CHAPTER V

DR. MAHTAB AS A POLITICAL COLUMNIST
V.I. USE OF MEDIA FOR SOCIAL AND PERSONAL IMAGE BUILDING
V.I. USE OF MEDIA FOR SOCIAL AND PERSONAL IMAGE BUILDING

Literature and journalism were part and parcel of Dr. Mahtab's life which went along with his politics. There was full compatibility. If politics became a habit with Dr. Mahtab, literature and journalism were his hobbies. At the end they served the same purpose to serve the nation.

Apart from being a good writer and journalist, he was a true lover of literature and literary people. Dr. Mahtab had felt the importance of writing as an instrument from his school days. Later on during freedom struggle and after independence, he had always remained conscious of the role of media and literature. So Dr. Mahtab continued as a political columnist both in journalistic and literary fields till the end of his life.

Dr. Mahtab, strongly believed that publicity uses the means of communication with the masses or with some specific public to convey facts and opinions that
will publicise those facts and opinions. Thus he said, "publicity is one of the tools of public relations". As Dr. Mahtab had understood this very well, so media became one of the main forms of propaganda for his ideas and action.

"Building up of public opinion was special aspect of Dr. Mahtab's journalistic life. He created public consciousness through journalism. His ability to manipulate politics gave birth to new leadership, helped the creation of best elements, helped the growth of literature, culture, art, architecture, dance, music which enriched Orissa in many fields and projected it to occupy an important place in the Indian map." 241.

In fact almost a decade before his death, he left politics but continued to create and strengthen public opinion as a columnist. All along his life political activity was his main medium of link with the masses, but he was one of the few leaders of the country whose second channel with the people was his columns.

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241. Ibid.; p. 49.
Besides writing in different newspapers and journals Dr. Mahtab had at different times started many publications including his daily paper 'The Prajatantra'. All the publications helped Dr. Mahtab build up his own image apart from the positive impact these periodicals had on the society.

In India many important leaders have launched their own newspapers at different times, their known intention being their own image building through publicity. Naturally Dr. Mahtab was a beneficiary in several of his publications including 'The Prajatantra'.

Dr. Mahtab had launched the Prajatantra as an Oriya Weekly from Cuttack. Propagation of Gandhism and constructive programme was its main objective. There was no advertisement nor any news in it. It was being printed in 'Malay Press'. 'The Prajatantra' was being despatched to all ashrams as a campaign leaflet when he made Balasore his headquarters.
'The Prajatantra' was shifted to Balasore. In 1930, he also published another weekly 'Yubak' as a mouth piece of youth movement. Besides other papers with a view to getting public support in favour of his opinion and actions, he was contributing to 'Dainik Asha' and 'New Orissa'.

"Though he had started the Prajatantra during freedom struggle it had discontinued till 1947 when Dr. Mahtab relaunched it." By that time Dr. Mahtab was already in powers. When his development activities were faced with stiff opposition from a few circles and the only paper 'Samaj' gave publicity to opposition views only and government version was not getting due coverage, Dr. Mahtab immediately felt the need of Prajatantra.

Then came, his English daily 'Eastern Times'. The purpose of launching this publication was to project the issues and problems of Orissa at National level and among the non-Oriya readers in and outside the State.

Even in the last part of his life, he brought out a daily paper named 'Hirakhand' from Sambalpur. "Hence in post-independence period Dr. Mahtab is considered as the pioneer and symbol of modern journalism". \(^{244}\).

Dr. Mahtab used literature for societal and personal image-building. His novels and all other literary creations portrayed the prevailing socio-economic set up and this was Dr. Mahtab's way of solution as corrective steps.

"Another landmark in his literary career was his famous novel 'Prativa' which was written during his detention at Ahmedanager Fort. The contemporary social environment was orthodox. The literacy rate among women was very poor. But in the midst of such a situation Dr. Mahtab had felt the necessity of education and political consciousness among the women which could eventually lead them to boldness in social and political fields among them. In this novel, 'Prativa' his ideas were centred round a lady who had revolted against her husband demanding due recognition."\(^{245}\) This novel

\(^{244}\) Ibid; p.46.

\(^{245}\) Mahtab Jayanti Smaraki; 1987, Cuttack, pp. 98-99.
was based on the problems and existing struggle which prevailed in the society during Mahtab's time. "According to Dr. Mahtab, women were considered as weaker sex. But he tried to project them quite strong in society." 246

This novel was mainly based on his own life during freedom struggle and his wife's participation in the movement. These personal incidents and experiences were the main inspiration behind the creation of 'Prativa'. "If his autobiography 'Sadhana Pathe' and 'Prativa' are examined many identical points could be found." 247

'Trutiya Parva' was the novel of Dr. Mahtab during his last days. This was based on the then political scenario and the spirit as well as the real shape of Indian democracy reflected in it after many years of independence.

'1975' was a portrayed of Dr. Mahtab's bitter anguish over emergency. In both 'Trutiya Parva' and '1975' Dr. Mahtab had built up individual image of a person who had sacrificed his life to attain freedom

246. Ibid.; p.97.
for the country but was aghast to see the deterioration of democracy for which he fought. It is said '1975' and 'Trutiya Parva' depict the feelings of going-on in the heart of the Creator".248

"In the novel 'Abyapar' one of the main characters Dibya Singh is a greatman who made maximum sacrifice for his motherland. In the matter of sacrifice he is like Utkalmoni Gopabandhu."249 Dr.Mahtab has mentioned many instances of his own life in this character.

The four novels 'Nutan Dharma', 'Prativa', 'Abayapara' and 'Touter' - called upon people to work for 'Swaraj'. Thus the patriotic blood that flowed in the veins of Mahtab was obvious in the pages of his literary productions.

"In some short stories also his own life story is narrated in different forms. "Mo Nija Gapa'is the story which explains the agitation of Ranpur in the
year 1937, where the British Political Agent Bejalgate was killed by the agitators."\(^{250}\)

Dr. Mahtab's autobiography 'Sadhanara Pathe' is a historical account of his life vis-a-vis the then social and national scene. That is a personal account of his observations about the contemporary events and social mobility which gives an insight into the very person, Dr. Mahtab.

"In Dass Barasar Orissa" and 'Gandhiji O' Orissa', Dr. Mahtab has picturised the political history between 1920 and 1930 and Gandhiji's association with Orissa between 1920-1948 respectively. According to him these two books have detailed the short-comings of the then Oriya society as well as the infusion of nationalism in it with Gandhiji's specific contribution to the state."\(^{251}\)

In his popular column 'Gaon Majlis' he was successful in projecting distinctive image of himself

\(^{250}\) Jhanka; 'Mo Nija Gapa' (Oriya); 1979, January, p.924.

\(^{251}\) Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; O'Dasa Barasara Odissa'; (Oriya) Opp. Cit. p.4.
in Orissa. 'Gaon Majlis' reveals a unique picture of Orissan rural society. Here he had displayed the true picture of the village as in Orissa, its culture, the way of life, habits as well as their level of political consciousness along with the societal quagmire girdling it. He has proposed to the government from time to time to take necessary remedial measures.

Before and after independence Dr. Mahtab was using different writing mediums whether it was a newspaper column or a literary magazine or a book or a statement to the press to make his position clear on different issues of State. It was but natural for him to do so since he had to operate in public life. Every such action of his was to strengthen the image of society. In the process he was able to develop a singular image of his own which was always giving him separate identity.
V.II PRINT MEDIA FOR COMMUNICATION IN PRE AND POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD
VII. PRINT MEDIA FOR COMMUNICATION IN PRE AND POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Dr. Mahtab observed that in order to achieve independence as well as to pursue his goals in a democratic set up, he had to take the help of media. So he used print-media for communication in pre and post independence era.

Dr. Mahtab being a political leader was intelligent and shrewd. He used this facility as his medium of communications throughout his active public life, that is before and after independence. He was contributing news and articles to various papers inside and outside Orissa.

When he was studying in Bhadrak High School the campaigner of Utkal Sammilani Mr. Anant Mishra came to Bhadrak with a definite mission to organise campaigning. They heard the fact of police oppression from Dr. Mahtab. Mr. Mishra published the same in the then old newspaper 'Asha'.

terrorism in Balasore and struggle of revolutionaries like Baghajatin were being published in Asha by Dr. Mahtab".253

"When he took admission in Ravenshaw College at Cuttack, he and his young activist friends read different nationalist newspapers and books to acquaint and enlighten themselves about the latest developments. Annie Besant's 'New India' was one such newspaper. At Cuttack, when he was a student of end year he and his friends brought out 'Malaya', a monthly hand written Magazine and 'Dustbin' an English hand written weekly. Academic articles and the social, political and cultural problems of the country were being published in these two magazines. During this period he started reporting to 'Utkal Dipika' about incidents of oppression by police and government officers".254

"In 1923 Dr. Mahtab decided to start a weekly to spread the message of 'Swaraj'. The title of the weekly was the 'Prajatantra'. Initially this was printed in 'Mukur Press' at Cuttack. The Prajatantra was

regularly being sent to all the Ashrams - Centres of freedom movement as a publicity leaflet. When in 1924 Dr. Mahtab shifted to Balasore for the political activities the Prajatantra continued its publication from town Press of Balasore. The paper had become popular since it was publishing details about British oppression and miseries of the people. During that time the Rajas of Princely States and Zamindars, who were tools of British Government were opposed to nationalist movement.

Dr. Mahtab was writing continuously against these reactionaries anti-nationals.

"Then Dr. Mahtab launched another weekly 'Swaraj Samachar' from Balasore. News about freedom movement were being published in this paper with all boldness for which he had to face improvement."

"In 1930, during salt movement the Prajatantra weekly was converted to a daily paper but it discontinued very soon. When Dr. Mahtab became Prime Minister,

256. Mahtab Jayanti Smaraki; (Oriya), 1991, p. 42.
257. Bahera, Dr. R.K., Opp. Cit; p. 11.
it re-appeared in 1947. Even when Prajatantra was stopped during freedom struggle, Dr. Mahtab had not given up journalism. He was functioning as Orissa correspondent of Associate Press and regularly despatching two columns of news to Amrit Bazar Patrika".  

"During Quit India Movement in 1942 it was decided to bring out one weekly 'Rachana' to spread Gandhiji's message among the people and to popularise Congress Programmes".  

"After Independence also Dr. Mahtab continued his practice of using Print-media even though the objectives had changed. While he was in power he did not stop his writing habits and was expressing his ideas through his columns in the Prajatantra. Thus he tried to educate the people about his progressive measures which were being opposed by different circles". As the Press Commission had said" the Press, as a medium of

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258. Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'The Prajatantra Bisesanka'; Daiba Dani Manis Gai'; p. 2.
260. Ibid.; p. 46.
communication, is a modern phenomena. It has immense power to advance or to thwart the progress of civilisation".\textsuperscript{261} Rightly Dr. Mahtab used the powerful medium to communicate with the mass with a view to bringing about socio-economic development of the people.  

"His thoughts and actions have influenced his writings. His anxiety to develop social, political, economic and educational conditions of the nation through his continuous and constant political efforts have made him a thinker and a political philosopher".\textsuperscript{262}

"When the paper Prajatantra re-appeared, he was writing editorials continuously for two years. When there was criticism in Bombay papers, he did not use his name but continued writing. After his official work he was working for the Prajatantra upto 2 PM very late even at night and because of that Prajatantra emerged as a leader in many fields including literature and culture in Orissa".\textsuperscript{263}

\textsuperscript{261} Parthasarathy Rangaswami; 'Journalism in India from the earliest times to the Present Day, 1984, p. 215.  

\textsuperscript{262} Sahoo, Basudev, Opp. Cit; p. 1024.  

\textsuperscript{263} Panigrahi, Kalandi Charan; 'Sahityare Samaj Bada' Oriya; Prajatantra Bisesanka; p. 35.
On behalf of the Prajatantra Prachar Samiti, Dr. Mahtab launched several publications like, English daily 'Eastern Times', Prestigious literary monthly 'Jhankar' 'Children's monthly', 'Minabazar'. Later on he started another Oriya daily 'Hirakhand' from Sambalpur. All these publications worked as medium of his communication with different sections of people. Through 'Jhankar' he built a bridge with the literary intelligensia of the state, 'Minabazar' was the medium for him to communicate with the future generation. Above all 'Gaon Majlis' was the permanent line of contact for Dr. Mahtab with all sections of people.

The renowned journalist late Mr. Chalapathi Rao in his book 'The Press in India' said a journalist "should establish himself as a man of ideas with the capacity to react, to interpret and to communicate".  

Dr. H.K. Mahtab, a journalist par excellence had all these parts of a great journalist, gifts of expression

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and communication. "Sometimes to know other's reactions he was creating a congenial environment even by self analysis, criticism of himself in the Prajatantra".\textsuperscript{265}

Since this versatile genius also used literature as part of his instrument of communication with people. All his literary treatises were based on the socio-political environment of the society. That is why the impact of these productions on the public consciousness cannot be lost sight of.

"Before independence whatever he wrote was meant to arouse nationalistic feeling among the public. His writings portrayed the goings on in the then social set up. Simultaneously he tried to bring about the necessary reforms in the society. His novel 'Nutan Dharma' written when he was in Hazaribag Jail was a story of the superstitions prevailing in the society, oppression by the landlords, Swadeshi movement, Widow marriage, women's consciousness religion of service etc. It had reformistic objectives".\textsuperscript{266} His other novel 'Touter' was written by him when he was in Ahmedanagar Fort.

\textsuperscript{265} Mahtab, Jayanti Smaraki; 1991, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{266} Behera, Dr. R.K., Opp. Cit.; p. 256.
It was based on the then political and social background at that time. Gandhism was fanning into the nooks and corners far and wide of the country. This novel was aimed at bringing about a change in rural society. That's why Dr. Mahtab was more a campaigner than a novelist whose aim was to communicate with people again with reformist objectives.  

Dr. Mahtab's literary creations in post-independence era have given vent to the frustration of the people with administrative system. Each politician needs to communicate with public. A leader and the mass have to join hands to interact with each other. But very few leaders have used various forums to interact with the people and to communicate with the common man.

In twentieth century Mahatma Gandhi was the topmost leader in India who used print-media as the best medium of communication not only with the people of India for whose independence he was fighting but also with the people of the world to whom he presented

267. Ibid; p. 15.
the concept of truthfulness and non-violence as the only way of life. So also in Orissa Dr. Mahtab, the dearest disciple of Gandhiji, employed print-media as the only tool of communication and all his writings even after his death, continued to guide the different sections of society.
V.III AS A VEHICLE OF CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT
V.III AS A VEHICLE OF CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT

Dr. H.K. Mahtab who eventually became the hero of Orissa in the freedom struggle and was one among the national leaders during his time had carried strong conviction about the role of press to generate revolutionary spirit among common men from his student days.

"Print-media has always been used as a weapon of criticism of the wrong doings of any government as well as the evils in the social system. India was no way different from this during freedom struggle when our national leaders were using "Print-media" to propagate nationalistic ideas among the people. They as well as the patriotic writers produced volumes of literature to arouse nationalistic feeling among the masses. Statesmen like Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Malavya, Lajpat Rai, Gokhale, Aurobindo Ghose and Pandit Nehru were using newspaper as the main weapon against British Government."^88

"Dr. Mahtab who joined in this galaxy of eminent leaders became a trend setter in Orissa during movement by starting several newspapers and periodicals to expose the misdeed of British Government and to expouse the cause of Swaraj. During his school days he started sending news to the then Oriya daily 'Asha' against British Oppression like police excesses in Balasore district"\(^{269}\) when he took admission at Cuttack he filed police excess stories in English to 'Utkal Dipika'\(^{270}\). Though he launched his own publication 'The Prajatantra' as a weekly in 1923 to circulate congress policies and messages of Mahatma Gandhi, the paper became popular slowly when it covered stories of British oppression and miseries of the people."\(^{271}\) His special column Bula Babajinka Patra' (letter from wondering hermit) created a sensation in political circles.

"During that time the rulers of the Princely States of Talcher, Nilagiri, Kanika, Ranpur and Dhenkanal were resorting to oppressive measures to suppress Prajamandal movement. Dr. Mahtab was regularly

\(^{269}\) Ibid; p. 41.
\(^{270}\) Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'Sadhanara Paths'; (O) Opp. Cit. p. 21.
\(^{271}\) Prajatantra Saptahiki; August 9-15, 1992-p.4.
publishing details about that which helped the agitation to remain alive." At that time in Kanika State there were several instances of in-human excesses by the ruler and his associates. Dr. Mahtab could not tolerate this. "So he brought out an English weekly 'Adventure' to publish these stories of freedom fighters. Mr. Nanda Kishore Dash had helped him to a great extent in his efforts." But this paper was banned because it published several facts about the excesses committed by the ruler of Nilagiri. The rulers of Kanika and Nilagiri also conspired along with the rulers of other Princely States to stop Prajatantra because it exposed their exploitation and misrule. There were two cases against the Prajatantra between 1924 to 1932. The editor of the Prajatantra was warned and the Prince's protection Act was enforced on the paper after it carried stories about Nilagiri Prajamandal Movement in 1927. There was a defamation case against Prajatantra because it wrote against the Bamanda Administration. "In 1927 there was severe flood.

272. Ibid.
274. Prajatantra Saptahiki; August 9-15, 1992, p. 5
in Balasore and Jajpur area. Dr. Mahtab criticised the Government's apathy revealing details with photos. 275

"Dr. Mahtab also provided leadership to the Salt Movement of 1930 in Orissa. Because of his criticism of British Government his press in Balasore was seized by the Police in 1930." 276 When he was in Hazaribagh Jail after participating in the Salt Movement he was secretly sending some items to Prajatantra one of his articles was against the ruler of Kanika, who was trying to obtain a certificate of power in order to collect land revenue, was intercepted at Balasore. Because of this, he was reverted to 'C' Class Prisoner status and sent to Patna Camp Jail.

"Further Dr. Mahtab published a small play 'Panchamruta' in Prajatantra to expose the government employees who were loyal to the British. But Prajatantra was again stopped after it incurred the wrath of British Government and the Press was again seized

275. Ibid; p. 5.
276. Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'Sadhanara Pathe' (Griya), Opp. Cit.; p. 128.
in 1932. Dr. Mahtab closed it in 1933. When Prajatantra was discontinued Dr. Mahtab brought out another weekly 'Rachana' from Cuttack for some time. He wrote an essay in this weekly decrying the agreement between Soviet Union and England. Government warned him that if such articles continued to appear in the paper then 'Rachana' would also be closed. As ill luck would have it after sometime the paper was stopped."

"After Independence Dr. Mahtab came to power and Prajatantra reappeared in 1947, its main objective was to support the progressive measures of the government. But later on at different times when Dr. Mahtab was out of power or differed with the government he converted his paper to an instrument of criticism of the government. Prajatantra's bold stand against the government's inefficiency during 1954 drought and severe flood in 1955 and at the time of S.R.C. Movement in 1956 made it popular." "Prajatantra became the main centre of activities during 1964, Students' Agitation

when it became a mass agitation.......Prajatantra has been able to ensure the fall of many weak and corrupt government.....Often it has taken the role of the opposition leader."279

Dr.Mahtab was a great critic of the British Government. The attitude and actions of government agitated his sensitive mind to introduce a satirical column in a pen name 'Farci Chand' against the prevailing system of administration. Those articles were rare at that time. Thus in his own popular columns he was expressing his views boldly. Many items in this column he helped to spread disaffection against the government. In the views of famous editor of Times of India, Late Frank Moraes, "The press should take it upon itself to function as an unofficial opposition outside Parliament, exercising that role with responsibility and circumspection."280 Most of Dr.Mahtab's columns which were full of scathing criticism of governments faults and failures were really in line with Morao's interpretation of the role of the Press.

279. Prajatantra Saptahiki, (0); August 9-15, pp. 8-10.
280. Ibid.
During and after freedom struggle Dr. Mahtab had produced volumes of literature. There were novels, short stories, one act plays, poetry, booklets, essays, even small leaflets. In most of these he had criticised the then Government. In 1922, 1923 while Dr. Mahtab was in Bhagalpur Jail he wrote a novel 'Ajabduniya'. Police seized it in 1930 and burnt the manuscript. In 1928, he wrote a booklet on 'oppression' in Nilagiri which had tremendous impact on the local people.

Thus, his writings acted as a vehicle for spreading nationalist sentiments. Therefore, Dr. Mahtab's conviction about the importance of Print Media as an instrument of criticism against the government remained with him till his death.

Even if he retired from active political life in 1977, still he continued to give his opinion about different government measures through his columns.

In the eighties government of India decided to set up a national test range in Baliapal of Balasore district which would have led to the displacement of thousands of families. Dr. Mahtab came out openly against this project. He took the help of the Press.

to protest against Government's decisions. He wrote in his columns to create public opinion against this. His writings were like bullets spreading fire against the government and its policy. In fact Baliapal became a national controversy and because of the unique protest by local people. This project had not come through till now despite of "efforts by Government of India. the credit goes to Dr. Mahtab who highlighted this issue first through Press. For Dr. Mahtab the Press was "a watchdog" which "should spur sensible appraisal of government's policy and stimulate reform." 282

Politics or no politics, for this great man, the concept about the role of Press and Literature were as weapons to expose government's misdeeds, had remained a lifelong passion, which had taken shape during his student days and continued till he left this mortal abode.

V.IV SPECIAL FEATURES : GAON MAJLIS
'Gaon Majlis' is a special feature introduced by Dr. Mahtab in 1950 in his paper Prajatantra which he continued till his end. He had written this column in Prajatantra covering all aspects of society, which was something unique and novel in Indian Journalism as well as literature. This column was being written by Dr. Mahtab a national leader and a freedom fighter of Gandhi era perhaps. That is the reason why it is considered as a chronicle of Orissa's political, social and cultural life.

"According to Dr. Mahtab's 'Gaon Majlis' common people should participate in any discussion, political, economic or any subject with that objective in view. Various topics were discussed in this column as if the village people were sitting and deliberating over some issues. Though the village people have not gone to Colleges and Universities, they can understand things and give some opinion. Gaon Majlis is introduced towards awakening that ability".283

283. Mahtab, Dr. H.K.; 'Gaon Majlis's, 2nd Volume-Rajniti Samikhya, Cuttack Student's Store, 1987,p+, 1.
But this column did not remain confined among villagers only. It became a subject to stimulate the thought of urban folk also. Dr. Mahtab dwelt upon all subjects like state, society, social reforms and all planning keeping in view the common welfare of the people in this column, finally pushing his points through strong arguments in favour of his conclusive suggestions. To be brief 'Gaon Majlis' was a column for commonman with a view to enlightening him on different issues and problems of the country. In this column Dr. Mahtab found an easy medium to inform the illiterate, half literate man about the political trend. This column was a continuous feature of Dr. Mahtab's writing activity and was discontinued for a brief period when he was detained during emergency days. It was the columnist's ability of Dr. Mahtab to analyse different issues, concerning villagers or slum dwellers or an event in international affairs in shippet form. Dr. Mahtab showed the rare journalistic acumen of brief and simple writing in Gaon Majlis.
In the beginning, 'Gaon Majlis' was based on the then social environment. Democratic government was in its initial phase. People were simple, mostly illiterate and superstitious. Dr. Mahtab's style was that of an experienced or teacher.

Dr. Mahtab himself has said that "the villagers are interested to listen to everything and understand each subject but there is nobody who will tell them all these things in simple way". Perhaps that is the reason why he had adopted the language and style of villagers. He has used the colloquial proverbs as quoted from different scripts, which made his writing popular among his readers. Thus once Dr. Mahtab commented "the village issues like the programme of Gram Panchayat, Caste problems, the menace of touts, superstitions, unemployment problems, financial situations etc. have been discussed in this column, ideas have been suggested as to what policies should be adopted for the development of the villages. The duties of

educated people and villagers for the improvement of rural economy have been elaborated in lucid language"^285.

"Gaon Majlis" provides a unique expression of the Orissan rural society. Here he has exposed the real picture of the villagers in Orissa.

"With social reform as his objective Dr. Mahtab has tried to use this column to cleanse the social environment. At one point he has advised people, particularly the villagers to be away from litigations. He argued, the litigant should be subjected to ridicule like the drunkards visiting the brothel"^286. "He has also warned people not be misled by superstitious beliefs, cheats in the guise of Sadhus"^287.

"Interpreting the spirit of democracy Dr. Mahtab has said that if the high command of a party does not select popular candidate then, defeating the unpopular candidate doesn't mean opposition to the policies of

286. 'Aainare Sasan; Prajatrantra, 24.12.1950.
the party. Rather it is a protest against the style of functioning of few leaders of the party. The policies of the party and the committee of the party are not the same. To strengthen the democratic system Dr. Mahtab has stressed on the role that voters should play even after election. In one of the columns of 'Gaon Majlis' he had said that the voters should not sit quiet just casting their vote. His comparative argument was simple and pin-pointed. Equating the farmer's field with the political field of a people's representative Dr. Mahtab has said the same situation would arise like the case of a farmer.

Dr. Mahtab's messages of caution in the context of student agitation and indiscipline among young men forty years back continues to be relevant even today. He had analysed the youth and the students who were victims of political mischief and being used as tools by politician. The students in the process were putting their lives in jeopardy sacrificing
independent thought for which in the eyes of society they were looked down upon with contempt.

"Political factionalism with vested interest was treated with equal contempt by Dr. Mahtab in his column. He had warned that internal bickerings would bring about destruction to a family and in the same way to a village, even a state would collapse due to this. His advice was that every body should express his opinion politely without fear instead of getting into group rivalry."^288

"Dr. Mahtab has decried the tendency of making general criticism. He has said one may get pleasure in criticism of others but there is showmanship in managing an affair, one should not give up one's conviction because somebody else makes some comments."^289

Because of wide experience in socio-cultural field he has given a positive angle about schedule

^289. 'Chinta Bibrata'; 'Prajatantra'; 1.6.1952.
caste and schedule tribe welfare programme. Thus he has said "if somebody goes to serve them he should do it paying due respect to their style and culture. Then only these weaker section will improve." Then only these weaker section will improve.

The analytic ability in Dr. Mahtab has identified the change in the trend of corruption.

From early sixties to early seventies his columns were mostly based on corruption in the then administration, speech oriented leaders without any activity, lack of character in the leader, helplessness of youth, defects in secular policy, mass discontent owing to communal riots, distressed condition of farmers, faulty agricultural policy of government, the gap between administration and people. The behaviour of police towards people, prejudices, administrative failures were prominently highlighted by him. At the sametime he also discussed defective prohibition law, different religious issues during this period. The period under discussion is important from one

290. Ibid; p. 43.
aspect that by that time the euphoria of independence had melted away and frustration due to poverty, unemployment, price rise added by other issues like communal problems had come to surface. This had also influenced Dr. Mahtab's writings besides the main reason of his political line.

How the democratic government was distancing itself from people and administration was lacking commitment to the people had been narrated in many words by Mahtab. In his words "Administration is meant for people are forgotten, only the administration in a gigantic way is standing there". The biggest crisis for India is the loss of faith in administration, said Dr. Mahtab, in his column.

"He pointed out that many things have been told and announced in political circles, but not even one percent of it was implemented. In the lives of

292. 'Rupam Dehi Jayam Dehi'; 'Prajatantra, 10.10.1967.
the people and in the nation also all hopes are breaking to pieces. Depression has gripped everybody and finding fault and quarelling among each other is common phenomenon everywhere"292.

On prohibition he wrote "my conviction is that unless prohibition is introduced in the higher circles of society, making efforts in this direction at lower level will have no meaning"293.

"On the problems of students and youth he has advised the administration not to resort to repressional measures. But Dr. Mahtab who was cautioning the students in 1950 about getting involved in political activities has argued in 1967 that who else will discuss politics if university students do not do it"294.

In some of his writings about Lord Jagannath he has projected some of the issues of the nation

292. 'Rupam Dehi Jayam Dehi'; 'Prajatantra, 10.10.1967.
294. 'Gaon Majlis; 'Prajatantra, 12.9.1967.
like the beggars before the temple and how the Indians are now begging. Instead of highthinking there is thought about corruption. There is some deep understanding and profound thought in his statement.

In fact, Dr. Mahtab's assessment regarding election in 1977 came true. The Janata Government could not give the stable administration for the entire full term. After emergency till his end. Dr. Mahtab was not associated directly with any political party though he had given support to different parties on different issues in his column. In his last part he had successfully created issues about Balliapal National Test Range. Another issue which he raised was animal sacrifice in temples of Orissa. In this case he was successful in putting an end to such system in some main Devi Temples of the State through his column 'Gaon Majlis'.

Truely to quote Dr. Sri Ramchandra Dash, "Gaon Majlis was the longest writing in the history of Oriya news literature". 

It was a light post, a valuable political and administrative constitution for everybody during the critical phase of Orissa and nation.

It threw light on the important issue in the political and administrative aspects of Orissa and India.
V.V AS AN INDICATOR OF LINK WITH THE PEOPLE
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In twentieth century Orissa, half of which was under British Yoke, Dr. H.K. Mahtab dominated the socio-political, economic and cultural scene for more than half of a century both during pre and post Independence period. He was one of the few national leaders who worked in close association with Mahatma Gandhi to attain the freedom of the country and held important positions in independent India. He was a rare genius with versatile talent. Politics had consumed a major portion of his active life but with many other passions which covered from journalism to literature, passing through historical research Dr. Mahtab was a many-sided personality.

Writing remained his main hobby till his last days in life. Since he was a public figure or to say a man of the masses, it was but natural that whatever he wrote whether a journalistic assessment of things in a newspaper or a literary piece in a magazine, everything emanated from his association with people. "The socio-economic and political
as well as cultural scene of the society was his canvas. It would not have been possible for him to write on wider range of things but for his close link with people.  

On Dr. Mahtab's association with the Prajatantra, Mr. Maheswar Mulia, a senior journalist has written that "wherever the former was going his main interest was the local news and development. The problems of the people and the concerned areas interested him." One can know from this about the intensity of Dr. Mahtab's desire to understand the people's problems and bring the same to everybody's notice through newspaper column.

"Dr. Mahtab's Prajatantra was the harbinger of many things new in Oriya Journalism. During that time news only about political people were appearing in newspapers. That there were poets, dramatists, sportsman, scientists, professors, doctors, businessmen,

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labourers etc. in society with many types of leadership was not in any body's imagination. That there were many interesting news besides natural calamities and deaths, that many noteworthy developments were taking place in the country each moment, that readers were eager to know about those things were beyond the ideas of the then newspapers.298.

"Dr. Mahtab introduced varieties in his newspaper 'The Prajatantra' because he had insight into the people's wants and demands. So besides news items, there were literary sections in Sunday Prajatantra, Children's section know as Minabazar, youth page known as Yuba Jagat; Women's section titled as Narijagat, Rupa, Rasa, chhanda Page to take care of art, drama and music, All India Radio coverage as Askashavni Parikrama etc. 'The Prajatantra' remained not only as a newspaper but became an institution of art and culture.299.

298. Mohapatra, Nilamani Sahoo; 'Prajatantra Bisasanka; 'Mane Paduchi''; p. 73, 1972.
"During the freedom movement 'the Prajatantra' started first as a weekly and then was converted to a daily but discontinued its publication. At that time Dr. Mahtab was very much active in freedom struggle and was imprisoned several times. He was using the pages of the Prajatantra during this period to cover the people's miseries under foreign rule which he was regularly coming across being in the vanguard of the movement. Virtually he had converted Prajatantra to be the mouth piece of freedom struggle. Dr. Mahtab himself was supporting the Prajamandal Movement in different princely States. He was closely associated with the rebellion against the oppressive ruler of Kanika. His paper 'the Prajatantra' helped in keeping the movement alive in Kanika, Talcher, Nilagiri and in other Princely States. That was why the rulers tried to close the paper.

"In later years after Independence 'Prajatantra' was the centre of activities of many successful young men."

300. Mahtab, Dr.H.K.; 'Sadhanara Patha' (0), Opp. Cit.; pp. 60-67.
301. Prajatantra Saptahiki; August 9-15, p. 9.
As a public personality Dr. Mahtab remained all along with the people in words and in action. Naturally his paper 'The Prajatantra was following its founder's line. Any issue involving the people particularly pertaining to Orissa was getting foremost attention of Dr. Mahtab when progressive measures like merger of Princely States or construction of Hirakud Dam or founding the new Capital in Bhubaneswar were initiated by him for the development of the State. His paper generated public opinion in favour of these measures. So also he tried to educate the people through his paper and his personal writings against the prevailing superstitious and conservative attitude in the society.

Whenever there was any popular movement on genuine issues, Dr. Mahtab supported the people in his columns. His own regular column 'Gaon Majils' was a link between the society and the administration.

Besides the Prajatantra during freedom movement Dr. Mahtab along with his political friends had brought out
some other publications which worked as a link between the people and the freedom movement.

In post-independent era Dr. Mahtab started some other publication like Jhankar, Minabazar, Eastern Times, Hirakhand which helped him in expanding his link with people. In the literary journal named 'Jhankar' editorial columns were being written by Dr. Mahtab with a purpose of maintaining a link with the people's objectives. Through Eastern Times which some-times appeared as a daily and after discontinuing for some years again reappeared as a weekly. Through this media Dr. Mahtab tried to communicate with English readers.

Dr. Mahtab's literary creations are fine example of his association with the public. Depending upon the time of writing of his literary piece, each item was based on the then social complexity. In most
cases the theme and the story lines indicated the author's close observations of the society and its trend. One of his short stories 'Apari Bi Huae' is based on village politics, touts and how the dalals rule the roost.

"In another political story 'Mo Ghara Srijanga' it is described that an old freedom fighter has been offended by his friend who became a minister. Dr. Mahtab had raised many basic problems in everybody's languages. "The characters in Dr. Mahtab's stories mainly belonged to the villages and towns of Orissa. They carried to some extent the identity of Dr. Mahtab's closeness with the socio-political background. He has revealed in his literary pieces about his desire for making the society progressive.

"Among his novels the 'Abhayapara' is considered as one of the best political novel written by him in Ahmednagar Fort. Some critics said " like some

304. Ibid. p. 149.
other novels of Mahtab it is a literary reproduction of his personal expression.\textsuperscript{306}.

For Dr. Mahtab, people were always the source of his writings. A political columnist from his young days till his end he had always sided with people though in some cases he tried to mould their approaches with his reformist outlook. Since people always inspired him. Dr. Mahtab never hesitated to take on enemy however powerful he may be whether in British or in democratic government. The same thinking influenced his literary productions also.

When alive he was considered as the only public figure of eminence who would stand by the people during any time of crisis and guide them through his writings.

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid.