CHAPTER - VI
DHRANIDHAR RISING OF KEONJHAR
The Dharanidhar Rising of 1891-93 was one of the most important events in the political history of Keonjhar in the 19th century Orissa. It was after the Ratna Rising of 1867-68, that another rising broke out in Keonjhar in 1891 in which the Bhuyans, the Juangs and the Kol actively participated. This rising continued for about three years from 1891 to 1893. It was more widespread than the rising of 1868 as it enlisted more support from the people of Keonjhar. Fortunately for the tribals of British Orissa there emerged a fearless, courageous, daring and educated member of the Bhuyan community to cause havocs not only for the native rulers but also for the British in the Bhuyan track of Keonjhar. His life and activities formed another sensational chapter in the history of 19th century Orissa. The tribal leader who gave guidance to the rising of 1891 was none else than Dharanidhar Naik.

CAUSES OF THE RISING

Behind this Keonjhar Rising of 1891 under the able leadership of Dharanidhar Naik lay some causes.
Political and Administrative Causes

After the suppression of the rising of 1868 the disaffected tribals of Keonjhar had quite settled down to their ordinary pursuits and Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja was acknowledged as the Raja by all parties. The Bhuyans, Juangs paid their accustomed homage to the Raja, visited him and consulted him about their affairs.¹ But subsequently he could not easily bring about a reconciliation (rapprochement) between his administration and the tribal communities of the State. The Bhuyans held a meeting on 11 May, 1869 and decided to stay in Keonjhar provided there was British supervision over the administration of the Raja, as they apprehended royal oppression and maladministration over them.² Accordingly Captain J. Johnstone, Special Assistant to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, remained in charge of administration of Keonjhar and tried to bring about a rapprochement between the gurjat chief and the tribal subjects. There was an apprehension among the tribals that there would be maladministration as soon as the British supervision over the state

ceased. Captain Johnstone, therefore, recommended to T.E. Ravenshaw, the then Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, to annex Upper Keonjhar with Chotnagpur Division and Anandpur to be retained by the Raja. But T.E. Ravenshaw declined to comply with his recommendations. He, even, declined to approve any sort of change in the existing systems of administration of Keonjhar. On the contrary, he gave the Raja much more responsibility in the administration of his State.  

Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja, under the judicious guidance and advice of Captain Johnstone, took keen interest in discharging his kingly duties. The state dues were collected from the subjects through the influential tribal chiefs and sardars on payment of remuneration in the shape of commission. The feudal claims of the Raja over his tribal subjects, specially, over the Bhuyans and Juangs were summarised as follows:

1. That the Bhuyans shall be liable to supply ropes and wood, and all labour required for the Rath Car Festival, and on other religious occasions. This is known as Ratho.

2. That they shall be liable to supply labour for all Government Officers travelling in the Bhuyan Pirs, as well as such rasad as is obtainable being paid for all labour and supplies thus furnished at current prices.

3. That they shall be liable to supply labour for carrying the Maharaja's luggage whenever he travels, not only in the Bhuyan Pirs, but also in any part of the State, and even outside of his State, subject to the condition that the porters should receive their daily food from him, but no wages.

4. That they shall be liable to supply rasad to the Maharaja when he travels in the Bhuyan Pirs at current prices. These three classes of bethi are known as Gohma.

5. That they shall be liable to thatch the Maharaja's houses, and to provide all materials therefore without charge. This is known as Kanto.
6. That they shall be liable to pay a proportionate payment of rent-in-kind of terms favourable to the Maharaja. This is known as Kiran.

7. That they shall be liable to supply a certain number of goats from each Pir at the Parban Puja free of cost.

8. That they shall be required to tender every year, when the harvest season is over, certain offerings of fruits, vegetables, etc. to the Maharaja, the Senior Maharani, the heir apparent, and the Bebarta; the Pradhans of each village receiving in return a piece of tusser cloth from the Maharaja, and the others something as Khuraki. 4

These feudal claims of the Raja were popularly known as bethi. The Bhuyans were reluctant to accept such claims of the Raja. They had represented as one of their chief grievances that "the Maharaja had taken large numbers of them for a long period

away from their homes and hills, to which they are devotedly attached, to carry his luggage to and from Patna (one of the Central Provinces Tributary Mahals) on occasion of his marriage. In addition to this, another legitimate grievance of the Bhuyans was that the Maharaja, instead of calling upon the Juangs, or upon the inhabitants of Bhuyan villages near to the Garh, enforced such services i.e. the supply of thatching materials and labour for the Maharaja's buildings, from those living in distant Pirs, and kept them a long time from their homes and fields. Though there was a customary feudal system that appointment to the office of sardar of a Pir or Pargana was vested in the hands of the Raja, the Bhuyans made complaints against the irregular appointment and frequent removal of Pir Sardars by the Raja. In 1873 T.E.Ravenshaw stated that the post of sardar is one that is in the gift of the Maharaja, and no Pir Sardar shall be ousted by the Maharaja from his post except for misconduct proved to the Superintendent's satisfaction and with his approval...... Therefore, the Bhuyans declined to recognise the nominee of the Raja as their sardar.

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
The system of *bethi* was also in practice in the three Juang *Pirs* of Keonjhar, namely, *Jharkhand Pir, Satkhand Pir* and *Katua Pir*. The Juangs had to supply all labour for thatching houses for the *Maharaja*. They had also to supply fuel and charcoal according to the prevalent rates, and ropes and labour for the Car Festival. They were also bound to carry the *Maharaja’s* baggage when he went on tour, as well as when he travelled outside his *Killah*. Thus the laws and regulations introduced by the authority was not suitable to the nature and character of the Bhuyans.

**Economic Causes**

The clash of economic interests has been one of the potent factors in various tribal rising of India. And the Bhuyan rising of Keonjhar under Dharanidhar was no exception to it.

Besides, the political and administrative arrangement in the Tributary State of Keonjhar Captain Johnstone made a settlement of *Paikali* and other *jagir* lands in Upper Keonjhar in 1869. The *jagir* lands, which were previously held rent free, were then assessed at

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half the current rent. And those which paid a reduced rate, the demand was half of the difference between the amount of rent already paid and the current rate. The rate which was thus settled would be paid during the life of the present owners of lands. After the death of these owners the lands would be assessed at full rates. However, Johnstone allowed the *paiks* of some places such as Chamakpur, Naikakot and Nayagarh to retain their *jagir* lands and other privileges as in the past.\textsuperscript{10} Settlement was also concluded with the *dan* lands which were enjoyed by the *Brahmins* and some others. These lands were granted by the *Raja* free of rent. Johnstone wanted to assess such *dan* lands, but the *Raja* objected to it as the assessment would create dissatisfaction and resentment among the *Brahmins*, etc. He therefore, postponed the settlement of these lands.\textsuperscript{11}

Captain Johnstone, thereafter, diverted his attention towards Lower Keonjhar with a view to make a regular settlement. But it was postponed due to bad season and partial failure of crops. However, he decided to make a temporary settlement of the

\textsuperscript{10} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), J. Johnstone to T.E. Ravenshaw, Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, 1 April, 1870.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
Paikali and other lands. He demanded an increase of two annas on every mana or bigha of land held as jagir. It was expected to realise an amount of revenue of Rs.46,330-8-4 in 1870. He, further, suggested the assessment of the dan lands of Anandpur area in order to augment the amount of state revenue.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to these Paikali and other settlements, Captain Johnstone made the following assessment of the Bhuyan Pir in 1870 which remained unchanged for a term of one decade.\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{align*}
\text{Rs. A. P.} \\
1,700 \text{ ploughs, at 8 annas} & = 850 -0-0 \\
889 \text{ houses without ploughs, at 4 annas} & = 222 -4-0 \\
2,185 \text{ houses at 1 anna school tax} & = 136 -8-0 \\
\text{Total} & = 1,208-12-0
\end{align*}

Captain Johnstone left the supervision of the Keonjhar Estate in August, 1871 and he was succeeded by Captain William R. Hunter.

\textsuperscript{12} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), J. Johnstone to T.E. Ravenshaw, Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, 1 April, 1870.

\textsuperscript{13} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.617S), Government of Bengal, Resolution No.1064P, 19 March, 1894;
After Captain Johnstone Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja managed the administration of Keonjhar Estate without intervention from the British Authorities. Captain Hunter continued till 1877 and the Raja got the complete control over his estate in 1878. During the subsequent years, he made the following assessment of the Bhuyan Pirhs in 1881 and augmented the revenue by nearly one thousand rupees.\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{align*}
\text{Rs. A. P.} \\
1,610\frac{1}{2} \text{ ploughs, at } 13 \text{ annas} & \quad \ldots \ldots \quad = \quad 1,308 \ 8 \ 6 \\
972 \text{ houses without ploughs, at } 6\frac{1}{4} \text{ annas} & \quad \ldots \ldots \quad = \quad 394 \ 11 \ 0 \\
2,523 \text{ houses at } 2 \text{ annas school tax} & \quad \ldots \ldots \quad = \quad 315 \ 6 \ 0 \\
\hline
\text{Total} & \quad 2,018 \ 12 \ 6
\end{align*}

Again the Raja made the following settlement in 1890 in which there was slight increase of revenue.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{align*}
\text{Rs. A. P.} \\
1,046\frac{1}{2} \text{ ploughs, at } 13 \text{ annas} & \quad \ldots \ldots \quad = \quad 850 \ 4 \ 6 \\
725 \text{ houses without ploughs, at } 6\frac{1}{4} \text{ annas} & \quad \ldots \ldots \quad = \quad 294 \ 8 \ 6 \\
1,782 \text{ houses at } 2 \text{ annas school tax} & \quad \ldots \ldots \quad = \quad 222 \ 12 \ 0 \\
\hline
\text{Total} & \quad 1,367 \ 9 \ 0
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{14} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.617S), Government of Bengal, Resolution No.1064P, 19 March, 1894.;
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
Similarly the Raja was obliged to conclude settlements with the Juang Pirhs by the help of his agent, Bichitrananda Das.\(^{16}\)

In addition to these settlements, the Raja oppressed the Bhuyan and Juang tribals by imposing a number of feudal claims on them. Such feudal claims completely broke down the backbone of these tribals. They were very much dependant on their physical labour to earn the bread and butter. But when they were detained for a long period away from their homes and hills continuously by the Raja and his subordinate officers for bethi and begari, etc. they hardly found time to earn their livelihood to maintain their family.\(^{17}\)

Thus, the agrarian discontent coupled with the Raja's heavy impositions led the tribal people to suffer. And this economic suffering made the Bhuyans turbulent and rebellious and they wanted to put an end to the royal overlordship in an earliest possible time.

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17. Ibid.;
Utkal Dipika, 11 July, 1891, P.220.;
Sambalpur Hitaisini (Oriya Weekly), 27 May, 1891, P.198.
Immediate Cause

The immediate cause of the rising of Keonjhar 1891 was the excavation of a canal (Mahara) known as "Machhakandana Jora" from the north of Keonjhargarh to the east through hill rocks and forests. The excavation of the canal was done completely by bethi in which hundreds of Bhuyans were engaged to render inhuman and hard physical labour. Fakir Mohan Senapati, one of the celebrated literateurs of Orissa, gives a graphic account of the episode in his autobiography. Baboo Bichitrananda Das, Assistant Manager of the Keonjhar State, was appointed as Engineer of that project. He greatly appressed the Bhuyan labourers and forced them to render hard physical labour throughout the day without any payment. The Bhuyan labourers, who could not bring any food from home, were forced even to work without it. The inhuman oppression by Bichitrananda Das and Narayan Poi, the Head Constable, created...
the sense of immense discontentment in the minds of the Bhuyans.\(^{20}\)

The oppression and exactions of the *Maharaja* were the immediate cause of the disturbances, which were promptly suppressed by the local officers with the aid of Government Police.\(^{21}\) The Bhuyans became furious against those who forced them to work hard and also against *Raja* Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja.\(^{22}\) The Bhuyans and Juangs convened a *Panchayat* at a village in Keonjhar, named Pawani with the object of discussing necessary measures to put an end to the oppression of the *Raja*. At the instance of the *Raja*, Bichitrananda Das, his Assistant Manager, went there in order to enquire into the matter and imprisoned about seventy Bhuyans. About ten of them were executed later on. Most of them became determined to resist the arbitrary conduct of the *Raja*.\(^{23}\)

At that posture of events Dharanidhar Naik, a spirited young man of the Bhuyan community, emerged as the leader of the discontented Bhuyans and Juangs of Keonjhar. He was born at

\(^{20}\) *Odiya O Naba Sambad*, 11 July, 1891, P.220.


\(^{22}\) *Odiya O Naba Sambad*, 11 July, 1891, P.220.

village Kusumita in the Gandibed Dandpat of Keonjhar. He received the favour of Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja and was sent to the Survey School at Cuttack. After his training he was appointed by the Raja as a Surveyor of the State for more than one and half years without any payment. He, thereafter, went to Mayurbhanj where he worked as a surveyor for about three to four years. He, thereafter, returned to his village Kusumita in Keonjhar. In 1890, there occurred a boundary dispute between Keonjhar and Singhbhum. Dharanidhar tried to spread education among the Bhuyans. So he incurred the displeasure of the Raja who sent him to survey the border between Keonjhar and Singhbhum. There he heard the news that his brother and some of his relatives were arrested and imprisoned without any fault, and that he would also be arrested on his return. He hastened towards Keonjhar and made an appeal to the oppressed people of Keonjhar to throng round him to fight against the oppression and inhuman torture of the Raja. In January, 1891 he sent petitions to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack,

the Manager of Mayurbhanj and the Govt. of Bengal in which he clearly narrated the inhuman oppression of the Raja. He, then convened a *Panchayat* at a village in Keonjhar, named Pawani, in order to take necessary steps to put an end to the oppression of the Raja.²⁷ The Raja in reply wrote to the Superintendent that the petition was a malicious propaganda and arrested the petitioners.²⁸

The meeting convened at Pawani was mainly attended by the tribals, like three Bhuyans, the Juangs and also the people who were the worst sufferers in the hands of the Raja and his officers. Accompanied by his officers like Bichitrananda Das and Narayan Poi, Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja came to the village and arrested many persons who attended the meeting. Dharanidhar, however, could manage to escape himself from being arrested. The people vehemently protested against the oppressive measures of the Raja and decided to recourse to open rebellion. Dharanidhar tried his best to get the government to see the grievances of the

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oppressed and when he failed to do so, the tribal people had no other alternative, but to take the matter into their own hands.29

Course of the Rising

On 2 May, 1891, about 1,200 Bhuyan and Kol insurgents of Keonjhar, Bonai and Singhbhum assembled at Chamakpur Dandpat in Keonjhar where the Raja had a fort, and arrested the constables and paiks of that place. The insurgents also plundered the property of the villagers and assaulted them. Dharanidhar was not present there but the attack was led by some of his relatives.30 After plundering the Chamakpur village, about 500 insurgents under the able leadership of Dharanidhar of Keonjhar Danai Sardar of Jointigarh and Narendra Mahaputra of Singhbhum assembled at Kalikaprasad Dandpat.31 They plundered Kalikaprasad and halted at Raisuan, 3 miles away from Keonjhargarh for some days.32 With the increased strength of about 2,000 insurgents, they committed

30. BJP (Political) December, 1891, Government of Bengal to Government of India, No.124 P-D, 20 June, 1891.
31. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), Maharaja of Keonjhar to Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, 5 May, 1891.
outrageous activities in Nayakot and Choragar. They damaged allegiance from the *paiks* and *sardars* of Keonjhar, closed the roads from the interior to the *garh* and cut off all communications.\(^3\) The situation was indeed serious and the *Raja* was forced to leave his *garh* on 7 May, 1891 for a safe shelter at Anandpur which is 52 miles from Keonjargarh. In course of a few days all sections of the people joined their hands together with the insurrection and about 5,000 insurgents marched towards the *garh* in order to attack it.\(^4\) The *Raja* finding Anandpur unsafe for him, left the charge of the *garh* to Inspector Harsa Singh and *Sirstar* Gopabandhu Dash and rushed to Cuttack with his Manager Fakir Mohan Senapati and reached there on 12 May, 1891 and put forth his grievances before G. Toynbee, Superintendent of Tributary *Mahals*, Cuttack.\(^5\)

G. Toynbee, the Superintendent of Tributary *Mahals*, Cuttack, informed the Government of Bengal about the rising of the Bhuyans

33. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No. 612 S), Manager of Anandpur to Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, 6 May, 1891.
34. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No. 612 S), Commissioner of Ranchi to Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, 11 May, 1891.
in Keonjhar. As a matter of policy, the Government of Bengal did not like to interfere in the first instance. But when Raja Dhanurjay begged for the safety of his relatives at the garh, and promised to pay all necessary expenses for the suppression of the insurrection, the Government decided to interfere in the matter.\textsuperscript{36} G. Toynbee, Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, arranged for the immediate deputation of a force. On 14 May, 1891, 150 armed police were sent to Keonjhar from Singhbhum under H. Dawson, an experienced Superintendent of Police. He was to cooperate with another force sent from Cuttack under the Superintendent of Police, Balasore.\textsuperscript{37} He was also assisted by Charles Willingstone, Deputy Conservator of Forests, in his operation against the insurgents. Besides, G. Toynbee took all precautionary measures so as to check the spread of the rising to the neighbouring states such as Dhenkanal, Pal-Lahera, Singhbhum and Mayurbhanj.\textsuperscript{38} The following telegraphic instructions were received by H. Dawson at Chaibasa from G. Toynbee, Superintendent of Tributary Mahals,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} Bd. Proc. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), G. Toynbee to Government of Bengal, 13 May, 1891.
\item \textsuperscript{37} J.K. Samal, \textit{Orissa Under the British Crown (1858-1905)}, New Delhi, 1977, P.331.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Bd. Proc. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), Government of Bengal to G. Toynbee, 15 May, 1891.
\end{itemize}
Cuttack, "Proceed Keonjhar at once. Issue proclamation calling upon the rioters to disperse and ring leaders to surrender to you, naming them, if possible. Promise fair trial by Superintendent of Assistant, and future enquiry into grievances, if any. If this fails, Maharaja should offer rewards for apprehension, and help you to arrest them, using necessary force. Telegraphic action taken and course of events, when necessary, through Bhuddruck or Chybassa".39

In accordance with these instructions, he issued a proclamation at Chaibasa warning them of the serious consequences of continued contumacy, and, if this warning was neglected, during the ensuring cold weather they were to be reduced to submission by force, and their ring leaders, if necessary, deported.40

In the meanwhile, the insurgents became violent and they plundered the properties of the amlas of the Raja, and the people

39. J.K. Samal, op. cit., P.331.;
BJP (Political) December, 1891, Government of Bengal to Government of India, No.124 P-D, 20 June, 1891.;
who did not support them. They also plundered the villages of Jhunkari, Baliband and thereafter marched towards Keonjhargarh. Many paiks were imprisoned and rasad was collected from the people by terrorising them with fire arms, gund and match locks.41 The insurgents, numbering about 2,000 attacked the palace of the Raja at Keonjhar on 16 May, 1891, but were repulsed by the guards commanded by Kshetribar Singh. In that encounter twelve insurgents and one paik of the Raja were killed. Although the insurgents were discouraged due to their failure, they had not completely lost their hope. They renewed and intensified their insurrectionary activities and cut off all dak communications between Keonjhar and Pal-Lahera. They did not allow anybody to move from one state to another, and were determined not to allow the Raja to occupy the gadi once again. The strength of the insurgents gradually increased from ten to twenty thousand by 24 May, 1891.42 With such an increased number of insurgents they defined the proclamation issued by H. Dawson from Chaibasa in which the insurgents were asked to surrender. They established their strongholds on the

42. Ibid., 24 May, 1891.
Indrachhatra and Raisuan hills and carried on insurrectionary activities. In course of time some of the Zamindars and Paiks left the Raja and joined their hands with the insurgents. The rising was not confined to the Bhuyans, the Juangs and the Kols and it gathered popular support and momentum in due course of time. The whole of Keonjhar State was see thing with the glow of insurrection.

One of the significant events of the rising in Keonjhar was the dramatic capture of famous writer Fakir Mohan Senapati, Manager of Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja of Keonjhar, while the former was proceeding from Ghatagram to Keonjhargarh with 250 paiks, 4 constables and 3 elephants. On hearing the attack by about 500 Bhuyans on his palace on 12 May, 1891, the Raja started for Anandpur for safety. But Fakir Mohan Senapati, instead of going to Anandpur with the Raja, desired to march to the garh in order to save it and the life of the relatives of the Raja from the insurgents. On 14 May, 1891, he reached at Basantpur where he came to know

44. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), Manager of Pal-Lahera to G. Toynbee, 14 May, 1891.
that the nearby Basantpur Ghati was one of the strongholds of the Bhuyan insurgents. He therefore, sent Maidu faujdar of Basantpur with a view to ascertain the fact. That Faujdar was actually an informer of the insurgents which was not known to Fakir Mohan Senapati. Consequently, when he left Basantpur with his followers the next morning, the rebels who had already hid themselves in the hills, came out and forced them to go to Dharanidhar. They were taken to Dharanidhar at Raisuan where he had his camp. Fakir Mohan Senapati cleverly saved his life from the insurgents and by dint of his courage and skill he won the heart of Dharanidhar and was employed as the Minister of Dharanidhar who had established a rebel government.45

Dharanidhar Naik issued parwanas in his name as the so called "Tikait of Keonjhar". He called upon the people to capture the employees of the Raja and to pay rasad to his government. He also issued proclamations informing the people of Keonjhar State about his position and wrote to the British Authorities to assist

him in taking over the charge of Keonjhar from the Raja. Such action of Dharanidhar was at the instigation of "some person or persons in Calcutta, to get up the rising". The insurgents attacked jails, released the convicts in the jails and plundered the Raja's treasury. In course of time they moved from the north of Keonjhargarh to the south upto Anandpur and thus established their sway over almost the whole of the Keonjhar State.

In such a critical juncture of the rising in Keonjhar, H. Dawson reported, "The rising is more serious than anyone hither to imagined", and he felt certain that " nothing but military force can stop the tide of rebellion and that they should be sent without an hour delay..." At the same time he ordered Bichitrananda Das, Assistant Manager of Keonjhar, to report to G. Toynbee, Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, regarding the state of affairs of the insurrection. The Government of Bengal despatched a detachment of the 17th Regiment with some guns from Calcutta.

47. Ibid., A Note for the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack 24 May, 1891.
via Chakradharpur on the Bengal Nagpur Railway to reinforce the police. The force would march from Chakradharpur through Chaibasa to Jaintigarh and then to Keonjhar. The Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals was ordered to possess "sole control of the political business connected with the disturbance and if necessary, will get special power......"49 Besides, the Raja of Saraikela supplied a hundred men fully equipped with arms for the assistance of the Govt.50

Capture of Dharanidhar

In the meanwhile, Raja's Assistant Dewan, Fakir Mohan Senapati, who was then in the rebel camp of Dharanidhar, devised a plan to capture the Bhuyan rebels along with their Chief through the help of the British Authority. Crafty Fakir Mohan easily deluded the plain and simple Bhuyan Chief Dharanidhar and taking advantages of the shortage of stock of betel leaves, persuaded the chief to allow him to requisition for him some betel leaves and areca nuts from his own farm agent Bholanath Dey. Permission was readily given and Fakir Mohan wrote a diplomatic letter* which was

* For details see Appendix - F, vide ODG (Keonjhar), 1986, P.52.
carefully worded to admit of secret meaning for mobilisation of troops from the north side to capture the Bhuyan strongholds. The Bhuyan Chief who carefully examined the contents of the letter, could not find anything suspicious in it and the messenger, who was a man of Fakir Mohan, managed to deliver it safely to the Raja who was then at Anandpur.51

Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja and his officers could interpret the secret meanings of the letter and accordingly sent sepoys to march from Chaibasa side to Keonjhar.52 On the other hand H. Dawson made all sorts of arrangements in order to capture the rebel chief Dharanidhar. Armed with a large number of military and police forces and a good number of officers, he started for operation against the rebels on 21 May, 1891 from Chakradharpur and arrived at Jaintigarh on 22 May, 1891. Simultaneously, R.F. Guise marched from Anandpur taking with Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja. At Jaintigarh H. Dawson came to

know that about 4,900 to 6,300 insurgents had "placed cannons in positions in order to make a break in the walls of the Keonjhar fort"\textsuperscript{53}, and had also captured the arsenal of the Raja. Dawson sent Sashibhusan Ray, Sub-Inspector of Police, and one Bhagaban Sardar in order to know the exact position. On 25 May, 1891, he marched with his armed troops through heavy rainfall, crossed the river Baitarani on 26 May and arrived at a village Majja. On 27 May, 1891 he got the news that his two emissaries had been detained in the rebel camp which consisted of about 10,000 insurgents. Early in the morning of 29 May, Dawson marched to the rebel camp in order to capture the rebel Chief Dharanidhar Naik.\textsuperscript{54}

In the meantime, Sashibhusan Ray exerted his influence on Dharanidhar. Fakir Mohan Senapati also cleverly persuaded the rebel Chief Dharanidhar to meet with the British Officers. Accordingly Dharanidhar proceeded to the garh in order to greet the British Officers accompanied by some of his followers. Dawson came from the opposite direction with his armed forces. About half

\textsuperscript{53} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), H. Dawson to G. Toynbee, 1 June, 1891.

\textsuperscript{54} P.K. Mishra, op. cit., P.157
way between Putulia and Rugree, Dharanidhar saw Dawson and got down from the elephant in order to greet him. But to his utter astonishment, he was surrounded by the troops of Dawson and was taken as a prisoner.55

SUPPRESSION OF THE RISING

After the imprisonment of the rebel Chief Dharanidhar, the rebel camp at Raisuan was set fire and those who were kept as captives like Fakir Mohan Senapati and others were released. The British troops captured all the arms and ammunitions of the rebels, then sheristas of Dharanidhar, and imprisoned 36 of his close associates. The rest of the insurgents fled away. On the same day, R.F. Guise escorted Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja of Keonjhar from Anandpur to Keonjhargarh and arrived at the place where Dharanidhar was imprisoned. On the way to Keonjhargarh, he was severely attacked by the Bhuyan insurgents. He overcame it and seven rebels were killed in the encounter. After reaching at Keonjhargarh, Dawson felt no need for further military

reinforcements, and sent back them to their respective headquarters, keeping only 50 men at Balibund and the same number at Palasbunga. He, thereafter, issued a proclamation calling upon the insurgents to surrender to the authorities.56

He urged upon Dharanidhar to induce the rebels like Gopal Naik and Narendra Mohapatra to surrender within ten days. Necessary measures were also taken to capture the insurgents who had fled away towards other garjats namely Dhenkanal, Pal-Lahera and Mayurbhanj. However, only a few of the insurgents could be captured.57

At the same time necessary measures were taken to redress the grievances of the people so that any fresh rising would not occur in future.58 G. Toynbee, the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, arrived at Keonjhar on 16 June, 1891. He invited the tribal Bhuyan to put forth their grievances before him and promised to protect them from all sorts of oppression by the Raja and his officers. He

57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., G. Toynbee to Government of Bengal, 1 June, 1891.
made an enquiry into the affairs of Keonjhar and was convinced that the presence of Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja would create further complication in the state. He therefore, decided to send the Raja back to Cuttack.\(^{59}\) In order to put a check of fresh rising in Keonjhar and set right the administration of Keonjhar, a competent European Officer was appointed. H.P. Wyllie the Manager of Mayurbhanj, took the charge of administration of Keonjhar on 17 July, 1891, in addition to his own duties in Mayurbhanj.\(^{60}\)

The arrest of Dharanidhar Naik, the chief leader of the insurrection, had discouraged the other insurgents who had taken shelter in the dense forests of Keonjhar. But subsequently they were reported to have renewed their strength, and occupied some of the passes of Keonjhar. They, again, disrupted the communications from Keonjhar. Under the leadership of Balaram Singh, about one hundred insurgents marched towards Kalikaprasad garh and also created disturbances in the border of Pal-Lahera and invited the people of that estate to join them in their insurrectionary activities.

\(^{59}\) Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.612S), G. Toynbee to Government of Bengal, 16 June, 1891.;
\(^{60}\) Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.613S), H.P. Wyllie to G. Toynbee, 25 July, 1891.;
In the subsequent confrontation the Police Jamadar of Pal-Lahera arrested many of the Bhuyan rebels and sent them to the agent of Keonjhar for trial.61

Mr. H. Dawson, the Deputy Commissioner of Chaibasa, reported that some Bhuyan rebels in Bonai and Jaintigarh had started depredations in Keonjhar. The rebels were not "befooled by the false impression"62 of the government proclamation. The raiyats of Anandpur in Lower Keonjhar complained against Fakir Mohan Senapati for his oppressive exactions as the latter demanded immediate payment of their revenues and threatened them of dire consequences if they failed to pay in time. The aggrieved people appealed to the Agent of Keonjhar, to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals and to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal so as to redress their grievances. But to their utter disappointment, the Government of Bengal rejected their petition. Such a decision of the Government of Bengal annoyed the people of Anandpur and they took recourse to insurrectionary activities.63

61. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.613S), Telegram, Deputy Commissioner of Chaibasa to Commissioner of Cuttack, 10 July, 1891.
62. Ibid.
63. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.613S), Petitioner of the Bhuyans of Keonjhar, 10 September, 1891.
In such a state of affairs, H.P. Wylly, the Agent of Keonjhar, with the help of armed forces, once again renewed operation against the rebels. It was with the cooperation of the Managers of Dhenkanal and Pal-Lahera that he was succeeded in capturing a large number of rebels including their leaders. Naren德拉 Mahapatra and Balaram Singh, the two close associates of Dharanidhar Naik, were captured and sent to Dhenkanal Jail. The Magistrate of Balasore was vested with the powers of a Sessions Judge for the trial of criminal cases of Keonjhar and was allowed to hold his Sessions Court at Baripada. At the same time H.P. Wylly, the Agent of Keonjhar was instructed to carry on conciliatory measures and some steps of public welfare so as to divert the attention of the people from the trial of the rebels.

In the meanwhile, Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja, the Raja of Keonjhar, filed a petition for the restoration of the gadi of Keonjhar in favour of him. Utkal Gourab Madhusudan Das, a famous lawyer of

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64. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.613S), Government of Bengal to Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, 2 September, 1891.;
65. Ibid.;
66. Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.613S), Government of Bengal to Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, 2 September, 1891.
the then Orissa, pleaded on behalf of Raja Dhanurjay before the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals. The Superintendent, however, rejected the petition of the Raja. Madhusudan Das, then appealed to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and advocated the innocence of the Raja in the affairs of Keonjhar. In fact, there were no proofs of oppression and illegal imposition of cesses by the Raja. Firstly, the Lieutenant Governor was not convinced about the fact. But subsequently, due to arguments of Madhusudan Das, he changed his mind and decided to go to Keonjhar in person in order to enquire into the affairs before giving his final decision. In February, 1892 Sir Charles Elliot, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal paid a visit to Orissa. On his way to Cuttack, about 200 villagers from Keonjhar State met with him at Bhadrak and gave him a petition regarding their grievances. At Cuttack he held a discussion about the matters with G. Joynbee, the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, H.P. Wylly, the Agent of Keonjhar, Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja, the Raja of Keonjhar and "a large number of the riayats and hillmen of Keonjhar". While G. Toynbee and H.P. Wylly were in

favour of the deposition of \textit{Raja} Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja from the \textit{gadi} of Keonjhar on the ground of \textit{Raja}'s misgovernment and oppression, the Lieutenant Governor observed. "The facts would not justify his absolute deposition." He was rather bent upon "to restore the \textit{Maharaja} with his prestige and credit unimpaired."\textsuperscript{69} At length a compromise was made in between the government and the people and the \textit{Raja} was allowed to return to Keonjhargarh accompanied by a Political Agent appointed by the Government to advise the \textit{Raja} in every sphere of administration. \textit{Rai} Bahadur Nand Kishore Das, a statutory civilian of the British Government, was appointed for the purpose and he was delegated with some important powers like settlement of the land revenue, record of rights, collection of revenue and police administration.\textsuperscript{70} It was also decided that some of the old advisors of the \textit{Raja} would be removed from the estate and all important posts would be filled up by the persons with the approval of the Superintendent of Tributary \textit{Mahals}.\textsuperscript{71} H.P. Wylly was withdrawn from Keonjhar estate. Similarly

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{69} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.614S), Government of Bengal to Government of India, 1 March, 1892.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid.; \textit{Utkal Dipika}, 20 February, 1892, P.59.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.614S), Government of Bengal to Government of India, 1 March, 1892.
\end{itemize}
Fakir Mohan Senapati was relieved of his duties and in his place Babu Durga Das Mukherjee was appointed as the Settlement Officer and Assistant to the Political Agent of Keonjhar.\textsuperscript{72}

Accompanied by Rai Bahadur Nanda Kishore Das, the Political Agent of Keonjhar, and Babu Madhusudan Das, Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja arrived at Keonjhargarh by the middle of March, 1892.\textsuperscript{73} Soon after his arrival at Keonjhargarh, the Bhuyans demanded the release of their leader Dharanidhar Naik. They also told that they would carry on the insurrectionary activities till the release of their leader. At this situation the Raja was afraid of the insurgents and took some measures to strengthen his police force. The Raja, also warned the contumacious subjects to refrain from further troublesome situation.\textsuperscript{74} As some Bhuyan and Kol rebels resisted to acknowledge the authority of the Raja and did not pay rent, the Government Agent Rai Bahadur Nanda Kishore Das issued a proclamation asking them to accept the terms of the

\textsuperscript{72} Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.614S), Government of Bengal to Government of India, 1 March, 1892.; Utkal Dipika, 20 February, 1892, P.59., 27 February, 1892, P.68.
\textsuperscript{73} Utkal Dipika, 19 March, 1892, P.90
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 9 April, 1892, PP.114-115.
Government by 30 November, 1892, failing which soldiers would be 
sent to destroy their villages and crops, and force would be 
applied to bring them under control, and they would be punished.75 
In the meantime, some of the Bhuyans went to Darjeeling in order 
to put forth their grievance before the Lieutenant Governor of 
Bengal. But the Lieutenant Governor rejected the appeal of the 
Bhuyan petitioners and warned them not to resort to any 
isurrectionary activities.76 The Bhuyans, however, did not keep 
quiet and they decided to continue their insurrectionary activities 
by rejecting the proclamation of the government.77

Thus, Keonjhar State continued in an unstable condition. Sir 
Charles Alfred Elliott, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, wrote that 
the grievances of the Bhuyans had been greatly exaggerated and 
the disturbance in the State of Keonjhar was primarily due to self-
seeking agitations who were dealt with in a manner which was 
perhaps too gentle on the suppression of the revolt in 1891.78

75. H.K. Mahatab (Ed.), History of Freedom Movement in Orissa, 
76. Utkal Dipika, 16 July, 1892, P.226.; 
Jagannath Patnaik, Biplabi Dharanidhar, Academy of Dialects 
and Culture, Bhubaneswar, 1992, P.22. 
77. Utkal Dipika, 10 December, 1892, PP.377-378. 
such circumstances, the government authority thought of taking stern measures against the contumacious insurgents. H.G. Cooke, the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, Cuttack marched with armed police forces towards Keonjhar in the early part of January, 1893, to establish order by reducing the rebels to subjection. After his arrival in Keonjhar he immediately started military operations against the Bhuyan insurgents. Due to the military operation some of the rebels were arrested and their houses were burnt, their crops were destroyed and their household articles were looted. Some of them out of fear surrendered and paid revenue to the Raja. But still the leaders did not tender their submission. The insurgents fled from the villages and took shelter in the hills with their families and cattle. The authorities even declared rewards of rupees one hundred each for the capture of four leaders and rupees five hundred each for the capture of the rest fourteen leaders. In the meantime six leaders* tendered their submission and paid revenue to the authorities.80


After the departure of H.G. Cooke, the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals, Cuttack from the State, peace prevailed in Keonjhar for some days. It was believed that the Bhuyan insurrection had come to an end. He sent those six insurgents leaders who were captured in January, 1893. Early in the month of March, 1893 the insurgents who had fled to the forests and hills, reunited and again by collecting rasads to got ready to create disturbances in Keonjhar. The insurgent Bhuyan leaders who were yet not captured, in many cases committed acts of plunder secretly against the authorities. In the meanwhile they captured one sardar and one police constable and committed acts of violence in the state by hiding themselves in the nearby jungles of Keonjhar. Gradually the situation deteriorated. Nearly ten thousand Bhuyan insurgents assembled in the border of Mayurbhanj and established their camps there to create disturbances in Keonjhar. One group of the insurgents hiding themselves in the jungles of Keonjhar border started attack in various places. During the

82. Ibid., 25 February, 1893, P.59.
83. Ibid., 11 March, 1893, P.74.
84. Ibid., 8 April, 1893, P.105., 15 April, 1893, P.113.
85. Ibid, 29 April, 1893, P.131.
early part of May, 1893 the situation deteriorated extremely. The insurgents attacked Chamakpur and Nayakot *Parganas* and committed the acts of plundering the villages and burning the houses. They also attacked the Assistant Manager *Babu* Chaitanya Prasad Ray at Nayakot and cut off the communication. The armed police forces from Cuttack under Captain Dundas, the police forces from Mayurbhanj under Lieutenant Kiddle and the police forces of Chaibassa under Captain Babur were sent to Keonjhar for the suppression of the insurrection.86 As the insurrectionary activities did not come to an end, in spite of continuous rainfall during the last week of May, 1893, military operations once again started against the insurgents. The military forces under Captain Walker and Captain Dundas marched in two different directions for the suppressions of the insurgents. The government police constables were sent to different police stations for the purpose.

Lieutenant Kiddle of Mayurbhanj was placed at Jatipur, Captain Macmillan of Keonjhar at Nayagarh, Assistant Manager *Babu* Chaitanya Prasad Ray at Nayakot, Settlement Officer *Babu* Durgadas Mukherjee at Jamapani and Government Agent Rai Bahadur Nanda

Kishore Das at Keonjhar. In spite of heavy rainfall, sickness and sufferings by the British troops, the operation continued against the rebels. The rebels neither came for direct encounter with the British forces nor did not surrender to the authorities till 1 July, 1893. By 8 July, 1893 only two rebel sardars were captured and a few Bhuyans had surrendered. It was a matter of grave concern for the government authorities. At that posture of events Rai Bahadur Nanda Kishore Das was transferred to Angul and H.P. Wylly was again posted at Keonjhar. After taking over the charge of Keonjhar on 4 August, 1893, H.P. Wylly decided to adopt conciliatory measures which ultimately proved effective. By his exertions and adroit handling of the situation, the Bhuyan disturbance in Keonjhar State was almost over by 30 December, 1893. Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja, who had fled to Cuttack at the beginning of the rising in 1893, returned to his garh on 11 April, 1894. In consultation with the Political Agent the Raja made necessary arrangements to redress the grievances of the disaffected people and to restore peace in Keonjhar State.

88. Ibid., 1 July, 1893, P.202.
89. Ibid., 8 July, 1893, P.209.
90. Ibid., 29 July, 1893, P.233.
91. Ibid., 30 December, 1893, P.393.
92. Ibid., 14 April, 1894, P.125.
1894, almost all the Bhuyan insurgents had come to terms with the authorities and acknowledged Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja as their Raja and returned to their own homes.93

The insurgent leaders like Bhikari Dehuri, Jogendra Padhial and Khandait Rana surrendered to the Raja of Keonjhar. Aguan Singh rendered his submission to the authority of the Raja. Gradually another insurgent leaders like Sukul Mahanaik, Nanda Naik, Kalia Naik and Kulu Donaik surrendered to the Agent of Keonjhar.94 One of the rebel leaders, named Gopal Naik, who had escaped twice, was at last killed by the police force on 19 August, 1894.95 Tikana Rana, another rebel leader of the rebellion, was arrested near Nayakot outpost on 23 October, 1895 and was sent for trial. But his close associate Ranju Pradhan, another insurgent leader, was killed in an encounter with the government police

93. *Utkal Dipika*, 9 June, 1894, P.177.;
Bd. Procd. (Revenue) (OSA, Accn. No.617S), Government of Bengal to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, 8 June, 1894.


95. Ibid., 9 November, 1894.
forces. Lastly, another notable insurgent leader, named Madan Futkar, was captured by the police force and was sent for trial.

After the cessation of military operations against the rebels and the capture of the rebel leaders, trial of the convicted persons began in the Sessions Court at Baripada. The Government of Bengal announced stern measures against the rebel leaders. It was ordered: "Mr. Wylly must distinctly bear in mind that the orders of Government are that the ring leaders of the revolt against the Maharajah must be called to account they must be arrested and an enquiry held into their cases individually and a report in each case submitted through you for the orders of Government, the men being detained in Hajut or on sufficient security until the orders of Government are received. A total number of twenty-eight prisoners were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment and only four were sentenced to transportation for life. But it

97. Ibid., Government Agent of Keonjhar to the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack, 28 April, 1896.
was started in the Utkal Dipika, 1895 that a total number of 29 prisoners were sentenced to punishment. Of them some were sentenced to transportation for life and some were sentenced to several years of rigorous imprisonment.\textsuperscript{100}

H.P. Wylly, the Political Agent of Keonjhar attempted to redress the grievances of the people. He made settlement of land revenue which was accepted by the \textit{Raja} and the tribal people. After making satisfactory settlement with the Bhuyan and Juang tribals, he left Keonjhar in October, 1894.\textsuperscript{101} After the restoration of peace and order in Keonjhar, the Government of Bengal considered that it was unnecessary to keep the political Agent in the State. Accordingly the Government decided to abolish the post of Political Agent and permitted the \textit{Raja} to appoint his own Manager for the administration of the State. \textit{Babu} Durgadas Mukherjee would complete the settlement of the whole of Keonjhar State.\textsuperscript{102} At last the Government Agent was withdrawn in July, 1899 and the supervision over the \textit{Raja's} affairs ended.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Utkal Dipika}, 2 February, 1895, P. 33.
\textsuperscript{101} J.K. Samal, op. cit., PP.335-336.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Utkal Dipika}, 20 July, 1895, P.225.
\textsuperscript{103} J.K. Samal, op. cit., P.336.
The trial of Dharanidhar Naik, the Chief Sardar of the Keonjhar rising of 1891, was made by the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Cuttack in June, 1891 and was sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment in the Cuttack Jail under Sections 225, 227 and 344 of Indian Penal Code. But before the expiry of his term of imprisonment he was released in October, 1897. He was ordered not to enter into Keonjhar and to stay at Cuttack with a pension of Rs.8 per month for the maintenance of his livelihood. He was allowed to go to Keonjhar once a month to receive his pension from the Raja of Keonjhar who had been asked by the Government to bear the expenses. At the same time it was ordered to watch strictly the movements of Dharanidhar Naik.

Thus, the Bhuyan rebellion of Keonjhar engineered by Dharanidhar Naik, a leader of the tribal community of Bhuyan arising out of feudal and agrarian discontent was successfully quelled down by the British Government. Peace and tranquillity was restored in the State.

104. Sambalpur Hitaisini, 8 July, 1891, P.14.
NATURE OF THE RISING

It is to be observed that the Bhuyan rising of Keonjhar in 1891 was more or less anti-British in nature. In this rising the majority of the Bhuyan population of Keonjhar, Pal-Lahera, Bonai and Singhbhum actively participated. Not only the Bhuyans, but also the cast Hindus and also some other tribals such as the Juangs and Kols, participated in this rebellion against the British. In fact, it was the most important rising in the garjats of Orissa under the British Raj in the nineteenth century. The rising completely paralysed the administration of the State for months together and the Raja was compelled twice to leave his palace at Keonjhargarh and took shelter at Cuttack, the headquarters of the Superintendent of Tributary Mahals, Orissa. Some of the officers of the Raja were also forcibly made captives by the Bhuyans insurgents. During this anti-feudal and anti-agrarian rising Raja Dhanurjay Narayan Bhanja got all sorts of assistance from the British Government for the suppression of the rising. In fact, the Raja of Keonjhar with the assured support of the British Government never paid due attention for the well-being of the husbandmen. When the British Authorities enquired as to the real causes of the rising, they unearthed the
serious facts of mis-government and inhuman oppression on the subjects of the state, especially on the most populous tribal Bhuyan community. As a remedial measure, the British Government almost took over the administration of the State from the Raja and for the time being he was not even allowed to stay in his own palace at Keonjhargarh. The British Authorities, in fact, were convinced about the maladministration of the Raja and extended support to some extent, the popular demands championed by the turbulent Bhuyan Sardar Dharanidhar Naik and his associates. Dharanidhar Naik was an educated man, that was the reason why unlike other tribal leaders in the garjats of Orissa, who did not easily tender their submission and fought with greater vehemence against the British Authorities for long years from the jungle hide-outs, he easily surrendered to the authorities. But he was neither sentenced to Capital Punishment nor even transportation for life. Before the expiry of his term of seven years of rigorous imprisonment, he was released in October, 1897 and was allowed to stay at Cuttack with pension from the Raja of Keonjhar. Thus, the way the Bhuyans fought against the authorities under their
celebrated leader Dharanidhar Naik has remained a memorable and sensational chapter in the history of the freedom struggle in Orissa.

Although the rising was successfully quelled down by the British Authorities, yet it was of a far-reaching importance. The rising changed the nature of the British Administration in the hill tracks of Orissa. Hereafter the British Authorities tried to understand the problems of the Bhuyan tribals and other tribal communities and appointed a top-ranking British Officer to supervise the administration of Keonjhar for some years, with the result that the socio-economic condition the Bhuyans underwent considerable improvements. Thus, in spite of the failure the Bhuyan rising in Keonjhar under Dharanidhar Naik, the aftermath was undoubtedly beneficial for the tribal population.