CHAPTER - IV

POPULAR MOVEMENT

Ph. D., THESIS
Soon after the beginning of the civil disobedience movement an unprecedented political upsurge was noticed in the feudatory States of Orissa. The simmering discontent of the people under an autocratic feudal order exploded in the form of violent agitation demanding early abolition of illegal taxes and exactions. In the States of Orissa the Chiefs encountered with stiff protest and vigorous movements. Such political outbursts forced them to accept the changes of a new social order.

Millions of people of Indian States were suffering under the autocratic rule of the princes. The taxes of the states were collected according to the requirement of the whimsical rulers without caring for the suffering of the people. Verbal orders issued by the Chiefs had to be implicitly obeyed. Judiciary was just an arrangement. The princes were heads of the executive, the highest law making authority and the fountain of justice. Administration was purely autocratic. Some still imagined that "they were the states" and the resource of the states were their private property and the inhabitants were their slaves.

Because of such mal-administration the Orissa States Peoples' Conference appointed an enquiry committee to enquire into the matter and a report was produced.
In fact the British Government was not looking to the suffering of the people though it was authorised to intervene in case of gross misrule. The definition of "gross misrule" was not defined. The people's voice was not audible to the centre or it was tacitly ignored. The instructions were given to the Political Agent not to hear grievances of the people and encourage them against the Chiefs.

The Chiefs were to administer their states according to the provisions of the Sanads. Such type of sanads were granted to Sambalpur States in 1867, Cuttack Tributary Mahals in 1894 and Bonai and Gangpur in 1899. Revised sanads were also granted and it was finally revised in 1937. In all these sanads the rulers were bound to administer "fairly and impartially and protect the rights of their subjects" according to the advice of the paramount power. But the paramount power was not sincere particularly to protect the right of the people rather it protected the princes by letting its troops to be used during Prajamandal movement.

Wherever intervention was resorted to it was not to protect the liberty of the people but to prevent the states (Talcher, Dhenkanal and Nilgiri) from disorder spreading from neighbouring British Province. As soon as the disturbance was over and the order was restored the Political Agent followed the policy of non-intervention in the name of internal autonomy of the states. So the ruler practised the
same autocratic rule without any hindrance or obstacle.

The land revenue system was very old and practically homogeneous throughout the states. Ownership of land rested with the state but right of occupancy rested with the actual cultivator who so long as he paid his rents, was left in undisturbed possession. Alienation by sale, gift or mortgage by a tenant of his holding was illegal and subjected both the transferrer and transferee to unconditional ejectment. Such alienation was strictly prohibited and disallowed in the five states transferred from Central Province. In some of the states such transfers were allowed with the permission of the state authorities.

The Orissa States Enquiry Committee Report also pointed out that "the peasantry had no full right on land in all these states. It was liable to ejection despite of its long possession and enjoyment for generations. A default in payment meant confiscation of land which was sold to the highest bidder without the balance, if any, over the arrear being refunded. So the owner of the land was not the peasant but the king who can dispose the tiller at his sweet wills.

The land revenue in the states was very high and it was collected by revenue officials, such as Gountia, Ganjhu, Sarbarkar, Pradhan and Thikadar. There was widespread demand for its reduction. In Saraikela and Kharaswan the highest rent per acre was Rs. 4/- whereas in Singhbhum...
it was Rs. 1-1-0 per acre. In Athgarh, Tigiria, Baramba and Narsinghpur average rent was Rs. 2-8-0 per acre whereas in neighbouring British Orissa (Banki) it was Rs. 1-3-5 per acre\textsuperscript{10}. In Kalahandi the highest rent of interest was Rs. 6-11-0 and in Nilgiri it was Rs. 5-0-0\textsuperscript{11}. The people resented. But wherever there was organised protest for non-payment of the rent, the British troops were requisitioned by the Rulers and land revenue was collected forcibly.

Besides the land revenue, other taxes, fees, salamies, hospital cess and miscellaneous cess were collected from the peasants. In addition to this grazing fee on cattle, tax on industrial caste, on sugar cane, cess on using cane-crushing machine, tax on landless labourers, fruit cess, cess for exporting grains or merchandise, fees for adoption, salami for permitting widow to adopt such fees in many states was levied at the rate of Rs. 5/- per acre of land. In many states there was income-tax, tax on salt, kerosene, bidi, tobacco, pan, coconut, coir and many other articles and necessaries of life through monopolies. In some states special fee for permitting the use of double plank doors, use of head-dress, use of palanquins, tax on plough and many other taxes were levied\textsuperscript{12}.

Collection of Land Revenue

Beginning from the day of magh, the Subdivisional Officer the Second Officer, the Tahasildar, the Garnaik, the Paiks and the peons all come to the Pradhan (the
headman). The demand all rents including the sixteen annas kisti. If the Pradhan points out that no collection has been made, the Garnaik orders the paiks and peons to "Fetch the Pradhan and all subjects to me". The order should be duly carried out, the Pradhan and the subjects on reaching the quarters occupied by the Garnaik and Tahasildar would find in front a thick wooden pole pitched into the ground. The poles are used to tie the defaulting tenants. The Garnaik then enquires about the rent and when the peasants would reply they would pay up on selling their rabi crops, he would order the paiks "Take the Pradhan and other subjects, tie them to the post with their heads tied up at the back hang a tuluka from the neck and load a nine seer heavy stone on the head". The paiks scrupulously carried out these orders and made the peasants carry heavy stone. When the pain would become unbearable, the subject cried and would request the Garnaik "You may auction our land, cattle and buffaloes and collect all the rents". Then the peasants would be free, the Garnaik would go to the village and put the belongings of the defaulters to auction. An article worth of Rs. 20/- would be sold for Rs. 10/- and the Garnaik himself would buy it.  

Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, a veteran in Talcher Praja Mandal movement was of opinion that the king's officials after fetching the defaulted peasants ordered them to stand in one leg on hot sand with a hot stone on his head and two hot stones in his hands. Some times on that hot sand the peasant had to stand in one leg put the other on a "Dhada" and put
a hot stone on the head. At the time of standing in one-leg if the peasant used the other one or the hot stone fell down from his head, the peasant was mercilessly beaten by the kings people in black and blue. In the winter, the peasants were forcefully plunged into cold water in the evening and were, also fanned with winnows$^{15}$. In these beastial manner the kings-men were collecting taxes. So when the revenue collectors were coming to the villages to collect revenue the subjects in some villages were running away to the forest leaving the children and old parents at home$^{16}$.

In some states like Patna, if the rent Collector could not pay the revenue to the state in time, first his movable property was attacked and then he was deprived of his own cultivable land$^{17}$. When the revenue collectors were awarded such type of severe punishment it was natural on their part to be very much severe towards subjects for the collection of rent and other taxes. This was the condition prevailing almost in all the Feudatory states of Orissa. Such type of oppressive measures engendered a revolutionary spirit that culminated in the Prajamandal Movement.

Other Forced Contributions from the Peasants

The forced contribution can be divided into a number of classes such as Bethi$^{18}$, Begari$^{19}$, Magan$^{20}$, Rasad$^{21}$, Kara Samgari$^{22}$, Ratha Bethi$^{23}$, Dashera Bheti, Paik Bethi$^{24}$, Hati Kheda Bethi$^{25}$, Shikar Bethi$^{26}$, and the like.
The people were forced to work without payment either for the ruler, for the officials or for the state in general. A peasant spent one hundred days of the year in doing forced labour for the state or its officials\(^\text{27}\). He was liable to be called up at any time of the day or night. He must leave his own work, however urgent it might be, on the pain of being beaten, forced or even imprisoned. If it was harvest season the crops must wait; if it is sowing season the sowing must be postponed till after the performance of the labour forced on him. Besides this the peasant had to render private services to the minor officials\(^\text{28}\).

This was admitted by J. Bowstead, I.C.S. who was ordered by the Crown Representative to enquire into the administration of the Orissa States in 1940. In his report he mentioned "till recently bethi, begari was in force practically throughout the Agency. Now it has been commuted into cash payment\(^\text{29}\). The cash payment did not benefit the peasants. In Talcher the Ruler commuted all begari in return of for five or four annas of rent. This was much more than the daily wages. If the peasant was not in a position to pay the amount, he had to render bethi\(^\text{30}\).

Besides 'bethi' and 'begari', "in a number of states 'rasad' was taken free or at reduced rate up till recently by the rulers and state officials on tour. A cess known as magan was levied till recently in a majority of these states\(^\text{31}\)."
Rasad was the forced requisition of provisions for the Ruler or his officials while they were on tour. All the requirements of the Ruler or the officials should be supplied by the people of the locality. It was declared by the political Agent that "Rasad shall be supplied to the Officers named in the schedule attached to the rule of their camp staff in the quantities indicated herein at the current market rate. Failure to render bethi, begari or to supply rasad in accordance with these rules shall render a tenant liable to ejection from his holding. The payment at current market price" was in paper and in practice no payment for the rasad and there was no limit to temptation of items of quantity. The people had to provide all those articles as desired by the officers, even certain rare provisions like liquor from the distant city.

Magan was the forced requisition of money on ceremonial occasions. The tenants had to pay an additional amount, about one-fourth of their land revenue on several ceremonies like sacred thread ceremony, ear-piercing ceremony of Raja, the heir-apparent and marriage of eldest Rajkumari. In Dhenkanal it had also meant contribution to the jubilee fund of the King Emperor and a trip to Europe of the Pattayat. Magan was prevailing in almost all the Feudatory states of Orissa.

People were asked to contribute Rs.0-0-6 paise in a rupee of land rent to the Sarbarkar who presented this.
Suniya bethi or New Year presentation to the Raja on New Years Day and such other occasions. Originally this presentation was voluntary contribution. But it assumed a compulsory character Bowstead had reported that these "additional taxes and exactions which constitute the legal grievances of the people and he recommended for their immediate abolition in practice".

The Detachment of Rulers from the ruled

There was always a wide gulf between the Rajas and the subjects. The former often felt as if he belonged to a different community with high social status. The real problem was that the Anglicised ruler was in large measure a foreigner in his own country. Culturally divorced from the mass of his people, he could easily become alienated from their problems and prejudices, thereby jeopardising that traditional respect for authority which was still the raison d'etre of the princely regimes. The Rajas were loyal allies of the Crown but they were not succumbed to nationalist propaganda and therefore unable themselves to float in the national current along with their subjects.

The British Government was following a policy of "subordinate isolation" towards the feudatory states. It was "subordinate" because British Government's insistence on the states relinquishing the right to conduct their own foreign relations. It was one of "Isolation" because the British
Government was content to leave the darbars very much to their own devices. Then the British Government appointed "Residents" and Political Agents in the native courts and well informed by them what was going on in the territories under Princely rule. But except in the matter of some heinous murder the British Government made no attempt to act on the information received. The Political Superintendent "exercises only a general supervision" and "avoids as much as possible all interference in its internal affairs".

British paramountcy in Orissa Feudatory States was articulated through a system of indirect rule through Residency system. It was rightly called as such because the Resident was the lynch-pin of the system. However the role of the man on the spot had been frequently misunderstood. No less than Collector in British India, he was an Agent of Government required to carry out the orders of the superiors "Without exaggeration it can be said that the principles on which the relations with the states are now conducted, except to the extent that they have been codified.....are only known to the Government of India". The British Government was showing total calousness towards administration in the Feudatory states. So the rajas had free hand to administer their own state.

The Chiefs in the Garjats were given a free hand to rule over their subjects so long as they were loyal to the British Crown. Even the Political Agents were advised:
to endeavour to convince the Chiefs that he is anxious to interfere as little as possible and to treat them as friends. He should never allow it to be thought that he welcomes, far less, encourages petitioners, against their authority or orders. His duty in regards to such states is one of the general watchfulness and friendly advice and support.....and to make them realise that it is the desire of the government to refrain from all interference and that just and firm rule by them makes any such interference un-necessary.

The Chiefs were nothing but the Agents of the British Government. Under the aegis of Political Department they were safe from external aggression and internal rebellion. In absence of any challenge to their authority the state continued to be unbridled autocracies where in democratic institutions even in an elementary form did not exist. Exaction and repression were the standard norms of the administration. The Chiefs were nothing but feudal relics and anachronistic being propped by the Political Department. They were the worst type of reactionaries standing as barriers between the people of British administrated Orissa and those of princely states in the desire to come together in fulfilment of common political ideas. But for their loyal support the British rule would have long ago crumbled to pieces.

No institution of British India so epitomized the imperial presence of the British as did the princely states. The Chiefs were not only contented to play the role merely of Tax Collector and Magistrates but they were autocrats. To assist in the discharge of its functions, in which the fiscal,
nor even political in their character. All the uprisings were confined to their respective states. Prior to 1930 there was no political organisation to organise and lead the people of the state unitedly to put up a common front against the arbitrary administration. As the agitations were confined to their own states, it was very easy on the part of the ruler to put them down ruthlessly with or without the support of paramount power.

Present Century

Bamra 1908-28

During the course of 20 years from 1908-1928 there were five peasant uprisings. The leaders were:

1) Hara Pradhan  
2) Bhagirathi Pradhan  
3) Jagannath Garnaik  
4) Daitari Hota  
5) Bhagaban Patel.

Some of them were beaten, fined and others were banished from the state. In 1928 the uprising was against Land Settlement. As many as 4000 peasants marched to Sambalpur and placed their grievances before Political Agent. A No-Rent Campaign was started on the failure to secure redress from the Political Agent. Six Gauntias (Village headmen) were arrested and imprisoned for three months. Some leads lost their jobs in service and 4 Gauntias were deprived of their Gaunti rights. Section 144 was served on Dayananda Satpathy and 5 others. The
former had to go to prison for a month and a half. Several others were dealt with under various charges and the movement was suppressed.44

Kandh Rebellion in Daspalla: 1914

The political consciousness was first growing in British Orissa and simultaneously the national movement was gaining ground in the Feudatory States. But the first aspiration of the people in the Feudatory States was seen in the Kandh rebellion of Daspalla, locally known as "Daspalla Meli" of 1914.45

Since 1905 when the post of the Political Agent was created for the Orissa States gradually a policy evolved to bring as many states under direct control as possible. Narayan Bhanj Deo, the then Raja of Daspalla was too old to manage the state. So he had practically left all affairs of the state in the hands of Dewan Bhagirathi Biswal. It was also to the latter's benefit to get the state under the Court of Wards so that he could himself be raised to the status of the Superintendent directly under the political department of government.46 He arranged the adoption of a minor prince of Parikud Raj family with the intention to put the State under Court of Wards during the minority of the ruler. The old Raja had a cousin named Baisnab Deo, aspiring for succession after the Raja. Both Bhagirathi Biswal and Baisnab Deo were now eagerly waiting for the Raja's death.47

Ph. D., THESIS
Bit it so happened that on the eventful day of the death of the Raja the Dewan as well as Baisnab Deo were both absent from the Headquarters. Dewan's henchmen conveniently managed to set up the young Raj Kumar upon the Gaddi for performing obsequies. He now had a very strong case for the claim over the Gaddi of Daspalla since the person passing formal orders for the removal of the dead body of the deceased Raja was the undisputed successor to the Gaddi. So Baisnab Deo had no other alternative but to take recourse to Court for establishing his claim. He proceeded to Cuttack for legal advice and did not venture to return to Daspalla for fear of harassment. In a warrant had actually been issued against him for inciting the people to revolt. He was convicted and sentenced to be transported.

Daspalla contained a good lot of aboriginal population. Most of the non-aboriginals practically accommodated themselves to the changed situation of succession of Raj Kumar but the eccentric aboriginal Khonds and a section of the non-aboriginals could not convince themselves how under the existing custom of the state an outsider could be taken in adoption to succeed to the Gaddi in the presence of a cousin of the deceased Raja. Their sympathy was with Baisnab Deo. They did not bother about Deo's age or qualification.

The people of Daspalla had many accumulated grievances. They were tired of the bethi service during the period Biswal exercised arbitrary powers. A number of roads
were constructed by bethi for which the State administration did not spend a penny. In every sphere of Biswal's activity added to the discontentment of the tenants generally. He was practically all in all in the state and the Raja was a mere figurehead.

The relation between Dewan and Baisnab Deo was anything but cordial. The eccentric Khonds supported the cause of Baisnab Deo and frequently came down to Cuttack to see him there even at the risk of incurring displeasure of Dewan. The latter interpreted this behaviour of the Khonds as sedition and revolt against the state. In order to subdue this, he did not hesitate to burn down villages. This helped to fan the fire of discontent of the people against the state. It was recorded as a Khond rising in Daspalla. To restore law and order police force rushed into Daspalla from various parts of Orissa and the rising was quelled. Baisnab Deo was made a scapegoat and convicted for transportation.

Govind Mishra a young man of Daspalla who was then reading at Cuttack did not approve of what was happening in Daspalla. He also incurred the displeasure of the Superintendent and was made an accused of fomenting disloyalty in the State. So, warrant of arrest was issued against him. However, he slipped out of the clutches of the State authorities and desperately ran away to Calcutta. In 1919 when a general clemency was declared, he returned to Orissa and merged himself in various political and social movements in Orissa.
Santal Uprising in Mayurbhanj 1917

The first World War broke out when Mayurbhanj was under the administration of Court of Wards on account of minority of Purna Chandra Bhanj Deo. Keeping with the tradition of the State the minor prince evinced great interest in rendering all possible help to the paramount power, especially in recruitment of soldiers and other arrangements connected with the War. He even offered his personal services as a Lieutenant of the Royal Artillery. There after he proceeded to France and England on active service.

Encouraged by the above gesture of the Crown Prince, the State Administration zealously took up the recruitment work among the tribals who though responded well at first subsequently showed reticence and in 1917 took recourse to open rebellion. The immediate cause of the rising was the attempt to recruit tribals for a Labour Corps in France for World War.

The tribal uprising first occurred during May 1917 in the Sadar sub-division and then spread to the sub-division of Bamanghaty and Panchpir during June. The tribals assaulted some officials who were in-charge of the recruitment. They looted the bazar and damaged the railway line. However the rising was temporarily crushed by the despatch of the armed police reserves from Orissa and 100 Infantry men from Calcutta. Inspite of this the tribals continued to hold mass meetings and protested against the oppressive administration. In June a fresh rising occurred in...
Bamanghaty sub-division where the bazar of Rairangpur was looted and burnt and a Police constable was murdered. Order was restored by the help of the military and police and a number of Santals were convicted and sentenced to various terms of punishment as follows:

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<td>14</td>
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The cases were tried in different courts and rigorous punishments were imposed upon 977 persons.
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<td>No. of persons tried</td>
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The rebels were charged with 712 major and 406 minor offences. L.T.R. Locus Special Judge and Haridas Bose the State Judge conducted the trial of major offences and minor cases were tried in the court of the State Magistrates. Besides military force, some state officials, Shiba Jena a resident of Khuruntia in Muruda P.S. explained to the people the need of army and also because of extensive tour of the Prince in the tense areas, people could be pacified. In response to his appeal during 9 February to 14 February 78 persons offered to be recruited for the Mesopotamia Labour Corps. The work was personally supervised by C.L. Philip, Political Agent, Orissa Feudatory States. Subsequent statistics revealed that 2452 tribals from Mayurbhanj had been enrolled for War service. As a welfare measure the Durbar accepted the liability of maintaining those families whose earning members like father or husband had been enrolled for service in War.

Movement in Dhenkanal 1922

In Dhenkanal at the turn of the century the Manager of the State contemplated enhancement of rent under a new settlement. But the idea to revise rent was abandoned due to protest of the people. Again in 1922 the Management wanted to revise the rent. Just at that time the Forest Rule was reviewed and enforced. Against both these, there was much resentment and agitation. Some grievances were redressed.
But four leaders were charged with conspiracy and sentenced to imprisonment for three years. This gave a set back to the movement.  

**Nilgiri Agitation 1928**

In 1928 the people of Nilgiri revolted against illegal cess like bethi, magan etc. The Raja resorted to rigorous punishment which intensified the agitation. About 2000 people left the state for Balasore. At the request of Hare Krishna Mahatab, Rev. C. F. Andrews visited Balasore and witnessed the non-violent and peaceful behaviour of the refugees. He mentioned this in his book "India and Simon Commission". It was at his intervention that a settlement could be arrived at. The Raja agreed to pay proper remuneration for services obtained from the people and the tenants called off the agitation and returned home.

**Fermentation in Talcher 1911-32**

The people of Talcher agitated thrice during 1911 and 1932. In 1911-12 the miscellaneous cess of an anna per rupee imposed upon them. Purandar Pani, Banamali Parmaguru and Sudarsan Dhar were fined under 124 A.I.P. for petitioning the Political Agent against the Ruler. But no response was made from the side of Political Agent and the agitation was suppressed by punishing the leaders.
In 1922 the Raja re-imposed *betti* and *magan* inspite of protests from leaders like Bankanidi Bhaktaballav and Natabar Ray. But the movement met the similar fate that of 1911.

The people again agitated against the re-imposition of cesses in 1930-32 with the leadership of Dhobai Chhual Singh and Brundaban Pradhan. They put-forth a Charter of demands and grievances before the Political Agent, Mr. Boston. But nothing came out of it. The leaders were imprisoned for a year and had to furnish bonds for good behaviour. Punitive Police were posted in their villages for one year. After taking further repressive measures the Raja suppressed the rebellion for a time.

**The Boudh Rising 1930**

Land rents were increased in Boudh in 1930 under the new settlement. There was an increase of 100, 200 and 300 and in some cases 400 per cent in different places. About 200 people went to the Raja to lay before him their grievances. The officials prevented an approach to the Raja. Twenty-seven Khonds then went to Sambalpur to get relief from the Political Agent. On their return to the state they were cruelly beaten and imprisoned.

**Orissa States' Peoples' Conference**

The Colonial government was friendly with the feudatory Chiefs of Orissa without paying any respect to the
During the last few months there has been considerable agitation against the administration of the Orissa States by the Congress workers and this agitation has been promoted by articles appearing in the newspapers published in Orissa. The Political Agent in a letter dated April 26, 1931 reported that numerous false and inflammatory statements have been published in the newspapers Prajatantra, Asha and Samaj alleging for instance that anyone in Khaddar is being arrested and that the Superintendent has passed orders for the Gaontias (Headmen) to be whipped in their presence if they failed to pay the rents.

This indicates that freedom movement in British India had already spread into the feudatory states and the states people accepted the Congress ideology to get civil liberty and establish popular government in their own states.

Some eminent political workers who were concerned with the State problems took the initiative, ad interim, and decided to form a central organisation to provide leadership to the movement in the states. They were Balawantrai Mehta, Manilal Kothari, C.R. Abhayankar etc. The conference held in Bombay in December 1927 was attended by seven hundred delegates from all over India. Its aim was to influence the government of the states as a whole "to initiate necessary reforms in the administration by the force of collective opinion of the people of the states." Further the conference emphasized the right of the people to determine as they deem proper the form and character of their government and also demanded that the elected representatives should be
associated with the administration. This representative government should have power over administration including finance. It also accentuated the separation of state revenue from personal expenditure of the Raja and demanded the establishment of independent Judiciary separated from Executive. It also urged for the speedy attainment of Swaraj and participation of the people in the new constitutional set-up.

On 1 April 1936, the Orissa Province was formed and in 1937 the Congress Party was voted to power. The people in the province were enjoying civil liberty and responsible government which inspired the people in the feudatory states. At the same time All India National Congress changed its policy from non-intervention in the states politics to "benevolent neutrality". In the Tripuri Session it resolved to identify itself with the States people thereby enhancing the strength of the states peoples' movement.

The peoples' movement in the feudatory states gathered new momentum after the formation of All Orissa States Peoples' Conference in 1931. The founding father of this Conference was Sarangadhar Das, a man of Dhenkanal having a dynamic personality. He was also a devotee of Mahatma Gandhi. He was also a member of the Working Committee of All India States Peoples Conference. He focussed the miserable condition of Orissa States' people before the Indian leaders.

The first session of the Orissa States' people Conference was held at Cuttack in 1931. It was not a success.
as the people being afraid of their Rulers did not dare to attend it. The second session was held in Cuttack town hall under the Presidentship of Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the President of All India States' Peoples Conference. It was crowded with delegates from various states. In this session Sarangadhar Das was elected as the Secretary of the Orissa States Peoples Conference.

The Conference resolved that

Whereas the people in general of the states have no facilities to know the laws, codes, rules, regulations and orders by which they are governed; whereas it is their bitter experience that their lives, properties and honours are not secured and whereas it is high time for the benefit of the Rulers and the ruled alike that the feelings of security should be ensured, it is hereby resolved that this conference do take all steps necessary for the purpose of impressing upon the Rulers of the States of Orissa, the immediate necessity of declaring and publishing all those laws, codes and acts of the British Indian legislature which they have adopted and also all such other laws, rules and orders having the force of laws, which they have formulated for the administration of their respective states.

The Conference also asked the Rajas of Orissa Feudatory States to immediately confer upon their subjects (a) the right of occupancy on their holding and (b) the fundamental rights of citizenship. The Conference also demanded that the Rajas should abolish immediately every form of bethi either in form of labour or money levy or of both and urged the...
government of India to investigate how far the real bethi has been abolished in the states.

The All Orissa State Peoples Conference also drew the attention of the Rajas to the mass-discontentment caused by evil practice like bethi, rasad, magan and strongly advocated for their total abolition. The conference also regretted for the prevalence of various kinds of illegalities and of repression in most of the feudatory states of Orissa and demonstration of occasionally morbid tastes of some of the princes leading to unspeakable events and appointed a committee of Inquiry with following members,

1. Satis Chandra Bose, Bar-at-law, Cuttack.
3. Balawantrai Mehta, Secretary, All India States Peoples Conference, Bombay.
4. Sarangadhar Das, Secretary, All Orissa States Peoples Conference.

Due to unavoidable circumstances Satis Chandra Bose, Braja Sundar Das and Sarangadhar Das could not join the committee, therefore the Working Committee of All Orissa States Peoples Conference at its meeting on 6 June 1938, with the consent of the President, A.O.S.P.C. re-constituted the All Orissa States Enquiry Committee as follows:

1. Harekrushna Mahatab, Member All India Congress Working Committee.
2. Lal Mohan Patnaik, Secretary, Orissa Board of Christian Education and ex-Secretary, Utkal Union Conference.
Sambalpur University

3. Balawantrai Mehta, Member, Servants of the People Society and Secretary, All India States Peoples Conference.

Sri Mahatab was elected as Chairman of the All Orissa States Enquiry Committee at its first meeting at Cuttack on 20 June 1938. Within June and July 1938 the Committee held its sittings at Cuttack, Jajpur Road, Balasore, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Angul and Kalupara Ghat. Questionnaires were prepared and sent to the leaders of Orissa States and public body and persons interested in the work. The Chairman, Sri Mahatab also wrote letters to the Feudatory Chiefs seeking cooperation from them in the work undertaken by the committee. It also sought permission from the Rajas to visit their states and collect evidence from Official and non-official witnesses. But his letters were not responded to.

The Chairman also addressed the Rulers to send copies of their Annual Administrative Report along with other relevant information throwing light on the affairs of the states. Absolutely there was no response except the Darbar of Patna which was good enough to send a copy of its annual administrative report. In spite of all these obstacles the committee conducted its enquiry and submitted its report in 1939 exposing the illegalities and acts of repression going on in the states of Orissa.
So, in the conference in 1937 it formulated the following demands on behalf of the States people of Orissa:

a) Responsible government be immediately introduced in all large single states that were able to bear the burden thereof and that smaller contiguous states be grouped for the purpose of responsible government,

b) the representative institutions be established on an elective basis for the purpose of local self-government, legislation, taxation and control of general administration,

c) that the Budget of the States be presented to and voted upon by the legislative council with a majority of elected members,

d) that the amount of the Privy purse of the Ruling Chief and his family be fixed by the legislation and excess over the fixed amount that might be asked for in any year be voted upon by the legislature and that the fixed amount be subject to revision every five years,

e) that there be an independent audit of the accounts of the states,

f) The judicial functions be separated entirely from the Executive and that the personal intervention of the Rulers in that administration of Justice to cease absolutely.
g) that recruitment and other matters relating to public services of the states be subjected to definite laws or rules.

The committee made these demands on the basis of recommendation of the All India States Peoples Conference, 1927 in Bombay and in relation to some of the social and political institutions which were prevailing in Orissa States.

The organisational set up of the conference was:

1. The Orissa States Peoples Conference.
2. The Working Committee of the Conference.
3. Association of the people of the states. It shall be opened, whenever it is considered necessary to have substitute associations for districts or taluks of the states to work in conjunction with the state associations.
4. to set up local states branches.

The All Orissa States Peoples Conference was also affiliated to the All India States Peoples Conference.

The people of twelve feudatory states and their Praja Mandals were emboldened to release themselves from the age old bondages after the formation of Orissa States Peoples Conference and Enquiry Committee. This feeling was stronger among illiterate villagers than among the few educated people in the head-quarters. The people in the 12 states demanded
"Civil Liberties and establishment of responsible government under the aegis of their respective Rulers". The Rajas were conscious of mass awakening everywhere and were afraid that if their subjects begin to organise themselves, the throne might eventually be shaken.

Within a year "the Prajamandals" were formed in almost every feudatory states of Orissa. The Prajamandals started agitations under local leadership against the arbitrary rule of the Rajas and establishment of responsible government in their states. The agitations also got support from the All India Leaders. Balwantrai Mehta, Secretary, All India States Peoples Conference addressed a meeting at Cuttack on 5 July 1938. Dealing with the miserable conditions of the people of the states of Orissa he stressed the need for a systematic organisation for the amelioration of their lot.

Nilgiri

All the agitations of Nilgiri were suppressed by strong measures taken by the Raja. The satyagraha then entered a new phase when the State authorities tried to collect the fines by attaching properties of the satyagrahis. About 5000 people (majority being aboriginals) assembled at village Machuapatna to offer satyagraha before the Officers sent to attack their properties. Both the parties camped in the village for about five days. The satyagrahis under Banamali Das were holding their non-violent and peaceful meetings and
processions. There upon the Darbar asked the Government of Orissa for Police help. At that time Orissa was governed by a Congress ministry under the premiership of Biswanath Das who outright turned down the request of the Ruler. In despair the Ruler informed the Political Agent who visited Nilgiri in July last along with contingent of Police Forces from Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Dhenkanal.

Major Bazelgette the Political Agent accompanied by the Raja visited Machuapatna and had two hours discussion with Banamali Das, the Secretary, Nilgiri Prajamandal. The Political Agent was highly impressed by the peaceful and restrained behaviour of the satyagrahis. He enquired about the grievances of the people and persuaded the Prajamandal leader for negotiation. Banamali Das demanded the release of all political prisoners, remission of fines and restoration of normal conditions as a pre-condition to the permanent settlement. While the negotiation was going on, the Political Agent left for his headquarters at Sambalpur. Then the Raja turned down the table and went to Dorkuli to seek the help of aboriginals. Banamali Das was arrested as he dissuaded the people to meet the Raja because of his treacherous behaviour. Satyagraha teams started their procession from Gadiamal Camp in Balasore district. On 12 August 1938 the state Police made a lathi charge and subsequently fired upon 6000 Satyagrahis. Receiving this news Harekrushna Mahatab and Sarangdhar Das hurried to Nilgiri. The Political Agent also came down from Calcutta reaching Nilgiri on 13 August 1938 and with his arrival negoti-
Mr. Solomon, the Collector of Balasore and Harekrushna Mahatab tried their best to persuade the Prajamandal leaders for an amicable settlement. The Dewan and Kailash Chandra Mohanty sat at the negotiation table from the side of Raja and the Prajamandal respectively. A sort of settlement arrived at as the Raja agreed to release all political prisoners and the Prajamandal agreed not to excommunicate him. So the agitation was suspended on 29 August 1938.

Mahatab gave the following Press-report:

I am glad to announce that the satyagraha in Nilgiri has been suspended from 29 August 1938 in view of the assurance of the Political Agent that the demand which cannot be met by the Darbar will be considered by the Resident, Eastern States and decision will be given by him after hearing the views of the Nilgiri Prajamandal. The assurance has been given that as soon as the boycott of the officials is withdrawn, General amnesty will be granted and this is expected to take place very soon. Those who were arrested when the negotiation was going on between Prajamandal and Political Agent have been immediately released.

Later on the rulers became reactionary and created a fake Prajamangal to counteract against Prajamandal movement.

Dhenkanal 1938

In 1938 the Prajamandal agitation was very acute in Dhenkanal. At last, while the negotiation talks were in progress a special train arrived at Dhenkanal on 20 September carrying in it 200 British troops and the inevitable happened.
The State Police assisted by the British troops entered the interiors of the state, searched houses and dragged the Prajamandal volunteers from their home-steads. Prajamandal was declared illegal and the leading Oriya Weekly 'Krushak' was banned. Har Mohan Patnaik, the President of Prajamandal was arrested on 22 September by an extraordinary warrant issued by the State under Section 124 I.P.C. and detained in the Cuttack Jail. At Parjang the houses of Prajamandal leaders like Maheswar Subahu Singh, Diwakar Biswal and Rama Prusti were demolished and burnt. The villagers were thoroughly beaten and dragged out of their houses to build roads on bethi. Their women folk were dishonoured. The contemporary English Dailies recorded,

"If at any time the correct history of these incidents are written, the tragic stories of Martial Law Regime in the Punjab will pale into insignificance before them."

Following the raids of the State Police with the assistance of the British troops the Prajamandal instructed the people to leave the state in protest. About thousands of people, men, women and children resorted to mass exodus and settled in a number of camps in British Orissa at Jenapur, Angul, Balrampur, Budhapank, Sukinda, Kalando and Golpur.

In the month of October about 20 armed police men came to Bhuban for suppressing the popular agitation against the ex-ruler of Dhenkanal. They perpetrated a lot of torture on the people at Bhuban. While they were going back, large number of people chased them. When they reached the ferry at
Nilakanthapur, the people chasing them had already drawn nearer and were about to attack them. The police men commanded the boat-man to ferry them at-once. The people from behind were shouting the boatman not to let them cross the river. The boatman and some other villagers present there refused to ferry the policemen. The policemen tried to snatch away the boat and to cross the river by rowing themselves. But the people resisted. They held fast the ropes of the boat. From among the few thus resisting, Baji Raut came to the forefront and denied them the boat. The police men now found that the infuriated mob following them had almost reached the spot. In the face of imminent danger of attack from the mob they opened fire killing Baji Raut and 8 others who held the rope. Then they crossed the river by rowing the boat themselves. Such brutalities and violence were condemned by Sarangdhar Das as well as by the Press. He condemned the British Government for lending police force to the rulers.

In December 1938 Naba Krushna Choudhury launched satyagraha against the military help of the British Government to suppress the agitation. He was arrested but released soon. Then there were 6 batches of volunteers who launched satyagraha. But it was stopped by the call of Gandhi.

In 1939 as a result of the reports submitted by the Military Intelligence Bureau, the Political Department withdrew the power of the Ruler and appointed a Dewan, A.K.Khan with full power of administration. A.K.Khan made some administrative
reforms and sanctioned economic reliefs such as relaxation of the terms and conditions of bethi, reduction of cess from four annas to two annas and the total abolition of forced labour. He also prepared a budget allotting per rupee of expenditures i.e. 8 annas for general administration; 5 annas for public work, health and sanitation; 2 annas for Privy purse which included allowances for Rajas relation and others, and 1 anna for the Residency Military Police. By this time the people had returned to their villages and showed their satisfaction over the minor changes and the gradual release of their leaders who were arrested by an extradition warrant.

The Talcher Exodus

The Talcher Prajamandal was formed on 9 September 1938 under the able leadership of Pabitra Mohan Pradhan. Notwithstanding various hindrances from the Raja of Talcher, a large number of people from Talcher crossed over to Angul and held their meeting at Kosala. Pradhan was unanimously elected as the President of the Prajamandal. A committee of ten members was empowered to implement the full programme and carry on their activities under difficult circumstances in a perfectly non-violent manner. The committee drew a charter of demands including the right to form association, hold meetings, abolition of forest laws and better conditions in collieries. The Charter also included the fundamental rights and full responsible government.
On the other hand the Raja repressed the agitators with an iron hand. About 10,000 persons of Talcher and Pallahara states assembled at Kosala and Kampsala in Angul in proximity to the border of Talcher. On 16 September 1938 they resolved to continue their fight till the fulfilment of their demands.

The sufferings of the people were beyond description. Their crop in the field was taken away by the Rajas' Agent on the plea of non-payment of rent. Many people were badly assaulted and their women folk were molested by the agents of the chief. In protest the people left for Angul and took shelter in the refugee camp. It was on 8 November 1938 the people of 25 villages left their homes and ripe crops and reached the headquarters of Prajamandal Office at Kosala in Angul. According to a modest calculations about 60,000 people left Talcher to take shelter in 9 camps set up in Angul.

With much hardship they stayed in the camps for 18 months. H.K. Mahatab was compelled to communicate the miseries of the refugees to Mahatma Gandhi in the following words:

If the people of Talcher do not leave peacefully under the tyranny of the Chief, if it is possible to move the agitation inside the state, if the Chief does not fulfil the genuine demands of the people and if the political department supports the Chief, then it is the only way for the people to leave Talcher. If about 100 workers prepare themselves to reside outside Talcher, the British Government will be forced to consider their difficulties. The Chief and the Political Department will be forced to fulfil their demands.
After 3 months the number of refugees came down to 20,000. These people were leading a very miserable life in the camps.

So Harijan said:

"...twenty thousand refugees of Talcher are in Orissa. They are living in Angul in British Orissa with much difficulties."  

In January 1930 A.V. Thakar Bapa, member of All India Harijan Sevak Sangha, N.G. Ranga an M.L.A. of Madras, Rev. C.F. Andrews and Miss Augusta Harission, the Secretary of the Indian Conciliation group in London and a member of the British Parliament visited the refugee camps. They were highly impressed by the non-violent spirit of the people and gathered the first hand knowledge about the detail of sufferings of the refugees in the camp. They brought it to the notice of British authorities. Thakar Bapa and Miss Augusta Harission remained in the camps for about 4/5 months.

In this situation the Political Agent, the Resident and Political Department discussed the matter with the Orissa Government several times but nothing was finalised.

Biswanath Das had to discuss the matter with the Viceroy as directed by him. Major Hannessey, the Assistant Political Agent of Orissa States went to the camps on 10 March 1939. Introducing himself as the representative of the Paramount power he assured the refugees certain reforms. The concession assured by Major Hannessey after being published in the press created a new hope in all circles.
Then C. S. Searle, Political Agent, Orissa States accompanied by Joseph Woods, Captain of the Salvation Army visited the refugee camps and urged upon the refugees to return to their homes. But refugees asked for a written assurance from the Political Department. Their complaints about concessions though had been granted earlier were not implemented. In order to create confidence among the refugees a meeting was held on 21 March 1939 at Angul between Hare Krishna Mahatab two delegates from the camps and Major Hannessey E. C. Ansgorsge, the Revenue Commissioner of Orissa attended as an observer of the Orissa Government. Other important personalities present at the meeting were Major Gregory of the Military Intelligence Department and Adjutant Woods of the Salvation Army.

Major Hannessey came well prepared to the conference with all the papers from Talcher. On 21 March 1939 an agreement was arrived at with certain concessions to the people. Popularly known as Hannessey - Mahtab Pact; It stipulated:

1) Reduction of the miscellaneous cess from 5 annas to 3 annas per rupee of rent, and an understanding that after the settlement to be started about next November the combined rent and cess will not be higher than the Angul rent and cess with the same class of land.
ii) The abolition of monopolies on the necessaries of life except hide, skin, horn, ganja, opium, bhang and liquor.

iii) State administrative machinery should not be used for enforcing fine etc. levied by Ecclesiastical Courts and Panchayats.

iv) Compulsory labour (bethi) should be abolished except when necessary for public purposes and then on payment of wages of ordinary rates.

v) The abolition of special taxes (pole tax) on industrial castes.

vi) There should be no victimisation of refugees on their return to the state.

vii) Constitutional reforms enabling the people to participate in the administration through their representative would be introduced as soon as the schemes were approved by the Political Department.

viii) There shall be no interference with freedom of speech and meeting, provided that there is nothing subversive or disloyal to the Ruler or his administration.

ix) People should be allowed to kill wild animals in the state on their own property without any penalties or fees.
Hannessey was absolutely confident that the concessions that he would recommend to the Ruler, would be granted but he doubted whether Mahatab would be able to send the refugees back. In order to remove his doubt Hannessey secured the signatures from the leaders of the refugees assenting to the above agreement. Hannessey went back to Talcher to announce the consent of the Ruler. But to the great disappointment of the people as well as of the Political Agent, the Ruler refused to grant the concessions on cess which was considered to be most important by the insurgent refugees.

The conditions of the Sanad (1937) under which the Raja ruled the state included the following conditions:

Clause (iii) That you (the Raja) shall do your utmost to suppress crime of all kinds in your state,

(iv) That you shall administer justice fairly and impartially to all alike,

(v) That you shall recognise and maintain the rights of all your people and in no account oppress or suffer them in any way to be oppressed, and that in particular you shall charge yourself personally with the welfare of the aboriginal population of your state,

(vi) That you shall act in accordance with such advice as may be given to you by the Agent to the Governor General, Eastern States or such
other Political Officers as may be vested with authority in this behalf by His Excellency the Viceroy.

Under Clause (vi) of the Sanad the Raja was bound to act in accordance with the advice given by the Political Agent and had no option but to carry out his suggestions. But the Raja very successfully ignored the recommendations which annoyed the people as well as the press.

On 29 April 1939 more than a month after the agreement, it was given by the Resident that out of the 9 concessions assured by Hannessey he would like to examine only one that is the concession regarding the reduction of cess and that the Rulers were ready to concede the remaining eight points. Further, he agreed to cancel the extradition warrants requiring only a security bond for a limited period from those who want to go into the state. This was the definite understanding that the Resident and his secretary gave to Mahatab and Miss Augusta Harrison on 29 April 1939. Accordingly, the Raja made an announcement on 1 May 1939 conceding the demands as per the suggestion of the Resident. But very surprisingly the declaration did not contain the above concessions, rather contained things which the Political Department had long ago declared abolished. The Raja was of the impression that the refugees would come back after declaration as the rain had set in and paddy season of 1939 was approaching. But the Prajamandal rejected the declaration of Raja and once again renewed the agitation. This aggravated
the refugee problem. In the meanwhile the Congress Ministry with the approval of the Political Departments cancelled the extradition warrants against 43 Talcher Prajamandal workers and released them on 12 May 1939. They were detained in Cuttack Jail since November 1938. Now the agitation was carried on with a greater vigour and the refugees stood firm not to return to Talcher unless their demands were fulfilled. To convince the Raja a conference was held at Talcher which was attended by Raja himself and a number of others, like the Political Agent, Mamatha Nath Basu, Collector of Cuttack and Hare Krishna Mahatab and seven representatives from the refugee camps but nothing came out of it.

Pressure from all corners of the world was brought to bear upon the British Government in India. Miss Augusta Harrison raised the question of the refugees in the British Parliament. The American Press criticised the Government; Rev. C.F. Andrews expressed great concern in his Press Note dated 5 May 1939. Mahatma Gandhi made the following Press Statements:

Talcher promised to be worse than Rajkot. In Rajkot it was the Ruler's word that was broken. In Talcher it was the Paramount Power's. In Rajkot the atrocities were not the subject of scrutiny. In Talcher the sorry condition of the numerous refugees is almost every thing. Hence delay is criminal and mean loss of one year's crop to several thousand cultivators. The other relief promised by the Political Agent Major Hannessey relates to paltry things so far as the Ruler of Talcher is concerned but they are serious enough for the people.
Gandhiji rightly felt Hannessey had signed the document without any reservation. To him the grievances were legitimate and their redress was long overdue. He failed to understand the reason why the Raja was not been taken to task by the British authorities. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made a Press statement on 30 May 1939 as follows:

Political Agents and Residents carry on in a leisurely way as if it matters little or nothing at all. How many scores of thousand of refugees were starving or how many others were being crushed by coercion. They make vague promises which they interpret in their own way. Among, all the states in India the Orissa States stand out today in their agony at Talcher of broken promises, and wandering starving refugees in Gangpur, where large number died and others are being driven to jungles.

The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow too expressed his deep concern at the state of affairs and desired to visit Orissa for spot enquiry. The Raja was warned that if the refugees did not return to their homes by the time of the Viceroy's arrival in Orissa, the State of Talcher would be confiscated and brought under direct management. Thereupon on 23 June 1939 the Raja made a proclamation fulfilling the demands of the Prajamandal. Most of the demands were fulfilled and assurances were given to meet other demands. The Congress Ministry of Orissa remained a witness of the assurances. After Pabitra Mohan Pradhan scrutinized the proclamation the refugees returned to their villages with joy and cheers.
In 1938 Prajamandal was formed in the small state of Ranpur adjacent to the district of Puri. On 29 December 1938, the Prajamandal convened a public meeting at Sunakhala under the Presidentship of Banamali Ram. The meeting criticised and condemned the activities of the Raja and Darbar; and formulated a Charter of their grievances. The Prajamandal presented the Charter of demands and launched a peaceful agitation under the leadership of Banamali Ram by way of organising processions and demonstrations in the headquarters of the State till the fulfilment of their grievances. Thereupon the Darbar declared the Prajamandal unlawful on 2 January 1939 and arrested the leaders which intensified the situation. On 5 January 1939, a huge crowd gathered before the palace and demanded the release of their leader. The Ruler, in panic, wired the matter to Major R.L. Bazelgette, the Political Agent seeking his help. Bazelgette being present at Nayagarh, the headquarters of the neighbouring state. Soon arrived at the scene with a small force after clearing the road that was blocked by trees and big stones. While he was conferring with the Ruler inside the palace, the crowd, many among whom were armed with primitive weapons like bows, arrows, lathis, axes and stones, felt very much agitated having heard the rumour that the Political Agent had killed two tenants blocking the roads while coming from Nayagarh. Ignorant of the rumours when Major Bazelgette came out of the Palace to pacify the mob.
he was at once attacked by them. In self-defence he brought out his revolver and shot one man dead just to disperse the crowd. But the mob got infuriated and wild at the sight of the dead body. They pounced upon him and within a few minutes killed him through brutal assault. This murder took place on the verandah of Bhima Padhiari where Bazelgette had tried to save himself hiding behind the wheels of a bullock cart. Thereafter the infuriated mob threatened to break open the Jail if the Prajamandal leaders were not immediately released. The Raja being thoroughly terrorised and panic-stricken ordered the Jailor to release all the prisoners. The whole episode took place within the span of a few hours. By a strange coincidence Hare-Krushna Mahatab arrived on the spot just a few hours after the murder of Bazelgette in the fateful evening and promptly cautioned the people about the possible repercussions of the incident and government reprisal.

The death of the Political Agent was followed by a reign of terror in the state. Jawaharlal Nehru in his Presidential address in the annual session of the All India States' Peoples' Conference held at Ludhiana on 15 February 1939 states:

The reaction of the British power to the tragedy of Ranpur was significant. Armed forces were brought from distant parts of India and a large concentration of troops in Orissa proclaimed the might of the paramount power. The starving people fled away at their approach and the State of Ranpur became an uninhabitated wilderness.
The Police and the military forces almost besieged the state and martial law was proclaimed paralysing the civil life. A special court of inquiry was instituted with B. Sivaraman, I. C. S. Joint Magistrate of Berhampur as the Enquiry Magistrate. Twenty six persons were accused of the murder. Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida were hanged and others were subjected to deportation for life and long term of imprisonment.

Jawaharlal Nehru while regretting the murder condemned the concentration of troops by saying that the troops came to overawe the peasantry of the state and to strengthen the Rulers in opposing their demands. They were utilised to suppress the movement for freedom. This was an intervention of the most flagrant kind on behalf of the paramount power on the side of tyranny and corrupt administration. Everyone knows that some of the states in Orissa are the worst and most degraded of their kind in India.

Sarangadhar Das issued the following press statements on 6 January 1939 on the murder of the Political Agent:

The act of violence committed on the late Major cannot be too severely condemned. The whole policy of the Rulers in most of the Orissa States had been to provoke the people to violence by all conceivable means at their disposal, so that their own sins may not come to light. It is a pity that some ignorant and immature persons in Rampur have so easily played into their hands without realising the consequences. For the time being the hands of the Rulers and their supporters have been strengthened and a situation has been created which compels me to advise the people of the different states in Orissa not to launch upon any mass movement of
direct action in the present circumstances. I hope my humble advice will also be followed by the people of those states which are now engaged in mass movements. Although the policy of the Orissa States' Peoples' Conference is one of non-interference in the affairs of different Prajamandals and the responsibility for all movements rests on the respective bodies. I am tendering this advice in anticipation of the sanction of my Committee.

Mahatma Gandhi though condemned the action of Prajamandal in the name of non-violence, still he in Harijan said:

Ranpur killed a Political Agent. The Police and the military men are happily passing their time by adopting a repressive measure upon the faultless men and women. Hope the Orissa Government will tackle the situation firmly not permitting the Imperial Force to do things according to their own will.

At the climax stage of the peoples' movement in the state the murder of Political Agent proved to be the last straw on the camel's back and the people of Ranpur for all times to come forgot about their Prajamandal as well as the spirit of agitation.

Nayagarh 1939

The Prajamandal in Nayagarh was constituted on 6 June 1938 under the Presidentship of Narayan Nanda. It submitted a Charter of demand securing political and civil liberty and agitated till the fulfilment of their demands. As a result thousands of people gathered before the palace. The Raja apprehending great tension sought the assistance of the Political Agent, Major Bazelgette. Bazelgette immediately
responded and came to Nayagarh to observe the situation. When he was dealing with the situation the Ruler of Ranpur sought his help on 5 January 1939. Since the situation was more serious. Then Bazelgette started his fateful journey in that evening.

The murder of Political Agent in Ranpur and subsequent reign of terror in the state un-nerved the people so much that they voluntarily suspended their satyagraha.

Khandapara 1939

The agitation was suppressed by the Raja who due to the second world war had more authorities to apply Defence of India Rules.

The agitation was headed by leaders like Daitari Parida and Somnath Mohanty. But because of rigorous repressive measures adopted by the Raja the agitation was suppressed.

Munda Rising in Gangpur 1939

A Munda rising shook Gangpur in the late thirties. They were said to have got inspiration from the freedom struggle that the Indian National Congress launched all over the country. The Munda Adibasis of Raiboga (modern Thana Raiboga) declined to pay the land revenue demand enhanced in the revision settlement which concluded in 1936 for land that was assessed at Rs. 1-9-0 per acre of land in 1910.
settlement, had to pay Rs. 2-8-0 in the settlement of 1936, while in the neighbouring district of Sambalpur similar land revenue paid was Rs. 1-2-0.

There upon the tribals, particularly the Lutheran Mundas started a "no-rent" campaign and stopped paying any rent to the state. When the arrears amounted to Rs. 63,000/- on 9 February the Maharani Regent convened a meeting at Sargipalli to hear the grievances of the people and to induce them to pay rents. At the meeting four to five thousand people from over thirty villages submitted a joint petition to the Maharani seeking redress of the following grievances:

1. The settlement of 1910 to remain in force,
2. Forest right enumerated in 1910 settlement be restored,
3. Chowkidari tax of 12 seers of rice and 3 annas in cash per household be remitted,
4. The people to be allowed to the hides of their own cattle, instead of the monopolist appropriating them to himself,
5. Free transfer of land be allowed without any fee,
6. Total abolition of unpaid forced labour, bethi (Nazrana) imprest-provisions, magan pancha (forceful contribution in cash or in kind)
7. Representative government in which the people can exercise the vote, to be introduced,
8. Permission to ply bullock carts on the roads built by the people,
9. Tanks be dug, embankments built by the State whenever necessary for irrigation purpose.

10. Full right to shoot wild animals that cause damage and destroy crops.

11. Freedom to sell lac, silk, cotton seeds, Mahua, Wax, etc to any merchant in the state.

12. Cooperative credit society to be established.

13. Local people given preference in state service instead of bringing men from out-side.

But the Rani remained passive to the legitimate grievances of the people which intensified the discontent.

The tribals under the leadership of Nirmal Munda continued their "No-rent-campaign". Finding the situation unfavourable to collect rent, the help of the Political Agent was sought by requisitioning soldiers in March. The soldiers stayed for ten days and arrested a few leaders of "No-rent-campaign". On 25 April about 800 native Christians were holding a meeting under the leadership of Nirmal Munda in the village Simko.

Two platoons of troops under a British Officer accompanied by Sub-divisional office and the Assistant Political Agent went to the spot to affect arrest of Nirmal Munda under section 332 I.P.C. for attacking a Chowkidar. But the crowd armed with crude weapons, with all their might, resisted the arrest of their leader. There upon the police opened fire killing 28 Mundas on the spot and injuring a large number of people\textsuperscript{110}.
The Official version stated that the number of killed was 28 whereas Sarangadhar Das maintained it to be sixty-five and State Committee for compilation of Who's Who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Sundargarh, recorded it to be forty two\(^{111}\).

Mahatab has mentioned in his autobiography:—

hundreds of people shot dead in Gangpur by British soldiers. From reliable sources it is known that this firing was wrongly carried out. The Political Agent had gone there to arrest the local leader Nirmal Munda. He called a meeting. That meeting was attended by men, women and children. When in that meeting the Political Agent convincing the people, the soldiers stationed at a distance mis-understood the posture and movement of his hand and started firing. As a result of which approximately three hundred men, women and children were dead\(^{112}\).

The version of the Darbar was that the firing probably prevented a repetition of what happened at Ranpur where Major Bazelgette was murdered\(^{113}\).

The firing resulted in the arrest of Nirmal Munda and with his arrest the agitation collapsed abruptly. Thereupon a public meeting was convened at Talenpalli under the President-ship of Sardhakar Supakar which demanded the institution of an impartial inquiry into the firings.

When the firing came to the public notice, Jawaharlal Nehru, in most unequivocal terms condemned the Government's action and demanded an enquiry.
Athgarh

The Prajamandal was formed in the small state of Athgarh. The Prajamandal was demanding for civil liberty and participation of the people in the administration of the state. The Raja did not concede the peoples' demand. The President of Prajamandal was banished from the state of Athgarh.

Keonjhar

In Keonjhar, the movement was not formally launched but false charges were framed against twenty five workers. They were sentenced to long term imprisonment. An advisory committee was introduced shortly after the trial of 25 workers. The agitation in Keonjhar was confirmed to aborigins and due to the lack of proper leadership, easily suppressed.

There were Prajamandal agitators in some Feudatory States like Bonai, Sonepur, Pallahara, Daspalla, Athmallik and Hindol. But the situation created was under control. These agitations were either suppressed or suspended. The promises made by the Rajas to fulfil the grievances of their subjects were not intentionally fulfilled.

Uprisings in the States 1941-47

During the period of Second World War the British authority strengthened the grips of Rajas to preserve their empire. The defence of India Rule and the Princes' protection Act were strictly implemented to arrest the
In 1939 when the king failed to face the people he sought the assistance from British Government. The British Government had provided the service of both the Infantry and the Air Force to help maintain the status quo. These forces were mobilized into action, bullets and tear gas shells were fired at the villagers from aeroplanes to terrorise them. The Infantry marched into every nook and corner of the state to fight off the advancing mob, but in vain. Chanting various inspiring slogans to the accompaniment of the blowing of conch and trumpets the insurgents faced the well armed military forces of the government. They raised barricades wherever possible and demanded on 7 September immediate transfer of power from Raja making the latter a constitutional head and the expeditious establishment of peoples' government.

In the confrontation between the Raja and the insurgents there were hundreds of casualties on account of frequent firing by the army as well as large scale arrests. Eye witness accounts revealed that truck loads of dead bodies were carried away for disposal and about 300 persons were arrested. Several villagers were pillaged; molestation of women was very common. About one hundred persons sustained several injuries and after a mock trial all those who were arrested were given rigorous prison terms varying from 6 months...
to three years. The Ruler did not permit any open enquiry into the allegations. To a question of Mr. H.K. Kunjru at the Council of States the Government Spokesman affirmed that at five places including Talcher, the insurgent have been machine-gunned during the Quit-India movement of 1942.

The Quit-India movement, thus, became another occasion to reinforce the authority of the Raja by the requisition of paramount troops on the pretext of Political instability in the State. The parallel Government set up by the people ceased to function on account of the oppressions of the Darbar. The leaders and workers of Prajamandal like Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Gobardhan Sahu, Gouri Shankar Pradhan, Bichhanda Pradhan, Jhaldas Maheswar Pradhan and Firingi Pradhan who had gone under-ground did not surrender themselves, but continued guerilla activities till the end of May 1943. A few leaders like Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Gobardhan Sahu joined the suicidal squad of the Indian National Army of Subash Chandra Bose and did not surrender till 1947.

In 1945 Mahatma Gandhi advised the leaders of the Quit-India movement who had gone under-ground to surrender. Though some of the Prajamandal workers surrendered, Pabitra Mohan Pradhan did not do so till his warrant was cancelled on 29 August 1947.

The final phase of the struggle for securing the freedom of the people was started in Talcher in 1947 during the post Independence period. Pabitra Mohan Pradhan organised
about 20,000 volunteers demanding the merger of the State in the Province. Such vigorous public demonstration created panic in the circle of the Raja. Since the British people were no longer there to help him he sought the help of Mahatma Gandhi who advised him to merge his state in the Province. With the merger of Talcher in Orissa in December 1947 the state regained peace and stability.

Dhenkanal

The policy of appeasement could not however satisfy the people who demanded Civil Liberty and representative system of administration in the state. Peoples' agitation, therefore, continued during the later half of 1939. The Raja again got an opportunity to unleash a reign of terror in the state backed by the paramount police force. Villages and houses were indiscriminately raided, properties looted, people beaten up at the offer of the slightest resistance had their women-folk dishonoured. Punitive tax was imposed and forcefully collected amounting more than ₹25,000/. All these earned a bad record for the Raja which led to the withdrawal of his power. The state administration was taken over on 17 January 1944 and was managed by the Political Department through Agents.

With the appointment of Government administrators the Prajamandal leaders were gradually released. After the release of the leaders, Prajamandal was once again reorganised under the Presidentship of Brajakishore Dhal and the...
Secretaryship of Kritibas Pradhan.

In 1947 after the departure of S.K. Srivastav and T. Satyanarayan, Rai Bahadur B. Sarkar was appointed the Chief Minister of Dhenkanal and the Raja was restored to his powers. During the post Independence period once again Prajamandal movement gained momentum under the twin leadership of Brajakeshore Dhal and Maheswar Subah Sahu Singh who organised a militia of about 20,000 demanding the establishment of a responsible government. To arrest the growth of disturbances the State authorities took all necessary precautions. Rai Bahadur B. Sarkar in his letter No. 77 CM/47 dated 22 September 1947 to Krishna Rao, Director, Union Secretariat, Orissa and Chhattisgarh States, Raigarh wrote to supply "1500 ball cartidges for 410 muskets and 1530 buckshot cartidges to face the breach of peace in the state. But before any agitation could be launched Sardar Patel arrived in Orissa on 13 December 1947 to effect the merger of States, when Dhenkanal was merged into the province of Orissa alongwith other states.

Prajamandal Movement in Mayurbhanj 1938-1947

The deep seated unrest among the peasants of Mayurbhanj provided congenial atmosphere for the growth of Prajamandal Movement during the 30s and 40s of 20th century. When juxtaposed territories like Balasore and Medinipur were completely saturated with Gandhian Movement against Government. The same sense of dissatisfaction and discontentment promoted the people to put-forth their grievances against
the native ruler through the State Prajamandal Movement with the leadership of Sarat Chandra Das, the erstwhile Secretary in Balasore District Congress.

The Satyagraha at Inchudi was launched in Balasore at the time of Dandimarch of Mahatma Gandhi at Gujrat Coast. Many tribals of Mayurbhanj could not join the Satyagraha led by Mahatab for fear of the Darbar.

The stringent circular No. 3 of April 1925 had deprived the common people from their basic right viz. freedom of speech association and public meeting. It was first challenged by Bansidhar Behera of village Dhadangiri (P.S. Banjirposi) who convened a public meeting at Simila in 1938. Subsequently he organised a number of meetings at Jashipur, Gadisahi and Raruan and delivered a series of speeches criticising the abuses of Darbar administration and demanded the withdrawal of the offending circular.

With the formation of Orissa States Enquiry Committee under the Chairmanship of Hare Krishna Mahatab in 1938, steps were taken to record the grievances of the subjects in the Feudatory states. The Committee with Mahatab, Balbantara and Lal Mohan Patnaik visited Balasore, Nilgiri and Mayurbhanj and were surprised to find that some tribal like Kols and Bathudis voluntarily travelled from Mayurbhanj (a distance of 3 days journey) to Balasore to put forth their grievances. Their grievances as recorded were:

Ph. D., THESIS
1. We pay annas four per family per month as fuel fee.
2. We pay annas two per head per each cow for grazing in the village pasture land.
3. We pay fine of annas four per head when we sell our cows.
4. We pay rasad (imprest provisions) to the State Officers and also during Shikar.
5. We do bethi for repair of roads, construction of School houses and state bungalow.
6. We are not allowed to take our cart on the main roads which are meant for motor cars only.
7. We pay a fee for obtaining Sal-wood for agricultural implements worth annas four per yoke of oxen.
8. We pay Chowkidari tax varying from annas two to annas five.
9. We pay a road cess at the rate of anna one per rupee of rent.
10. We pay a marriage tax which ranges from annas four to annas eight.
11. We pay a cess of annas twelve for tussar cultivation.

Besides it has been found that there was no medical facility at the time of epidemics. There were no enough schools to provide education to tribals. The members of the committee expressed their deep concern at the callous
attitude of the State administration in improving the lot of the common men and the heavy burden of taxation. Taking notice about the changing condition in the adjacent princely state like Nilgiri the Maharaja withdrew the prohibitory circular dated 27 April 1925. On 25 November 1938 issued in Mayurbhanj state Praja Sabha order. Praja Sabhas were established at Baripada, Bamanghaty, Kaptipada and Panchpir.

The people were not satisfied with these Praja Sabhas. Besides, the Indian National Congress inspired the people in British administered area to demand complete freedom and self rule. Likewise in the Feudatory states people demanded for the liquidation of the feudal social order and installation of popular government. Being inspired by the vigorous Prajamandal agitation launched at Nilgiri, Ranpur and Dhenkanal, the people of Mayurbhanj inclined to have similar organisation. The path was shown by Bansidhar Behera, a Congress worker of village Kuliana. Gradually the sympathisers of Prajamandal movement began to swell up. The Prajamandal became more active after the failure of the Praja Sabha experiment. Bansidhar Behera was supported by Krishna Chandra Mrugaraj of Jashipur, Kantharam Das of Karanjea and Shyam Singh Tipiria of Raruan.

The Prajamandal Movement really gathered momentum with Sarat Chandra Das. He was earlier an active member of the Congress Party and from 1920-25 he was the Vice-President of Balasore Congress Committee and a member of the Utkal Union.
He was popularly called as Sarat Gandhi.

On 26 March 1939 he started a Pragana Samiti and made the village folks conscious of the feudal practices and the efficacy of both their Civil and Political rights.

On 18 December 1940 a meeting of Pragana Samiti was called at Ambajora and renamed as Mayurbhanj state Prajamandal with Sarat Chandra Das a President and Goura Pradhan as Secretary. The Darbar re-acted sharply and initiated malicious propaganda against Das comparing him with Hitler and a crook. The Prajamandal workers were threatened and intimidated.

The State government sponsored a parallel organisation called the State Praja Mangal under the leadership of Haris Chandra Dash, the brother of the Superintendent of Police. The members were from among Sardars, Tahsildars, Sarbarakars and the State Officials whose loyalty to the Darbar administration was beyond all questions. The Darbar administration went a step forward and declared the Praja Mangal as Mayurbhanj National Congress and used the State Flag as National Flag.

Inspite of that the Prajamandal became very popular among the people through their welfare work, with enormous public good-will and popular support the Prajamandal leaders demanded the responsible and representative government as a remedy against the autocratic rule of the Maharaja. With the Quit-India resolution adopted by the National Congress the political atmosphere in Mayurbhanj turned to be more tense.
The Prajamandal intensified the struggle for freedom in their respective areas. Public meetings, demonstrations, picketings and boycott of educational institutions and offices became common feature.

The ruler resorted to another clever device for which proclamation was made on the occasion of his 4th birth day on 23 April 1945129. It declared that there would be a Mayurbhanj Kendriya Parisad or Central Legislature for 3 years consisting of 27 members including the President, among whom not more than 15 would be nominated by the Maharaja, representing various interests like Industry, Trade, Tribal population and rest would be elected130.

Besides the Maharaja also appointed a Committee to recommend measures for the formation of village Panchayat which was one of the objectives of Prajamandal. The committee consisted of Chief Revenue Officer, the Inspector General of Police, the Law Secretary and the Director of Education and Rural Reconstruction. The Committee was asked, to submit the report by 31 May 1946131.

All these arrangements of Darbar proved to be futile because Prajamandal Movement was gaining popularity.

In February 1947 the paik uprising under the leadership of Baikuntha Nath Sadual, an Executive member of the Mayurbhanj Prajamandal made the situation grave. The immediate cause of the uprising was confiscation of Jagir lands of paiks after death. The conviction of Sadual added fuel to the fire.
At this time the Orissa and Chhatisgarh States peoples' Regional Council was set up at Cuttack with Sarangadhar Das as Chairman and Madan Mohan Pradhan the Secretary. Three members in the Executive Committee were from Mayurbhanj Prajamandal including Prasanna Kumar Dash who was elected as one of the joint secretaries. The last meeting of the Prajamandal was held on the bank of the river Budabalang in July 1947, at Pratappur and was attended by delegates all over the state. A proposal was made in the meeting to lead a mammoth procession to Baripada on the occasion of 15 August 1947.

The crisis was precipitated when Lokanath Patnaik, President, Praja Parisad allegedly stated before All India States' Peoples' Conference against Mayurbhanj Prajamandal. As it was revealed that the Maharaja had a clandestine hand in it, the Prajamandal members were withdrawn from the Mayurbhanj Kendra Parisad. But the vacancies created out of the withdrawal of members of Prajamandal were promptly filled up by workers of Praja Parisad which added to the smouldering discontent among Prajamandal members. So on 31 July 1947 an Action Committee was constituted with Sarat Chandra Das, Prasanna Kumar Dash, Harihar Mohanty, Gour Mohan Pradhan, Bhaktabandhu Mohanta and Ananta Rath to put pressure on the Maharaja to accept the Charter of demands presented on 30 June 1947 for early establishment of responsible government.

In such chaotic conditions with much dismay the Maharaja dissolved the Mayurbhanj Kendra Parisad on 5 July 1947. On the other side, the Prajamandal issued ultimatum to
the Maharaja to concede to their demands by 16 September 1947. The Maharaja opened negotiation through the Chief Revenue Officer, Radha Govind Das and it was agreed that the Prajamandal would furnish the list of members from Praja Sabha and defunct Kendra Pratisad to function as interim government until a new Praja Sabha and Kendra Pratisad were elected and at the same time the Chief agreed to act as a constitutional head.

On 9 December 1947 the Maharaja nominated Sarat Chandra Das, Bidhyadhar Mohapatra and Maheswar Naik to constitute a 3 member cabinet allotting portfolios as follows:

- Sarat Chandra Das - Premier, Home, Finance, Planning and Reconstruction.
- Bidhyadhar Mohapatra - Revenue, Law, Health and Local Government.

The State was to function as a new unit of Indian Union. The transfer of power took place on 10 December 1947. Thus the long cherished hope of the Prajamandal was realised.

Indian National Congress and Feudatory States of Orissa

The Prajamandal movement was a part of freedom struggle against the foreign rule. S. Nijalingappa correctly commented "the freedom struggle in the Princely States..... forms an integral part of the history of our national struggle for liberation from foreign rule." Though the Congress and All India States Peoples' Conference were separate organisations, still the A.I.S.P.C. was enthusiastically supported by...
top leaders of congress like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Subash Chandra Bose, Sardar Patel, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and others. Pandit Nehru and Dr. Sitaramayya were Presidents of All India States Peoples' Conference. In the Ludhiana session of A.I.S.P.C. in February 1939 Nehru explained in his Presidential speech, the real close relationship between Congress and A.I.S.P.C. He said

the Congress knew well that the backwardness of the states hinders our National progress and that there could be no freedom for India unless the states ceased to be what they were. The Congress was eager to bring about this essential and vital change and it knew that the change could only come about from below, when the people of the states grew self-reliant and organised and capable for shouldering the burden of their struggles.

This statement indicates that there was no difference in the aim and objective of National Congress and All India States People's Conference. The leaders of States People Conference also preached the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and National Congress in the princely states. The statement of Sarangdhar Das before the court of Deputy Commissioner, Sambalpur made this position very clear.

Our way of removing the evils of British Imperialism is consequently grounded on non-violence in thought and action. More preaching will bring no result. Universal spinning and propagation of hand made Khadi and other village crafts in place of mill-made articles, removal of untouchability among Hindus and illiteracy among all communities, persuading people to give up drinking and drugs, encouraging women to discard their superstitions and to come forward and join every kind of activities, settlement of village disputes by mutual negotiation are some of the items in the programme."
He introduced himself saying,

I am a satyagrahi and a firm believer in the principle of truth and non-violence as applied by my leader, Mahatma Gandhi.

Endorsing the above stand of Das had observed,

As a principle the Congress had not been keeping any relations with Prajamandal movements; but many leaders and members of the Congress had been involved in that movement.

Apart from Mahtab and Nabakrushna Choudhury many Congress and Socialist leaders of the Province fully supported the Prajamandal movement. They denounced the oppression of the Rajas on their subjects.

It can be said that the Prajamandal movement in the States was another facet of India's political awakening that aimed at redeeming the rural peasantry from age old feudal oppression.
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8. Ibid.


11. Ibid.


14. Two poles vertically pitched and horizontally bounded by another pole on 2½ feet height.


18. Free and forced labour for construction and repair of roads, culverts, houses of the Raja and his cousins.

19. Free and forced labour for carrying of luggages of the Raja or his officers from Camp to Camp.
20. Free and forced contribution both in cash and kind on the occasion of marriage, deaths etc. in the Raja family, purchase of motors etc. by the Raja.

21. Free ration supply to the Raja, his cousins and his officers while camping in the moffusil.

22. Supply of provisions such as paddy, rice, mung, biri, ghee etc. to the Raja at half the market price.

23. Different classes of tenants and artisans such as Coolies, Carpenters, black-smiths, washermen etc. had to come to the Garh, half there for different period to construct the Rath annually for which they were given some nominal Jagirs. The timber for the purpose has also to be obtained by the tenants from their respective Jungles upto the Garh at their own cost.

24. The Paiks and Sabars had to work compulsorily for about a month or so on the occasion of the Dashers every year for making all arrangements for the ceremony and the Sarbarkars and other prominent tenants had also during Dashera to make compulsory present to the Raja.

25. Free and forced labour provided to the king on catching of Elephants from the jungle.

26. Free and forced labour extended to the king at the time of hunting.


28. Ibid.

29. Political Department, File No. 22(4) P(Confidential) 1940.


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33. Ibid, p.18.

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37. Coupland Ian, *The British Raj and Indian Princes*, (Calcutta 1982), p. 188.

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49. Ibid.

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Ph. D. THESIS


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73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.


88. The All Orissa States Peoples Conference (Cuttack 1937), p. 5.
89. Ibid, p. 5.
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98. The Statesman, 31 August, 1938.
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106. Pradhan, P.M., op. cit., p. 70.
199. Harijan, 22 April, 1939.
Mahatab, H.K., op. cit., p. 182.

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101. Press Note made by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 30 May, 1939.


103. Ibid.


106. Press Statement made by Sarangadhar Das on 6 January 1939.

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112. All India States Peoples Conference, File No. 5.


114. Ibid.

115. Pradhan, P.M., op. cit., p. 201.


119. Orissa History Congress, 1982 - Special Issue on Mayurbhanj.

120. Ibid.

122. *Orissa State Enquiry Committee Report* 1939, pp. 54-57.


125. Ibid.

126. Ibid, p. 205.


129. Ibid.


132. Praja Parisad a hostile institution to Prajamandal came into existence after the failure of Praja Mangal.


134. Ibid.


138. Correspondence of Sarangdhar Das, File No. 5 *(Nehru Memorial Library and Museum, New Delhi)*.

139. Ibid.


141. Ibid.

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Ph. D., THESIS