CHAPTER - VI

English Education and Oriya Nationalism
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Before 1936 no Orissa existed as a political unit, and even before 1866 there was no conscious effort to assert Oriya identity within British colonial set-up in India. Orissa lay scattered in three separate administrative divisions. The Oriya speaking people lived like political and cultural minorities in these separate linguistic administrative divisions. English education had started giving the neo-literates a broad horizon where they got an opportunity to compare and contrast their own situation with the others. The gradual realization of a sense of loss of being deprived of their political identity, especially after the Famine of 1866, fostered a new outlook in the emerging elite. In the search for a new identity, they started recognizing the existence of a common culture, tradition, language and history. In that process, they sought for a cultural, linguistic and political unity. This awareness of speaking one language, sharing a common culture and a common historical knowledge inspired them to be united within a common territory. The ‘Oriyaness’ which came to be identified in a single nationality transformed into a consciousness and desire for a group solidarity and took shape in the foundation of a political demand to create a separate province for the Oriya people – ‘Oriya’ means those who identified themselves with the Oriya cause with a common nationality. According to Hayes, “a nationality is primarily cultural, and only incidentally political: it is cultural because it is a group of people who speak either the same language or closely related dialect, who cherish common historical traditions and who constitute or think they constitute a distinct cultural society.”

However, it can also be observed that an individual’s language, religion, society may change in the course of social and political change. The presence of domiciled Bengalis, Telugus and Hindustanis (the Hindi speaking people) provides evidence to the above observation. In the course of history,
gradually they identified themselves as the citizen of their land of adoption. Gourishankar Ray, Radhanatha Ray, Madhusudan Rao and a host of others who took a benefit of English education in Orissa were all domiciles. Their identification with Orissa and their sharing of a common regional heritage involve a broader definition of nationality. John Stuart Mill has provided such a definition in the following words:

*A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any other— which make them co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be governed by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively.*

No doubt the basis of nationality is usually regarded to be one or more of the following: the community of race, language, religion or culture; geographical position, identity of present political interests or past historical traditions etc. So long as the feeling of common sympathies does not inspire a considerable body of them, they can hardly be said to form a nation. Judged by this standard it can be said there was a sense of nationality that existed among all the Oriyas who spoke a common language sharing a feeling of common sympathetic attitude towards the Oriya cause. The search for an identity, no doubt, gives a sense of nationality. The identity of ‘Oriyaness’ existed in the works of medieval Oriya poets. But it was dormant. There was no necessity of asserting Oriya nationality as there was no clash between the political, religious, or racial interests of Oriyas and that of others. A new dimension to the construction of Oriya nationalism was added when the Oriya elite invented the Oriya identity question. This new idea of Oriya nationalism had no trace before the colonial period. The construction of nationalism in the context of Orissa was a very typical one. When the Bengalis and others in India were learning a different lesson of
nationalism from the western experience of nationality, freedom, democracy etc., Oriyas spontaneously received the message of the same from their own regional crisis.

The result of the disastrous Famine of 1866 made the Oriya elite aware of the disadvantages of the territorial dismemberment. Oriyas living under different administrative authorities could not get prompt relief due to the lack of political will of the authorities to help them. The newly educated who suffered this administrative apathy and those who obtained a historical knowledge of the ill treatment developed a collective awareness to be anti-colonial. The seed of construction of Oriya nationalism was laid on the one hand by the Famine of 1866, which threatened the physical extinction of the Oriya community and, on the other hand, by the language controversy of 1867-70 which challenged the cultural pride of the Oriyas. There was a threat to the very survival of Oriya language.

The language controversy that gave rise to the linguistic movement was, however, not really an anti-colonial movement in a real sense. It was a protest against the political diplomacy of the British, which created bitterness in the relationship between the Oriyas and their neighbouring counterparts. The educated middle-class in the Oriya speaking regions - in the areas entangled with Bengal, Central Provinces and Madras - played their significant roles in understanding their ideological position to defend Oriya identity and to establish it by demanding political solidarity with the formation of a separate province within the British colonial activity.

This ascendance of 'nationhood' did not ascertain the self-sufficiency of the Oriyas. The real feeling of nationality among the Oriyas emerged with the sense of deprivation of their own rights over their natural resources and over employment in different offices of the Government. It was English education which made them fit for a post in the lower offices. But their
Bengali counter parts, who were first brought by the Colonial Government to serve under them in Orissa, snatched all the job opportunities. Gradually, the local discontentment became visible and intense. Even in the field of industry no real help or encouragement came. It must be remembered that at the beginning of the British rule, Oriya industries were suppressed and the people were forced to remain confined to agriculture.

Though we give much stress upon the national awakening of the educated elite, we must not forget the reaction of the masses. The real victims of the British supremacy in Orissa, as else where in India, were the ordinary people. The middle class which acquired a sense of power from its contact with the English enjoyed some benefits. Nevertheless, the general mass was in a loss. They did not seriously concern themselves with questions of high policy, political or economical and were not very much affected by the newly born urge of nationalism or patriotism, which moved the English educated elites. They were gradually alienated from the British rule by the terrible miseries like floods and famines. The condition of the people was deteriorating due to the heavy land revenue, the ruin of trade and industry and the huge drain of wealth to England. At this point their outburst was, no doubt, anti-feudal and anti-colonial, not less significant than the newly awakened spirit of nationalism among the educated middle class.

It has been said that for a national movement to be progressive it needs to have elements of anti-feudal struggle. Such nationalism, so long as it does not complement the anti-feudal struggles with anti-imperialist struggles, remains incomplete and to that extent loses its progressive character. R. S. Rao observes that when the anti-imperialist struggle can be joined by feudal forces and even led by them, it generates a nationalism which is negative in its character as it does not permit the release of productive forces potentially existing within the
The aspect of the creation of a political identity and national liberation related to Orissa got submerged in the anti-colonial struggles.

Historically, nationalism is a product of the rise of capitalism and the defeat of feudalism. But in the context of Orissa, we don't see the operation of the above concept. As Orissa was not having a fixed territory and the conscious effort to re-organize the 'Oriya nation' on the basis of language, culture and geography was not to harmonize capital and labour within it, as the native industries were suppressed and economic status of the people was not given proper attention, the dichotomy between capitalism and nationalism was not clearly understood. The growth of nationalism in this respect was dubiously misconceived. The role of mass involvement in the formation of Oriya nationality bears a lot of significance. The anti-feudal movements in the mugalbandis (the area under the direct administration of the government) and feudatory states add a new dimension to the construction of nationalism. English education does not have any impact in that sphere. Hence, we cannot deny the link of economic or commercial aspect to the evolution of a nation state in Orissa. In this context, a question comes up, whether the nation has a political and social aspect also. Rabindranath Tagore says, "A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose". His argument here is that nationalism is a political affair. As our real problem in India was not political, our attention had never been directed towards the organization of such a political and economic union in our country. Our social problems, especially, the racial one, captivated our interest from the very beginning of our history. That was the reason why we had struggled for the establishment of a racial unity and failed to acquire the status of a nation. However, on the other hand, in the western countries, they had their racial unity from the beginning, and their natural resources were not sufficient for the inhabitants. Therefore, their civilization took the character of political and commercial aggressiveness. As they had no internal complications, but had to deal
with neighbors who were strong and rapacious, they had to have political unity and organized their power to fight against others as well as plunder and exploit the whole world. This gave rise to the idea of 'nation'. It is really the aspect of a whole people as an organized power.

Politics in that way dominated the western mind and the Indians started imitating that. We didn't have a national habit of being united nor did we look for a mere political or commercial basis of unity in Orissa. The unity of language which had been existing in Orissa even before the British and even within the sixty years of colonial rule never inspired the Oriyas to be organized for the achievement of a political goal. During the Language Agitation their consciousness of being a unique race gave them a status of nationality. If we consider the construction of nationalism in Orissa in the context of Indian nationalism, we can find that it was an indigenous construction. When India was trying to imitate the political ideology of the English, Orissa started a constructive work coming from within itself. The birth of Oriya nationalism was not an aspect of organizational imposition of its selfish interest upon anybody else. But it was conceived as a self-assertion and self-defiance. The general awakening of having a great history, a great culture and tradition helped the Oriyas to have a quest for self-identity. They tried to recapture the sources of their greatness in the racial-consciousness. Language became a powerful issue to give them a stand in their national awakening. Nationalism started representing more of a state of emotion, literature became the easy means to carry it to the people at large. The Oriya intellectual touched on the Oriya problems through their work of history, poetry and philosophy. On a more solid foundation, the Oriya awakening took a literary shape as gradually Oriya history, culture and heritage came to light through the inspired works of the educated Oriyas.

The inspiration they received from their anti-colonial consciousness gave a positive thrust, an awareness of the collective self. The threat to their racial
symbol, i.e. Oriya language, united the newly born middle class in the Oriya speaking regions. The threat was caused by the Bengalis who had already enjoyed the benefits of English education and organized themselves into a power and had conceived their own creed of nationalism. Their nationalism had been an imitation of the English model and had taken the character of 'political and commercial exploitation' and as such an imposition upon the interest of the Oriyas. Consequently, their relationship with the Oriya became unpleasant. They collaborated with the colonial government in depriving the Oriya community of their own rights.

In the first part of the nineteenth century, while consolidating their administration in Orissa, the British adopted a policy of marginalization of the Oriya community. The Oriyas became the victim of the ambition of a 'great nation' of the world. Tagore says, "Englishmen can never truly understand India, because their minds are not disinterested with regard to that country". Their national selfishness and pride had fostered an attitude of apathy and contempt. Their exploitation of Oriyas started with the land revenue administration, as frequent settlements upon 1837 created instability and uncertainty due to increasing demands for land revenue. The authorities made settlements each time without any consideration of the actual state of the people. Thus the Oriya Zamindars (landowners) ran into heavy annual arrears and their estates were sold off. As the task was performed in Calcutta, because of the distance and expenses involved two-third of the Oriya landlords were ruined in the process. Out of the ruin of the original Oriya landlords, a class of absentee landlords developed who were mostly Bengalis and officials of the court.

The economic deterioration of Orissa was accelerated by the gradual decline of the local industries like Salt and Shipping as well as the cottage industries. Phakirmohan wrote in his autobiography, "Whatever pride and prosperity Balasore then possessed was due to the Salt manufacture alone. For the
inhabitants of Balasore town, the salt manufacture was virtually the sole source of livelihood. These industries had their religious and cultural aspects also. Phakirmohan recollects those good old days,

*To ensure he safety of ships at sea, hundreds of Brahmins were employed to worship the town's deities and recite the Chandipatha and to ensure the continued prosperity of the Salt industry, each year before the production of salt was resumed, a ceremony was held for Jhareswar Mahadev on behalf of the Government, whose exchequer bore the whole expense for it. All the people were Hindus, so the Government do this to humour them.*

Nevertheless, in 1814, the salt monopoly was extended throughout Orissa and this deprived many people of the profitable business of salt manufacture. In 1863, when the Salt Department of Orissa was transferred to the administrative control of the government of Madras, it caused a disaster for the thousands of salt manufacturers of Orissa. Due to such behavior of the Company Government, Orissa's indigenous industries went to the non-Oriyas. Even the trades in cattle, textiles, handicrafts and others were reduced to a minimum and the famous filigree works and handloom industries gradually languished without patronage. Being a perfect organization of power, English nation, had no spiritual idealism. That is why, while depriving the Oriyas of their opportunities and reducing their education to the minimum, this Nation pacified its conscience by showing the Oriyas as a degraded race and had taken an excuse by declaring it as 'whiteman's burden of civilizing the East'.

This was the time when a neglect of education and the corresponding shrinkage of job opportunities matched economic ruin for Oriyas. The neglect of both primary and technical education caused the Oriyas to be unable to relate their plights to the ruler. It also made them unfit for industry and business. This state of affair caused the intrusion of non-Oriyas, mostly the Bengalis and Telugus into the
government offices, and the Marwaris, Sindhi, Gujurati and other Hindi speaking people for trade and commerce in Orissa. Thus it became a perpetual market for alien trade and suffered from the draining of wealth. The years of official apathy and neglect contributed to the disastrous Famine of 1866 and the Oriya language crisis of 1868-70.

At this point, the new consciousness of the educated Oriyas, noted above, perceived the disadvantages of the territorial dismemberment of Orissa. It was perceived that the ruthless outbreak of the famine was due to not only the perennial problems of the failure of crops because of insufficient rainfall and shortage of food grains in the government stores, but also due to the lack of foresight on the part of the information-machinery of the Government, geographical isolation and the apathy of the absentee land-lords. Orissa had a very complex situation. It was colonized not only by the English but also by those of its neighbours, who came to serve under the British. The de-facto rulers were people from Bengal, Madras, and Central Provinces. The Bengalis had captured most of the posts in the government offices and schools at Balasore, Cuttack and Puri districts. But those Bengalis who had chosen to settle in Orissa from an early time identified themselves with Orissa and the Oriya cause. A few of domiciled Bengalis were to become champions of the Oriya nationalist movement in later years. However, those who came during the British rule had a fair knowledge of the British system of administration. Their base in English education gave them a false pride in being an advanced race. Therefore, when they came to Orissa to serve under the British, they came with a snobbish attitude towards the Oriyas. A sequel to all this was that the ones who came, also maneuvered to bring in their relatives and the process continued. In a few years there was a good deal of increase in the size of this Bengali population in Orissa. We must agree with Tagore who viewed that ‘pride in every form breeds blindness at the end. Like all artificial stimulants, its first effect is a heightening of consciousness’. It can also
be applied to the Bengalis who in their blind imitation to political ideology of the British started justifying that Oriya was not a language separate from Bengali.

Consequently the schools were staffed with Bengali teachers and textbooks were brought from Bengal. The local people were forced to study through Bengali medium in the heart of their mainland. Some of the educated Oriyas were able to see the problem and an initiative was taken to save the Oriya language from extinction by writing textbooks and setting up printing press to accelerate the production of textbooks. This endeavor was really facilitated by the sprouting of a desire to protect their language, which they felt as the great reservoir of Oriya culture. The Oriyas were continuously at a loss. At this phase of history they had to confront another threat to their racial soul, for 'a cultural conquest means the subjection and may be distraction of the psychic possessions of the racial soul which in them transformed into the nature of that of the victor'. Woodroff affirmed,

"Language affords a notable example of such cultural dominance. A people who abandon or who are compelled to abandon their language for that of another lose themselves. Language means by which cultural ideas are expressed and handed on."

The English had already started controlling education, therefore culture of the people. Obviously as English was the language of the ruling race the situation made its acquisition a practical necessity. Though there was no law compelling this by force of circumstances the Oriyas had to learn it. However, there was no practical necessity to learn the Bengali language. It was partly due to the impact of English education that the Oriyas started valuing their own cultural heritage. The rising awareness of the Oriyas created unease among the Bengalis. They were afraid that once the local people started receiving higher education and getting successful, the Oriyas would pose a threat to their economic and social
status. They had a strong hold in the Education Department with the support of which they tried to establish the Bengali language replacing Oriya from the school curriculum. As most of the teachers in Oriya schools were Bengalis they joined their hands in this. It was a deplorable state that instead of giving a right direction to the fate of Orissa, these members of the first generation of modern teachers in Oriya schools, tried to injure the national life of the Oriyas. However, not all the Bengali teachers had such a petty selfish interest. On the contrary, they set the character of the national leaders of Orissa. R.D. Banerjee said, "Bengali teachers conferred great benefit on the people of Orissa and many an educated Oriya gratefully remembers the kindness, infinite tact and above all the vast learning of many Bengali teachers and professors". The validity of the above statement can never be denied. Autobiographies of Madhusudan Das, Nilakantha Das, Godabarish Mishra, Pranakrushna Parija are full of happy recollections of their amicable relationships with their Bengali teachers.

It was Uma Charan Haidar, a Bengali Deputy Inspector of Schools who advocated the necessity of using Bengali as the medium of instruction in the Oriya schools. As there was an acute shortage of Oriya textbooks, he felt that Bengali textbooks should be prescribed in schools. In 1869, he went a step further to suggest that Oriya language be written in Bengali script. In 1870, Kantilal Bhattacharya, a Bengali teacher of Balasore High School, published a booklet propounding a theory that Oriya was a dialect of Bengali having no separate linguistic identity. We can have a clear picture of the situation from Phakirmohan's autobiography:

_There was not at that time a single highly - placed Oriya in any government department, let alone the schools. All the Bengalis were of same opinion. They were all equally disparaging of Oriya. And now there was a surge of elation amongst them. Kanti Charan was walking on air, thinking he had achieved lasting fame in Orissa._
The Oriya – Bengali dispute was further instigated by Rajendralal Mitra, an eminent Bengali historiographer, who went so far as to state that even as a race the Oriyas were not separate from the Bengalis. He asserted that the population of Orissa being barely 20 lakhs it would be an absurdity to maintain a separate language for so few people. These misleading and ill – motivated arguments created restlessness among the educated Oriyas. Interestingly, R. L. Mitra later admitted before M. S. Das, that his remark about the abolition of the Oriya language was apparently based on the wrong information that was fade to him by the Bengalis in Orissa.\(^{21}\) It can be easily understood that those Bengalis who perceived a threat to their interests from the introduction of Oriya formed a group and were in the fore front of the anti – Oriya campaign. It was a big conspiracy, which did not go unopposed. Goldsbury, John Beams and Ravenshaw, the Commissioners of Orissa, strongly supported the cause of the Oriya language as distinct from Bengali. Bhudev Mukherjee, an eminent Bengali writer, refuted the arguments of Kantilal and Rajendra Lal. The educated Oriyas also stood up with their own arguments.

The pro-Bengali group expressed their views through the Debating club, the Cuttack Society and the \textit{Utkal Hitaisini}, a weekly newspaper, whereas the pro-oriya group utilised the \textit{Ullasini Sabha}, and some weekly newspapers like the \textit{Utkal Dipika} and the \textit{Sambad Vahika} as their forum. In defiance of the Oriya language, Gourishankar Ray, himself a domiciled Bengali, was one of the first to raise weighty arguments through his editorials in \textit{‘Utkal Dipika’}. He also laid bare those conspiracies of the vested interests to abolish the Oriya language. It had its impact on the educated people on the main land, who also came to learn of the sufferings of their brethren in the outgoing areas in the three provinces, where they were being forced to disown their mother tongue and learn Bengali, Telugu or Hindi.\(^{21}\) The other members of the domiciled Bengali elite class who identified themselves with the interest of the country of their adoption, and rallied to the
cause of Oriya langugae were Raja Baikunthanath De of Balasore, Radhanath Ray, Ramshankar Ray, Rammohan Ray and Sitanath Ray. They played a significant role in the intellectual reawakening, and in creating a profound consciousness in public affairs. Pearimohan Acharya was another eminent domiciled Bengali who created a historiography in Oriya by producing history of Orissa following modern methods of historiography to be read in the schools of Orissa to inculcate patriotic pride and a healthy national spirit among the younger generation. But the book was later excluded from the syllabus only for the attribute of profanity in certain reference to Hindu beliefs. It was actually a part of colonial diplomacy to suppress any kind of national pride inculcated into the minds of the ‘native’.

Language controversy seems to be a clash between the Bengali and the Oriyas in the mainland, between Telugu and Oriya in the areas attached to Madras Presidency and between Hindi and Oriya in the area attached to the Central Provinces. However, it really was a clash between the colonial interests and the colonized needs. As has been pointed out earlier the colonial group did not consist of the British alone, it included the Bengalis, Telugus and other opportunists. Their interests in political power and economic status instigated them to suppress the growth of a language, with its own cultural specificity and significance. So the goal of establishing Oriya as the language of administration and of education in Orissa was inspired as a corollary to the objective of protecting it as a reservoir of culture. Phakirmahan was of the view that ‘Language is the mother of society, Just as individuals identify themselves by their parents’ names, so nation identify themselves by the name of their mother tongue.’ He further said, “The nation, whose language is unawakened, lacks initiative and is unable to maintain self-respect. Its place and prestige among civilised nation is low. It is constantly mocked and ridiculed, People of Orissa, bear in mind, that there is no way of improving the status of one’s nation without improving the status of one’s literature”.24
This forerunner of modern Oriya literature took a pioneering role in motivating the Oriya clerks of the Balasore Collectorate to help in the protection of 'Oriya' from extinction. He along with his co-patriots convened a meeting with the clerks and warned them about the impending dangers of the abolition of Oriya. The argument was that when Oriya was abolished, all the sons, brothers and relatives of the Bengalis would become clerks. The Oriya would be dismissed and their sons and grandsons would not get government jobs. Consequently an application signed by five hundred people was submitted with a plea to retain Oriya in schools and offices. With the support of all-European missionaries and officials then living in Balasore they convinced the Government and the order was issued for the teaching of Oriya in educational institutions.

Interestingly the same type of a diplomatic game was going on in other Oriya-speaking regions, namely, Ganjam and Sambalpur. The Oriyas interacted with their neighbours from an earlier time before the British appeared on this land. Never had there arisen such conflict among these people. No doubt, Oriya had been under different powers from time to time. Nevertheless, such political domination never preceded any conscious cultural conquest by the conqueror. Somehow, the cultural predominance in Orissa of alien tongues had been the main cause of the backwardness and low prestige of Oriya language. The decline started with the Mughals in Orissa as Persian became the official language. Since Oriyas were ignorant of Persian, Orissa was crowded with people from other provinces, who came as Government officials and since Persian was the official language, no one paid any heed to vernacular. It is found that there was no awareness among the Oriyas to fight for their language. It was fashionable, at that time, to learn Persian as a language of prestige and influence. The rich used to keep all their household accounts in Persian. Only regional texts such as the Bhagabata and Ramayan remained in Oriya. If we remember the chatsalis, the indigenous elementary schools, taught Oriya and as such preserved the indigenous Oriya culture. No one had ever taught the court language at the elementary
schools. However, with the advance of British power Orissa got opportunity to have English as well as Oriya in the court. After many centuries, Oriya was accorded this privilege. The English also didn’t try to teach common people in their language. It has already been pointed out that the British as a Nation lacked sympathetic attitude towards the Oriyas as the later had been marginalized. Ricketts wrote, “At the conquest, we found the Ooreah in a state of great degradation and to our shame be it recorded that our policy was to perpetuate the degeneration which prevailed among them”. He rightly observed, “If schools be established and properly attended to, the Ooreah will soon show that degeneracy is but the usual consequence of misrule”.

Can the validity of above remark be doubted? The English class in India were shrewd enough to obstruct the ways where the Oriyas could be united to stand against their interests. So they used their invisible hands to perpetuate the degeneracy among the Oriyas. In the mainland colonial interests manifested a preference for Bengali. Many British officials wanted Bengali as an unifying factor for the whole of the Bengal Presidency, which at that time consisted of Bihar, Orissa, Assam, and Bengal proper. Since the British treated Bengali as the most developed language of India, its introduction in the whole of Bengal would help in maintaining peace and order and reduce expenditure on education. These colonial considerations guided the British preference for Bengali even at the cost of a well-established and well-developed language like Oriya. So the controversy was initiated by the then Inspector and Director of Schools of Orissa who proposed to remove Oriya and introduced Bengali in Oriya schools. Though the proposal was contested by the educated elite and refuted by the higher officials like John Beams and Commissioner Ravenshaw, who supported the Oriya cause, it provided an inspiration to the Bengali lobby. Likewise, in Ganjam under the Madras Presidency, the Director of Public Instruction dismissed Oriya as a semi-barbaric language and the available textbook as useless. But the higher authorities did not agree with the Director and it was allowed to be used in schools
and courts. Even Madras University recognized the Oriya language in 1873. In Sambalpur, which was in the Central Provinces it was decided to introduce Hindi in place of Oriya from 1896 on administrative grounds. It was an imposition of the interest of the Hindi-speaking officers during their posting in Sambalpur. The English administration never came in direct contact with the 'native' people. So they depended upon the subordinates' report, and a circular was issued to replace Oriya by Hindi. The circular created a great stir in Sambalpur and the Oriyas all over Orissa immediately reacted to it. The *Utkal Dipika* wrote that nothing could be more inhuman than to help in smothering some one's mother-tongue and to destroy a language. The Chief Commissioner John Woodburn who issued the above circular, had visited Sambalpur in January 1894. After visiting the schools in Sambalpur, he commented that he had not seen a district school like that. The concern which he had shown for the people of Sambalpur had given them the impression that he was their well-wisher. Hence, the circular of January 1895 created a shock among the people.

The people of Sambalpur took the first step in the amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts in Orissa. Chandra Shekhar Behera who was a clerk in Nagpur secretariat saw the development in the official process of introduction of Hindi in the schools and courts of Sambalpur. He along with Dharanidhar Mishra (The first matriculate of Sambalpur) championed the cause of the Oriyas. Dharanidhar Mishra argued that Sambalpur, being an Oriya district would suffer most if people's mother tongue would be ignored. The people had to face a lot of difficulties in learning English, and it would be still harder for an individual to get over one more foreign language. The educated made an appeal to the government to retain Oriya language in the court and to transfer Sambalpur to Orissa Division in the Bengal provinces. *Utkal Dipika* also opined that if the Government stick to the resolution, the people of Sambalpur would have neither pure Hindi nor pure Oriya and they were to learn three languages instead of two, for example, Oriya for their father, mother, wife and children, Hindi for the purpose
A weekly journal called ‘Sambalpur Hitaisini’, which came out in May 30, 1889, revealed Sambalpur’s contribution in fostering the nationalist agitation. Gangadhar Meher through his poems published in Sambalpur Hitaisini championed the cause and was able to create an awareness among the educated few. The chiefs of Bamanda, Sonepur, Padampur took a lot of interest in the move and gave a lot of support to the cause.

Dharanidhar Mishra and his associates Sripati Mishra, Brajamohan Pattnaik and others had contact with Madhusudan Das and other members of the Orissa division. They made all the efforts to ventilate their grievances through the Oriya Association of Cuttack. The most important development in this national movement was the growing consciousness among all classes of people. The Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, Andrew Fraser, was very much sympathetic to the Oriya cause. He visited the entire Sambalpur region and was very much impressed by the great anxiety that the people had for the restoration of Oriya. He met Malguzar Gauntias (Revenue Chiefs) and the tenants in their villages, the municipality members of Sambalpur and many members of the District Council, all classes of native officials, and the Missionaries. He recommended the restoration of Oriya. Finally the government had restored the Oriya language in Sambalpur in 1903. In spite of the restoration of Oriya in this region, the administrative difficulties, because of its link with the Central Provinces, remained as such. The Hindi officers transferred to Sambalpur and the Oriya official from Sambalpur transferred to other area of the Central Provinces faced the problem with the alien local tongues. The proposals for the amalgamation of Sambalpur with Orissa Division grew in number. The first official proposal was forwarded by Andrew Fraser, when in his famous note dated 5 October 1901, he recommended, "Sambalpur ought to be joined to Orissa, to which it really belongs".

Though the above language controversy started and ended with colonial interference, it demonstrated to Oriyas the negative impact of colonialism
on their culture. Awareness of marginalization generated reactionary feelings among them that Orissa belonged to Oriyas only and that they must get their due share in their homeland. The economic plight coupled with linguistic and cultural subordination convinced them of the necessity of protecting their interests, their language and their culture. Their confrontation with British colonization, with the alien dominance, gave them a collective awareness of ‘Oriya’ identity, which convinced them that they had an altogether different culture and history. Both these anti-colonial consciousness and collective awareness of a national identity together evolved a scope for the construction of Oriya nationalism. At the close of the nineteenth century, a considerable growth of an educated middle class, due to the progress in English education had already been baptized to this new creed of nationalism.

Out of the feeling of being neglected, the Oriyas rose to strengthen their power by asserting the self-identity in qualifying themselves in a number of fields, which showed them as modern. Towards achieving that goal they started establishing printing presses in different places of Orissa; started forming associations; and started giving ventilation to their grievances through their literary aspirations. In order to make their language a vehicle of culture they used the print media. The newly educated engaged themselves in writing textbooks on a variety of subjects like history, geography, nature etc. which had been a new development in the evolution of prose literature in Oriya. The printing press thus favoured the development and systematization of the literary language of these people. That language which was confined to express the poetic sensibilities and religious experience in this land also became a vehicle of secular thoughts. Its journey from the periphery of textbooks to that of a new literature suggests a prelude to the quest for Oriya identity. Subhakanta Behera observes, ‘multiplication of the number of books in Oriya systematized and standardized the language and gave a new fixity to it’. The print language became a powerful means of developing Oriya consciousness. By the end of the nineteenth century,
sixteen Oriya printing presses had been established at different places in the Oriya-speaking regions.39 Though small in number, these presses produced Oriya periodicals and books in quantity. Nevertheless, the intellectual status of the people was so deplorable in the 1870’s that the achievement in this field was quite discouraging. Phakirmohan stresses this state of affair in one of his famous speeches.

A study of the periodicals available in Orissa reveals the status of our mother tongue. At the present time Bengal puts out 300 monthlies, Madras 149, Bombay 303, Punjab 103, The United Provinces 98, Bihar 28, Central Provinces 15, Assam 4 and Orissa only 2; and even those two are not particularly thriving.40

Here he draws attention to the appearance of ‘Utkal Dipika’ by Gourishankar Ray from Cuttack and ‘Sambad Bahika’ by Baikunthanath De from Baalsore.

Gradually the situation changed and condition improved. After the Famine of 1866, the communication system was developed. The introduction of railways and other network of communications opened the vistas of more flexible interactions of Oriyas with English education. More people started writing. They started reflecting their views related to the Oriya plights. Gradually the number of periodicals increased up to sixteen in 1871-81 and twenty-two in 1881-90.41 Though many of them were short lived, they stirred the Oriya mind and made a path wide for the creation of a new literature. They served to reinforce the linguistic identity of the Oriyas. They brought closeness among the writers who started writing and reading in the same periodical or book. The print language caused a linguistic identification among the educated and tied them with the bond of the same nationality. At this moment, their unity embodied the hopes and aspirations of the whole of Oriya people. They developed an emotional and intellectual sympathy towards their fellow brethren. With the quest of Oriya
identity they searched for a solution to the predicaments inflicted upon them by the economic, cultural, political domination by other nationalities. The linguistic movement at last took a political direction. Its aim was the creation of a separate province of Orissa with the unification of the Oriya speaking regions.

Keeping in view that goal, the linguistic and cultural consciousness of the educated middle class led to the formation of many associations in the late nineteenth century. The Oriya Association established in 1882 started voicing the sentiments of the people. But it was the *Utkal Sammilani* (the Utkal Union Conference) established in 1903, which became the mouth piece of Oriya nationalist urge. The main objective of this association was to demand for a separate province for Orissa with the unification of Oriya-speaking tracts. Its other objectives were the improvement of the agricultural economy of this region and accelerating its industrial growth. The leaders of this association emphasized in the spread of a desire to instill self-confidence and self-reliance among the people of Orissa.

Prior to this phase of national awakening in Orissa, on account of their separate existence, the people had no representation in the Legislative Council of Bengal nor could be noticed anywhere the faintest sign of the people's participation in movements for improvement their own lot. Memorializing and petitioning to the Lt. Governors were the order of the day. In the initial stages of their political demand, the Oriyas didn't take to any political agitation but had to take recourse to the above methods of petitioning in order to draw the attention of the colonial government. The *Utkal Sammilani* was conceived as the 'Parliament of the people inhabiting Oriya-speaking areas not withstanding caste, creed, language and administrative divisions'. Long before the Indian National Congress had adopted the programmes of removal of untouchability and *Swedeshi* in the social and economic spheres respectively, the *Sammilani* had championed the cause. It successfully led the Oriya movement under the leadership of
Madhusudan Das, the brain behind the establishment of it, as well as Phakirmohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, Gourishankar Ray Mahraja K. C. Gajapati of Pralakhemandi, Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Chandra Sekhar Behera and a few others. The success of the Utkal Sammilini could Bengali ascertained from its first convention, where thousands of Oriyas, both educated and uneducated assembled to listen and express their predicaments to the government in an organized manner. The uneducated supported the educated class in their struggle for a separate identity. The movement thus became successful on 1 April 1936 by getting a separate political identity, with the creation of a separate province. The anti-colonial perspective of the Oriya middle class took a positive development in the form of Oriya consciousness and at last resulted into the creation of a separate province of Orissa.

It is interesting to note here that those who searched for the Oriya identity in literature, philosophy and religion also tried to bring a solution to Oriya predicaments in politics. Though it seems natural in the context of historical necessity, it created a wrong tradition. Gradually the pristine quest for Oriya identity turned to an instrument of political opportunism, a struggle for more political power and economical advantage in the colonial set up. When the search for Oriya identity culminated in the merger of Oriya identity with the broader canvas of Indian nationalism, it gave a new dimension to the construction of Oriya nationalism. The middle-class tried to combine the interests of the Oriya movement with the nationalist movement of India. The unification of Orissa succeeded partly due to the support of the Indian National Congress. However, this tie created a loss in other aspects of national growth. In this context, how can history forgive Gopabandhu and other Satyavadi workers who, by betraying the ideal of Satyavadi school, plunged into the battle of national liberty by joining the National Congress. One of the causes for the sudden demise of ‘Satyavadi School’ was attributed to the participation of Gopabandhu and other teachers in the non-
cooperation movement of 1921. Such a great educational experiment on the soil suffered from the higher ambitions of the Oriya nationalists.

Gopabandhu was indeed a high priest of Oriya nationalism. His definition of ‘Oriya Nation’ was striking. He gave a new significance to the nature and function of the *Utkal Sammilani*. His presidential speech in 1919 revealed his loyalty to the Oriya cause. It also revealed his greater loyalty to the cause of the Indian nation as a whole. Narrow parochialism had no place in Gopabandhu’s heart. His love for Orissa and his love for India were only aspects of his love for humanity as a whole. He said,

> The objectives of the *Sammilani* are to develop the Oriya nationality which consists of different categories of people residing in natural Orissa accepting it as their own province. Not parochialism but humanism was the goal of Oriya nationalism. Oriya nationalism consists of universal love and fullness of life. It is not based on desire for conquest or bloodshed. Equality, fraternity and liberty are its watchwords. Orissa does not suffer from pettiness. Orissa’s river is called the *Mahanadi* or the great rever; Orissa’s sea is *Mahodadhi* or the Great Sea, Orissa’s hill is *Mahendra* or the Great Mountain, Orissa’s Tree is *Kalpabata* or the Tree of Fulfillment, Orissa’s lord is *Jagannath* or the lord of Universe and Orissa’s cremation ground is the *Swaragdwara* or the Gate to Heaven. The Oriyas visualize greatness all around. The conference is a part of India’s national movement. To maintain our individuality, we must maintain the foundation of our nationalism.  

However, Gopabandhu’s contribution in the construction of Oriya nationalism is unrefutable. His quest for Oriya identity through his literacy works proves his great dedication to the Oriya cause. But his nationalism cum humanism,
in a way, destroyed the specific objectives of the Satyavadi School. In the first ten years of its existence Satyavadi School had wielded influence which was far too deep to be blotted out of memory. In its own way, it contributed a great deal to the cause of nationalism. The teachers of Satyavadi were great crusaders.

Oriya nationalism had its sincere votaries from all walks of Oriya life - the chiefs of the feudatory states, intellectuals, students, teachers, women and humble peasants of the villages. The role of the chiefs of Bamanda, Kalahandi, Paralakhemundi, Mayurbhanj and a number of other Feudatory states provides a new dimension to the growth of Oriya nationalism. Though opinions differ in respect of the success or failure of Oriya Nationalism due to the involvement of this feudal aspect in it, no one can forget the dedication of these Feudatory chiefs to the Oriya cause.

During the language movement, those who became targets of victimization due to the alien conspiracy, noted above were mostly the students. They had to undergo very bitter experience in the school with the teachers speaking alien tongues. Non-Oriya students also made them targets of ridicule. While a student in the Cuttack High School, Madhusudan Das incurred the wrath and displeasure of the Bengali Headmaster only because he pointed out the wrong interpretation of a selection from English literature. Thus, he was expelled for alleged insubordination. He was also insulted by his sophisticated Bengali classmates in the school.

Due to the impact of English literature and European philosophy the students started imbibing the ideas of the nationality, equality and fraternity and started beginning to forge solidarity. Being inspired by the world events like American war of Independence, French Revolution, Unification of Germany and that of Italy they were attracted to the spirit of nationalism. With the establishment of ‘Orissa Graduate and Undergraduate Association’ in 1858, Madhusudan Das
introduced the students to political life. Gopabandhu, Nilakantha, Godavarish were all imbued with the spirit of nationalism from their school time. Though students were discouraged from time to time by their parents and teachers, yet a gradual consciousness grew in them to come to the mainstream of national life.

Progress in education opened a new vision for the Oriya woman also. Kuntala Kumari Sabat, the Oriya poetess, searched for an Oriya identity in her poems. She had tried to highlight how together with other Indians Oriyas enjoyed many things in common such as the same land, the same interest, the same devotion, the same fate, the same pain and pleasure, and finally a mother common to them all. Such an emotional and intellectual bond, which the modern educated established among themselves helped them in the construction of Oriya nationalism. The anti-colonial consciousness, which crystallized into a sense of national/racial identity, united the intellectuals to redefine the unique concept of ‘Oriyaness’.

While giving a realistic expression of the long history of Marhatta rule, Muslim tyranny, British mal-administration, exploitation by petty Bengali officials, growth of a parasite class of administrative and commercial middle-men, socio-economic impact of the disastrous Famine, religio-cultural tension generated by widespread missionary activities, increasing competitiveness in getting official employment, accelerated pace of urbanization and a host of similar historical factors, Phakirmahan Senapati tried to share his complex historical experience with his compatriots. He mixed up his own experience with imagination to create a glorious past Radhanath ray created a literary world of his own by receiving inspiration from Oriya history, legends, folklore and myths. His poetic-romances like Chandravaga, Kedar Gouri, Usha and Parvati were the conscious efforts to construct a ‘make-believe’ history of Orissa. According to S. Behera, “The importance of constructing a ‘make-believe’ history by Radhanath in the late nineteenth century lies in producing a collective view of the ‘self’ among Oriyas,
who were, otherwise, suffering from colonialism and subordination". Madhusudan Rao, who held a different attitude towards glorifying the past glories of Oriyas conceived Orissa as an eternally virtuous mother in his poems like 'Utkal Sangeet', 'Utkal Vandana' and 'Jatiya Sangeet'. Phakirmohan, Radhanath and Madhusudan tried to create a concept of geographical Orissa for the Oriya mind. They did not want to hide the present condition of the Oriya. They tried to contrast the past and the present, the traditional and the modern in their literature, and define 'Oriya identity' by discussing an essential element of cultural identity. Gangadhar Meher, the humble poetic genius from Sambalpur was very much aware of the fact how Sambalpur was in the grip of a long-drawn-out cultural and political battle in establishing its Oriya identity. Gangadhar, as a poet, was quite conscious of his special responsibility as a representative voice of a particular sub-culture with its specific geographical and socio-cultural identity. This consciousness reveals itself not merely in his choice of historical, natural and religious places of the region to describe and celebrate; it also finds poignant and exciting expression in his urge to vindicate their glory and carve out for them a distinguished place in the literacy map of India. Dr. M. S. Pati says, “Gangadhar’s consciousness of his identity as a spokesman of the region nowhere renders his tone narrowly polemical or regional, in fact, of all the Oriya poet of his time his vision of Orissa was the most inclusive and broadbased.” Gangadhar’s ‘Utkal Lakshmi’ presents a comprehensive political and cultural personality of Orissa including the dismembered territories in the south and the North-East, thus prophetically foregrounding a totality long before it was politically realised.

Bhima Bhoi, though a metaphysical poet, was not devoid of a sense of history. Rooted in the Garjat jungles of western Orissa with no enlightenment of the English education, Bhima Bhoi hoisted his standard of revolt against social inequality, political oppression, religious fanaticism and caste discrimination. His
rebellious spirit didn’t conform him to be a nationalist but turned him into a
humanist.

This chapter cannot be closed without giving a reference to the
literary activities of a school of writers, in whose quest for Oriya identity, there
was an attempt to cross national boundaries in order to reach universal humanism.
Gopabandhu, Nilakantha, Godavarish, Krupasindhu- all of them create a discourse
of history as a search for Oriya nationalism. Gopabandhu created an impact on the
Oriya mind by making Dharmapada, the symbol of brilliance, bravery and self-
sacrifice, in his ling poem ‘Dharmapada’, Nilakantha’s ‘Konarke’ and
‘Kharavela’ reconstruct the past history of Orissa with its great glory. Godavarish
in his novel ‘Atharasa Satara’ celebrates the glorious tradition of Paikas, the
traditional militia of Orissa. Within the Satyavadi group the historian Krupasindhu
Mishra also shared the sentimentalism of Godavaris and Nilakantha towards
Orissa’s past. In a search for Oriya identity and for the construction of Oriya
nationalism, the Oriya authors in the late nineteenth century and in the beginning
of twentieth century relied on history and tradition. Oriya literature of this period
became a means of defining ‘Oriya’. Literature became a powerful ideological
apparatus to construct Oriya nationalism.

Not only history but also culture, based on religion, became a medium for
asserting Oriya individuality. The poets and writers tried to deconstruct the image
of Lord Jagannath as constructed in missionary literature and English
historiography. They engaged themselves in waging the war against the colonial,
anti-Jagannath cult. The nationalist poets treated Lord Jagannath as the symbol of
‘Oriyaness’. Gopabandhu imagines Lord Jagannath sharing the fate and destiny of
Oriyas. Therefore, he asks for the Lord’s leadership in the national struggle of
Oriya against the British.52 This Jagannath-centric identity, among the Oriyas,
gives a new dimension to the construction of Oriya nationalism.
Here the concept of nationalism was to be merely 'political and commercial'. Nevertheless, it extends to a cultural reassertion, aiming at defining a healthy phenomenon: a nation not just to serve any class interest or to justify any historical and geographical boundary. The growth of nationalism in Orissa was not a similar experience like that of Indian nationalism as conceived elsewhere in other regions. The historical perspective can justify it as a unique experience for the people of Orissa. When the growth of Indian nationalism can be studied as an anti-colonial thrust being inspired due to the impact of English education, that of Oriya nationalism can be studied as a quest for Oriya identity. It is true that the role of English education in the growth of Oriya nationalism can never be denied. However, it can also be asserted that the natural habit of Oriya mind sensed the genuine cause of its misery and went in for a quest of its identity. Consequently, that made the path open for the construction of an ideology i.e. Oriya nationalism.

Notes

4. Ibid. p. 122.
5. Tagore, Rabindranath *Nationalism* (Delhi, 1950), p. 5.
6. Ibid. p. 58
9(a) *Hymns to Goddess Durga.* Lord Shiva worshipped at a place called Jhadeswar at Balasore.


18. Utkal Dipika, Cuttack, 10 Jan 1869.


23. Rath, Mrutyanjaya. Karmavira Gourishankar (Oriya) (Cuttack, 1925) p. 76


29. Utkal Dipika, Cuttack, 4 Jan 1868.


31. Sambalpur Hitaisini, Bamanda, 31 Jan 1894.

32. Utkal Dipika, Cuttack, 27 April 1895.
33. Sambalpur Hitaisini, 31 Jan 1894.
36. Utkal Dipika, 23 Feb 1895.
38. Ibid. p. 182.
43. Ibid. p. 71.
44. Ibid. p. 72.
45. Quoted in Pandit Gopabandhu Das published by the Gopabandhu Birth century celebration Committee, Cuttack, 1976, p. p. 43-44.
49. Ibid. p. p. 79 – 80.
51. Ibid. p. 193.