CHAPTER - VI
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Binayak Acharya was always concerned for the countless poor, needy, harijans and tribals of Orissa. He joined the socialistic movement on account of such attitude. Under the leadership of Indira Gandhi when the congress party adopted the socialistic goal he was attracted towards congress and joined the fray. He did not subscribe to the idea of political horse-trading, the attitude to perpetuate family rule and individualistic temperament prevailing among the then politicians. He despised immoral conduct.

Acharya was never averse to extend support even to his adversaries at the time of their need. He was sincere and soft-speaking gentleman. He had no enemy worth the name and as such he was an undisputed personality. Whenever somebody came to meet him, he used to hear him with patience and jotted down his grievances in diary. He never said no in trying to concede to any body’s request.

Although Acharya was the Finance Minister as well as Chief Minister of the State he never collected money by dishonest means. No body had ever complained against his integrity. The people of Berhampur as well as of Orissa have been very much conscious about the conduct of politicians. By and large every one, irrespective of party affiliation, was unanimous about his sincerity and honesty.

Acharya was never interested in helping the people under pressure unless the matter was reasonable, just and lawful.
Now a days, casteism, communalism and regionalism are on rise in the country. Even parties are formed over these pranks. Acharya did not support any argument or demand which spoke of regionalism. Some of his colleagues in his own constituency were displeased with him because of this attitude.

When any natural calamity occurred in an area, he never hesitated to render necessary assistance to the distressed people. He was influenced by the principles and idealism. Once Chandra Sekhar Mohapatra brought out an allegation that Government departments were showing undue interest to purchase materials from companies outside the state instead of companies of Orissa. As a response, Acharya immediately rang up the departmental secretary to carry out necessary investigation and enquiry. The matter was settled after necessary enquiry.

In spite of being in the state council of ministers for a long time he did not amass wealth. He remained poor till his last and lived simple and ordinary life. None had ever complained that he was scornful towards anybody. He never hesitated to put forth his view points with all humility. While in power his family members did not enjoy any special privilege. Whether in the Berhampur Municipality or during his tenure in Bhubaneswar Secretariat and in the Assembly he managed the responsibilities entrusted to him with all sincerity and devotion to duty. This factor could very well contribute to the smooth functioning of democratic fabric. When public morality is on wane we recollect the exemplary contributions of persons like Binayak Acharya to show us the right path.
Even having reached the pinnacle of power, Acharya never deviated from moral standards. There were several Chief Ministers in Orissa who found it difficult to accept the changed situations and environment after they have stepped down from the sheet of power. But Acharya's thought and life style were made of different stuff.

Urban development was uppermost in his mind. The conditions of roads and garbage dumps of Berhampur town disturbed his mind and when he was elected Chairman of Berhampur Municipality he pledged to effect such improvement. He was not satisfied for the non-solution of problems of Berhampur town.

Acharya's simple and sobre characteristics, his courage and firmness made him popular and undisputed contestant in the party. Had he lived long, he would have reaped its benefits. He was not in the habit of exaggerating the things. He considered the interests of the country to be paramount.

Besides being a minister, Chief Minister, he was also the pro-chancellor of the Agriculture University. He also took up the reins of the president of the Orissa Krushak Samaj. But he never proved himself inefficient in any post. It was found that he never tried to misutilise his position.

While analyzing his profile the cyclone devastation of Ganjam district of the year 1968 comes into fore automatically. The loss of life & property on account of cyclone of that year, were enormous in Berhampur. To provide relief to the cyclone ravaged, Ganjam Relief Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Biswanath Das. Basanta Panigrahi & Kishore Ch. Tripathy were the two
secretaries of this committee. Kamakhya Prasad Sharma & Dr. Jagannath Rao were the Vice Presidents and Brundaban Sabat worked as the treasurer. Binayak Acharya, Brahmananda Panda, Brundaban Nayak & Sashibhusan Pati were its active members. Acharya did the relief work with utmost sincerity. He used to watch the situations by going from door to door. After distribution of relief he used to narrate his experience and analyse the situation in the meetings of the relief committee. He was foremost among all the other members of the committee. While people were looking at the work from political angle Acharya used to implement the programmes with no political inhibitions.

During the election campaign Acharya neither adopted any reaction amidst propaganda nor exhibited any jealousy. This showed his power of patience and moderation.

On many occasions in specific situations fame and achievements placed a man in high position. Sincerity, commitment to work and organisational skill had placed Acharya in the top position of the state. He never considered anybody as big or small. To the best of his ability, he tried to solve everybody's problems.

After the historic division of the Congress Party in 1969, Acharya took the side of Indira Gandhi superseding many senior leaders of the party. He was nominated as the President of the Pradesh Congress Committee during that year. He made efforts to spread the message of socialist philosophy.

As the leader of the opposition, the gravity of his speeches was discussed even in national political level. This
fact created sensation in the minds of people of the state. Resultantly, he was very much loved by the general public. There used to be discussion about his personality even in the remote rural areas. He was appreciated by all political leaders for his oratorial skill.

During his tenure as the Finance Minister in the year 1974, he brought about significant changes in the finance department. True to his Gandhian Spirit, he was able to maintain stability in the finance department by initiating stringent financial discipline. He was so unostentatious that he was fondly called "Finance less Finance Minister".

Being loyal supporter of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and having taken the responsibility as the Chief Minister of the state, his modern and revolutionary ideas helped to expedite several development works of the state. In this endeavour he got unstinted support from his close friend and the then Central Minister J.B. Pattnaik. The age old veteran editor of Samaj Dr. Radhanath Rath used to say that the honesty of Binayak Acharya was perfect for which he could never be criticised. Even his political adversaries were respectful to him. This indicated his unblemished & strong personality. In reality, he was known more as an ideal man than as a Chief Minister or a Minister or the Congress President.

When Acharya was the Chief Minister of the state the Congress party and the state were passing through a period of gloom. It was a critical time for the administration as well as for the state politics at large. While the congress party did not formally establish itself Acharya could make
Binayak Acharya was an ideal candle light for the teachers' community. Simple and plain living could raise him to the top. His principles were stable and uncompromising. His hatred for falsehood and love for truth made him a champion. From his personal conversations, his commitment for the development of education, country's sovereignty, secularism, national integration, eradication of class biases and dowry, drugs, family planning, spiritualism and nationalism, could very well be discerned.

He was mentally disturbed at most of the time due to the rude diplomacy of his political opponents. His simplicity was painted otherwise and his adversaries derided him as a Diary Minister. But he turned a deaf ear to such insinuations.

Though he adorned the top most position in the state politics, he had no greed for wealth or money. He was extremely austere and modest. Despite this he could not escape from the adverse and wilful propaganda of his enemies. According to them he had amassed enough wealth during his ministership. But those who had come into contact with Acharya were very well aware that, at the time of his death, he was penniless.
There was a strange combination of socialist thought and moral values in his personality. He was, in reality, an ardent thinker of democratic socialism and a patron of resurgent Orissa.

Acharya had accepted Marxism and Gandhism in the true sense of the term and always pleaded for a classless social order. To ensure social justice to dalits who were exploited and tortured, he tried with courage and continued to do so till his death. For this, he was accepted as a symbol of cleanness and as politician with morality, the honour enjoyed by a microscopic minority of leadership, in the state.

Acharya was a promising and pragmatic leader in his own field. He started his life as teacher. He had great quality of perseverance. He was closely associated with the Indian Freedom struggle. From the beginning, he was attracted towards socialism and proved to be a true Gandhian in his subsequent phases of life.

He fully realised the problems of poor toiling masses and the farmers. He was also well aware that Orissa is full of enormous natural resources but constantly fomented by natural disasters like flood & cyclone. He made efforts to orient his leadership to face such calamities. In his political life, he took up many important responsibilities in most critical juncture, encountered by the state.

Biju Pattnaik stated that Acharya was a simple and popular social worker. His constant endeavour to propagate socialist and revolutionary thoughts among the people was highly praiseworthy. He was loved by all, irrespective of
political affiliations, for his sincerity, moral values, idealism and love for education. He laboured till his last for the achievement of the moral idealism.14

The congress lost elections in the country and Orissa as well due to the adverse effects of national emergency. Acharya lost both from Berhampur and Chikiti Constituencies during the election. Dyansamantray had taken the leading role for his election propaganda in Chikiti Assembly Constituency. Even during his propaganda for Berhampur Municipal election Acharya did not have sufficient funds of his own. Hence, very often, he had to borrow money from his friends and well-wishers.

The virtues and vices of the man usually come to forefront after his death. Acharya’s honest living kept his family in poor state of finance as it had been all through. Even his family did not have money to perform his death ceremony. Biju Patnaik and J. B. Patnaik - the ex-Chief Ministers of the state had extended financial help to his family for this purpose.

He did not believe in publicity. As a result, most of his good achievements could not be properly brought to the knowledge of people. Rusikulya water project was his brainchild and establishment of a permanent port in Gopalpur was his great longing.15

Unlike other Chief Ministers he had hardly shown any extra favour to members of his family for their economic, financial and political development. He was never distracted himself from his policy of honesty inspite of the
fact that he was humiliated many a time due to his financial hardship.

When the congress party was in wane in Berhampur town, Acharya made efforts to revive it. He was able to give re-birth to Congress due to his strong organizational capability and personal leadership.

He had stated that though India achieved independence it would be meaningless without financial independence. It could be established only through socialism. For the establishment of socialism he had very often emphasised on the word "minimum need". He was of the opinion that a "minimum need of the people" could pave the way for financial independence. Minimum needs include provision of food, shelter and clothing, medical facilities and education. Besides these, he had taken keen interest for the implementation of 20 point programme, enunciated by Indira Gandhi.

Though he had occupied the post of M.L.A., leader of the opposition, minister and Chief Minister, he remained a teacher in heart. He used to examine thoroughly the different situations and try to find out the ways and means to solve them. He had full faith in public opinion. He had the capacity to influence it too. Since all administrative decisions were taken as per public opinion they were very successful. As a socialist, he had full faith in the labour unions. He had no hesitation to become a labour leader. He had a leftist leanings. The socialistic thought and developmental programme, envisaged by Indira Gandhi, were strongly supported by Acharya.
He was able to explain the theory and philosophy of socialism very clearly in congress forums. He had taken a leading role in propagating in favour of Bank nationalisation and in explaining how it would benefit a number of poor people and farmers of Orissa. He had fully realised the good effects of land-reforms. And he was able to carry such messages to the farmers' community.

During his period land lordism was prevalent in a number of districts in Orissa- like Balangir, Keonjhar, Koraput and Kalahandi etc. Under such a system most of agricultural lands were remaining in few hands and as such they were enjoying ownership of these lands.

Acharya realised that unless these lands were brought out from them and distributed among landless, progress of the country could not be achieved. And unless the lands come to the hands of true farmers production would not rise. Acharya contended that capital was very much needed for increasing the agricultural production. For this, he espoused the steps for nationalisation of banks and use of modern and updated technologies.  

![Image](image-url)

While he was the Chief Minister one could witness a number of examples in favour of his benevolence. He detested the cleavage which existed between the lower and higher grade servants in administration. He had a strong sense of humanity which made him a great leader.

During the tour, all the staff and employees travelling with him, were asked to join on the same table. As a regular habit he used to take special care for his staff during the
tour. It is rare to find out such a good human being in the present political scenario.\textsuperscript{17}

He never ran after power. Due to his kindness, affection and ever laughing face he had become a popular leader. He had maintained his simplicity all through his life. He was an important political leader in Orissa politics from 1967 to 1977. He had established himself not only as a responsible leader but also as a very good organizer. High moral standard, simplicity and concern for the depressed and distressed, were the hallmarks of his personality.\textsuperscript{18}

It was very often alleged that Binayak Acharya's political life was confined to a small circle owing to the fact that he was moving against the prevailing political stream and he only jotted down the grievances of people and never tried to attend to them. For this matter, he was sarcastically called the 'Diary Minister'.

As the Chief Minister of the state he wished that the interests of the state as a whole only should be looked after. He provided scant attention to the regions. He was often assailed for the fact that South Orissa did not benefit at all although he belonged to this part and became the Chief Minister.

It should not be forgotten that People's representative should look to the interests of the state without marginalising the needs and interests of the people of the area which has elected him. Looking from this angle, Binayak Acharya's personality would have been heightened more had he focussed his attention for the development of the regions including that of his own.
In spite of this loose end, Binayak Acharya’s firm belief in value-based politics, steadfast commitment for incorruptible administration, non-adherence to political equivocation, pledge for simplicity and transparency and urge for toleration and modesty, add a feather to the cap of his scintillating personality.

Binayak Acharya should be considered as one of the remarkable supporters and practitioners of democratic socialism in the perspective of his involvement and commitment for welfare of the weaker and vulnerable sections of the society.


5. Ibid


15. Personal interview with the ex-speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly, Chintamani Dyansamat Ray.
