Orissa or Kalinga had been ruled over by several different Oriya Dynasties from 300 B.C. down to the 19th Century till she lost her independence in 1803 A.D. The first was Soma Dynasty which reigned till 556 A.D. and then came the Keshari Dynasty, beginning with Jajati Keshari which continued till Subarna Keshari. Thereafter came the Ganga Dynasty which met its end in 1435 A.D. The Keshari Dynasty was succeeded by the Surya Dynasty which reigned up to 1553 A.D. Then came the Bhoi Dynasty which lasted for a period of only five years. It was followed by the Chalukya Dynasty which was succeeded by Jadu Vansa. The present ruler of Puri belong to this dynasty. But this dynasty had been deprived of its ruling power on account of violent attack of Afgans, Mughals and Marathas for over two hundred years for which the territorial integrity of Orissa suffered a great deal and political instability of the state of ancient Orissa led to disintegration. But till the British occupied, this ancient land of valour in 1803 A.D. with the help of some Jagirdars and on the account of internal dissension leading to fast disintegration.
The states of Orissa formerly known as Orissa Garjats (land of forts) had a total area of 28,656 sq. miles and a population of 46.5 lakhs. They were divided into 26 small states beginning with the smallest state Tigiria and ending with the biggest state of the size of Mayurbhanj. Formerly these petty states formed part of the great Kingdom of Kalinga lately known as Orissa. The Rajas were known as Samanta Rajas under the independent Gajapati King of Orissa.

With the advent of the East India Company which occupied Puri, Cuttack and Balasore districts in 1803 A.D. and had signed treaties with the chiefs of the tributary mahals of Orissa like Athgarh, Athmallik, Baud, Boramba, Dasapalla, Dhenkanal, Hindol, Keonjhar, Kendrapara, Mayurbhanja, Narsingpur, Nayagarh, Nilgiri, Pallahara, Ranpur, Talcher and Tigiria. The commissioner of Orissa was made the ex-officio Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals which were created in 1814 in order to supervise the states. But gradually tributary Mahalas came to be known as feudatory states. Bonai, Gangpur, Patna, Kalahandi, Bamra, Sonepur and Rairakhol were brought under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Orissa. A post of political Agent was created at Sambalpur to supervise the 24 feudatory states in 1916. In the same year Saraikela and Kharswan came under the political Agent of Orissa and the number of states was increased to 26.
There were 11 'A' class, 12 'B' and 9 'C' class feudatory states in Orissa. The size, area and population of these states were not uniform. Most of the rulers of these states belonged to the Mughals and Marathas. With the fall of the Mughal Empire, some Rajput princes on pilgrimage to Puri settled down in those states. When these rulers came under the Suzerainty of the British Government, they were treated as mere zamindars.

After the announcement of the Cabinet Mission Plan, 1946, the rulers of Orissa and Chhatishgarh states except Mayurbhanj and Bastar had decided to form the Eastern states union which started functioning from the 1st August, 1947. This union had a constitution with a chief secretary, a joint police organisation under an Inspector General of Police and an appellate court and had no legislature. The main intention behind the formation of the Eastern States Union was to suppress the agitation which has erupted among the people of the feudatory states.

The peasantry has no full land rights in all these feudatory states. Their land is liable to ejection in spite of their long possession. A default in payment means the confiscation of land which is sold to the highest bidder. The agrarian situation in these states is getting more acute by the increase in land rent. The peasantry naturally shows the signs of impatience for the lightening of the burden, insecurity of tenure and arbitrary increase in
land rent are the two great impediments in the way of large-scale cultivation on the vast area of rich land which might bring prosperity to the people and to the state. Land is heavily taxed, ignoring the capacity of the peasants to pay.

In addition to this, there were other taxes like fees Salamies, levies and monopolies, education cess, hospital cess, forest cess, road cess etc. are levied in lieu of bethi & beggari, tax on land less labours, special cess on sugar cane crushing machine have been levied in some states. Tax have been levied on salt, kerosene, bidi, cocoanut which are the necessary articles of life.

Under such circumstances the Orissa states' people's conference was first organised in 1931 by Sarangadhar Das in Dhenkanal and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan in Talcher who tried their best for forming representative government. In these states the people were forced to work free, repair roads, pay either in cash or in kind for the ceremonies of royal houses. Such type of forced labour and torture gave rise to vigorous praja mandal movement in 1937 for pressing rulers to give-up power in favour of the representative Government. The rulers of Praja Mandal Movement were inspired by Gandhian principles of freedom from foreign clutch and was led by Sarangadhar Das and Baisnav Charan Pattanaik in Dhenkanal, Pabitra Mohan Pradhan and Naba Krushna Chaudhury in Talcher, Kailash Chandra Mohanty in Nilgiri, Kapileswar Nanda
in Bolangir and Radhanath Rath in Athagarh.

It was in 1936-37 that fresh attempts were made to rejuvenate the Orissa state people's Conference which was held under the presidency of Dr. Pattavi Sitaramayya. It was then proposed that an enquiry committee should be constituted to enquire into the prevailing conditions in the Orissa native states. In Keonjhar, Dasapalla, Talcher, Nilgiri, Baramba, Narasinghpur, Boudh, Bamra, Saraikela, Nayagarh, Bonai, Dhenkanal and in several other states. The people tried to bring their grievances and the misdeeds of the rulers to light. But such attempts were suppressed with stern hands. In the state of Baramba, the ruler was deprived of his powers. But the defect of state administration such as Bethi and magan were not abolished.

After the creation of the new Orissa province in 1936, the Congress Ministry had formed the Government. The Orissa states enquiry committee with H. K. Mahtab as president and Balwantrai Mehta and Lalmohan Patnaik moved to hear the people who came to lay their grievances before them.

The Praja Mandal Movement started first in Nilgiri in 1938 where the police had arrested more than one hundred agitators and some were badly injured due to firing and lathi charge by the police. The situation in Nilgiri was the worst when the ruler of Nilgiri created a serious problem in his state by imposing
heavy fines on people for the offence of "Inter dinning" on a social occasion. This was very much resented by the people and they organised a meeting to protest against this. The Nilgiri Praja Mandal was first formed to secure the civil liberty for the people of the state. But a settlement was arrived at, through the mediation of Dr. H. K. Mahtab and Solomon, I.C.S., the District Magistrate of Balasore and major Bazelgatte the then political agent of Orissa.

By this settlement the ruler conceded certain demands of the people, guaranteed civil liberty and the Paraja Mandal was reconstituted as a representative body of the people to place their grievances before the Durbar in a constitutional manner. It was hailed on all sides as a good sign of changes and was expected that other rulers would likewise redress such grievances and grant civil liberty to their people. Sarangadhar Das organised a body of volunteers in Nilgiri to propagate the grievances of the people. Gradually the people in Talacher, Nayagarh, Ranpur, Keonjhar, Hindol began to express their problems and difficulties to the rulers through their Praja Mandal. The success in Nilgiri would spread like wildfire all over the Orissa state.

The Nilgiri agitation spread to Talcher and Dhenkanal where the rulers tried to suppress the agitation by taking drastic steps and ordered for mass arrest, lathi charge, firing and the Praja Mandal was declared unlawful. In 1938, five of the Praja Mandal leaders of Dhenkanal were arrested, a number of innocent persons died due to firing and lathi charge. Baji Raut, a boy
of 11 years of age showed exemplary courage and determination by facing the bullets of the British forces, and infact he has become a legend in Orissa. The houses of many Praja Mandal leaders were destroyed and their properties looted and confiscated. In such a state of affairs many people fled away from the state and there was a reign of terror all over the state. So people lost their confidence in the administration and its rulers. Formerly, there were several agitations in the state but they were suppressed. To save from the merciless beating, inhuman torture by the British police, the people of Talcher and Dhenkanal migrated to Angul, the British administrative district. It was apprehended that violence may get out of the control of the Praja Mandal leaders. In order to give a peaceful turn to the agitation, Satyagraha was started in the first week of December, 1938, N. K. Choudhury, who was then a Congress Member in the Legislative Assembly and he belonged to the socialist group of the Congress, resigned from the Assembly and led the first batch of Satyagraha from Cuttack to Dhenkanal. Gradually, a number of Congress workers joined the agitation along with the Prajamandal workers. H. K. Mahtab, Sarangadhar Das and Malati Chaudhury tried a lot to bring a reconciliation between the ruler and the estranged people. The people of Talcher and Pallahara assembled at Kampsala near Angul to express their grievances against their rulers and migrated to Angul which put much strain on the administrative block and the authority failed to maintain law and order in the district.
There were 30,000 people who with tears in their eyes and babies in their arms left their dear land and place of birth. Their leader Pabitra Mohan Pradhan had by then gone underground after escaping from Talcher Jail and there was a reward declared for his head by the durbar. A reign of terror was prevailed throughout Orissa.

In Nayagarh the people disobeyed the order of the ruler and held meetings and started Satyagraha in 1938. The Kisan agitation in the Nayagarh state took serious mode as a result of which the Praja Mandal leaders were arrested and assistance of military police was sought for, from the political agent.

In Ranpur, the people surrounded the palace of the ruler on 5th January, 1939, demanding the release of the Praja Mandal leaders. The people could not fix double doors in their houses and were deprived of wearing head dress and moving on pallaquins without state permission. Bethi, Magan and Rasad were given not only to the rulers but also for the servants of the rulers. The Praja Mandal was declared unlawful and the leaders were arrested. This made the situation extremely tense. Instead of pacifying the people the rulers called for the assistance of the military force from the political Agents. Major Bezzelgate, who was then political agent at Sambalpur immediately came over with a troup of military force from the neighbouring state of Nayagarh.
He came to the rescue of the ruler of Ranpur, but by then, the move had become tumultuous and unmanageable. But as soon as he entered into the dense crowd in the narrow street, he was assaulted by the people. In order to save himself he opened fire as a result of which a man died on the spot. This infuriated the mob who pounced upon him and Major Bazzelgette was stormed to death. This brutal and ghastly murder of the political agent took place on the fateful evening of 5th January, 1939, which changed the course of the agitation and the people escaped to the neighbouring states for fear of police action. Martial law was promulgated and civil life completely paralysed.

Prominent Congress leaders of Orissa and some notable Indian leaders tried to intervene in the agitation in order to bring about a settlement between the rulers and the people. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Rev. C.F. Andrew, Miss Agatha Morrison, Prof. N. G. Ranga and Harekrishna Mahtab made an all out effort in reaching this settlement.

In the state of Nilgiri the adivasis were violent and the life and property of the people became so serious that the central govt. had to intervene and the administration of the state was taken over by the Govt. of Orissa at the direction of the centre in November 1947.

After the creation of the separate state of Orissa in 1936
it consisted of 6 districts and 26 Indian Native states. These Indian native states were incapable of maintaining law and order inside the states. They were conscious and fought for dual freedom, one against their despotic rulers and another against the British Government. In the beginning, the movement was non-violent but gradually with the increase of repression by the native rulers, the agitation took a violent turn. The rulers of Chattisgarh and Orissa together formed the Eastern states Agency in 1946 when Mehtab became the Prime Minister of Orissa. At that time the situation was so grave in Nilgiri that Mahtab took over the administration of Nilgiri of Balasore District in 1947 for the maintenance of law and order.

Some rulers took the advantage of the local politics and instigated the agitation against the Hirakud Dam project. By the construction of the Hirakud Dam, a vast area of land will be submerged and with favourable compensation this project of Orissa started acquiring the lands. The acquisition of lands created a wide spread resentment among the peasant class.

Mehtab got definite information that the Maharaja of Patna was organising and directly conducting the agitation against the Hirakud Dam project at Sambalpur. He had an intention of amalgamating Sambalpur with his home state Patna. It came to the notice of Mahtab that the leaders of anti-Hirakud project were visiting the ruler of Patna for receiving advice and financial assistance for continuing the agitation. Though it may sound peculiar
or ridiculous, the then Maharaja of Patna had promised Chief Ministership to Bodhram Dubey, and the post of Chief Justice to Raibahadur Achutananda Purohit, the leaders of agitation.35

The then Governor received certain information with the anti-Hirakud Dam agitation. A meeting of about 500 people held at Sapalhara village in Sambalpur on 14, August 1946 with Parama Panda in chair that the people wanted the separation of Sambalpur from Orissa and during this time the Maharaja of Patna was present and it seemed fairly clear that he was identifying himself with agitation.36

It was also reported to the Governor that the members of the anti-Hirakud committee had a secret discussion with the Maharaja about the formation of the proposed "Koshala" province. The Viceroy gave warning to the Maharaja of Patna not to join himself with the agitators. As soon as Mahtab took over the Prime Ministership of Orissa in 1946, he submitted a memorandum to Sardar Ballavbhai Patel (the then Home Minister of India) regarding the various problems arising due to the Indian native states like problems relating to law and order, smuggling across the borders, development of communication etc. Mahtab had suggested two alternatives for the solution of these problems. Firstly, there must be common administration over certain subjects both for the state and province. Secondly, the integration of native states with Orissa was mostly accepted because there was social, cultural, and linguistic affinity between the people of the native states and the province.
Sir Hawthorne Lewis the Reform Commissioner had suggested that unless and until the princely states were brought under the administration of the Orissa province, there would not be a developed Orissa both politically and economically. In 1938 Mahtab was the head of the state people's enquiry committee, felt with his two colleagues Lalmohan Pattnaik and Balwantrai Mehta that the abolition of despotic rule possible through the merger of native states with Orissa and at last Mahtab succeeded in mobilising this genuine cause and got it approved by Gandhiji. But during the visit of the cabinet mission plan in 1946, the Maharaja of Patna R.N. Singdeo put more stress for the formation of Eastern States union and opposed the amalgamation of Indian native states tooth and nail. On hearing this Sardar Patel felt very disturbed and tried to merge these states with the province of Orissa.

A meeting was held in Delhi on 20th Nov. 1947 where H.K. Mahtab and the regional commissioner of Sambalpur present along with V.P. Menon. They put emphasis on three things, firstly the eastern states should not be recognised by the Government of India, secondly, the 'B' & 'C' class states should follow common administration on certain subject by the provincial Government and thirdly, the state ministry should call a meeting of the rulers of 'B' & 'C' class states at Cuttack in December. The creation of Eastern state union would be impossible due to diversities of linguistic and geographical considerations of the people of Orissa and Chhatisgarh.
The state ministry of Orissa prepared to face the problem created by the time of merger of princely states. Since the rulers surrendered their states for all time to come, they must be given some allowances in the form of privy purse for their maintenance. The rulers had to retain certain private properties, occupied the palaces, guaranteed the royal privileges and succeeded the throne. These were given to the princes in the sense that they could not find any social and economic disparity or status after the merger of the states.

Another problem was to whom the rulers should surrender their authoritarian power, to the central Government or to the provincial Government. It had been decided that it would be better if centre took over the administration of the state and then appointed provincial Government. The law ministry prepared the merger agreement consisting of five articles which will be subsequently served as a model for all such agreements.

Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon reached Cuttack on 13th Dec. The rulers of 'B' & 'C' class states met the Home Minister in a conference. Sardar Patel warned the rulers that they would not hold on the power of the state to the rising agitation for the responsible Government.

Patel also made it clear that no help would be given by central Govt. if the people agitated against the feudal rulers. So the rulers of Baramba, Daspalla, Hindol, Khandpara, Kharsuan,
Narsingpur, Nilgiri, Pallahara, Rairakhol, Ranpur, Talcher signed the merger document. But 'A' class rulers were not agreed to the proposal of merger. Sardar Patel was very much perturbed regarding the attitudes of the 'A' class rulers. But the ruler of the Denkanal agreed to the proposal of merger because he realised that he could not maintain his position in his state without the support of the Govt. of India for the Praja Mandal movement. Gradually, the rulers of Patna, Bouda, Gangpur, Kalahandi, Sariaikala, Sonepur signed the merger agreement except Mayurbhanj. 40

At first Sariaikala and Kharsuan were allotted to Orissa. But after the merger an agitation was started in Sariaikala and Kharsuan for their merger with Bihar as most of the people were adivasis and geographically these two states were the parts of Singhbhum district of Bihar. After much discussion with the Govt. of Orissa and Bihar, the Union Government gave Sariaikala and Kharsuan to Bihar on 31st Dec. 1947, 41 until the question could be considered again in more settled times.

The Maharaja of Mayurbhanj did not signed the merger agreement on the ground that they had an responsible Govt. and it was the opinion of the Maharaja that he could not signed the merger document without consulting his ministers. But in course of time Maharaja found that the ministers had spent state funds lavishly and that there was complete bankruptcy in the state. At last Maharaja was compelled to sign the merger agreement on 17th October, 1948. And was taken over by the Government.
The state of Mayurbhanj was handed over to Orissa on 1st Jan. 1949. Thus the merger of princely states ended with Mayurbhanj in Orissa.

The Britishers first conquered the Southern part of Orissa, Secondly, the coastal region and lastly the area of Sambalpur. The southern part was attached with Madras. The coastal area with Bengal and western part with central provinces. So the Oriya people suffered the injustice of dismemberment as it was tagged up and administered by three different provinces having different languages and cultures. The Oriyas remained linguistic minority dominated by Telugu and Hindi speaking people.

The Oriya movement of 19th century was spearheaded to restore the Oriya culture, language and separate Oriya linguistic province for Oriyas. The unity and the creation of a separate Oriya state had hampered the interests of the Bengalis, Biharis, Telugus and the people of central provinces because in the neighbouring provinces Oriyas lay scattered. So the unity of Oriyas may lead to territorial dismemberement of the concerned provinces. The British Orissa was divided into three districts viz. Cuttack, Puri & Balasore with capital at Puri till 1817 and then it was shifted to Cuttack. Beside these districts, the other portions of Orissa was left to be administered by the feudatory chiefs. The parts of Orissa had tagged with different political units from time to time by the British Govt which affected the cultural, linguistic and other development of Orissa. The growth of education,
establishment of printing press publication of different periodicals, journals helped the people to start thinking about their genuine demand of a separate state. The enlightened middle class tried to safeguard their culture, language and started the movement against the Bengali, Speaking administration. Three local newspapers: Utkal Dipika, Prajabandhu, Sambalpur Hitaisini were published by Gouri Sankar Ray, Shyam Sunder Raiguru and Raja of Baramba as their editors respectively. These periodical newspapers covered the cultural, religious, social and political aspects of the life of the people and provided an impetus to create public opinion.

The people of Utkal lost their language, culture and unity because the entire Utkal territory was fragmented and being kept divided under different states and provinces, one of the most important reasons for the dismemberment and non unification of Oriya speaking tracts was the heinous conspiracy and treachery of the neighbouring states for which the legitimate demand of the Oriyas were neglected and at last the state of the proposed Orissa did not embrace all the Oriya speaking Tracts of the neighbouring states.42

In the year 1868 A.D. Rajendra Lal Mitra43 a Govt. of India Research Personnel was appointed and posted to Orissa to start his research work in archeology. In public meeting in Cuttack town on 9.12.1868 he said that in Orissa division, Bengali was used as the language of the state instead of Oriya. He also commented
that it was impossible for the Oriyas to maintain a separate language as few of them were literate and they were not in a position to publish a single book whereas in Bengal book making had already become a profitable business. Another Bengali gentleman who is equally responsible for shouting against the Oriya language was Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya a pandit of Balasore High School. He wrote a book entitled "Oriya not an Independent language" (Oriya ekta swatantra bhasa nai) and recommended for the substitution of Bengali for the Oriya language. So there were attacks on Oriya language from all corners and such propaganda used to suffocate the people of Orissa.

After having lost the unity, language and culture, the Oriya people revived a sense of brotherhood amongst themselves for the survival of their language. There was a popular uprising of the people of Utkal. Then it was felt that there should be a common place to sit together and think about their problems and demands, right from the King down to the last subject. Various institution were established for the revitalising a national feeling among Oriyas at different places. In 1873, the Oriyas of Madras formed a society named and styled as "Utkal Hitabadi". This was formed to usher a sense of oneness among Oriyas. The Oriyas residing in Madhypadesh are also get untied themselves and expressed their views through a newspaper named and styled "Utkal Darpana". There were protests from all quarters of the country for forming a separate state for Oriyas under one banner. Harihar Mardaraj,
Raja saheb of Khalkot was the first to take a bold step in voicing the need of Oriyas for a separate Orissa state. Due to his relentless efforts in the year 1902, a meeting of the old ruling chiefs and some pro-Oriya thinkers met at Rambha of Ganjam district to organise "Utkal Sammilani" or the Utkal union conference to put up the demand for joining together all the Oriya speaking tracts lying scattered in different states under one common administrative unit. In 1903, the first graduate of Ganjam namely Syam Sunder Rajguru held a meeting called "Ganjam Sammilani" which was attended by the leaders from all parts of the state and "Ganjam Sammilani" became the genesis of Utkal Sammilani. The first success of these organisation was the detachment of Sambalpur from the central province and its merger with Orissa as the fourth district in 1905.

In 1911, when Emperor George V announced the partition of Bengal and formation of sub-province of Bihar and Orissa. According to this Orissa was made a division with five districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Sambalpur and Angul. But the leaders of Orissa started a persistent movement for the creation of a separate Orissa state. In 1914, at Parlakhemundi, under the leadership of young Raja Krishna Chandra Gajapati and Raja Vikram Dev of Jeypore demanded immediate formation of Orissa on linguistic basis. For the fulfillment of this demand, Madhubabu, Pandit Gopapandhu, Raja of Parlakhemundi and Raja saheb of Khalkot made a concerted effort till the goal was achieved.
Raja saheb of Parala; Raja saheb of Khlikot, Bhubanananda Das, Syam Sunder Gantayat and others went to England and attended the Round Table Conference wherein they convinced the British Government towards the reasonable need and necessity for the formation of a separate Orissa. Consequently on 24th Dec. 1932, the home secretary of England Sir Samuel Hore announced in the House of commons that a Separate state of Orissa would be established in India. After the declaration of this notification, a number of committees and commissions had come to find out and finalise the formation of Orissa and its boundary. The Simon Commission examined the legitimacy of the demand and appointed a sub committee with Major C.R. Atlee and recommended a separate province of Orissa. 47 Necessary steps were taken for demarcation of boundaries through the appointment of O'Donnel committee and the Hubback Committee and the province of Orissa 48 created on 1 April 1936. The separate province of Orissa had only six districts viz. Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Sambalpur, Ganjam and Koraput.

A separate state of Orissa was of course established but extensive areas in the south consisting of Somapenta, Ichhapur, Tikali, Budhasingh, Manjusha, Purunapatna, Batili and tracts extending up to Srikakulam could not be covered in the state. Similarly, in the northern region Saraikela Kharswan and the entire Singhbhum district, in the western part Baster, Bindra, Nayagarh, Rajpur, Sankara etc. of Madhya Pradesh and Midnapore areas of West Bengal were left out of the territorial jurisdiction of the Orissa state.
A headless, handless, legless trunk of Orissa was handed over to the Oriyas in the year 1936.

The political background of the State of Orissa:

The first congress ministry and working of provincial Autonomy from 1937 to 1939.

The administration of Orissa was carried on during the transitional period from 1st April 1936 till the General Election to the provincial legislature was to be held in 1937 by the Governor with an advisory council consisting of seventeen members. Sir John Hubback was appointed as the first Governor of the Orissa. The Indian National Congress was not satisfied with the provisions of the Act of 1935. In Orissa Pandit Nilakanth Das was incharge of conducting the election campaign. The Congress party fought for the cause of the peasants in Orissa and they accepted some of the important resolutions of the Utkal provincial Kisan Sangh like the abolition of Zamindari system, full occupancy rights over their cultivable lands, reduction of land revenues and water taxes as part of the Congress manifesto.

Besides the Congress party two other political parties were also very active in the province of Orissa. They were the Orissa Nationalistic party and the United party. These parties were led by the Rajas and Zamindars of the province of Orissa such as the Maharaja of Paralakhemundi, Raja of Kanika, Raja of Khallikote
Braja Sunder Das and Mandhata Gorachand Pattanaik gave leadership in order to defeat Congress party.

The election of Orissa legislative Assembly started from 18th, Jan 1937 and ended on 23rd, Jan 1937. The total number of seat in the Orissa Legislative Assembly was 60, out of which 56 members to be elected directly by the people in the method of limited franchise and 4 to be nominated by the Governor of Orissa. The Congress party which had set up 37 candidates won 36 seats. The political parties led by Rajas and Zamindars of Orissa were severely defeated.

* * Citizen who were giving 4 annas cess to Govt. were eligible to cast their vote. There were very few female voters and widows who had land can cast their vote.

They won only 10 seats and the independents secured 10 seats. About 80% of the voters cast their votes in favour of Congress party. The Congress secured absolute majority in the Orissa Legislative Assembly. The Utkal provincial Congress met at Cuttack and Hare Krishna Mahtab was elected as the president of the O.P.C.C. by defeating Pandit Nilakantha Das, the former president N.K. Chaudhury of the socialist group became the General Secretary of the Congress party.

In the first week of March, the newly elected congress
members of the Orissa Legislative Assembly met at Cuttack to elect the leader of the party. 32 Congress men attended the meeting and they unanimously elected Biswanath Das as their leader. The Indian National Congress was now to decide the important question of the acceptance of office by the Congress. The Congress president Jawaharlal Nehru was not in favour of the acceptance of office by the Congress due to Possibility of interference by the Governor in the administration of the state.

But Mahatma Gandhi persuaded the Congress working committee to adopt a resolution regarding the acceptance of office on certain pre-conditions. The AICC had decided for the acceptance of offices in the provinces where the Congress commanded a majority in the legislature, provided Congress party would satisfy that the Governor would not use his special power of interference or set aside the advice of the minister with regard to constitutional activities.

On the basis of this Congress resolution, the Congress leaders in different provinces started negotiations with their respective Governor regarding the formation of the ministry. The Governor invited Biswanath Das to form the council of ministers. Biswanath Das intimated the Governor that he will accept the office of the prime-ministership provided his excellency agreed to give him an assurance that "He would not use his special power of interference or over-ride the advice of the ministers with regard to constitutional matters."
However, the Governor was not prepared to give an assurance put forth by Biswanath Das. But he had promised to give all possible cooperation and support to the council of ministers so the Congress party could not form the ministry. The Governor invited Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, the Raja of Paralakhemundi (the leader of united party) to form the Govt. on 1.4.1937. The Raja was sworn in as the first prime-minister of Orissa with a ministry consisting of two members; Mandhata Gorachand Pattnaik and Maulavi Latifur Rehman. The ministry did not have majority support in the legislature and it remained in power only because the legislature never met during its period of office. Thus the Government of the Raja of Paralakhemundi faced many public criticisms from the date of its acceptance of office as it was backed by the minority in the legislature.

On the 5th April, 1937 Biswanath Das wrote a letter to the Governor asking him to summon the Orissa Legislative Assembly in order to pass a vote of no-confidence motion to dislodge the Government of Raja of Parala.

The Congress High Command was negotiating with the Governor General regarding the acceptance of office by the Congress party. After a prolonged discussion, the Governor General made an announcement not to interfere in the matters of administration and apply his special power only in case of emergency. This victory of Congress party in political field gave them a chance to take decision
to form ministry in Congress dominated provinces like Bombay, Madras, United Province, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, North-Western frontier Province.

According to this provision, the interim ministry of Orissa handed over its resignation to the Governor of Orissa on 13th July, 1937. Biswanath Das took over the charge of prime-minister on 19th July, 1937 with a ministry consisting of two ministers Nityananda Kanungo and Bodhram Dubey. Biswanath Das had shown his political abilities with honesty, integrity confidence and conviction, in resisting successfully the interference of the Governor. During his short span of office Biswanath Das provided a capable and stable leadership to new state of Orissa. He was against the feudatory chiefs of Orissa who suppressed the Prajamandal Movement and progressive measures like Orissa Money Lending Act. and Orissa Coopreative Land Mortgage Bank Act. Due to the outbreak of world war II and the decision of Congress party to enter into the war forced him to quit the prime-ministership and he resigned on 4th Nov, 1939. The Governor Sir John Hubback had assumed the administration of Orissa. There was Governor rule under section 93 of the Government of India Act 1935 in Orissa from 1939 to 1941.

A new political coup known as the "Orissa swaraj Dal" associated with the "Forward Block" formed a coalition ministry. The move to form a coalition was backed by Nila Kantha Das and
Godavarish Mishra who were the defectors of Congress party.\textsuperscript{58} Inspite of severe criticism both from inside and outside the Congress party, the coalition ministry sworn in on 24th Nov, 1941 with a three member ministry consisting of Maharaja of Paralakhemundi as the prime minister and other two ministers were Pandit Godavarish Mishra and Maulavi Abdus Sobhan Khan.\textsuperscript{59} This ministry lasted for a period of three years and resigned on 20th June, 1944. The coalition government of Parala Maharaja was the association of four political groups like National party, United party, Muslim league and some of defectors from the Congress. From 30th June, 1944 to 1946 Orissa was under Governor's rule for the second time.

From 1939 to 1942, the party position of Orissa Legislative Assembly was very critical. During this period Pandit Godavarish Mishra defected from the Congress with seven Congress men and joined the opposition. He left the Congress party on the ground that his close associate Nilakantha Das was defeated by H.K. Mahatab in the election for the office of the president of the Congress party in Orissa.

The coalition ministry led by Parala Maharaja and backed by revolutionary leaders like Pandit Godavarish and Nilakanth Das built a new era by introducing and propagating the spirit of higher education in establishing the Utkal University and the SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY.
S.C.B. Medical College and thus remained in the memory of the people till now. Mahatab emerged in the political scene of Orissa during the early 40's. The able guidance and leadership of H. K. Mahatab and Biswanath Das, the congress party did fairly well in the election of 1946. The congress had won 47 (36) seats in the house of 60, out of which 4 members were nominated by the Governor of Orissa. Biswanath Das, the first Prime Minister of the First Congress Government could not provide leadership of the newly elected Congress party in 1946 due to a court ruling in connection with an election, filed by Dibakar Pattanaik. So Mahatab took advantage of the situation and became the Prime Minister of Orissa on 23rd April 1946. A five member ministry were sworn in on 23rd April, 1946 with Nabakrushna Chaudhury, Nityananda Kanungo, Pandit Lingaraj Mishra and Radhakrishna Biswas Rai. When R. K. Biswas resigned for charges of corruption, Mahatab induced three new members to the cabinet viz. Lal Ranjit Singh Bariha, Rajkrushna Bose and Sadashib Tripathy.

Mahatab's premiership gave Orissa a new light of industrialisation. His confidence, convictions and political foresight led Orissa on the path of commendable success and his tenure of office from 1946 to 1950 undoubtedly recognised him as the maker of modern Orissa. During his tenure of premiership, Mahatab very tactfully handled the communal riots in Orissa following the partition of India. He was also successful in suppressing the prajamandal
movement which raised against the Princes of the native states and consequently merge them with the territory of Orissa. So Mahtab was a pioneer in merging the native states with the Indian Union and became famous for his contribution towards the integration of princely states. The other achievement of Mahtab was the transfer of the state capital from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar in 1949, when the state legislative Assembly started working in a temporary building. Mahtab's progressive administration embraced the all round development of Orissa which resulted in the establishment of various industries like Orissa Textile Mills and Kalinga Tubes, Aluminium Plant at Hirakud. He also set up All India Radio, Barabati Stadium and the High Court at Cuttack to flash his political image and policies of his Government. He edited an English Paper "The Eastern Times", 'The Prajatantra'. After the integration of Princely states the strength of Orissa legislative Assembly and been increased to 91 instead of 60 by the Notification of the Governor General of India. These 31 members were nominated by the Government from ex-princely states area. From the very date of inclusion of nominated members of the ex-princely states, the undisputed leadership of Mahtab did not run smoothly. Mahtab faced many problems like the resignation of N. K. Chaudhury, the charge of corruption against R. K. Biswas Rai and the inclusion of Saraikela, Kharswan with Bihar, brought down the image of Mahtab in Orissa. In this juncture he got an invitation to join Central Cabinet of Pandit Nehru as a Minister. Since then Orissa was not represented...
in the Nehru Government. Mahatab was looking for such an opportunity and was suffocated in the politics of Orissa and willfully decided to leave the post of premiership and joined in the Nehru government\(^6\). Though he left Orissa on 12 May 1950, he held an intention to make his presence felt in the State politics and probably for this he wanted a successor other than Biswanath Das who will act as a puppet in the hands of Mahtab. N. K. Chaudhury who as the revenue minister in Mahtab's cabinet was totally disinterested when persuaded by Mahtab and his group (Biju Pattaniak and B. Mitra) to accept the office of Chief Ministership due to the sad demise of his son. At last N. K. Chaudhury had agreed to be the Chief Minister and took office on 12 May 1950. The ministry was to consist of eight members namely N. Kanungo, Lingaraj Mishra, Ranjit Singh Bariha, Raj Krishna Bose, Sadashiv Tripathy and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan. This ministry of N. K. Chaudhury remained in power till end of 1951 when the first general election was held\(^6\).

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