the Gods and Goddesses. He raised his voice against these types of cruelties and implored important dignitaries of Orissa to bring about social change.

As a man of letters Dr. Mahtab wrote several novels, poems, short stories and dramas and published Gandhiji's ideals as journalist of repute. In his writings, he linked politics with literature.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., p. 350.
Dr. H.K. Mahtab was the founder president of the "Prajatantra Prachar Samiti" a trust established in 1947 and published the Oriya daily the 'Prajatantra', English daily 'The Eastern Times' and the 'Jhankar' the leading Oriya literacy monthly. He was also the editor of these dailies and journals in the beginning. If we open the pages of the history of Orissa, we will find the Prajatantra was just like a factory which has produced great deal political leaders such as Sri Bijayananda Pattnaik, Sri Biren Mitra, Nilamani Routray, Sri J.B. Pattnaik, Chintamani Panigrahy, Mahtab also encouraged the women and the children through his Prajatantra Prachar Samiti. Different branches of the Prajatantra such as 'Narijagat' and 'Meenabazar' an Oriya children's monthly were introduced. In spite of his hectic activities in political work as Chief Minister he devoted time for these literary works and intellectual progress.

"In 1949, during his premiership, Mahtab first organised a three day get-together of writers called 'Visuba Milan' at Cuttack that became an annual festival. The steps taken by Mahtab for Prajatantra Prachar Samiti to make it an ideal cultural and literary organisation, are not emulated by any newspaper organisation to bring about a modern renaissance in Orissa. He groomed a number of poets, writers and literature through his 'Jhankar'.183

H.K. Mahtab's contribution to the literary renaissance of the state was as significant as his role in the political upheaval of Orissa. He was a highly acclaimed poet, novelist, essayist and journalist.

"As a dramatist, Mahtab extended his possible help and action for cultural progress. Drama is the mirror of the society. During the Second Congress Ministry, he initiated to provide lands for the 'Kalavikash Kendra' at Cuttack to construct its own building. His play 'Atmadan' was highly praiseworthy. In his short play 'Bastavik', staged during Visuba Milan of 1948, Mahtab himself had played a role with an intention that the established people of the society should take part in drama, dance and music in front of the public, otherwise, it would be only binding to the professional and would not be helpful to the cultural development of the society". As a part of his interest in cultural programmes he founded Ravindra Mandap, an auditorium for cultural activities at Bhubaneswar.

On fifteenth August, 1947, on the Independence Day of India, a large number of functions and festivities were organised by the Congress leaders of Cuttack. Mahtab
and Dr. Kailashnath Katju the Governor had paid a visit to the Annapurna Theatre hall to see 'Jaga Juga Bharat'- a patriotic drama produced by Mahtab and Sri Sachin Dutta, a journalist of Amrit Bazar Patrika. The Drama was so heart-touching that it recollected the memory of the past martyrs and Mahtab's co-workers who had sacrificed their lives during freedom struggle. His keen interest in preservation of old historical monuments, records and manuscripts was no less remarkable. The Orissa State Archives and the Orissa State Museum were all products of his will. He had inspired the young historians to conduct research on Orissa's socio-political and cultural history.

"In 1948 Mahtab founded a Broadcasting Station at Cuttack to fulfil his desire for the establishment of a Broadcasting Station". Mahtab pressurised the Central Government and brought a unit to Cuttack which was supposed to be opened in Assam".\(^{184}\)

"In 1949, the Indian Council of World Affairs was set up in Delhi under the Presidency of R.N.Kunjru. Dr. Mahtab opened its branch in Orissa and became its President. Every fortnight one meeting was held in Ravenshaw

\(^{184}\) Ibid.
College. A large number of researchers and learned scholars were invited to its meeting for religious and cultural discussion.\textsuperscript{185}

With a view to encouraging sports and games in Orissa, Orissa Olympic Association was set up and the responsibility of this association was shouldered by Sri Bhairab Charan Mohanty. After the arrest of Sri Mohanty during 1942 revolt, the responsibility of the Association was taken up by Mahtab. He continued to be the life President of the Association.

"While the unemployed Youths of Orissa were not getting job opportunity in Railway Service, Mahtab took up the matter with the Central Government. A rule was made to appoint an Oriya in Railway Service Commission."\textsuperscript{186}

"In the field of Judiciary, Mahtab's contribution cannot be assessed. It is because of his towering personality he succeeded in establishing Hon'ble High Court for Orissa. Orissa High Court was established in 1948 consisting of three justices.\textsuperscript{187} "Its establishment in 1948 was possible due to the kind help of Sardar Patel."\textsuperscript{188}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Mahtab, H.K.; 'Sadhanara Pathe' (Oriya), Opp. cit. p. 384.
\item Ibid.
\item Mahtab, H.K.; The Beginning Pathe', (Oriya) Opp. Cit. p. 432.
\item Mahtab, H.K.; 'Sadhanara Pathe', (Oriya) Opp. Cit. p. 432.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The period from 1946-50 was crucial in the life of the nation as well as for Dr. Mahtab. This was a transitional phase in reshaping a feudal, colonial state and society to democratic polity. With his experience from the beginning of the freedom struggle and his close contact with the mass, he had the vision and understanding of both the legislative and executive procedures. He was also aware of the "situational politics" in the country and knew the methods of mobilising resources, both financial and the human capital in an outside structural apparatus of the state in the making and the provincial" powers and privileges enjoyed by the legislators and the bureaucracy. It seems, the transitional phase in the governance of Orissa as a link between the State and the Centre was a basic factor in modulating the leadership style of Dr. Mahtab. He was democratic in mobilising the Union of the legislatures, and the bureaucracy and at the same time innovative and authoritative in his approach in dealing with the legislatures and the bureaucracy. In this respect he may considered as a "task-oriented leader" more pragmatic in his approach than being an "idealist". Keeping the "idealistic" approach as the norm, he tried his best to steer the affairs of Orissa in such a way so as to transcend the socio-political activities in Orissa, and establish a strong base for modernization
of Orissa and making it an ideal State in the Union of India. He was innovative and pragmatic in reshaping the future of Orissa as a "task-oriented-leader" with vitality, inexhaustible energy, a farsighted vision and legal acumen. "He was capable of presenting, both micro and macrolevel of the political process simultaneously".  

Among the political leaders of Orissa in the twentieth century, Dr. H.K. Mahtab stands out as a pre-eminent personality both as a freedom fighter in the struggle for national independence and the maker of modern Orissa. He made a mark as a national leader and his activities were not confined to the State of Orissa. As a freedom fighter he belonged to the Gandhian generation and came in close contact with veteran freedom fighters like Gandhi, Jaya Prakash Narayan, J.B. Kripalani, Morarji Desai and others. First as the Prime Minister of Orissa under the Government of India Act, 1935 and then as the Chief Minister of Orissa he provided guidance and leadership to the new generation of regional leaders in the post-independence period. He made a mark in freedom struggle, social work, politics, administration, literature and journalism.

For his all round achievement in socio-political, economical and cultural field, he can be rightly called as the "Founder of Modern Orissa". It is said that "he was the 'Polestar' in the National Life of Orissa". It is a fact that he was the "SUN OF ORISSA" and a "MAN OF CENTURY". As an architect of modern Orissa, Dr. Mahtab is rightly called the "UTKAL KESHARI".