CHAPTER – V

English Education And The Neo – Literates in Orissa Before 1936
The Neo-literacy in Orissa is a very complex phenomenon. It is often said that the creation of a middle class in Orissa was the result of a neo-literacy as a consequence of English education. Though there was the possibility of a middle class social order existing in the pre-British India, the evolution of such a class in Orissa as elsewhere in India, was due to this impact of English education. In this context, the term ‘neo-literate’ or ‘educated’ bears a lot of significance. Those who were getting education in India from the indigenous centres of learning like chatasalis, tols, maktabs, and madrasas had a different world view in the pre-British period. Their experience was restricted to their narrow domestic walls. There was no scope for critical evaluation of the matters that could be imparted to them through the subjects included in their curriculum. The whole approach was restricted to the ultimate aim of imparting the four R’s. It was categorically provided to them according to the provisions made for different castes of the society. No doubt, elementary education was meant for all irrespective of caste and social status but higher education in Sanskrit was specifically for the higher caste Hindus. The Brahmins had a monopoly over the latter and they had of course a snobbish attitude towards the lower classes, even towards the vernacular i.e., Oriya. The Karanas, Khandayats in the coastal districts and the Bhuyans, Kuitlas, Agharias in Sambalpur and nearby gadjats had a different attitude towards education and other activities of life. Like the Brahmins, the Karanas some areas were the non-landed classes. Their interest in education was thus influenced by their interest in getting royal favour. So they were not satisfied in getting elementary education only from the village schools. They also learnt Persian from the centres of Islamic learning. Persian was studied both by the Muslims and by the Hindus and considered an accomplishment for a gentleman. However there was no such cohesive force in the indigenous education
which modern education had. It had a powerful force, which created a bond among the new literates. The growth of an educated middle class opened a new phase of cultural evolution in the history of Orissa. The study of this history of education in Orissa is nothing but the study of the evolution of a racial consciousness among the Oriyas. It was a quest for the Oriya identity. Truly speaking neo-literacy brought a change in the dynamics of perception.

The Commissioner of Orissa in 1875 remarked that Orissa in comparison to other districts of Bengal had the highest literacy rate. Although many a learned was ignorant in the use of paper, they wrote legibly on palm leaves. The traditional literate class had their own limitations. Their perfection with 'iron – pen' was not taken into consideration. L. S. S. O’ Malley reports that when in 1805 orders were issued to use Oriya along with Persian in all written communication with the people, the Oriya scribes were employed. They were skillful enough with their ‘iron – pen’ and bundle of palm leaves, but they proved helpless when required to write on paper with an ordinary pen. They were slow in acquiring the new method of writing, ignorant of business in general and especially of the new English method of revenue accounts. It is obvious that the British felt no concern for the Oriyas. There was no attempt to provide any sort of education or training to the Oriya scribes, but all the subordinate clerical posts were given to the Bengali babus. Whether it was purposefully done or an easy way out from the reality of administration by the Colonial Government that needs a historical analysis. The year 1805 had a different historical situation. Just two years after the annexation of Orissa, we could not expect any benevolent attitude from the British towards the ‘natives’ of Orissa. Besides, a report by the Magistrate of Cuttack in 1821 shows a very deplorable condition of the Oriya literates then:

*Scarcely a single real Oriya received a salary of more than ten rupees per mansem, but several were naturalised Bengalis or*
Musalmans. I always give preference to the Oriyas, but at this moment, I scarcely find a single Oriya possessing qualification to fit him for a common scribe.³

The Oriyas were not given proper attention. Until 1835 there was no government endeavour to educate and train the Oriyas to make them fit for the colonial machinery. It was due to the callousness of the Company Government as well as the ignorance of people regarding the benefits of new education. The Commissioner of Orissa strongly criticized the apathy of the government towards the spread of education in this state. He wrote, “At the conquest, we found the Ooriah in a state of great degradation and to our shame be recorded that our policy was to perpetuate the degeneracy which prevailed among them”⁴. He also observed, “If schools be established and properly attended to, the Ooriah will soon show that degeneracy is but the usual consequence of misrule”.⁵ It is the utterance of a deeper sympathy from the heart of a benevolent servant of the Company Government. But on the other hand, some of the inspired servants of the British Government like Hunter, had a very unsympathetic attitude towards the people. His ‘History’ presents a very dark picture of the Oriyas. He blamed the people for their own degeneracy. He wrote, “In 1838, Government entered the field and opened an English and Sanskrit school at Puri. But these institution proved altogether unable to make head against the tide of ignorance and bigotry”.⁶ But historical facts show the opposite side of the same coin. It was due to the lack of efficient teachers and textbooks; the first English school met its premature death, which could not create proper motivation amongst the teachers. The number of students attending the school was not satisfactory. Ganganarayan Bose, the first teacher of the school observed, “The inhabitants of the town chiefly consisted of the priests of the Jagannath, to whom a knowledge of the Shastras was more profitable than of the English language”.⁷ It is remarkable to notice here that from an utilitarian point of view English was not the need of the time. Those who were linked to this school had no real objective of imparting a purposeful education.
The school was simply an evidence of the governmental allegiance to the charter Act of 1813. Truly speaking the history of English education in Orissa was not founded on the true basis of demand and supply. As the commercial aim of the Colonial Government was getting no satisfaction, there was no purposeful investment in the education of the Oriyas.

Further, English education was not introduced to the people with systematic planning, when it was at last introduced. New schools were established, but indigenous schools were neglected. Government made a mistake here by not using the traditional centres of learning. This negligence created a bitterness in the minds of the traditional literates especially the abadhanas or the indigenous school – teachers. Thus in 1845, when a school was opened in Khurdha these teachers dissuaded the parents from sending their children to the Government School.

Caste prejudice and conservatism stood on the way of acquisition of this neo – literacy. Government schools were looked upon as infidel institutions. At Bhadrak “the people not only take no interest in the welfare of the school, but many of them” it is said, “entertain most absurd notions of the intention of the Government, believing that the children, if allowed to attend school, will eventually be taken away from their parents and send to England.” This sort of fear and doubt was invariably due to the missionary activities. The orthodox Brahmins disliked the government schools.

It was found that on the eve of the transfer of powers to the Crown in 1858, the education of Orissa was extremely backward than in other parts of Bengal. At that time, there were about 600 employees in all the offices of Orissa of them 120 were hereditary Kanoongos, 216 were Oriyas, while 224 were Bengalis and the rest Muslims. Most of the officers – in – charge of the administration in Orissa admitted that the effort of the Government was too feeble to provide the people with educational facilities. During the terrible Famine of
1866, it was seen the want of educated person aggravated the suffering of the people. T. E. Ravenshaw wrote:

No other province in the presidency was so deficient of intelligent and public spirited residents who would appreciate the facts bearing on the prospects and means of the people and who could give practical information to the authorities as would have been the case in any district of Bengal proper, and in carrying out remedial measures. ¹⁰

From the above certification, it seems clear that the Company Government was gradually becoming aware of the situation how Orissa was in a state of deprivation. Progress of education was really not satisfactory. The most pathetic matter was that the successful students were not getting appointment in higher posts. Pandit Biswambhar Bidyabhusan started his service as a teacher in the Cuttack School in 1841 with a salary rupees twenty. In 1851 when he was appointed as a Munstif at Jajpur. Pandit Rudreswar Panda was appointed in his place.¹¹ In 1852 Achyut Sahoo was appointed as the fourth teacher in the Cuttack School.¹² Another reputed educated Oriya teacher of the Cuttack School was Nabin Chandra Sarangi.¹³ In 1859 – 60, Bhabagrahi Mahanty and Raj Kishore Mahanty were appointed as the fifth and sixth teachers respectively in the Puri School.¹⁴ Here it is important to mention that the teachers in the government schools were mostly the Bengalis. During this period, some of the Oriyas were appointed in the lower administrative posts. Rashbihari Pattnaik, Sadananda Singh and Mangal Singh were appointed as police Darogahs. Besides, Sadananda Jachak and Nimaicharan Nangee were appointed as the writers of the Cuttack Collector’s office and Swapneswar Das was appointed as the salt Dewan. Most of these officers had no academic qualifications, but had good knowledge of Oriya, Bengali and Persians.¹⁵ Some Commissioners like H. Ricketts, A. J. M. Mills, F. Gouldsburg and G. F. Cockburn took care to give appointments to the Oriyas.
After 1866, more Oriyas were appointed in the government service due to the progress of education. Out of the total number of students who passed from the Ravenshaw College up to 1892, three were Deputy Magistrates, fifteen lawyers, one Superintendent of the ‘Tributary Mahals’, one Translator to the Commissioner, two Sub - Deputies and the rest were appointed in other services. Their monthly salary varying from rupees forty to rupees three hundred. Most prominent of the educated persons were Durga Charan Sahoo, Gopalballav Das, Balaram Das, Chatrabhuja Pattnaik, Madhusudan Rao, J. S. Raut, Chandra Mohan Maharana, Ganapati Das, Mani Charan Mohapatra, Gopal Chandra Praharaj, Abhiram Bhanja, Nanda Kishore Bal and Gopabandhu Das. Between 1877 and 1894, 168 students who passed from the Cuttack Medical School, 1446 were Oriyas. In 1894, 71, Oriya medical students were seen employed in the government posts. Similarly between 1878 and 1893, 277 students passed from the Survey School, out of which 237 were Oriyas. These were appointed in settlement works. Such appointments in government services gradually reduced the general backwardness of the Oriyas.

Though the educated Oriyas were trying to get suitable jobs, they were still facing a great deal of competition from their neighbours. There was a report from the collector of Cuttack in 1879:

*It may be doubted whether the Oorya is holding his own in the struggle for existence. The Bengali is ousting him from the land and from service, the Bengali, the Marwari and the European from the trade, the Telugu from the rougher kinds of labour. Perhaps this movement may cause a reaction. The Oriya is possibly less successful in the struggle, because he has long been isolated from the parts of India where it has been most severe, and the competition*
It was very much clear that the interest of the outsiders stood in the way of progress of the Oriyas. As there was no special consideration for them, even the meritorious Oriya graduates and under graduates had to seek jobs at Rs. 20/- or Rs. 25/- per month in the maximum. Their mind was therefore pre-occupied with wants and needs and they were found showing a very indifferent attitude towards education and cultural attainments. It was from this peculiar situation evolved a new class of Oriyas with a new outlook having a defiant attitude towards their neighbours. Sentiments of hatred and hostility overtook the majority of educated people. These people had an awareness of their state of disadvantages. Out of that mental state, a new racial conscious emerged. A new racial identity was born. A new awareness was there that Orissa was meant for the Oriyas. H. G. Cooke, the Commissioner of Orissa, praised the Oriyas for not identifying themselves with the inhabitants of Bengal and desirous of qualifying themselves for service in their own country. He praised them for possessing a political character of their own. This political character of the Oriyas took its birth no doubt from the increasing dissatisfaction among them against the intruders both the Colonial Government and their neighbours. Now we can understand that the term ‘neo-literary’ does not mean an acquisition of a new intellectuality but a new said role. Missionary endeavour in making a group literate was not to enlighten them in the modern sciences and literature of Europe. Their main concern was to preach the Gospel. These neo-literates coming out of the Missionary institutions had no purpose to fight for their own rights. They were from such layer of the society, which had been neglected and deprived of many said benefits earlier. Their role in constituting the modern middle class is often dubiously suspected. But those who attended the government educational institutions became literates with Shakespeare, Milton, J. S. Mill, Bacon, Herbert, Darwin and others. They were mostly from the higher classes of the society who could pay for the modern
education. The Bengalis were the first group of English educated in Orissa who shared and contributed to the growth of a microscopic minority in this land. The Cuttack School in between 1841 and 1851 was teaching up to the middle standard. Those who were studying here were generally sons of or relatives of the Bengali government servants or came from the families of the newly evolved Bengali landlords. Generally speaking, the school had to attract the common inhabitants of Orissa.²²

In the beginning, as it seems, there were very few Oriya students in the Cuttack school as it was formerly a missionary school.²³ The Oriyas had abhorrence for the missionary school. So those who availed of the educational opportunity in the early years of educational history of Orissa were the Bengalis. They imbibed the same qualities of the educated babus in Bengal. Even a few Oriyas who came to receive modern education in this phase also followed the same footprints. So English education came to be criticized for encouraging imitativeness and superficialities and for having produced an uprooted elite, who imperfectly imitated the west. The babus were intellectually hollow and did not have sufficient knowledge and culture. This intellectual hollowness made them to disrespect their tradition and vernacular.

As it was in Bengal, so also in Orissa the educated minority diligently cultivated the self-image of a middle class, below the Zamindars but above the tillers. It searched for its model in the European middle class. But their aloofness from business, or commerce gave a new dimension to their growth. Their social roots were not laid in industry or trade but in government service or the profession of law, education, journalism etc. There was no conscious aspiration to have an independent industry or trade of their own. But the disastrous Famine of 1866 gave a shock to the Oriya babus. From this shock therapy evolved a new class of educated who imbibed a new outlook from English education. English education united them and there appeared, at the second part of nineteenth
century, a group of educated Oriyas and naturalised Bengalis who formed an enlightened class. The prominent among them were Pandit Kapilswar Bidyabhusan, Pandit Gobind Rath, Gobinda Chandra Pattnaik, Gouri Shankar Ray, Ram Shankar Ray, Ram Prasanna Mukhopadhyaya, Bichhanda Pattnaik, Bhubaneswar Dutta, Nimai Balabha Bidya Sagar, Prabhakar Bidyarath, Phakirmohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, Bichitananda Das, Madhusudan Das, Baikunthanath De and a host of others. Due to the conscious and continued efforts of this enlightened middle class the economic and intellectual backwardness of the people of Orissa gradually diminished. But they had their own loopholes. They had a craze for some sort of power. Basically speaking, they were not all motivated for the betterment of the society. They were not all having self-sacrificing attitude for the upliftment of the society. The first – phase of neo – literates had been keeping their eyes upon the material benefits in the government jobs. But gradually a transformation had taken over in the outlook of the English educated class. Their knowledge of the American war of Independence, French Revolution, Unification of Germany etc. and the philosophy of Rousseau, Bentham, Ruskin etc. gave them a wider perspective of life. They developed a sympathetic understanding of the social, economic and political problems of their nation.

In order to discuss the role of this class against the background of the construction of nationalism in Orissa, we must take the microscopic view of a selected elites from the above list without whose contribution no real purpose could have been achieved in the formation of the separate province of Orissa.

In the above list the first name, to be mentioned is Gourishankar Ray called the father of modern Orissa. He was the man who brought a social and intellectual revolution through his epoch making newspaper ‘Utkala Dipika’. After passing Junior Scholarship examination from Cuttack School in 1855 – 56, he went to Hoogley for college education, but could not complete it. He started his
career as a teacher in Balasore School and came to be the teacher of some future architects of Orissa – Madhusudan Das, Baikunthanath Dey and Radhanath Ray.

In 1859, on his return to Cuttack he took interest in public life and organized ‘Youngmen’s Association’, the object of which was to spread education and render social service to the poor and weak. Since he had to earn money for financing his public activities he accepted a clerical job in the Commissioner’s Office. Mr. Cockborn was greatly impressed by Gourishankar’s intelligence, efficiency, devotion to work and his sense of responsibility. Gourishankar took initiative in establishing the first Oriya printing press in 1865. Before it, there was only the Mission press performing its Christian service by printing Christian literature. The first purpose of the Oriya Printing Press or Cuttack Printing Press was to print those manuscripts, which were the great resources of Oriya literature. Here we can feel the sense of nationalism in disclosing the fact that the Oriyas had also a great heritage of literature and culture. Balaram Das’s Ramayana, Sarala Das’s Mahabharata, Jagannath Das’s Bhagabata, Upendra Bhanja’s poetic works were all printed and circulated among the people. At this point, it may be highlighted that Bhagabata Ghara in each and every village of Orissa was serving a great role in inspiring people to be literate in the vernacular for the purpose of reading all those great works in Oriya. People loved to read them as the latter was satisfying their religious instincts and was giving moral instructions. Gourishankar himself felt the need of wide circulation of these works in the printed forms among the people.

Gourishankar along with his friends felt that there was the need of a newspaper to relate the local plights to the Government. Gourishankar took the responsibility of editing the newspaper ‘Utkal Dipika’ despite being a government servant. The first edition of the paper was brought out in the month of August 1865. Hence forward Dipika proved to be an agency of political education for the Oriyas. It was really the beginning of political activity. Though the protests were
very mild, ‘Dipika’ sowed the seed of agitation. There had been strong criticism against the Income Tax, Salt Tax etc. on the pages of ‘Dipika’.

Gourishankar was trying his best to draw the attention of the Government as well as the educated minority towards the government budget, activities of the police, exploitation by the clerks and officers, activities of the schools and colleges, publication of textbooks etc. There had been a continuous demand for the self – government through the pages of the ‘Dipika’. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the educated Bengalis had become imbued with English political principles and ways of thought. They wanted to enjoy the same civil and religious privileges that every Briton was entitled to in England. This realisation was lacking in Orissa even up to the last part of the nineteenth century.

Gourishankar was trying his best to create a political atmosphere in Cuttack. The office of the Printing Company was the centre of political activities. Gourishankar encouraged public activities in Cuttack by helping the construction a ‘Town Hall’ in Cuttack. Gourishankar established ‘Utkal Association’ in 1870 and was the Secretary of it from 1870 to 1915. Until 1882, the activities of the Association were confined to literary discussion and local matters. But later, it entered the field of politics. At first Kasinath Das, the landlord of Bhingarpur was the President but later Madhusudan Das took the charge of the Association. In 1886, Gourishankar put a proposal to merge this Association with the Indian National Congress. Madhusudan did not want to join Congress but Gourishankar attended the Congress sessions from time to time. However, when Madhusudan started his Utkal Sammilani, Gourishankar supported it. He was permanent member of it.

Gourishankar encouraged the establishments of small associations like ‘Brahmin Society’, ‘Kayastha Samiti’ etc. His argument was that the Oriyas
did not have the habit of sitting in a group to discuss public matters or general goods. If they started such associations in their small units, they could generally form the habits to attend the large national conferences like *Utkal Sammilani* or Indian National Congress. According to him, the primary duty for an individual was to strengthen his society and community.

Gourishankar also played a vital role in the protest against the evil intention of Rajendralal Mitra and Kantichandra Sharma to exile the Oriya language from its homeland. Even when the mischief was done to substitute Hindi for Oriya in the court of Sambalpur, ‘Dipika’ raised its voice against the injustice. In this manner with the ‘Utkal Dipika’ or, we can say, with Gourishankar opened a new phase in the history of Orissa. Those qualities like consciousness, integrity, fellowfeeling, scientific outlook which make a nation modern and progressive that flowed from ‘Utkal Dipika’ and Cuttack Printing Press.

This Printing Press inspired a number of writers to write textbooks to fulfill the demands of the schools in Orissa because there was the scarcity of Oriya textbooks. The next person to discuss is Pandit Gobind Rath. His career as a textbook writer highlights the politics in the selection of books for the syllabus. Gourishankar started a movement against it in the pages of ‘Dipika’. Both Gourishankar and Gobind Rath showed pioneering works in the field of publishing industry. There were three hundred share holders up the Printing Company established by Gourishankar. By publishing and selling books after fifty years Gourishankar returned his partners Rs 55,000 as profits and had left a profit of Rs 40,000 for the Company. His industry and perseverance also inspired Govinda Ratha to start a publishing house and to print around two hundred textbooks in his lifetime. He had earned a lot of money from this business. These events prove that the Oriya intelligentsia found their first commercial screen in the publication industry.
The first Oriya to obtain a Bachelor degree in 1870 and a Master degree in 1873 from the Calcutta University was Madhusudan Das. He was also the first Oriya law Graduate and Advocate to join the bar at Cuttack in 1881. A man of moral conviction, courage and strength of character, he was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill besides the contemporary political movements in Italy.

Madhusudan Das began his career as a teacher and never ceased to be the one. His long stay in Culcutta, his interactions with the missionaries and an extensive reading of English literature and philosophy had shaped his modern outlook. As it was the case with all English educated of his period, his mind was attracted towards the social reformation. He thought to do something for the Oriya people, who had for long suffered political injustice, economic backwardness and social stagnation. He felt that for the majority of the Bengalis, the race of the Oriyas was a race of porters and rickshaw pullers. Because this was the identity of the Oriyas who were earning their livelihood in Calcutta working as porters and rickshaw pullers. Madhusudan felt the need of making the Oriyas self-sufficient by starting their own factories and industries. Due to the exploitation by the Colonial Government and the failure of salt industry, most of the people in coastal districts became unemployed. So they went to the neighboring states like Bengal and Madras to earn their livelihood. Madhusudan was interested to make Orissa self-dependent so in his later life he started his ‘Utkal Tannery’ and ‘Utkal Filigrees works’ for which he invested the whole of his life saving.

Behind all these efforts, his principal aim was to inculcate a spirit of self – dignity and self – dependence in the Oriyas. He was at first an admirer of the Indian National Congress, but discarded it as he felt that the Oriyas needed a separate organisation for its political growth. It was due to his sincere effort ‘ the Utkal Union Conference’ was formed. Through this conference he wanted to unite both educated and illiterate, upper classes and lower classes on a common
platform. Its main aim was to put forward a plea for the union of all Oriya speaking tracts as well as to revive the cottage industries of Orissa and to bring an all-round agricultural, economic, industrial, educational, cultural improvement of the Oriya people.

Being inspired by the movement of ‘Young Bengal’ in Calcutta, he formed the ‘Cuttack Student Association’ to involve students in the political activities. It was a very critical period in the history of Orissa when the Bengalis and the Oriyas had developed a very bitter relationship among themselves due to the language agitation. As English education progressed in Orissa the number of educated unemployed increased too. Their sole aim was to get government jobs. In reality, they didn’t have any vision. As they have no experience of public service or business they were passing their time with some sorts of bitterness in their hearts. At this moment Madhusudan’s “Orissa Graduates and Under Graduates Association” in 1888 helped them to get a direction in the field of education, culture and social service. Once he said,

I want the crowds of discontented educated unemployed in every household of Orissa. History is not the creation of gluttons. Every age takes a step forward from the hunger of the enlightened few. I clearly perceive that due to the progress of English education, colonial regime in India will see its end very soon. Macaulay had conceived that English education would produce a class ‘Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in morals, in opinions and in intellects’. His purpose was to found the British rule in India on English education. But gradually it is going to be proved that history will deceive them and their own system of education will be destructive for them. 

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Madhusuan's approach towards modern education was quite different from that of the most of his contemporaries. While others took it as a high way to get employment, Madhusudan took English as a language of protest. He wanted English should be used more and more in different platforms – educational, cultural and political – to convey the plights of the Oriyas to the Colonial Government. The educated Oriyas were united on the common platform. Being imbued as they were with a sense of patriotic pride, they demanded greater share in government employment, self – government and spoke in terms of ‘Oriya language’, ‘Oriya culture’, ‘Oriya nation’ and ‘Oriya territory’. Their intense patriotism was projected through speeches, writings and literary works. The most outstanding effect of the introduction of western culture through English education was the growth of modern concepts such as nationalism, nationality, political rights etc.

At this point we can note the far – reaching influence of Phakirmohan Senapati, Radhanath Roy and Madhusudan Rao. They played very significant role in the promotion of Oriya language. When Oriya was going to be abolished from the schools of Orissa due to the Bengali conspiracy, Phakirmohan, Radhanath and Madhusudan produced a number of textbooks in Oriya. Their greatness however rests in their literary masterpieces.

Phakirmohan’s autobiography gives valuable informations regarding the contemporary social, economic and political conditions of Orissa. His short stories and novels criticize the impact of English education on the young Oriyas and the impact of British administration upon the life of the people. John Boulton says, “Phakirmohan himself was one of the early patriarchs of Oriya nationalism”. He was regarded by the Europeans at Balasore as a scholar. His comment upon himself on that recommendation was that, “In a treeless region even a tiny castor oil plant is regarded as a tree”. John Beams, the then District Collector of Balasore strongly supported him in the promotion of female education
in the district and in the preservation and enrichment of the Oriya language. John Beams took the help of Phakirmohan while writing his 'Competitive Grammar of Indian Languages'. He always told everyone that Phakirmohan was a patriotic scholar.

Phakirmohan had no English education in school. But he was appointed as the headmaster at Balasore Mission School. Because of the shortage of Christian teachers in those days, the Hindus were appointed as teachers. Here at this Mission School learnt the 'First Book of English' and made himself capable of reading some English books: The Arabian Nights, Robinson Crusoe, Bengal Peasant Life and The Bible. Such a little contact with English motivated Phakirmohan strongly. He writes in his autobiography,

*At that time, Indians learnt through the study of the Bible and various other books, and by taking with European missionaries, that the world was the creation of the Supreme God, whose son, Jesus Christ was the saviour of our souls. Eternal damnation attended those who were not baptised in the name of Jesus. I began to think, since God created us, He would save us provided we worshipped Him. But who are those Gods and Goddesses? Every village has a deity in every temple. How could I worship so many Gods? They could not save me, so what was the point of worshipping them? I told Radhanath. For a long time, we considered what to do. Finally we decided to embrace Christianity, but in the event, Radhanath declared that he could not forsake Hinduism, and I did not have the courage to become a Christian alone.*

Madhusudan, however, had embraced Christianity alone when he was in Calcutta. Madhusudan had the courage also to criticize those missionaries as 'churchians' who in the name of social service and service to mankind led a luxurious life.
Besides Christianity, the catholicity of Brahmoism also attracted the educated Oriyas. Phakirmohan and a few other educated Oriyas started holding Brahmo services during the summer of 1867. Till then most people had not heard of Brahmoism in Orissa. So they took it as a blemish upon Hinduism.

Such attitude towards change and an outlook of rational inquiry can also be seen in Nilakantha Das, another Oriya nationalist. As a schoolboy, he, with some other boys, entered the church at Puri. When he was charge of defecting from his religion, he explained that he and his friends had gone to the church to understand the poem 'The Village Blacksmith' they were taught in the class, where a line occurred, "here's the parson pray and preach". Such poems and other literary pieces that prescribed in schools and colleges inspired a rational thinking in the minds of the educated few. Sometimes they deliberately rejected the age-old beliefs of their own.

It seems that Phakirmohan had a deep respect for his own culture. We can realise this from his translation of the Ramayana into Oriya. His role as a teacher and an administrator in different Tributary states of Orissa had given him a wide experience. Sometimes he has been criticized for his service to the Colonial Government. But his role in establishing the second printing press in Orissa at Balasore, his indomitable effort to establish Oriya language in the schools by replacing Bengali, his efforts to establish schools in the remote areas of gadjats, his effort to write textbooks in Oriya and other literary pieces prove him to be a predecessor of Oriya Nationalism and a foremost leader of the Oriya people.

Radhanath Ray also shared the same spirit with Phakirmohan. When the latter taught at Barabati School, Radhanath was sent to Calcutta to sit for the Entrance examination. He was the first pupil to pass form Balasore district. He was sent to Calcutta for his F. A. (Final Arts), but his father being an ordinary clerk could not afford to keep him in Calcutta for long. So Radhanath returned to
Balasore, where he successfully studied for his F. A. at home. He started his career as a teacher and later became a school inspector of Orissa division. As a teacher and an inspector, he tried his best to improve the conditions of schools in Orissa. The following extract from the Orissa Joint Inspector’s Educational Report for 1875 – 76 gives evidence to Radhanath’s efficiency as an Inspector,

*Balasore takes the lead in primary education. The *pathsalas* are well attended and are taught for the most part by well-qualified teachers and altogether exhibit a vigorous and healthy life not approached elsewhere in Orissa. Among other causes, Balasore schools owe their success by the Deputy Inspector, Babu Radhanath Rai who takes more than an official interest in his work.*

Radhanath worked for five years as Deputy Inspector in Balasore district. Then he was appointed as the Joint Inspector of schools in 1877. An extract from the General Report of Public Instruction, Bengal for 1878 – 79, says, “The improvement of Middle Education in Orissa is largely due to the judicious control of the Joint Inspector, whose zeal and discretion in this, as in every other branch of his duties claim the fullest acknowledgement”.

Radhanath’s job as a teacher and as Inspector gave him a scope to not only bring some sorts of changes in the field of education in school but also to influence people by his personality. Two famous Hindus from the district of Balasore and Cuttack respectively took to Christianity at their school age. They had already been baptised. But later they realised their fault and wanted to return to Hinduism. In 1885, Radhanath went to their villages, talked to their family members, argued with the conservative members of the society, fought against their orthodoxy and again made the two to return to the folds of Hinduism.
Radhanath was a scholar of ancient Oriya literature, Bengali and Sanskrit also. He had widely read the works of English authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spencer, Cowper, Grey, Milton, Goldsmith, Byron, Scott, Shelley, Wordsworth and Tennyson. He had also read the English translation of Petrarch and Goethe. His first collection of lyrical poems *Kavita Kalapa* (1880) in collaboration with Madhusudan Rao has often been compared to Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*. It was a new experiment in Oriya literature. Though Radhanath and Madhusudan have been blamed for their plagiarism, they thought they were enriching Oriya literature. By taking the themes and subject matters from western culture, Radhanath tried to revive the ancient cultural heritage of Orissa. It was his access to English literature that gave him a scope to inaugurate a new phase of Oriya literature. His *Mahayatra*, was the first attempt in Oriya literature to introduce blank verse in Oriya.

The other writer who imitated and translated English Romantics was Madhusudan Rao. He was also swayed away by the current of religious movement started in Bengal. The catholicism of Brahmoism attracted him and thus in 1870 he became a Brahmo. His poems were mostly the utterance of his religious beliefs, but his sense of patriotism was also portrayed in a certain volume of lyrics like *Utkal - gatha*. His *Madhu Varnabadha*, the primer of Oriya for the first learners and his *Avadhana Bandhu*, the method – skit for the village teachers present Madhusudan’s moralistic and utilitarian outlook. However, it must be highlighted that his textbooks served the fundamental objectives of primary education. Madhusudan’s primer was full of aphorisms – high ideals for children. Like poetry, Madhusudan’s prose was equally powerful. His essays as well as speeches touched the young educated Oriyas emerging at that time. The *Utkala Sahitya*, a periodical literary journal in Oriya, which appeared in 1897, gave a scope to Madhusudan Rao and others to express their modern and progressive ideas.
Such periodicals and journals played a great role in keeping the balance between the old and the new literature. Vishwanath Kar, the editor of Utkal Sahita, was also a great writer inspired by nationalism. His biographical writings on the great national leaders were very much inspiring. Nanda Kishore Bal’s historical and nature poetry, Ram Shankar Ray’s historical plays and a host of other such works received inspiration from such journals and periodicals.

In this context, we must highlight the fact that the printing press and the publication of journals and newspapers played a dominant role in creating a powerful public opinion in Orissa. Along with the literary matters, other things related to life were published. A new type of political activity started with the help of the press. The periodicals like Utkal Dipika (1866) from Cuttack, Sambad Bahika (1868) and Utkal Darpana from Balasore, Sambalpur Hitaisini (1885) from Bamanda (Sambalpur) and a number of others covered the political, social, religious and cultural aspects of the life of the people and helped creating an awareness among them that they were the legatee of a great heritage, the Oriya heritage.

Not only the establishment of press that served as an agency to unite the educated and uneducated, high and low in Orissa, but also the development of communication and the growth of associations. Due to the absence of proper communication facilities, meritorious students could not go outside Orissa for the continuation of their studies. So there were gradual demands for construction of railways. It took almost 30 years for the completion of the railways in Orissa.

The growth of associations began after 1866. The educated played a great source of inspiration for the students. They inspired the students to establish libraries and debating societies in schools and colleges. Public gatherings were encouraged. Oriyas had no such habit of public meeting before. Gradually we can see, there was increase in the number of meetings: meeting of the modern youth
on social and political problems, enlightened meetings of the *pandits*, cultural meetings of the senior citizens etc. These meetings were oriented by the English public life, which brought the educated Oriyas into a common forum to discuss their common problems to find a solution. Realisation of such a common feeling gave a sense of oneness to the Oriyas and from that ground developed a feeling of “Oriya nation”. A self – conscious class of educated Oriyas evolved, who due to their upper caste status gradually influenced the lower classes.

The educated in India has often been said to constitute a middle class. But the term is quite confusing in the context of Orissa. A member of middle class can only depend upon a government job or can have an independent business. Mostly the non – landed elites constitute this class. It was thus fashionable for a time to consider the English educated as ‘elite’ groups. The traditional ‘noble’ and ‘literary’ castes tended to take more easily to the new education. Brahmin students could have predominated in Orissa as the first English school was founded at Puri. But as it has already been discussed, the Brahmins played no such vital role in the social reformation in Orissa under the influence of English education. Their deep – rooted orthodoxy and conservatism stood on the way of progress. The karanas excelled in their achievements. The Brahmins who showed their desire for English education were excommunicated from the society. In 1860, Sadashiv Mishra, a teacher from Puri Zilla School was boycotted by the Brahmins. Only a very few Brahmins had received higher education and got government jobs in the nineteenth century. Nilamani Brahma, Pandit Biswambhar Vidyabhusan, Govind Chandra Mahapatra are a few names to remember here. Gradually, the Brahmins realised that English education would bring a change in their material condition and bring worldly prosperity. The educational movement, which took place at the Satyavadi in the district of Puri assembled a host of enlightened Brahmins with their common educational ideals. Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Ramachandra Rath, Anant Mishra, Harihar Acharya and a few others constituted a group of devoted teachers who thought to
bring a change in the national life of Orissa by making a National school at Satyavadi. The brain behind this school was Gopabandhu Das, a great product of English education in Orissa. He along with Madhusudan Rao selected the place near Sakhigopal at Puri for the National school. Gopabandhu once said, "We are not going to wage a war like the Americans for our independence. But we can built such a human – community upon which the English that depends on animals power cannot rule further." Though education engaged the immediate attention of Gopabandhu and other workers of Satyavadi School, they set before them also an ambitious programme of social and political advancement of their people.

Gopabandhu achieved command over the Oriya language during the period of his study in the ‘Middle Vernacular School’ at Cuttack. English was then not a part of the curriculum in Middle Vernacular Schools; Oriya literature and Arithmetic were the primary subjects. There was a great impact of Pandit Sadashiv Mishra, the headmaster of the school upon Gopabandhu. After passing the Middle Vernacular Examination, he went to join Puri Zilla School. Here he was introduced to English. With the English education started a training in public work. Under the inspiration of Shri Ramachandra Das, a muktear at Puri, Gopabandhu decided to dedicate his life to the service of the country and the people, while in the high school, he took the lead in organising a volunteer group to render service to the people during the car festival. Acharya Harihar Das, a teacher in the Satyavadi School was Gpabandhu’s chief lieutenant in all these humanitarian activities.

When Gopabandhu was a student of Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, he took keen and active interest in social service. In 1899, he published his book ‘Avakasha Chinta’. A deeply romantic sensibility wedded to a sense of patriotism and a deep spirit of devotion can be seen in these poems, A poem by him entitled, “On seeing Barabati on the first day of the Twentieth Century” expresses his deepest sorrow over the ruin of the fort that symbolised the decadence that had
overtaken the Oriya race. He also hopes there that time which has already punished Utkal for her sins would be compassionate and propitious for Utkal, i.e. Orissa. During his college years Gopabandhu came in contact with Madhusudan Das, who was a source of encouragement and inspiration to the students of that time. Being interested in the unification of Oriya-speaking tracts, Gopabandhu attended the first session of the Utkal Union Conference held at Paralakhemundi in Gnjam in 1903 as a student leader.

When he was in Calcutta for doing his B. L. Course, Gopabandhu felt an enthusiasm to do something for the thousands of Oriyas employed as cooks or coolies or labours in jute and textile mills of Calcutta. He understood that the main plight of these people was illiteracy. So he tried to rouse a sense of dignity and to inject a sense of unity into them by educating them in the night schools.

Gopabandhu was basically an educationalist. He had been greatly influenced by the aims and ideals of Gokhale's 'Deccan Education society' and of Rabindranath Tagore's 'Shanti Niketan'. So he inspired Nilakantha, Harihar, Godavarish and few others devoted educated young men to start the school at Satyavadi. This band of selfless teachers Nilakantha Das, Krupasindhu Mishra, Basudev Mahapatra, Ramachandra Rath, Venugopal Acharree, Satyavadi Tripathy, Bhubaneswar Rath, Lingaraj Mishra and a few others were highly educated. Some of them had passed M. A. All of them left high material prospects and served as teachers on mere subsistence allowance. There was no fixed amount of salary drawn by them. They took an amount according to the need of each member.

This famous school played a significant role in the cause of social reformation, nationalism and freedom of the country. It tried to break the barriers of caste and community. Teachers and students dined together irrespective of caste and creed. Nilakantha led a "mustache rebellion" as a protest against caste rigidity. Nilakantha started having mustache as a fashion when he was in Calcutta. But
when he returned to Orissa with that he created a havoc among the orthodox Brahmins, who never grew moustache as they considered it blasphemy. They decided in a meeting to boycott Nilakantha from Brahmin society for violating the customs. Nilakantha remained firm in this decision and consequently paved for a transformation in the outlook of people.49

Satyavadi was the combination of both indigenous and English system of education. It was a laboratory for Nilakantha, Gopabandhu and others. They experimented a lot of new things which they had come to hear about from the models of some such national schools already established in India, Gokheale’s Deccan Education Society, Poona’s Forgusson College etc. They had also heard about the Public Schools like Eton, Harrow, Rugby etc. in England. They also came to know about Edwin Arnold’s great experiment in Rugby.50 However, the main source of inspiration for the Satyavadi group of teachers was Gopabandhu. His ideal was Pandit Harihar Das, the founder of Puri Sanskrit College. Though the latter was not educated in English but he was greatly inspired by the missionaries. Their interest in trying to spread Christian culture inspired Harihar to establish a Sanskrit College on modern lines in order to save native Sanskrit culture. This reformist outlook of Harihar influenced Gopabandhu a lot. So he wanted to establish such kind of national institutions throughout Orissa. In response to the appeal of Gandhiji to spread Free National Education, he formed an educational organisation named ‘Utkal Surakshya Parisad’ which formulated the system of education, the courses of studies, the mode of teaching to be adopted in national institutions, and took the responsibility of regulating and supervising such institutions. In 1921, Satyavadi School was converted to a National School and in 1923 into a National College.51

Gopabandhu’s educational interest was not confined to the Satyavadi School. He wanted educational development of Orissa as a whole. He started a fund called ‘The Orissa Education Fund’ or ‘One Pice Fund’. Each person was to
pay one pice only for the cause of educational uplift. Thousands of rupees were collected in this way. Mr. Lambert, the principal of Ravenshaw College, was the treasurer of the Fund. Gopabandhu also inspired Nilakantha to start a National School at Sambalpur in 1921. However, Satyavadi stood for the best example as it survived for more than fifteen years.

Besides national education, Satyavadi School also imparted lessons in the strengthening of national life and character. The students and teachers participated in the Non - Cooperation movement. They also did their best to promote Swadeshi, to remove untouchability. Their involvement in the Utkal Union Conference drew the attention of the public.

Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, the then Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University visited the Satyavadi School in 1917 and wrote a note of high appreciation:

I have visited the Satyavadi School with great interest. The school possesses many remarkable features. It is managed by well - educated Oriyas, who have realised the great truth that spread of education amongst their people can be effected on the surest and soundest lines by persons, who are prepared to make a great sacrifice. It is obvious to me that the school is backed by more than one such devoted and enthusiastic young man. They have further realised that truth education is possible without expensive and luxurious equipment. The promoters of this school have set a laudable example. Their ideals are high, they understand the value of discipline and culture – mental, moral and physical, the result of their labours is likely to be great, for the very reason that the beginnings are so humble. One cannot but wish that every village in Bengal
should possess a genuine place of instruction like the Satyavadi School.  

However, this great experiment finally withered away. The main reason for this was the differences that arose in the teachers. All these things happened only after Nilakantha left hostel to stay at his village home. This incident followed from his difference with Godavarish. After passing out B. T. Examination in 1918 from Calcutta University, when he stood first class first, Godavarish applied for the post of head master in Khurdha High School. Godavarish had no such devotion to the social service like Gopabandhu, Harihara and Nilakantha. He wanted to earn more by doing other job according to his qualification. He had decided to go to England for the higher training by joining the post of principal, 'Deaf and Dumb School, Calcutta'. But Gopabandhu and Nilakantha had motivated him to sacrifice that ambition for the sake of Satyavadi School. In his autobiography, Godavarish had blamed Gopabandhu for destroying his ambition. He had also a complaint against Nilakantha. As Nilakantha had joined first in the school, he had created a tradition of taking salary according to need. Godavarish writes, “To forgo every kind of comfort and pleasure in order to live and work in the school on a salary of forty rupees a month was like jumping into a fire. We followed in Nilakantha’s wake like the proverbial swine”. In spite of his goodness, he became responsible for creating a friction in the relationship. Godavarish became the head of Satyavadi. Nilakantha went back to his village. Godavarish left Satyavadi to join the movement launched by the Oriya – speaking people of Singbhum. Nilakantha went to Calcutta and at the persuasion of Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee joined the Department of Modern Indian Languages as a Professor in Oriya – cum – comparative philology in 1920.

Thus the Satyavadi School became a victim of the political ambitions of its founding fathers. One more unfortunate thing happened, the existing teachers started worrying about their students passing the university
examinations. They gave less time and attention to all extracurricular activities. It became important for Satyavadi students to do well in the university examination. Satyavadi inevitably began to turn away from the countryside and look forewords the town, and its acquired values.

No doubt, the school was closed, but its impact remained for a long. Chandrasekhar Mishra, an ideal student of Satyavadi School was full of appreciation for the school in his reminiscence, *Satyavadire sata varsa* (Seven years in Satyavadi). A great deal of information can be taken from this book. Nilakantha was famous for his vast knowledge, eloquence and his rich contribution to creative and critical literature. Apart from various intellectual essays, he wrote several long poems including *Konarka, Kharavela, Pranayini* modelled after Tennyson's *The Princess* and *Dasa Naik*, a translation of Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden*. Godavarish achieved fame as a lyric poet, a short storywriter, a translator and a dramatist. Krupasindhu Mishra, an M. A. in History, wrote historical treatises on Konark, and Barabati Fort, Gopabandhu's writings were all inspired by his sense of sacrifice, patriotism and nationalism.

He felt that the foundations of nationalism to be laid through development of agriculture, industry, commerce, literature and education. He tried to create a climate in favour of integration of Utkal Sammilani with the National Congress. But he failed. The Utkal Union Conference under his guidance started Non-cooperation Movement in Orissa. The Movement spread all over Orissa. Hundreds of students left schools and colleges. Many lawyers gave up the bar and plunged into the Movement. National schools were started at Sambalpur, Satyavadi, Banpur, Chakradharpur and Cuttack and were all placed under the *Utkal Swaraj Siksha Parishad*. The *Samaj*, the weekly founded by Gopabandhu carried the message of the Congress to remote corners of Orissa. During his lifetime, *The Samaj* became the most powerful instrument for propagation of the message of nationalism and the cause of Indian freedom.58
Sambalpur displayed a new political consciousness and took an active part in the national movement from 1919 when Chandrashar Behera established a National School in 1921 and Nilakantha Das joined as its headmaster. Sambalpur joined the Non-cooperation Movement in 1921. It is to be noted that the students of Zilla School, Sambalpur were the first to adopt the Non-cooperation movement in Orissa.\(^5\)

Nrusingh Guru of Sambalpur had his education in the English schools up to entrance level. He evolved as a student leader from the Zilla School, Sambalpur. Being influenced by Krushna Chandra Sengupta, the superintendent of school hostel, Nrusingh imbibed the spirit of nationalism as a way of life. Sengupta inspired him to be humanitarian and a lover of his nation. The National School, with the guidance of Nilakantha impressed upon Nrusingha to be involved in the reconstruction of the society. As many as two hundred students took admission in the National School. Some of the important teachers of this school were Ambika Prasad Patnaik, Balamukunda Mishra, Anantaram Behera, Kamal Prasad and Nilamani Mahakud.\(^6\) Their selfless service was a great inspiration to the students. Due to the difference of opinion between the president of the school and the members of Utkal Provincial Committee, Nilakantha Das could not pull on well with his co-workers in the National School at Sambalpur. In October 1921, Nilakantha left Sambalpur to champion the cause of National movement in Puri and Cuttack. In his autobiography, he admitted that Sambalpur in the field of nationalism had been in a higher position in Orissa. The people of Sambalpur had made an advance in fearlessness, self-sacrifice self-respect and were rapidly progressing towards 'Swaraj'.\(^6\)

"Sambalpur Hitaisini" published from Bamanda, a tributary state in western Orissa became a powerful instrument of political consciousness of the people. Nilamani Vidyaratna, the able editor of the weekly through his editorial
column took up the cause of the Language Agitation of Sambalpur from 1895. Gangadhar Meher, the young poet of Sambalpur published his poems in the *Hitaisini* and championed the cause of nationalism. Raja Basudev Sudhaldev, the raja of Bamanda and the founder of Sudhal Press from where *Sambalpur Hitaisini* was published, served as an inspiration of the people. Though he had not attended an English school, he had a modern attitude. He established a high English school in 1882 at Deogarh. In 1899, the Raja was a member of the Selection Committee of the Madhya Pradesh group of schools. It was not quite surprising because the king himself was a great poet and an erudite person. His royal court attracted a number of educated Oriyas like Phakirmohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, Madhsudan Rao, Gangadhar Meher and a lot of others.62

It is a matter of surprise that the Nobles and Lords in Orissa, as elsewhere in India, supported the cause of nationalism. It is quite contradictory to the growth of nationalism in the western sense. Somehow in India, the Colonial Government tried to have the Indian kings and princes on its side conferring them prestigious titles. Raja Basudev Sudhaldev was conferred K. C. I. E. (Knight Commander of Indian Empire) by the Crown.63 The important thing here we have to highlight is that inspite of the colonial pressure, the Nobles and Lords of this land supported the people and the great cause of nationalism. The other important figures to be mentioned here are Maharaja Shriramachandra BhanjaDeo of Mayurbhanj, Maharaja Sri Krishnachandra Narayan Deo of Paralakhemundi, Sri Rajendra Narayan Bhanjadeo of Kanika and Raja Baikunthanath De of Balasore. All of them were the chiefs of the tributary states. Some of them were educated from the Rajkumar College, Madras. Their role in the formation of separate province of Orissa needs special consideration. Here we must note that the kings and the princes of south Orissa had played a great role in the preservation of Oriya culture and language. When Ganjam was facing the same conspiracy like their counterparts in Cuttack, Balasore and Puri as well as in Sambalpur to be deprived of reading and writing in Oriya. A College was established in 1869 at Berhampur.
But the Government decided to close it by refusing to give financial help. At that point, Sri Harihar Mardaraj, the Zamindar of Khallikote donated Re. 1 lakh to the College for its survival.64 Such benevolent activities were not inspired by English education but by the public – spiritedness of these rajas. English education of course created a foundation for intellectual upliftment, economic advancement and social progress. It brought the new concepts like nationality, liberty, equality, integration etc. and created awareness among the people. But the real life force, which became instrumental to unite the educated and which inspired them to bring the whole country into a national stream was cultivated from the base of national culture. It is to be noted here that all the national leaders of the nineteenth century, who became instrumental in the amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts, had their early education from the traditional institutions of learning. Their journey from Jagannath Das’s Bhagabata, and Bhaskacharya’s Lailavati Sutra to Aesop’s Fables and Euclid’s Geometry and further to Shakespeare’s plays and Charles Darwin’s Origin of Species established a strong combination of both the indigenous and modern values.

Notes

3. Ibid. p. 258.
4. Orissa Revenue Records, Vol. 64 (Issue), Ricketts to the Board of Revenue, No. 2955 – 57, December 1837.
5. Ibid.


13. Ibid. p. p. 117 – 118


15. Ibid., 1856 – 57, Appx – D, p. p. 49 – 50

16. Odia O Nava Sambad, Cuttack, 13 April 1892.

17. Utkal Dipika, Cuttack, 14 March 1894.

18. Utkal Dipika, Cuttack, 29 September 1894.


20. Utkal Dipika, Cuttack, 23 November 1884.


27. Ibid. p. p. 27 – 30.


30. Ibid. p. p. 72 – 73.


33. Ibid. p. 98.


36. Ibid. p. 40.

37. Ibid. p. 41.


43. Ibid. p. 93.

44. Ibid. p. 168.


46. *Utkala Dipika*, 16 August 1864.


50. Ibid. p. 59.


57. Ibid. p. 60.


60. Ibid. p. 41.


63. Ibid. p. 55.