CHAPTER – VII

Conclusion
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The quest for Oriya identity culminated into the creation of a separate geographical and political entity called Orissa in 1936 within the structure of British colonial administration in India. It is true that the Oriyas had never been united politically in a modern sense. But the Oriyas also never faced such an identity crisis as they did during the period, 1803 to 1936. It was a crisis, which made them feel that if they did not assert their identity they might be annihilated as a linguistic group and as a nation.

The above period brought Orissa into such a historical circumstance, that the fate of Oriyas was decided by a body of educators who didn’t have any affinity with the Oriya culture. These educators came to teach a new language of culture, politics and religion; came to impart the new knowledge of humanism, rationalism, power-relations etc. They came with their own techniques and technocrats who could prepare a base for the permanent establishment of the British regime in this land. In the initial stage of their cultural conquest, the British took a very inhuman method of degrading the Oriyas in every aspect of the latter’s life—culture, history, philosophy and religion. The British colonialism had its inspired servants who, through the help of historiography, literature and philosophy, did their best to describe the Oriyas as the most ignorant, orthodox, and conservative among the Indians.

So they planned to civilize the people. For that purpose they tried to materialize the experience, which they gained from their own Grammar Schools, Charity Schools, Public Schools, Colleges and Universities. They planned to bring
out a class of Oriyas from their own established institutions, which served as the models to fulfill the colonial interest then to fulfill the local needs and demands. The link of English education with the fulfillment of the necessities of life, at first, drew the attention of the Oriyas towards the acquisition of it. The purpose of this education was to fulfill the practical necessities only, not to provide any intellectual food.

English education in Orissa was not the result of a general demand of the people but was the outgrowth of the so-called philanthropic activities of the Missionaries and the colonial servants. The initial efforts in the establishment of schools in Orissa differed from such efforts in other parts of India. In Bengal, some of the English gentlemen created a desire for English education among the people by establishing a few English schools. Though established for earning a livelihood, these schools became instrumental in creating a propitious atmosphere for the foundation of an English system of education in Bengal. Though the colonial government tried to organize a uniform educational set-up for the whole of India, it did not work out successfully as it did not provide equal benefit to all the regions. The whole Orissa region was neglected.

Provisions were made to teach both a class and the mass. Policy was made to teach the class in English language and the mass in their mother tongue. Though provision for the mass education was not included in the proposal of Lord Macaulay, Wood's Dispatch conferred the responsibility to the Government to educate the mass. The encouragement to the vernacular education was but a part of the cultural conquest initiated by the Colonial Government to create a desire among the people for English education. It was a shrewdly contrived policy of the British to capture the Oriya mind for all sorts of colonial benefits-social, cultural, economic and political. We have already discussed how the British took excuse of
their mal-administration in the initial stage by making the Oriyas responsible for their own degradation. It was a reaction to the resistance made by the traditional Oriya elites against the colonial interference in their culture. Both the Brahmins and the Khyatriyas were regarded as the 'the guardians of national culture' in Orissa as elsewhere in India. The Khyatriyas due to their bitter experience with the Colonial supremacy over their control remained aloof. But the Brahmins took the lead in the resistance against the British interference in their educational affairs. Consequently, the first output of the English system of education in Orissa were the men of Bengal who took benefits as the Government servants. The first few educated Bengali babus did not have any interest in the well being of Orissa. They followed their fathers' path and remained safe and secured in their government posts. Their relaxed position did not enable them to take interest in the condition of the ordinary Oriyas. At the time of disastrous Famine of 1866, due to the wrong information of these government intermediaries, the Government could not come to the help of the people and thus millions died.

At this critical phase of history, the traditional elites felt the need of co-operation with the administration by receiving English education. They also realized that the acquisition of English was very much necessary for their adaptation to the new colonial set-up. The Brahmins and Karanas themselves were the non-landed elites and were in need of government patronage for acquiring the means of sustenance. As the whole system was changing and a process of new social formation was going on, the Brahmins could not earn their livelihood with a rudiment of Sanskrit. The social circumstance made them to attend the English schools and to attain that much training in English for befitting themselves to have a clerical job in an office. The link of English with the government job created new power relations among the British and the Oriyas. After this, the educated had to be obliged to the Government for the latter's
benevolence in providing the former with the means of sustenance. Thus English education started playing a dominant role in subjugating the people.

Due to the impact of humanism and rationalism, the educated started being engaged in reforming their religion and society. Though, the educated middle class became directly involved into the process of social formation, we cannot ignore the role of common people, whose co-operation made it a success. We can see how they started taking interest in the gradual change brought by the English civilization. Phakirmohan Senapati gives an account of the people's inquisitiveness in the establishment of a press at Balasore. 'When it was proclaimed that the printing was going to be commenced, half the shops of the town was closed. Even the town's most prominent people came to watch the process of printing. The crowd in front of the printing press filled the road and brought the passage of pedestrians to stand still.'¹ Such an excitement also brought people from the villages, with the manuscripts in their hands, to the first printing press established by Gourishankar and his partners at Cuttack. These humble villagers had a belief that if the manuscripts be put into the printing machine, they would automatically come out in the printed forms.² Their involvement in the social change became visible from their attractions to the English schools. The parents started sending their children to schools. The activities of the intellectuals raised the mass consciousness. People in different Oriya speaking tracts started getting united to make the Oriya movement successful. The unique character of the Oriya problem fostered a sense of unity among the people in all those Oriya speaking regions.

The system of English education was not introduced in Orissa under a planned project by the Colonial Government, it abided by the contingent policies and acts related to English education for the whole of India. Macaulay's Minutes,
Wood’s Dispatch, Auckland’s Proposal, Reports of the Education Commission etc. directed the education system comprising different stages of primary, secondary and collegiate education; different schemes of training, inspection, supervision and examination; different incentives of stipends, scholarships, prizes and degrees and thus helping in the evolution of an educated class quite different from the traditional educated in Orissa. The educational development in Orissa shows that there is almost a one to one correspondence between education and the general interest of the public. We can easily perceive that the British were in no position to leave a legacy in this country had the people not opted for one.

From their earlier experience, the British understood that without impressing the Oriyas they could not become successful in introducing their educational patterns in this country. So, they introduced a new method of bribing. The Government offered the bribe of education to the people by linking it with the scheme of employment. The Missionaries had first started it in order to achieve the objective of conversion. Their first school i.e. the English Charity School was meant for the children of English officers who were serving in Orissa, and the other Christians. As they failed in the adult conversion, they started establishing schools for the Oriya children. Their purpose was to teach the Bible and to use education for creating an atmosphere for evangelization of Orissa. The Government had its own selfish motive to motivate people for English education. It was for the purpose of administrative conveniences. The government could have employed as many Bengalis, Telugus and Hindustanis in the different offices of Orissa as it wanted, but it was concerned about the discontent that grew among the Oriyas in the course of time. The Paik Rebellion of 1817 had taught a lesson to the Colonial Government and had made it aware that the Oriyas were not a passive people as they seemed. In the beginning the Brahmins, having their special position in the society, protested the Missionary and Governmental endeavor in
introducing English education. But the karanas welcomed it only because they perceived an economic benefit out of it.

It seems that the Government had no particular scheme to train the 'natives' as clerks, though, Macaulay put such an idea in his famous Minute of 1835. No graded syllabus was prepared to help the educated in being clerks. The texts that were prescribed for the pupils in different examinations were not for training the servants but the administrators. So the contradiction in the colonial intention and the output of the educational programmes gave rise to a different political atmosphere. The natives' disappointment in not getting the appropriate and sufficient result of their educational labour made them aware of their own position in the colonial set-up. This awareness turned them to be rebellious. Gradually their interaction with the enlightened minds of the West through the texts helped the neo-literates to gain experience. This lesson also helped them to share each other’s experience by sitting in a club, by forming a society or association, by bringing out periodicals, by establishing printing presses and by an understanding of the common plights. The print language united all those who read and wrote Oriya. This sharing of common experience gave rise to a new class of educated intelligentsia. As they belonged neither to the upper class nor to the lower class, they formed a new middle class order in the Oriya society. The middle class people not only thought about themselves, but also started taking interest in the problems of their fellowmen. There grew a new search for self-identity among these people. The newly educated felt that a new political, geographical and cultural identity could save them. The print media helped the Oriyas in different administrative regions to share their bitter experience gained from the treatment by the Bengalis, Telugus and others.
Their strong foundation in the indigenous centers of learning gave a strong sense of 'Oriyaness' to the neo-literate. The chatsalis not only taught them the three R's but also gave a base to Oriya culture. This religio-centric identity was sharpened when they were introduced to an alien culture in the English Schools. The fusion of Western liberal outlook and Eastern spiritual ideology inspired a few to search for a new Oriya identity. The first beginners in this new exploration had undoubtedly been blamed for being plagiarists, but they became pioneers in creating modern Oriya literature. The Christian Missionaries as such initiated the methods of translation, transliteration, compilation of dictionaries etc. which standardized the Oriya language. Though Radhanath, Madhusudan and a few others took to the poetic language to define their Oriya identity, Phakirmohan widely used prose to do so. The Satyavadi group of writers used both prose and poetry to have a quest for the cultural self in a glorious past. The neo-literate felt the need of reforming Oriya society and uniting the Oriya speaking tracts in a single administrative unit for its political and economic progress. This need, of course, gave rise to a union of the Oriya people, but not to gain any political freedom from the colonial yoke. It was to demand for the creation of a separate province for the Oriyas. The need for the unification of Oriya speaking tracts made the Oriyas to assert their unique position among the other Indians. Thus, the quest for Oriya identity culminated in the making of Oriya nationalism.

'Nation', however, in the Western sense of the term is a political and economic organization to achieve a selfish goal. The evolution of English nation, in that context, was to gain its strength not from any benevolent enterprise, but from a selfish motive to expand colonial hold over a large portion of the world. The Oriyas did not follow the British in this. Of course, they had to fight against their aggressive neighbours, but they did not have a motive to use their surplus
organisational power to exploit or suppress any other race. Thus, Oriya nationalism was more of a cultural kind than a political or economic one. It was not the result of the total impact of English education but that of indigenous culture also.

This indigenous culture of the Oriyas, imbibed naturally from their traditional educational institutions, had a strong impact upon them. The inheritance as well as the acquisition of traditional Oriya culture prevented them from a complete adherence to English culture. Both the Christian missionaries and the Colonial government tried their best to inculcate English culture into the Oriya mind. Teaching of the Bible and even the secular writings of Shakespeare, Milton and a number of English authors was for the purpose of evangelizing the Oriya mind in one way or the other. Madhusudan Das, the first Oriya M. A., acquired Christianity, but we can see that a few other neo-literates, who took interest in Christian religion did not adopt it. It shows that their foundation in the indigenous culture was so strong that any other influence could not bring the Oriyas under its spell.

The British aimed at creating a hybrid race, who could be neither English nor Indian. They planned to distribute English culture directly among a class through English education and indirectly among the mass through the vernacular i. e. Oriya language. Introduction of English texts was made easy by the preparation of the Oriya texts in different new subjects like history, geography, science etc. We have already discussed how translation from English and Bengali books was encouraged in the preparation of texts in Oriya. Literary genres like the essay, play etc. were introduced and Oriya literature was included into the syllabus. A great many Oriya authors brought different subject matters – both commonplace and philosophical – into the arena of Oriya essays. All this helped in
the changing of outlook of the people, even those who did not attend an English School.

As we see, the British developed a hierarchy of education system by establishing a link between one stage to another for the success of their network. They introduced the advanced method of pedagogy, used literature as an ideological tool, brought and trained a new breed of educators to accelerate the programme of cultural conquest in this land. They did not want to lose their commercial settlement in India. Their 'divide and rule' policy tended them to ignore the Oriya interest from the very beginning. Even in their educational programme, they showed apathy towards the Oriyas. The British realised their fault at a very later stage, when the Oriyas suffered a lot at the time of disastrous Famine of 1866. The British wanted to save the regime by pacifying the Oriyas. Those who survived after the Famine underwent a mental crisis due to the conspiracy of the Bengali, Telugu and Hindi-speaking people in the Oriya speaking regions to annihilate Oriya language. The conspiracy might have been successful if the British Government had not given administrative support to the Oriyas. The scholars and the administrators like John Beams and Ravenshaw had complete sympathy for the Oriya cause.

But the administrative support behind the rehabilitation of Oriya language and the unification of the Oriya speaking tracts had a political motive. By encouraging the growth of small nationalities in India the British wanted to weaken the growth of a strong Indian nation. Where Madhusudan Das and a few others had a strong support for Oriya cause, Gopabandhu Das and his followers had their involvement in the freedom struggle along with Oriya movement. Both of these movements grew side by side. On the one hand Utkal Union Conference was organising the people and trying to draw the attention of the Government
towards the creation of a separate province of Orissa. On the other hand, the nationalists like Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das and others were working for the Indian National Congress and participating in the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements. They established national schools at different places to inculcate national habits among the children. This national growth, as opposed to the colonial intentions, marks the failure of English education in Orissa.

An analysis of the whole process of English education in Orissa can help us to know how the Colonial Government tried to save its position in India by changing its plans now and then. When the Government after a few years of the introduction of English education found that the down-ward filtration theory was not going to be successful, it changed its strategy and involved in providing education to the mass not in English, but in Oriya. When it realized that the increasing demand of English education was also increasing dissatisfaction among the unemployed, it withdrew direct control over the secondary education and encouraged private enterprise in this field through grant-in-aid system. When it saw that the national schools were evolved due to the enterprise of educated Oriyas, the Government started establishing secondary schools. The above analysis can show that the Colonial Government was not sure about its purpose and had no understanding of the Oriya situation and Oriya mind. A few experienced English men had a strong belief that their education to the people of India was their way back to England. They had a strong anticipation of the failure of English education. Though English education was used as an ideological apparatus to perpetuate British dominance over India, it served as a weapon on the hands of the people to obliterate British regime from this land.

The Oriyas got a scope to interpret their past from a new outlook imbibed from English literature and Western sciences. After their initial resistance
to English interference, they welcomed the formation of a new social order. English education did not serve its original purpose to subjugate the ‘natives’, but in course of time became Indianized. English, no doubt, remained the medium of instruction in higher education, but its position in the middle English and secondary schools remained as a second language. English education sharpened the consciousness of the Oriyas. Their involvement in the Colonial Administration and participation in a new politics made them more exposed to their national problems, which was of a regional kind. They became aware of the evils lying in their own religion—the caste rigidity, untouchability, atrocities upon women etc. English education developed a unique sense of oneness among the people irrespective of class, caste and gender. The educated realized that the division of the society into a number of compartments based on caste was a big hindrance in the development of an ideology of patriotism among the people. English school, with its secular education, united the Oriyas in a patriotic bond. Its influence brought women, aboriginals and the untouchables to its fold. But English education brought women into the fold of useful instruction. Due to the impact of a new ideology, the Oriya women started searching for her new identity.

The first change, which became visible in the entire education system in Orissa, as elsewhere in India, was due to the centrality of the textbook as the powerful agency of instruction. The printed class books replaced the manuscripts. English system of education introduced a wholly new apparatus—the agency of the prescribing authorities, fixed syllabi and an examination system based on the prescribed textbooks. It produced a neo-literacy, which unlike the traditional one, started a tradition of neo-rationalism and neo-humanism in this land. They started revaluing their own culture. Though Macaulay anticipated that after receiving English education the Indians would no more be the idolatrous, it did not happen. The Oriyas became more idolatrous, as they glorified the concept
of "mother Utkal" in order to rouse patriotic and nationalistic feelings in the heart of the people. In the early part of the twentieth century, we can also find that Lord Jagananth became an inspiration for the national leaders of Orissa. The land and the people of the Oriya speaking region came to be increasingly identified with Lord Jagananth. Both the religions and political entities came to be identified in the expressions like 'Jagananth Desha' and 'Thakura Raja'.

Thus a link between the emergent Oriya consciousness to assert Oriya identity and the construction of Oriya nationalism in the beginning of twentieth century provides evidence to the failure of English education in Orissa. Ultimately, the Colonial Government had to support the Oriya cause and the Oriya movement. The Oriyas, struggling through the adverse circumstances of Colonial period finally became successful in protecting their interests. Once they discovered their identity, they were activated to achieve their political goal in the creation of a separate province of Orissa in 1936.

Notes

2. Rath, M. Karmayogi Gourishankar (Oriya), op. cit. p. 25.