CHAPTER I

LIFE OF THE HISTORIAN
- A BRIEF SKETCH
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LIFE OF THE HISTORIAN - A BRIEF SKETCH

The sad demise of Professor Nabin Kumar Sahu on 02 September 1985 created a vacuum in the field of Odishan historiography. He was a historian par excellence in the realm. His contribution in the field of history writing was immense. By his painstaking research he produced many monumental works which gave somewhat a concrete shape to the history and culture of this land. A follower of Leopold Von Ranke, N.K.Sahu followed a critical and comparative method and tried to discover truth, only truty, nothing but the truth, although in many cases he had to bear severe criticism. Through ups and down of his career, he was firm and discerned hard truth after comparing and contrasting several sources. The writings of this erudite scholar bear ample testimony of his scholastic skill which made him famous as a historian.

Birth and Childhood

N.K.Sahu was not born to blush unseen. He was born on 28 July 1922 in the Barapali village of the Baragarh District. His father Suru Sahu was a simple man and mother, Sevati Devi was a pious lady. N.K.Sahu was their second son.¹ He was taken as an adopted child by the elder brother of his father Ghasiram Sahu
and his wife Satyabhama Devi. Thus, N.K.Sahu was fortunate enough to lead his childhood days amidst the motherly affection of his mother and elder mother.

The birth place of N.K.Sahu, Barpali is a famous village located about 19 kms south of Bargarh on the State Highway No.02, running from Bargarh to Borigumma. It was an erstwhile feudal estate of Baliar Singh, the fifth Raja of Sambalpur, who assigned it as a maintenance grant to his second son Bikram Singh. It was Bikram Singh who established Chauhan Zamindari at Barpali and his descendant Narayan Singh was the last Raja of Sambalpur.

The village Barpali bears an aesthetic importance for having two prominent temples, the Samaleswari Temple built by Bikram Singh and the Jagannath Temple built by Hrudaya Sai, the son of Bikram Singh. The architectural design of the Samaleswari Temple displays the typical Chauhan style whereas the Lord Jagannath Temple resembles the Odishans style of temple architecture.

The village Barpali to which N.K.Sahu belongs is also the birth place of the renowned Odia Poet Gangdhar Meher, industrialist Padmashri Krutartha Acharya, eminent scientist Padmashree Parsuram Mishra, educationist Ghanashyam Das and freedom fighter Bhagirathi Pattnaik.

Despite having the care and affection of two parents N.K.Sahu's childhood days passed through utter poverty and
despair. His father had a small confectionery and he had to help his father in the shop during his boyhood days. But, poverty could not obstruct his primary education. The childhood days of N.K. Sahu was influenced by the festivities and ceremonials of the two deities of Barpali village, Lord Jagannath and Maa Samaleswari. The Sadhus and Sannyasis coming from various parts to the village also influenced his thinking and ideas on religion and spiritual philosophy.⁵

In the month of November, 1926 A.D. both N.K. Sahu and his elder brother Birabar Sahu suffered from small-pox and in those days it was a fatal disease. However, at the grace of God both of them recovered from the disease.⁶

Education

Nabin started his childhood education under acute financial strains in the village Chatasali at Barpali even though there was a government school. The Chatasali was functioning in Samaleswari Temple corridor with an honorary teacher. On every Sunday, students used to worship Lord Ganesh. On the auspicious occasion of Saraswati Puja (SriPanchami) rich guardians used to offer gifts and rewards in the shape of dress-materials to the teacher. There was a provision of Guru Dakshina for those students who successfully completed their education. N.K. Sahu studied under the guidance of his beloved teacher Sadhava Behera and learnt the Odia letters, alphabets, basic mathematics,
After completing his chatasali education Nabin got admission into the village primary school. At the time of admission the Headmaster of the Primary School, Madhusudan Mishra made a wrong entry into the admission register of his date of birth and instead of 28.07.1922, 22.08.1920 was recorded. For this silly mistake Nabin despite having a brilliant academic career could not get scholarship in Class-III, V and VII. Madhusudan Mishra was succeeded by Purandar Das as the headmaster of Barpali Primary School and Nabin got the love and affection from Purandar Das which he was missing from Madhusudan Mishra. It was learnt from Purandar Das that Madhusudan Mishra deliberately made a wrong entry of his date of birth only to deprive him of scholarship as he belonged to the residential area of the Chauhan Zamindari. But, J.K.Sahu says, he never heard anything against Madhusudan Mishra from his brother N.K.Sahu, because Nabin was unconcerned about the teachers' mistake.

Nabin completed his Class-IV to VII education from Barpali Middle English School and was deeply influenced by the then Headmaster Gokulananda Bhuyan and Asst.Teacher Pandit Raghav Mishra. The simplicity, sincerity, truthfulness and dedication of Pandit Raghav Mishra inspired Nabin to a great extent. He was admitted into the Prithviraj High School of
Bolangir and his maternal uncle extended all sorts of assistance to Nabin for his higher study.

Nabin got married to Saraswati the daughter of Bajaranga Sahu of Sonepur while he was in class X. At that time the system of child-marriage was in vogue and before his matriculation examination he had to forbear the burden of family life. However Nabin was determined and due to his hard labour he passed matriculation securing first class in 1940 and stood first among the students of Prithviraj High School breaking the record of the last 25 years of the High School and won the Patna Maharaja Gold Medal.

N.K.Sahu got himself admitted into Cuttack C.T.Training School after his matriculation and successfully completed his two years training to become a teacher. Immediately he joined as a teacher in 1943 in Bargah George High School. He served there only for one year within which he could pursue the intellectuals of his native place to establish a High School. His effort got materialised and in July 1944 Barpali High School was established. Nabin got himself transferred to Barpali High School and joined as Asst.Teacher. He stayed there only for a year but within the short span of his teaching career he could win the love and affection of his students and teachers.

Nabin was never satisfied with his career. His zeal and enthusiasm for higher study was untiring. During his teachership in Barpali High School he passed Intermediate Arts (I.A.) as a
private student and was placed in Second Division. With a purpose in mind he saved something for his higher study during his teachership. In 1945, Prof. Ghanashyam Das was the Head of the Department of History in Ravenshaw College and he also belongs to Barpali village. So under his guidance and inspiration Nabin got admission into B.A. with History (Hons) in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack.

N.K.Sahu as a student was so hard-working, research-oriented and dedicated that he inspired his teacher Ghanashyam Das to set up a museum in the previous Muslim Hostel of Ravenshaw College. Now it has been converted into P.G.Department of Botany. Prof.Sriram Chandra Dash mentions -

The museum set up by Ghanashyam Das and N.K.Sahu was the precursor of the Odisha State Museum, Bhubaneswar.¹

The inspiration and experience which N.K.Sahu gathered during his student career helped him in laying the foundation of a museum in Sambalpur University.

Nabin passed graduation in 1947 with first class first with distinction in History (Hons). At that time, there was no scope for Post-Graduation in Odisha, so he has go to Allahabad for higher study and in this direction Prof.Ghanashyam Das inspired him a lot. His stay in Allahabad was never peaceful. He continued his struggle against all odds. Family problems and financial hardships badly affected his attention and adding to this agony he fell ill during the days of his final M.A. examination. At last he
passed M.A. in History from Allahabad University with higher second class in 1949.

**Career as a Lecturer**

N.K. Sahu started his career as a Lecturer in History in Christ College, Cuttack in 1949. In the same year Government of Odisha appointed him as Deputy Collector, Angul but he declined the offer. Rather Nabin personally requested Dr. H.K. Mahatab, the then Chief Minister to appoint him as a Lecturer in a government college. Dr. Mahatab immediately directed the D.P.I. to do the needful but Nabin had to wait for one year. In 1950, N.K. Sahu joined as a Lecturer in history in Maharaja Purna Chandra College, Baripada and continued his Ph.D. work in the Utkal University on the topic 'Buddhism in Orissa' under the guidance of Dr. Nalinaksha Dutta. In 1955, he was awarded Ph.D. from Utkal University.¹⁰

During his brief stay as a Lecturer in Christ College, N.K. Sahu came in contact with Radhamohan Gadnayak, who was a student at that time but both of them had some useful discussion about the cultural history of Odisha. When he was in M.P.C. College, He received an award from the Government of India for his essay on 'Yuge Yuge Bharatiya Noubanijya'.¹¹ (History of Indian Maritime trade through ages). This made his very popular among the scholars of Odisha.

N.K. Sahu was transferred to Ravenshaw College in August 1954 on the initiative of Ghanashyam Das, the then D.P.I. of
Odisha. He became the Administrative Bursar of Ravenshaw College from 1958 to 1960. During his service in Ravenshaw College he came involved with *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, a quarterly published by Odisha State Museum. He regularly contributed articles to this journal and in 1958 he was taken as a member of the Editorial Board. For some years he was also the Chief Editor of *Orissa Historical Research Journal*. During his service in the Ravenshaw College he was well acclaimed by teachers and students for his masterly teaching on the history of Odisha and Ancient Indian History.

**Activities as a Researcher**

N.K.Sahu was a prolific writer and a passionate researcher. While working as a Lecturer in the M.P.C. College, Baripada, he started his research work on 'Buddhism in Orissa' which was awarded Ph.D. Degree in History by the Utkal University and the same university in 1958. It is a monumental research work. The book has been enriched with careful guidance and authentic remarks of Nalinaksha Dutt, Professor of Pali, Calcutta University. The book gives an idea about the growth and development of Buddhism in Odisha and a study of Buddhist ruins in various parts of the state. In the preface he wrote,

"The present work is an humble attempt to discover and study the development of this culture through successive ages till new forces appeared by the 16th Century A.D. and transformed it into vaishnavite movement revolving round Lord Jagannath."
In this book N.K. Sahu has given a proof of his research caliber by exploring the development and growth of Hinayana, Mahayana and Tantrayana Buddhism in Odisha. He faced a lot of criticisms for this book but for his research findings he could prove that the Tantrapitha Uddiyana was no other place than Odisha. In due course of time, this book became very popular among researchers. In view of growing popularity of this book, Odisha Sahitya Academy published its Odia version, Odishare Boudha Darma, in 1959.

The Utkal University History of Orissa, Vol-I is another original and valuable book written by N.K. Sahu through which he tried to given a detail account of the history of Odisha from the ancient period upto 5th Century A.D. In this book he sheds light on the political and geographical condition of Odisha in the ancient period and describes the geneology and chronology of the ruling dynasties of the region. Although he has been criticized by K.C. Panigrahi for improper style, ambiguous and unnecessarily descriptive writing yet his work made him famous all over India both as a writer and a researcher. Infact, with the publication of this book, the universities of Odisha introduced regional history (History of Odisha) as a paper in History Honours in B.A. level and subsequently this regional history became a special paper like Ancient Indian History, Medieval Indian History etc. in Post-Graduate level by the Department of History in different Universities of Odisha.
Kharavela is another voluminous work of N.K. Sahu in which the author has tried to bring light the activities and accomplishments of this great ruler of Kalinga. Kharavela was in fact one of the great luminaries of the rulers of ancient India and he had an eventful career for which he ranks very high in the annals of history as a conqueror, benevolent rule and patron of art and culture. His political and cultural achievements were glaring in that remote phase of history. He appeared at a time when there was a political stagnation in India after the degeneration of the Mauryas and Sungas. He had extended his arms up to Keraliputra in western direction of Kalinga and subdued all the contemporary rulers of his period.16

The book titled Kharavela written by N.K. Sahu was inaugurated by Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India on 29 October 1984, on the occasion of celebration of Golden Jubilee of Odisha State Museum.17 The facts and events illustrated in this book are based on his painstaking research and to a great extent solve many controversial issues with regard to dates and events connected with the life of Kharavela.18 Although N.K. Sahu had elaborately described about Kharavela in his Utkal University History of Orissa (Vol. I, Ch. VI), yet he tried his best to rectify and analyse the art, language, literature sculpture of Kalinga more intensively in his book titled Kharavela so that it would be a useful work for researchers and historians of the future generation. He sharply contradicted the views of
K.C. Panigrahi and other historians who had opined that Kharavela belongs to the 2nd Century A.D. He could prove with valid reasons that King Kharavela belonged to the 1st Century A.D.¹⁹

N.K. Sahu also wrote a book titled *History of Orissa Police* which was published by Government of Odisha on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration of Indian Police in Odisha in 1961. This book depicts the evolution and progress of police administration in India, in general and Odisha, in particular. The author has attempted to analyse the evolution of law and order, police administration, crime and punishment from the ancient period up to the modern period in a systematic manner.²⁰ In this book, he has started with the police and law and order system that prevailed in ancient Kalinga under the Mauryan rule. He has elaborately discussed step by step about police administration in Medieval Odisha, during the Mughuls, Marathas up to the British rule. Credit goes to the author for compilation of such a volume of 426 pages within four months of time.²¹ It gives ample proof of his hard work and devotion towards academic research and writing.

The book *Veer Surendra Sai* was the last major publication of N.K. Sahu. It was published by the Department of Culture, Government of Odisha and inaugurated by His Excellency Biswambara Nath Pandey, the then Governor of Odisha on 30 August 1985. N.K. Sahu had accepted this responsibility of writing a volume depicting the life history of Veer Surendra Sai in 1984 by the request of the Centenary Committee established by
the Government of Odisha for the celebration of death centenary of the departed freedom fighter. Before N.K. Sahu a few writers had also written some books and articles on the life and contribution of Surendra Sai, but the work of N.K. Sahu is outstanding because of his sincere effort and research oriented analysis of every fact and event connected with Surendra Sai. As per example, he had to go to Asirgarh Fort to find out the compartment in which the great leader of freedom struggle breathed his last. This shows his unflagging zeal and devotion for hard work and thorough research.

This book depicts Surendra Sai as the Child of the Revolution of 1857 in Odisha. The author in this book has tried to project Surendra Sai as a true freedom fighter and a hard-core Nationalist. He tried to eradicate a misconception that Surendra Sai fought the struggle against the British for his self interest. He has given facts and evidences to prove that the heroic achievements of Surendra Sai and his uncommon sacrifice for the cause of his people which have few parallels in history. His role in shaping the course of the Revolution of 1857 in the hill-tracts of Western Odisha was highly inspiring and continued to be more vigorous after the suppression of the revolution in other parts of India. Veer Surendra Sai carried on an uncompromising war against the imperial powers till 1962 and these four years were the momentous period for the last phase of the Indian Revolution and it was Surendra Sai who led from the front along with a band
of tribal warriors. N.K. Sahu has compared Surendra Sai with other great nationalist freedom fighters like Rana Pratap and Chhatra Pati Shivaji and thus, glorified his relentless struggle for national self-determination.

Prof. Sahu was the co-author of a book titled *History of Orissa*, with J.K. Sahu and P.K. Mishra. The book was first published in 1980. As no definite mention of the chapters contributed by the authors has been made, it is presumed that Prof. Sahu must have contributed chapters like 'Prehistory', 'Historical Geography', 'Early History of Kalinga', 'Magadha and Kalinga', 'Kharavela', 'Kalinga after Kharavela', 'The Matharas' and 'The Nalas and their contemporaries', the topics in which he had acquired mastery and reflected in his master-pieces, the UUHO. His numerous published articles, as has been reflected in the Bibliography, have also been discussed with his different chapters in different books. His articles concerning political history, historical personalities of ancient Odisha, historical geography and archeology have been discussed in the UUHO. Similarly, his research and popular articles concerning Buddhism, Buddhist art etc. have found place in his monumental work *Buddhism in Orissa*. Similarly, the facts of *Yuge Yuge Bharatiya Nauvanijya* have been reflected in his book titled *Odia Jatira Itihasa*. Further, the facts concerned the Chauhan dynasty and Surendra Sai published in different journals, proceedings and
magazines have been reflected in the pages of Veer Surendra Sai.

Prof. Sahu was very much meticulous in his research. He has given a number of maps in his books to get the readers acquainted with various place-names, kingdom, routes, location of monasteries etc. which have been furnished at the end of the research work. He drew the country maps of the excavation before he proceeded to the sites. He believed that maps are indispensable for the understanding of historical facts. Similarly, he has projected the photographs of different caves, images, tools, etc. to give first hand idea and knowledge to the readers and researchers which have been appended with this work under the caption 'Photographs'.

N.K.Sahu was awarded with D.Litt. degree in 1964 by Utkal University for his thesis. Role of Odisha in the History and Culture of India'. He was so much busy in preparation of History of Orissa, Vol-I that he could not publish his D.Litt. thesis. That research work is not available now. Otherwise, it would have reflected more on Odishan society and culture.

Research Guidance

N.K.Sahu was one of the sincere and devoted research supervisor of his times. His passion for research and his inspiration behind research work made him a successful guide. His first research scholar was Sarat Chandra Behera, Lect. In History, Christ College, Cuttack who carried out research on the
Sailodbhava dynasty of Odisha under his guidance and was awarded Ph.D. degree in 1962 by Utkal University. N.K.Sahu was the first lecturer in History in Odisha to guide a scholar successfully for the award of Ph.D. In this endeavour N.K.Sahu had to face a lot of challenges but he overcame them patiently. K.C.Panigrahi was one of the examiners of the thesis prepared by his scholar Sarat Chandra Behera and the former made an undesirable remark on the thesis for which N.K.Sahu had to request the University authorities to change K.C.Panigrahi as the examiner. To his good luck, the thesis was again sent to Ram Sankar Tripathy, retired Professor of History and on his remark Sarat Chandra Behera got Ph.D. Besides S.C.Behera, N.K.Sahu successfully guided a number of scholars from various disciplines like J.K.Sahu, his younger brother, Archaeologist Arjun Joshi, Chittaranjan Mishra, Sadhu Charan Panda and Akhila Panda - all lecturers in History, Arjun Satpathy, Lecturer in Hindi, Pabitra Mohan Nayak, Lecturer in English, A.K. Chakravorthy, Lecturer in Political Science, Sradhakar Supakar, Lawyer, Jagannath Das, Administrator and bureaucrat and Surendra Kumar Moharana, Department of Finance, Odisha Secretariat, etc. It was on the inspiration of N.K.Sahu that Laxminarayan Sahu, prepared his thesis ‘Jainism in Orissa’ 27. For his dedication towards historical research N.K.Sahu never in his life harassed or denied anybody approaching him for guidance. In every sense of the term, he guided and goaded his research scholars.
Popular Writings

N.K. Sahu was a prolific writer on ancient Indian History and History of Odisha. He regularly contributed articles to *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, published by Odisha State Museum. Credit goes to N.K. Sahu for editing two volumes on History of Odisha in 1956-57. These books were enriched with valuable articles written by Andrew Sterling, William Wilson Hunter and John Beams and were published in 1980 by Indian Publishing House, New Delhi. In the last chapter (Ch.9) of Volume-II, N.K. Sahu has described the history and culture of Odisha in a lucid way which have became useful not only for the students of history but also for common readers.

While working as a Lecturer in Ravenshaw College in 1958, N.K. Sahu published an article in a popular Odia daily in which he questioned the authenticity of the historical facts mentioned in *Madala Panji*, the chronicle of Sri Jagannath Temple, Puri. He was of the view that Keshari dynasty had never ruled over Odisha, the stone barricade constructed by Markat Keshari was a misnomer. Anang Bhim Dev never built the Jagannath Temple at Puri and the story concerning the child-hood days of Kapilendra Dev was a fiction. The people of Odisha had accepted the facts of *Madala Panji* as ultimate truth. But, it was N.K. Sahu who through his articles and essays could reach the people of Odisha and created a sensation among the conservative literateurs. Pandit Gouri Kumar Brahma raised his protest against N.K. Sahu and
there was a literary clash between them. It helped N.K.Sahu a lot to make critical analysis on many historical facts and he became well known in the nook and corner of Odisha for popularizing history of this land. It illustrates the fearless character of N.K.Sahu and his passion for discerning the truth.\textsuperscript{30}

The Government of Odisha appointed N.K.Sahu as the State Editor of Odisha District Gazetteer in 1960 and he continued in this post upto 1967. During these seven years he travelled throughout the state and visited important historical sites and places having artistic and cultural significance. As the State Editor he published the District Gazetteer of Koraput in 1966 and Bolangir in 1967. He also initiated the preparation of District Gazetteer of Sambalpur which was accomplished by his successor Bhabakrushna Mohanty.\textsuperscript{31}

A writer par excellence N.K.Sahu was fearless out and out. He always tried to publish something useful for the future generation. He had written a book in Odia named 'Odia Jatira Itihasa' which was published by Odisha State Bureau of Text Book preparation and production in 1974 and reprinted in 1977. In this book, he analysed the history of Odisha from the ancient period upto the early 12th Century A.D. giving an elaborate explanation of the history and culture of the state. Very interestingly he throws light on the maritime trade of Odisha and her relation with outside countries like Java, Sumatra, Ceylon,
Kambodia, Thailand, etc. But it is unfortunate that Part-II and III of this book could not be published.\(^{32}\)

A man of Western Odisha, N.K.Sahoo was more concerned to bring the history and culture of this region to limelight. Therefore, he prepared a scheme for writing books in University level by Indian authors and accordingly got the UGC recommendation for publication of a book on the History of Western Odisha. On the request of Sambalpur University, his brother J.K. Sahu was deputed to Sambalpur University from Khalikote Evening College for this purpose and the research work continued. The book was divided into two parts. After the completion of Part-I, the script was handed over to the University, but in the mean time, N.K.Sahu retired as Vice Chancellor of Sambalpur University and all his efforts ended in a smoke. The University authority showed no interest for the publication of that book.\(^{33}\)

N.K.Sahu has also co-authored a few books like +2 World History and History of Orissa along with J.K.Sahu and P.K.Mishra, which won the heart of thousands of students and teachers all over Odisha and these two books were published by Nalanda Prakashan, Binod Bihari, Cuttack.\(^{34}\) Even today History of Orissa (popularly known as three authors book on Orissa History) is liked by the students.

The Department of Culture, Government of Odisha authorized N.K.Sahu for the publication of a Souvenir on Odia
Poet Jayadev. The basic intention behind this literary exercise was to prove that Jayadev belonged to Odisha, not to Bengal, as it was time and again claimed by certain Bengali scholars. But, after the appointment of N.K.Sahu as the Chief Editor, K.C.Panigrahi raised eyebrows upon it and criticized the decision of the Government for the printing and publication of the souvenir. However, the souvenir was sold immediately after its publication which gives a proof of its valuable contributions. The credit definitely goes to Prof.N.K.Sahu for accomplishing this task.

N.K.Sahu was the editor of the book titled *Madhusudan Das: The Legislator*, Published by Pragati Utkala Sangha in 1980. In the preparation of this volume Prabodha Kumar Mishra extended all sorts of help to N.K.Sahu. It was N.K.Sahu who for the first time expressed the view that the Jagannath culture came to Puri through the western coast. He was of the view that Jagannath Cult descended from the relics of Buddha. He also described God Jagannatha as Adi-Buddha and he found no difference between the Jagannath of Indrabhuti and Sri Jagannath of Puri. N.K.Sahu was also a great patron of Mahima Cult and he tried his best to establish it as the religion of people of Odisha. He visited Joranda and Khaliapalli two centres of Mahima Dharma time and again and has discussions with sages of Mahima cult on Mahima culture. He encouraged his students and scholars to undertake research on Mahima Cult and on his initiative 'Mahima Cult
Research Council was set up. He was the President and Bhagirathi Nepak was the Secretary of this council respectively. He released a magazine titled *Mahima Alok* only to popularize it among the people of Odisha.\(^{39}\)

**Registrar of Sambalpur University**

The Sambalpur University was founded on 01 January 1967. On 01 January 1968, one year after N.K. Sahu became the first Registrar of Sambalpur University. Under his astute guidance and leadership, the Administrative Block of the University was constructed. He played a leading role in the Construction of various buildings and in the inauguration of different P.G. Departments. Initially, only 22 colleges were affiliated to the University but, it was mostly due to the initiative of N.K. Sahu, the number of affiliated colleges increased. He was instrumental for the spread of higher education in Western Odisha. It was due to his sincere interest that in a particular year in Panchayat College, Bargarh, Honours teaching permission was given to nine departments. During his tenure in 1968 Post Graduate teaching facility was extended to the subjects like Odia and Political Science and in the very next year P.G. Departments in History, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Life Science were created. In fact, *The Sambalpur University Journal* was also the brain-child of N.K. Sahu. Initially, it was a single publication both for science and arts but later, two separate journals were released for Arts and Science students.\(^{40}\)
Career as Professor

Just after the creation of P.G. Department of History in Sambalpur University, N.K. Sahu joined as Professor and Head of the Department of History in 1969 and continued in office till 01 November 1979. The Department under his leadership achieved tremendous progress. He used to organize seminars in the Department in every week. He advised the students to utilize Seminar Library and Museum Library profusely for writing research articles and seminar papers. He encouraged his students for the collection of ancient epics palm-leaf manuscripts and materials having historical significance. He always remained present in the Departmental welcome and farewell ceremonies and picnics.

Under the auspices of P.G. Department of History, Sambalpur University and Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur the Odisha History Congress was held on 04 March 1970 in Gangadhar Meher College. Again, after eight years in 1978, Department of History, Sambalpur University organized the Odisha History Congress and N.K. Sahu took the privilege of presiding over it. On that very day of 04 March 1978, at about 12 Noon Dr. Ram Prasad Mishra, the then Hon'ble Finance Minister of Odisha laid the foundation stone of the University Museum in Sambalpur. But after his retirement in the next year the construction of the proposed museum could not start. As yet the museum is still functioning within the four walls of History
Department. N.K. Sahu had taken a lot of pain for the foundation of the museum. He brought a stone inscription of Emperor Bhanudev-I from Sonepur to the Department museum overnight without caring for the criticism of the people. He in his presidential address to the Odisha History Congress, 1978 reiterated the importance of a Museum for the preservation and propagation of regional culture and history. After his death, the University authority dedicated this Museum in the name of 'N.K. Sahu Sambalpur University Museum' but no Museum Hall is constructed as yet.

The publication of the University Magazine 'Saptarshi' started from the year 1972 and N.K. Sahu was associated with it. It was a monthly magazine and N.K. Sahu was its editor. Subsequently, differences cropped up and Saptarshi was lost into oblivion. Then, on his initiative the P.G. Department of History started the publication of a Research Journal titled New Aspects of History of Orissa in 1971. In this very first edition, Professor Sahu contributed an article, 'A survey of the History of South Kosala' in which he gave a new dimension to the importance of Kosala. The second edition of this issue was brought out in 1978 and N.K. Sahu wrote an article designated 'University Museum – its bearing on the History of Orissa' only to emphasise on the need of a Museum for university level study.

He had a dream of opening a new Department of Indian Culture in Sambalpur University. He prepared the syllabi for the
Department taking into account the Pali and Sanskrit scripts, numismatics, art and sculpture, religion and philosophy of various regions. The Department of Culture was inaugurated in 1978 and N.K. Sahu was the Head of both Department of History and Indian Culture. He also proposed to extend +2 level teaching in affiliated colleges on the subject, Indian Culture. After his retirement the department of Culture functioned under P.G. Department of History and the dream of N.K. Sahu remained unfulfilled. 

Vice-Chancellor Sambalpur University

During his registrarship N.K. Sahu had a pious dream in his mind and he worked day in and day out for the progress of the University. When he became the Professor in P.G. Department of History he was involved in almost every activity of the University and tried to win over the confidence of students, teachers and employees. He was syndicate member, a successful Warden, Director of Employment Bureau and Co-ordinator of various P.G. Departments. His popularity increased and he became the Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University on 19 November 1979. He had dedication and sacrifice for the University. He was loved by one and all and he was free from corruption. But, to his bad luck, he failed to be a good Vice-Chancellor. As he was a man of liberal attitude and temperament, some of his associates taking benefit of his simplicity, conspired behind him. They regularly sent anonymous letters to the Education Secretary and Chief
Minister against N.K. Sahu. He was well known to them. Therefore, Janaki Ballav Pattnaik, the then Chief Minister of Odisha issued an order that the Government of Odisha would take over the administration of University and on 12th May 1981 he was relieved of his duty as Vice-Chancellor, Sambalpur University and Dr. Srinibas Sahu took over the charge. It was a defeat for N.K. Sahu to others but in fact he got a lease of life on that day.

**As an Archaeologist**

Professor Sahu played an important role in the field of archaeological excavations in various parts of Odisha. Since his student career in 1947-48, he visited Kausambi in U.P. and Sishupalgarh near Bhubaneswar in 1948 to learn something about archaeological excavations. When he was a lecturer in Ravenshaw College in 1956-57, he participated in the excavation of Bhuasuni hill and Jaugarh. After his appointment as the Professor P.G. Department of History, Sambalpur University, the Department of Culture, Government of Odisha in collaboration with P.G. Department of History, Sambalpur University led an expedition for archaeological excavation of Asurgarh in Kalamandi district and N.K. Sahu played a leading role in this excavation. It continued for a month and it brought to light some antiquities datable from 3rd Century B.C. to 5th Century B.C.

N.K. Sahu in 1978 led another archaeological excavation in the Ganiapalli area, 10 kms away from Melchhamunda area in the District of Bargarh in the Ang Valley and discovered about 30
ruasted iron implements, carnelian beads and a portion of
Muchalinda Buddha monastery covering an area of one and half
acres. In this excavation led by N.K.Sahu two Muchalinda
Buddha images of life-size made up of bluish chlorite stone were
discovered. Each of the images has snake canopy over the head
having five hoods and the iconography suggests the period 5th
Century A.D. for these icons. The Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen Tsang
who visited the Monastery Parimalgiri in the 7th Century A.D.
made no mention about it. However, Prof. Sahu presumed that
the pilgrim had no scope to visit this monastery as he was
passing towards the capital of South Kosala. N.K.Sahu further
said that such a monastery was rarely seen during 4th – 5th
Century A.D. However, he felt the structure requires proper study
and research so that Ganiapalli hill find a glorious place in the
history of Buddhist Culture.

He has also discovered the historic remains of a civilization
in Asurgarh near Sonepur. When he was the Vice-Chancellor of
Sambalpur University he led another archaeological excavation
along with H.D.Sankhalia of Pune University in search of Lanka
which in his opinion, is not the island of Ceylon but a fortified city
in the middle or in the bank of the river. H.D.Sankhalia held the
view that Ravana belonged very probably to the Gond tribe and
that Lanka of this Ravana was in the Chhot Nagpur Plataeu in
East M.P. In course of the excavation, by the side of Sonepur it
could not be proved that there was any evidnce to identify the site
with the Capital of Lanka of the Ramayana. The location of Lanka by the side of Sonepur, which has been the aim of Professor Sahu is not proved to be certain. The subject of identification of Lanka with any part of the Godavari Valley or the Mahanadi Valley seems to be a matter of further investigation. In course of time H.D. Sankhalia left the project and N.K. Sahu retired from his service and left the project unconclusive.50

The excavation work of Maraguda Valley near Khariar in the district of Kalahandi was undertaken by N.K. Sahu when he was an Advisor of the Department of Archaeology. He was helped in this work by Jita Mitra Singhdeo, the Prince of Khariar. During the excavation, N.K. Sahu discovered a Saktipitha of Nanda dynasty.51 As per his remarks, Maraguda was a flourishing city in the 6th – 7th Century A.D. and he identified the place with Sarabhapura, the Capital of South Kosala. He also discovered a fort called Jumalgarh located on the river Jonk which surrounds it in the shape of ‘U’. There is a big tank near the fort called Raital Sagar which covers about 15 acres of land and is surrounded by a natural embankment. The fort Jumalgarh, probably is a later name of Surabhapura, the Capital of South Kosala.52

From the Maraguda excavation N.K. Sahu has discovered a number of mounds containing important antiquities and the sculptures of 7th-8th century belonging to Jaina religion. He also found a number of iron clamps used for the construction of stone monuments in the Maraguda valley of the medieval age along with
a royal clay seal of Maharaja Nannaraja of Pandu dynasty which have been presented to Sambalpur University by B.R.Yadav of Maraguda Valley. Further N.K.Sahu has discovered a few antiquities belonging to Sarabhapuriyas. He also gathered two big Lion images, one headless warrior riding on a horse, a small Ganesh and several Hero Stones Commemorating the death of warriors and performance of Sati rites by their widowed wives.

N.K.Sahu has forcefully claimed Sonepur as the Lanka of the *Ramayana* era. Through his forceful arguments and presentation of facts he proved that Uddiyanapitha was no other place but Odisha where Vajrayana and Tantrayana flourished and King Indrabhuti of Sambhal is the present Sambalpur. The sister of Indrabhuti Laxmikara was the daughter-in-law of Lanka Kingdom and that Paschim Lanka was no other place but the modern Subarnapur (Sonepur). Like, N.K. Sahu, S.N.Adhikari identified Lanka in Indonesia, S.N.Mehta in Australia (Sundar Kanda, 1941), V.H. Bader in Maladive, Hormone Jekobi in Assam, Ray Bahadur Hiralal in Jabalpur, H.D.Sankalia in Amarakantak, Dwaraka Prasad Mishra in Andhra and Hiralal Shukla on the bank of river Godavari. But Professor N.K.Sahu has tried to identify Lanka after studying the Sonepur Copper Plate inscription of the Somavamsi ruler Kumara Somesvara and Mahada Copper Plate of the Telugu Choda King Somesvara Varman. However, the views of N.K.Sahu about epic Lanka may not be right but he had
successfully brought it into an academic forum and had done a commendable job in this direction.\textsuperscript{58}

Visit to Russia

N.K. Sahu had been to Russia in 1975 A.D. to attend a cultural programme and he visited various historical places and archaeological excavations in Leningrad, Samarkand, Dushan Bay. He had the privilege to observe the archaeological excavation at Hissar hill. He was fortunate enough to deliver a speech in Odia in one of the Universities of Russia and his lecture was sincerely appreciated, it was the greatest honour of his life.\textsuperscript{59}

Relation with Pragati Utkala Sangha

As a patron of history and culture, N.K. Sahu was involved with a number of historical and cultural organizations of Odisha. He was very close to Pragati Utkala Sangha of Rourkela. The organisation has passed a resolution since 1968 to publish a book commemorating the achievements of Madhusudan Das. He was requested to edit the book and at that time he was the Registrar of Sambalpur University and the University was in its infancy. However, N.K. Sahu could not refuse the offer and for the cultural development of Western Odisha, he took the responsibility of editing a book. On 01 April 1968, in the Sector-7 Community Centre ground at Rourkela, Utkal Divas and
Madhusudan Jayanti was celebrated and N.K. Sahu presided over it. On this occasion a souvenir called Smaraki was published bearing the picture of Konark wheel. Since 1968, N.K. Sahu had been involved with the cultural activities of Pragati Utkala Sangha. He had a mission to publish a book on the life and achievements of Madhusudan Das. N.K. Sahu had every honour for Madhusudan Das and on his proposal the Pragati Utkal Sangha of Rourkela erected a bronze statue of Madhu Babu near Rourkela Railway Station. The Sangh has also donated an oil portrait of Madhu Babu which has been kept in the art gallery of Sambalpur University Museum. 

**Methodology**

Prof. Sahu was very sound in methodology. He examined the sources, compared and contrasted them, weighed them as a judge, argued in his mind as an advocate and finally reached the conclusion. He followed a 'critical and comparative method'. As an archaeologist, he himself visited the sites and verified everything before he wrote the report. He had no personal bias. He projected the facts as his sources led to. Whatever he thought right, he expressed boldly without fear as in case of the identification of Lanka with Sonepur. He had a thorough knowledge in Pali and Sanskrit for which he could produce a matchless work like *Buddhism in Orissa* which earned him immortal fame. In fact Prof. Sahu wanted to discern truth, dry
truth; nothing but truth while writing history. That made him a first class researcher.

**Last days of life**

N.K. Sahu after his retirement as Vice-Chancellor, Sambalpur University led a complacent life. He had no craze for power or money but he devoted his life for historical research, writing of books and publication of journals. He was a constructive genius who devoted a greater part of his life for the development of western Odisha. As the first earning member of his family he had discharged his duty towards his brothers and sisters. It was due to his effort that his younger brothers J.K. Sahu became a historian and retired as Reader in History, Krushna Chandra Sahu could become a Professor in I.I.T. Mumbai and the youngest one Govinda Prasad Sahu retired as Joint Director, Agriculture. Till his death he was loved and respected by his brothers and sisters.61

N.K. Sahu was secular in approach. During his service in M.P.C. College, he was attracted towards Buddhism, but after coming in contact with Professor Kangali Charan Pati, he became a devotee of Sri Maa and Sri Aurobinda. While going away from home he used to offer prayers to Sree Maa. But towards the last part of his life, he forgot about worship of God and regarded idols of Gods and Goddesses as research materials. After his retirement, he was appointed as the Advisor in the Department of Archaeology. Government of Odisha and he continued in the post
till his death and it was a great honour for the versatile genius. He was busy in preparation of the book *Veer Surendra Sai*. He also took the responsibility of constructing a Mini Konark on the initiative of the then Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Pattnaik, but could not accomplish it.\(^{62}\)

Never in his life N.K.Sahu had ever thought of purchasing a plot, construction of his own house or about adopting a son. But, towards the fag end of his career, he asked his younger brother J.K.Sahu to purchase a plot for him. His friend Nikunja Bihari Singh donated a plot of about 85 decimile to N.K.Sahu free of cost and he constructed a large building there at Barpali. That building was named after his beloved wife as 'Saraswati Bhawan'. In the year 1973, the Barpali College became operational in that house and continued there upto 1986 and N.K.Sahu did not claim any rent from the college.

N.K.Sahu had no child of his own and he was least concerned about this. There was pressure from the relatives to adopt, the son of his elder brother as his son, but he refused. In April, 1985, he suffered from a mild heart attack, but survived. After recovering from illness, he again remained busy with his research activities. He was a busy man and most of the times he was invited by various organizations to deliver a talk. Research scholars approached him everyday and he derived pleasure by giving them guidance.\(^{63}\)
On 28 August 1985, N.K. Sahu accompanying his wife reached Angul and stayed there at night. The weather was not conducive and he found some time to discuss with his brother J.K. Sahu about some useful items of history. The very next day he returned to Sambalpur. On 30 August 1985, the statue of Surendra Sai was unveiled near jail chowk and his book, *Veer Surendra Sai* was inaugurated by Dr. B.N. Pandey, the then Governor of Odisha. On this memorable occasion, Honourable Governor declared a reward of Rs. 3,000/- for N.K. Sahu for his work and he was asked to deliver a speech on Surendra Sai. N.K. Sahu won the love and affection of all the people of Western Odisha for his speech. On 01 September 1985, he participated in the Jubilee celebration of Gangadhar Meher in Barpali and returned back. On his way to Angul only 10 kms from Barpali his vehicle stopped suddenly and he walked to the nearby village Sarasara, the village of his favourite student Buddhadev Panda. He spent the night there and it was his last night. Deep at night he suffered from another heart attack. Finding no other way out his wife brought him to his brother Govinda Sahu and he was brought to the Burla Hospital but doctors declared him dead. Thus, the life of an illustrious historian and researcher was snatched away by the cold hands of destiny.

His dead body was brought to Jyoti Vihar for the last sight of his beloved students and employees and then cremated at Barpali. After his death, his wife had to adopt Binodananda, the
son of Birabar Sahu unwillingly. Binodananda enjoyed the Power of Attorney and sold all the property of N.K. Sahu leaving Mrs. Sahu uncared. She suffered from illness and on 9 December 1993, she breathed her last in Katapali near Burla in the house of a faithful servant Manabodha, who was the orderly of N.K. Sahu when he was the Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University. She had constantly inspired Professor Sahu for his research. She took up all the family burden when Prof. Sahu was busy in research and other academic activities. The pioneering research works of Prof. Sahu have enriched Odishan historiography.

**Prof. Sahu and Odishan Historiography**

It is pertinent here to throw some light on Odishan historiography before Prof. Sahu took up his pen for reconstructing the history of Odisha. In 19th Century Andrew Stirling, George Toynbee, John Beams and William Wilson Hunter through their pioneering works opened a new approach to reveal the facts of Odishan history. A British administrator, Andrew Sterling's work, *An Account, Geographical Statistical and Historical of Orissa Proper on Cuttack* (Calcutta, 1825) came out with two chapters: one on 'Chronology and History' and the other on 'Religion, Antiquities, Temples and Civil Architecture'. Due to his prematures death, there was an abrupt end to his scholarly activities. His work was the first attempt on Odishan historiography.
George Toynbee was another British administrator who wrote a small monograph on Odishan history titled, *A Sketch of the History of Orissa*, 1803-1828 which started with the British Conquest of Odisha in 1803 followed by an elaborate discussion of the political disturbance in Khurda. It was a frank and fearless exposition of the prevailing condition in Odisha during that period.⁶⁶ Although a British himself, he did not try to cover up many shortcomings in the administration and the difficult situation under which the people of Odisha lived.

Another British Civil servant who made spectacular contribution to Odishan historiography was John Beams whose monumental work was *History of Orissa under the Mohammedan, Maratha and British Rule* (Calcutta, 1875). In this book, he champions the British administration criticizing the Mughal and Maratha rule in Odisha. He was a great proponent of Odia culture and opined that Odia language and culture was distinct from Bengali. Beams was a historian, a product of the Western School of Historiography.⁶⁷

Rajendralal Mitra in his *Antiquities of Orissa* (Calcutta 1875) discussed intensively regarding the temples, sculptures and allied relics of old cities of Odisha like Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Puri, Konark and Jajpur. However, the work very often made departures from the original theme and spoke on different historical issue.⁶⁸ The descriptions were very often incoherent and unrealistic. Similarly Nagendranath Basu in his
Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanj (Mayurbhanj, 1911) and Mano Mohan Ganguly's *Orissa and Her Remains – Ancient and Medieval* contributed a lot to the history of art and architecture of Odisha. Similarly, Manmohan Chakraborty's numerous articles published in different journals also enriched Odishan historiography. The Nationalist historians of Odisha like Pyarimohan Acharya, Jagabandhu Singh, Nilakantha Dash, Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra and Birupakshya Kar also wrote on history of Odisha where legend, history, archaeology were mingled but no coherence was maintained. India attained independence in 1947. After that the Odishan historiography took a new turn with its historians like K.C. Panigrahi, M.N.Das and N.K.Sahu who left their indelible imprint as notable scholars. Prof. Sahu's writings reflect his genius as a notable historian of Odisha.

Prof. N.K. Sahu was humble out and out. He devoted his entire life in research and became one of the path-finders of Odishan historiography. He was one of the renowned historians of Odisha and familiar to Odishan as well as Indian scholars for his skillful historical writings and universal friendship. His quest for knowledge was unsatiable. Inspite of his uncommon intellect and memory he reflected his innocence and humbleness. As a human being, he loved the people around him and inherited the qualities of the adage *Namranti Gunino Janah* (meek are the wise). As a historian, he was excellent as will be reflected in the forthcoming pages.
NOTES & REFERENCES

1. Interview with Devanand Chopdar (Professor and Head, Department of History, Sambalpur University) on 08.09.2011.

2. Ibid.


4. Ibid.


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid, pp.6-7.


10. Information gathered from Prof.D.Chopdar.


19. For detail vide *Infra*, Ch.II.
20. For detail vide *Infra*, Ch.V.
21. Information gathered from Prof. D. Chopdar on *History of Odisha Police*.
28. Information gathered from Prof. D. Chopdar on 08.09.2011.
33. Ibid, p.29.
34. Ibid, p.31.
35. Information gathered from D. Chopdar on 08.09.2011.
37. N.K. Sahu, *Odishare Bouddha Dharma*, Odisha Sahitya Academy, Bhubaneswar, p. 32.
42. *Ibid*, pp. 35-36.
55. N.K. Sahu, *Buddhism in Orissa*, pp. 149-150.
56. *JRAS*, p. 408.
57. J.K. Sahu & D. Chopdar (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 34.
58. Ibid, p.35.
61. Informations gathered from D.Chopdar on 08.09.2011.
63. Ibid., p.51.
64. Ibid., pp.53-54.
66. Ibid., p.5.
67. Ibid., p.8.
69. For details see, Ibid., pp.282-300.
70. Ibid, pp.308-313.