CHAPTER-II
NON-COOPERATION AND PEASANT UPRISING IN ORISSA: 1921-27

The first Utkal Sammilani or the Utkal Union Conference was held at Cuttack Town Hall from 30th to 31st December 1905, under the leadership of veteran patriot Madhusudan Das, the 'Kulabraddha' or grand old man of Orissa. The aim of the Utkal Sammilani was to carry on the struggle for the formation of Orissa into a separate linguistic province. The representatives from Midnapore, Sambalpur and Ganjam flocked there in hundreds. The princely rulers of Talcher, Keonjhar, Athagarh and Dhenkanal attended the conference. Hundreds of government servants also attended the session. Till 1920 it dominated the political scene of Orissa, which represented the hopes and aspirations of middle class intellectuals including those of the landed class. The situation, however, changed with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian politics. Gandhi's taking up active politics in 1920 and his message of non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement against colonialism gave birth to a new sense of nationalism in Orissa.

Although the Indian National Congress in 1920 had no definite programme and policy for the peasants, however Gandhi was fully aware of the necessity to enlist the peasant support for the programme of India’s struggle for freedom. This was apparent from his following observations in 1916, “our salvation can only be achieved through the farmers neither the lawyer nor the doctors nor the rich

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1 Report of the Utkal Union Conference, Acc. No. 1600, Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
6 Indian National Congress, Roll No. 1.
landlords are going to achieve it". He had a great love and sympathy for the dumb masses and was looked upon as the incarnation of poor peasants. 

A special session of the Indian National Congress was held in Calcutta on 24th September 1920. Mahatma Gandhi submitted his scheme of non-violent, non-cooperation as the only means of fighting against the foreign rule for the attainment of independence. There was heated argument over the question; ultimately the overwhelming majority accepted Gandhiji’s proposal. Pandit Gopabandhu Das and Hare Krushna Mahatab attended the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress and were impressed with the scheme of non-violent non-cooperation.

The Non-cooperation Movement as planned by Mahatma Gandhi was to progress through four carefully graded stages, as it seemed that the country was prepared for them. The first phase was to give up all titles and honorary offices. The second was the withdrawal from the paid appointments of Government and a refusal to participate in the civil and judicial administration. The third stage was to ask the police and the military to withdraw cooperation from the Government and fourthly, mass civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes.

In December 1920, the thirty-fifth session of the Indian National Congress was held at Nagpur. A good number of delegates from Orissa, including Gopabandhu Das and Hare Krushna Mahatab the latter being a strong believer in the

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Gandhian principle of non-violence, attended this session. In that session a resolution was passed for the constitution of a Pradesh Congress Committee in each linguistic region. So Utkal (Oriya), which had no separate Provincial Congress Committee till then, was now entitled to have one and constituted the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee in 1921 with Gopabandhu Das, as it's first president.

After the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress, Gopabandhu Das, 'Utkalamani' or the 'Jewel of Orissa', and other Congress stalwarts went to Chakradharpur, where the Utkal Union Conference was to be held on 30th December 1920, under the leadership of Jagabandhu Singh. In that session Gopabandhu Das, argued before the leaders that, "Utkal Union Conference is a part of Indian National Congress and it needs to fight for an independent nationality on the national plane not on the regional plane". In that session, the Utkal Union Conference finally accepted the Non-Cooperation resolutions of the Indian National Congress.

Although Braja Sundar Das and a few other leaders opposed it, an overwhelming majority carried it. After that the political movement in Orissa changed. Its scope was widened and it was transformed from the status of a regional struggle to that of the national struggle. All the political workers were extremely
busy in founding and organizing Congress institutions and spreading Congress ideas and programme among the masses.\textsuperscript{17}

Mahatma Gandhi visited Orissa on 24\textsuperscript{th} May 1921 and his speeches on the bank of river Kathjori in Cuttack and at Puri, Bhadrak, and Berhampur on the eve of the Non-cooperation Movement acted as a catalyst. Within ten days of his stay in that, there was unprecedented enthusiasm among the masses of Orissa.\textsuperscript{18}

During his visit to Cuttack, Mahatma Gandhi remarked that, 'I used to co-operate with the Government and entertain the belief that co-operation would do well, but I find I was mistaken. No good can be had of a satanic system of Government'. He appealed to the masses to participate in large numbers in the Non-Cooperation Movement.\textsuperscript{19}

Here an attempt has been made to describe how the peasant masses of Orissa looked upon Gandhi. What was the involvement of the Congress leaders of Orissa such as Gopabandhu Das and others? It is also our attempt to analyze at the regional level the response of the peasants to Mahatma Gandhi and his programme of Non-Cooperation Movement in different parts of Orissa.

The peasant movement in Kanika Estate was perhaps most important peasant movement during the Non-Cooperation Movement.

\textsuperscript{17} De, Sushil Chandra, 'Trends of Political Events in Orissa from 1882-1936,' Cuttack, 1966, pp.97-98.
But before discussing the events, it would be better to understand the short
history of the estate and the physical features of the tract in order to visualize more
clearly the conditions under which the trouble arose.\textsuperscript{20}

The Kanika Estate, with an area of 440 square miles, was situated along the
seacoast of the Bay of Bengal. It was divided into four main fiscal divisions.
Panchamukha area was under Balasore revenue rule, Chhamukha, Kerara and
Kaladwip were under Cuttack revenue rule.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1803 the first Commissioner confirmed the Peshkush at 84, 840 of
cowries, equivalent to Rs. 20,408, to the British Government. But in 1805 the Raja
of Kanika found malpractices and the estate was placed under the Khas
Management.\textsuperscript{22} Since then, there were frequent settlements of the Kanika Estate
during the period of the Court of Wards Management. Partly as a result of the
reclamation of the jungle, the rent rose from about Rs. 50,000 in 1884 to Rs.
1,36,000 in 1894.\textsuperscript{23} Interestingly, the rental collected by the estate rose from Rs.
105,338 in 1880-81 to Rs 138,893 in 1893-94. Till 1893-94 the rents used to be
collected through the village ‘Mustagirs’.

The ‘Mustagirs’ generally used to get a commission of ten percent on total
amount collected by them. Besides, they also held some privileged tenures. But this
system was abandoned in 1894.\textsuperscript{24} The reason was that the ‘Mustagirs’ (the natural
leaders of the peasants) organized ‘melis’ (organized troubles) at every revision

\textsuperscript{20} Home Political Department File, Acc. No. 3628, 1922, Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar,
Orissa, This is the Kanika debate by Mr. Mac Pherson in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative
\textsuperscript{21} O’ Malley, L.S.S., Gazetteers of India: Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteer, Patna. 1933, pp.246 -
247.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 246-247.
\textsuperscript{23} Maddox, S.L., Final Report on the Survey Settlement in the Province of Orissa (1890-1900), Vol.II,
Calcutta, 1900, pp.418.
\textsuperscript{24} Mac Pherson, op.cit., p. 5.
settlement instead of helping the proprietors. After that the 'Mustagirs' were swept away once the Khas Management was introduced.\textsuperscript{25}

As we are discussing about the Non-Cooperation Movement, it is necessary to understand the changes that took place between 1893-94 and 1921-22. The 'Mustagirs', in addition to the commissions on collection, enjoyed some other commissions and privileges. Their permanent class interest naturally allied more with the Raja than with the peasants. But it cannot be denied that an important role that played by the 'Mustagirs' in the peasant movement of Kanika during the year 1921-22, especially by some ex-Mustagirs like Dinabandhu Khandaita Rai.\textsuperscript{26}

Besides, certain changes took place on the population density during this period. In 1893-94 the minimum density of population was 200 per square mile and maximum density of population was 440 per square mile. In 1921 it was 250 and 900 respectively. The area in and around Raj Kanika had the highest population density in the two districts of Cuttack and Balasore.\textsuperscript{27} Although we do not have concrete information about it, it can be safely assumed that the pressure on land was much heavier in the Cuttack side of the Kanika Estate.\textsuperscript{28}

As has been mentioned earlier, the rental of the estate rose between 1880-81 and 1893-94. A council was formed in 1922 under the leadership of Rai Bahadur Brajendra Nath Rai, to enquire into the "Dukhini Kanika" (Distressed Kanika) grievances. Accordingly, in February 1922, the Collector held a local enquiry into the grievances of the peasants of Kanika. In the course of the enquiry he found that

\textsuperscript{25} Hossein, S. S., \textit{Completion Report of Survey Settlement for Kanika Wards Estate: District Cuttack, 1889-94}, Calcutta, 1895, pp. 1, 65, 66 and 71, ('Meils' were no-tax campaign).
\textsuperscript{27} Lacey, W. C., \textit{Census of India, 1931: Bihar and Orissa}, Patna, 1933, p.1.
the record of rights made in the period 1889 to 1894, when the Kanika Estate was under Court of Wards, had been correctly maintained, but that there had been changes in the following three respects.  

Firstly, the rental of the Cuttack portion of the Kanika Estate was enhanced generally by two annas with per rupee about 6 years ago i.e., 1916.  

Secondly, the Court of Wards raised the forest cess, which was originally levied at the rate of four annas to eight anna and three pies, per holding, annually during the management. But it was commuted in October 1910 to a cess at six pies in the rupees.  

Last but not the least, the pasturage dues on buffaloes at eight annas per head were being levied.  

So far as the facts had been ascertained the enhancement was protected by the provision to the Section 84 of the Orissa Tenancy Act, 1913 as it had been collected for three years. The right of forest cess was questioned in the Court in 1912-13 but it was decided in favor of the Raja Rajendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, the present proprietor.  

Raja Rajendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, who came of in 1902, made a petition in 1912 to the Colonial Government for his hereditary proprietorship and was thus ascertained according to the Regulation of XII of 1805. However, his petition for raising arms and ammunition was denied by the Colonial Government and was

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29 Mac Pherson, op. cit., p. 6.  
30 Home Political Department (Confidential) File, No. 17/3, 1912, Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.  
31 Ibid.
allowed to keep as before.\(^{32}\) When his hereditary proprietorship was retained, he got a wide opportunity for further enhancement of land revenue, when the Orissa Tenancy Act was passed in 1913.\(^{33}\)

As an influential member of Bengal Legislative Council and afterwards of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, he was successful in moulding several provisions of the Orissa Tenancy Act of 1913 to his own interest. Besides, Section 16 of the Act, which empowered the landlord to coerce the peasants to increase the fees for mutation and transfer of the land, sections 136 and 137 were most draconian to the extent that it empowered him to increase the rental of his own sweet will on a so called "compromise" basis.\(^{34}\)

Besides, the land revenue and other means of revenue provided in the Orissa Tenancy Act of 1913, it struck the fancy of Raja Rajendra Narayan Bhanja Deo and his cohorts to try extracting other cesses not provided in the law. Thus gave birth to sixty-four kinds of 'Abwabs', \(i.e.,\) illegal cesses known as 'Chausathi-Kara', which sound peculiar and satirical to outsiders, but were bone breaking to the poor peasants.\(^{35}\) A few of the illegal cesses to squeeze the peasant were as follows: Banakara (forest cess), Macha Kara (fish cess), Gochar Kara (grazing cess), Chama Kara (hide cess), Hada Kara (bone cess), Anda Kara (egg cess), Para Kara (feather cess), Singh Kara (horn cess), Hata Kara (creeper cess), Hentala Kara (mangrove trunk cess), Pinch Kara (mangrove leaf cess), Khala Kara (harvesting place cess), Angar Kara (coal cess) Fala Kara (fruit cess), Namkata Kara (mutation cess),

\(^{32}\) Home Political Department (Confidential) File, No. E/ 9, 1912, Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.


\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 14.
Namelekha Kara (mutation cess), Bhul Sansodhan Kara (mutation cess), Namjog Kara (mutation correction cess), Namyog Ghata kara (ferries cess), Nata Kara (Dance cess) Bata Kara (road cess), Bhandha Kara (embankment cess), Polo Kara (bridge cess), Kesha Kara (hair cess) and Madhusajya Kara (honeymoon cess).  

Rajendra Narayan Bhanjo Deo was a very polished and sophisticated tyrant so he did not enhance or impose those abwabs or cesses half-hazardly. To impose them throughout his estate in a systematic way and within a specified period he appointed an officer named Indramani Mohanty to act as the head of the settlement operation, who would be known as Superintendent of Kanika Estate.

For the peasant of Kanika such a private settlement operation was considered as ‘nightmare’ and the peasants were feeling helpless and desperate and groaning under the iron heel of the oppressive Raja.

What emerges is a clear picture of pressure on the peasants of the estate. They were forced to sell the bulk of their harvest (paddy crops) leaving very little for them to live on or to pay the illegal cesses. This was then sold to the dealers outside the estate at two or three times the cost price. The estate was in a position to do this since according to the existing system the peasants could not sell their produce in the market themselves.

At the same time, they were forced to work for constructing embankments, roads, digging ponds (Chandnapukhari), bridges by ‘bethi’ system (without

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36 *Home Political Department (Confidential)* File, Acc/No-124, 1922, Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar. This is the pamphlet of Ananda Chandra Jena’s *Dukhini Kanika* (Distressed Kanika), which describes the illegal cesses imposed on Kanika and Interview with Prafulla Das (Age-74), on 12-7, 1999, Sebasahi, Rajkanika.


38 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
remuneration) and were forced to pay eight annas per acre whenever or wherever any such construction was undertaken in the estate.

They paid grazing cess at eight annas per buffalo, forest cess, pond cess, health cess, education cess and other such cesses.

Regarding the practice of giving loans, the estate gave the peasants money in advance and took away their paddy. The loan remained unreleased due to the burden of so many cesses. The interest of the loan was 6.35% or 12.5% per annum. The estate adopted strict means at the time of repayment of the loan.  

During 1919-1920, high floods affected Kanika. To alleviate distress, the Estate authority sold twenty-two gaunies of paddy to give the ten gaunies of rice. It worked ‘on the principle of trade’ and opened godown at several places. The manner in which the rice was sold was highly profitable. The estate made huge profits in time of distress.  

The peasants of Kanika were never allowed to take loans from other village creditors or moneylenders. The Estate granted them loans at 12.5% interest at the rate of Rs. 10 per acre. When they failed to repay the loan, the estate took their lands away forcibly and if they refused to give up their lands then were severely beaten up.

The situation worsened, as the estate was hard hit on account of, first, scarcity of rains and then floods successively for two years i.e., 1919-22. No steps had been taken to relieve the peasants. Rather owing to the loss of crops the prices of

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39 Home Political Department (Confidential) File, op.cit., pp. 9-12.
40 Ibid., p. 19.
41 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
paddy and rice had gone up. The rents of the estate were not commuted. The proprietor of the estate Raja Rajendra Narayan Bhanja Deo turned a deaf ear to the demand of the peasants for the exemption of the land revenues. Although the colonial authority distributed rice and ‘takavi loans’ after the floods, Rajendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, prevented them for doing so on the ground that he would do it himself. Three rice distribution centers were opened in the estate when the District Magistrate visited the place. No sooner did he leave the place that the relief work was stopped by “beat of drums” and the food grains were sold to the peasants at higher prices. Ananda Chandra Jena in his “Dukhini Kanika” (Distressed Kanika) booklet had remarked that “the estate oppressed the peasants in various ways, the oppression committed by the estate cannot be described by words”.

It was against this historical background the Non-Cooperation Movement started in Orissa. It became an eye opener to the peasants of Kanika. In July 1921 the Raja of Kanika made a speech openly condemning the Non-Cooperation Movement and congratulated his peasants at having remained uninfluenced by the propaganda of non-cooperators. True to the Gandhi’s perception of the Zamindars, Zamindars proved to be the chief stumbling block to the Non-Cooperation programme but they could be brought to sense if the peasants could be persuaded not to pay rents.

When the Raja of Kanika opposed the Non-Cooperation programme, complaints appeared against him in Oriya newspapers such as Samaj, Utkal Dipika.
and Seba. The non-cooperators considered the condemnation of Non-Cooperation by the Raja as a challenge.48

Ram Das Babaji an up-country youth from Uttar Pradesh who was associated with the Congress work in Orissa arrived at Kanika from Aul, a neighbouring estate, and gave a rousing speech at Kanika High School. In the garb of a Sadhu he commanded tremendous influence on the peasants. 49

Ram Das Babaji had a sharp tongue and said, “the sinful oppressive government which has been ruling over India for two hundred years have ruined us. Do not trust this ‘Satanic Government’. The Raja of Kanika is a creature of this ‘Satanic Government’ and he has been oppressing the peasants and opposing Non-Cooperation Movement in various ways; do not be deceived by this ‘Satanic government’, they are swindlers”. Although the peasants were asked not talk to thee non-cooperators by the Raja, but that order hardly had any impact on them.50

Thus, Rama Das Babaji, who created political consciousness among the peasants of Kanika by holding a public meeting in the disguise of a ‘Sadhu’ seems to have close similarity with51 Baba Rama Chandra, who operated in Oudh area during this period carrying a copy of Tulsi Das’s Ramayana from which he would often recite verses to the rural audience.52

Ram Das Bhabaji was arrested at Raj Kanika under Section 108 of Indian Penal Code but by then he had become successful in rousing the peasants of Kanika from their stupor. It was also during this period that Ananda Chandra Jena, the rebel poet who wrote 'Dukhini Kanika' (Distressed Kanika) booklet, was dismissed from service from the Kendrapara Local Board. Chakradhara Behera, the stormy petrel of Kanika had resigned from service of the estate a few days before Ram Das Babaji's visit to Kanika in protest against Government's conferment upon the Raja of the power of confiscating land on allegation of arrears of rent. All this happened at such lightning speed that the peasants of Kanika were spellbound and their spirit of defiance stiffened.\(^{53}\)

After the arrest of Rama Das Babaji, the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee identified with the peasants and organized them. The anti-imperialist attitude of the students of Kanika High School was reflected when the students of Kanika left the school and attempted to break it down and to establish a National School instead.\(^{54}\)

A 'Swaraj Ashram' was set up at Chandbali-Kantapara road and 'Swaraj Jagyan' was held. A tri-color flag was hoisted on a tree, which came to be called as Gandhibata. Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the Secretary of the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee and Jadumani Mangaraj\(^{55}\) Mrs. Sarala Devi (wife of Mr. Mohapatra) and Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya, travelled all over the Chhamukha area of Kanika and attracted huge crowds by making exciting speeches. The burden of the speeches was that "Swaraj" would come into being within a year and the peasants would not be

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p.169.
\(^{55}\) Pati, Biswamoy, op.cit., p.28.
required to pay their rent. Chakradhara Behera, a young peasant leader of the estate moved around asking people not to serve as false witnesses against Rama Das Babaji.

Ananda Chandra Jena, Jairam Rai, Upenddra Subudhi Rai joined in the movement. Upendra Subudhi Rai, a ‘Pattadar’ of the Raja had resigned to participate in the ‘meli’. Bisuni Madual (a cultivator) and Basu Sethi (a washerman by profession) also joined in the movement. The Congress workers worked actively among the peasants and formed several villagers Sabhas in different places to protest against the land laws. A large number of peasants were enrolled as four-anna members of Congress and directly linked with the Congress organisation.

In such a situation in April-March 1922, the peasants entered into the most militant phase of their struggle in Balasore and Cuttack areas of Kanika Estate. As a result, the peasants who embraced over hundred villages and contained as many as four thousand members formed a ‘meli’. A regular council with office-bearers was established at a village called Meghapur to co-ordinate their activities.

The Estate did not agree to accept rent unless paid at the higher rate proposed, which the peasants too did not agree to pay. Many of them therefore deposited their rent at the existing rate at Kendrapara Government Sub-Treasury under the provision of the Orissa Tenancy Act of 1913. But those who declined to pay taxes were boycotted and intimidated. Funds were collected and failing to seek redress from the Raja, a petition was submitted to the Collector signed by as many

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as five thousand people. In February and March, 1922 the Collector and the Commissioner conducted an enquiry but the lots of the peasants did not improve in any way. 60

Hare Krushna Mahatab and other Congress workers wanted to hold a meeting at Moto on the way to Chandbali, the Tahasildar served a notice on the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee, by which the meeting was banned. Similarly, all meetings were banned in Kanika. Nevertheless meetings were held secretly to keep the movement alive. 61

It was also important that in a meeting, which was held at Khurda, Gopabandhu Das had called upon the peasants not to stop the payment of rents and jungle taxes. Although the Indian National Congress called off the Non-Cooperation Movement on 10th February 1922, but the militant peasants of Kanika continued their struggle. 62

Raja Rajendra Narayan Bhanjo Deo put forward a proposal to secure the support of the colonial administrators to suppress the movement once and for all. In April 1922, when a violent crowd at a village called Patarpur assaulted a peon accompanied by two others, who had been sent to serve a notice on certain judgments related to trouble in Kanika, the British Government came into fray. 63

When Gopabandhu Das saw the peon blood stained he took him to the 'Swaraj Ashram' at Kantapara where first aid was applied. He was offered a

61 Das, Prafulla, Kanika Praja Andolanaro Itihas' (Oriya), op.cit., Appendix – 3, This is the letter of Hare Krishna Mahatab to Prafulla Das, which describes the ban on Congress activities in Kanika. 9th July, 1984, p. 271.
'Khadar Cloth' to change the torn and blood stained uniform because nothing was available in the Ashram. That peon however deposed in the trial against Gopabandhu Das, that it was the latter that had so severely assaulted him and forced him to put on the 'Khadar Cloth'. The two Congress leaders, Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mohapatra were convicted and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment.  

A case was started under Section 147 of Indian Penal Code on 10th April, 1922, by which the Inspector of Police proceeded to arrest the accused. He was surrounded and cut off from his men by a crowd of two thousand persons. On hearing of a large gathering of the peasants the Superintendent of Police, Rai Bahadur Srikrishna Mahapatra immediately left for Kanika. On his arrival he found a somewhat alarming situation. The Superintendent of Police took with him a force of twenty-five armed police and proceeded to break up and disperse the crowds moving in the vicinity. The colonial police force camped between Jorele and Meghapur on 23rd April 1922. Consequently, three people were killed and as many as 144 others were injured. Among those who died were Basu Sethi and Bisuni Madual, the two peasant leaders of the Gandhian movement in Orissa.

Withdrawal of the Congress and Collapse of the Peasant Movement in Kanika:

But there was a tragic turn of events on the national movement. Gandhi withdrew the ‘Satyagraha’ on 12th February 1922. So the die was cast by the Government and certainly for the Raja. Within no time the Congress office was closed at Raj Kanika and Ayatan. The Congress workers, who participated in the
peasant agitation of Kanika, ran away as most disciplined soldiers of the day. They did not even get time to make over the office premises to their owners.\textsuperscript{67}

Raja Rajendra Narayan Bhanjo Deo, who was identified with the British Government, carried out large-scale repression with the help of the colonial police force upon the peasants.\textsuperscript{68} The forces sent from Cuttack to suppress the movement looted the houses of the peasants and dishonoured their womenfolk.\textsuperscript{69} The men were mercilessly beaten up. The women who were pregnant delivered prematurely due to the assault on them.\textsuperscript{70}

The peasant activists of the ‘meli’ were arrested, tried in the Raja’s house and forced to admit that they were the culprits of the disturbance. About one hundred and fifty of them were tied to one another and made to walk up and down from Cuttack side of the estate to the Balasore side, \textit{i.e.}, between Chandbali and Bhadrak.\textsuperscript{71}

Along with suppressive measures to terrorize the peasants the Raja implemented Rs. 10,000/- fine on them. The colonial Government gave the Raja power of collecting rents by the ‘\textit{Certificate Procedure}’ by which the peasants who did not pay the taxes were forced to evacuate the estate. Punyanda Raut Ray and Dinabandhu Khandayat Ray, the two most important leaders were driven out from

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 29.
\textsuperscript{68} Das, Prafulla, Appendix – 3, op. cit., p.274.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Home Political Department (Confidential) File}, No. 129, Orissa State Archives Bhubaneswar. This is the booklet of Ananda Chandra Jena’s \textit{Dukhini Kanika} (Distressed Kanika), which depicted the oppression during this period, p.122.
\textsuperscript{71} Mahatab, H. K., op.cit., p. 68.
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the estate and there properties were confiscated.\textsuperscript{72} These repressive measures brought about a tragic collapse of the movement.

Besides these, some of the important cultivators who were behind the movement like, Sadananda Samant Rai and Raghunath Samant Rai changed sides and withdrew support to the 'meli'. The 'Dukhini Kanika' booklet of Ananda Chandra Jena, which was banned at that time, vividly describes the decline of the peasant movement.

Ananda Chandra remarked thus:

"Kanika Devi is our mother (Goddess of Kanika).
Her husband (lord) is our father;
We will never forsake our father and we will always prostrate before him.
We will not mind the insults, which he may inflict upon us. We should again prostrate at his feet and fight for having our grievances redressed."

As the peasants of Kanika were faced with severe tyranny and oppression they appealed to the Lord of India (naturally refers to the British Government) for help. As Ananda Chandra Jena wrote,

"To get out of this trouble,
Let remember to the Lord of India"

This appeal to the 'Lord of India' for help is repeated number of times in the booklet.\textsuperscript{73} Simultaneously, rumors were floated in Kanika that Gandhi's army was on its way from Ranchi to assist them against the Raja and the Colonial police force.

\textsuperscript{72} Das, Prafulla, op. cit., p.
\textsuperscript{73} Home Political Department (Confidential) File, No. 1922, p. 6.
It was clearly evident that an attempt was made to keep the struggle alive and to inspire militancy.\textsuperscript{74}

However, the role of the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee at this juncture seems to be quite striking. A day before the firing, it was announced that its aim was to build up a good relationship between the landlord and peasants. Since the Kanika events there were prosecutions against the persons believed to be behind pull the stirring. Therefore, the Raja and the British Government further tightened security in July and August 1922 by sending additional forces to Kanika. It was decided that, one-fourth of the costs would be paid by the Raja himself and three-fourth by the peasants.\textsuperscript{75}

Ruthless repressive measures were deliberately adopted to create panic among the people so that they might not join in the political movements. The S.D.O. of Bhadrak promulgated an order under section 144 Cr. P.C. prohibiting any meetings in Bhadrak side of the Kanika areas. Pandit Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mohapatra, who had come to Bhadrak for investigation into the causes of Kanika troubles and had fixed a meeting at Bhadrak were arrested and sentenced to 6 years imprisonment each. Besides, Jadumani Mongaraj, Mohmmad Ekram Ruosil, Pandit Ananta Mishra and Atal Behari Acharya were arrested and sent to jail.\textsuperscript{76}

By this time the 'meli' had been crushed. However, all this was happening in the Cuttack area of the Kanika Zamindari but in Panchamukha, \textit{i.e.}, in the Balasore side of the Zamindari, everything was practically calm and which was mainly due to

\textsuperscript{75} Pati, Biswamoy, op. cit., p. 67.
the intelligent handling of the situation by Mr. Hudson, the then Superintendent of Police of Balasore. Besides, there was lack of organizational support.\textsuperscript{77}

However, towards the close of 1922 there was a strong peasant agitation in Balasore district against the settlement operations. In consequence of which, the settlement operation was stopped. Mathura Mohan Behera who organized the peasant agitation was arrested and sent to jail for one year.\textsuperscript{78}

The most striking example of the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee’s attempt to keep the Non-Cooperation Movement within bounds was provided by its actions in the Bhadrak area. The peasants of this area stopped payment of rents during this phase. Interestingly, through the mediation of Banchanidhi Mohanty, a Congress worker, the landlord did not institute rent suits against the peasants, but filed lists of the dues of the peasants at the Congress office. Further through the help of the village panchayat the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee assumed the charge of rent collection after the withdrawal of the Bardoli Satyagraha.\textsuperscript{79}

In Puri the District Congress Committee was formed under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das. At the beginning of the Non-Cooperation Movement the district of Puri responded well and the Satyabadi School was converted into a National School in 1921. Mahatma Gandhi visited Satyabadi in Puri district in 1921. It was the most important political event in the Congress movement in the district of Puri in 1921. The visit of Mahatma Gandhi created unprecedented enthusiasm among the peasant masses of Puri, and consequently, the Congress call for a national struggle

\textsuperscript{77} Mahatab, H. K., op. cit., p. 68.
\textsuperscript{78} Sahu, N. K., op. cit., p. 71.
\textsuperscript{79} Pati, Biswamoy, op. cit., p. 31.
met with a ready response. In 1921, picketing of excise and foreign-cloth shops was carried on with full vigour.\(^{80}\)

The peasants of Puri also started a 'no-rent campaign'. On 16\(^{th}\) October, 1921 there was a meeting at Khandagiri, which was well attended by the peasants. It was organized by Gopabandhu Das himself to explain the elements of Non-cooperation. In that area 'Sabarkars' (a type of peasant who was an intermediary between the Government and the peasants) violated the forest laws and started 'no-rent campaign' when their rights were denied.\(^{81}\)

In Sambalpur, Baragarh, Jharsuguda, Talpatia, Rampella and several other places the peasants showed their enthusiasm and actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement. In two places of Sambalpur district, settlement operations were to face passive resistance but the matter did not take a serious turn.\(^{82}\)

Mahatma Gandhi visited Berhampur, where he delivered a speech stirring up the national spirit among the people of Ganjam. His addressed to a mammoth gathering at Barracks Maidan (Berhampur) facilitated the enrolment of Congress members and volunteers. Besides Gopabandhu Das, V.V. Giri (ex-President of India), who hailed from the district, and his family members, actively worked for the Congress organization and mobilized the masses.\(^{83}\) The visit of Mahatma Gandhi in March 1921 to Ganjam had a tremendous impact on the masses of Ganjam. Soon

\(^{80}\) Ibid., pp. 31-32.
after that, the leading Congress members undertook picketing of government excise offices at Ichhapur, Berhampur and Balipadar.\(^{84}\)

In Ganjam Zamindari, Pandit Biswanath Das, a leading Congress leader, who set up the 'Ryot Association' mobilised thousands of peasants under the banner of the Congress and started a 'no-rent' campaign. Biswanath Das carried on the struggle against the obnoxious 'Mustadari' system and 'Sanja' laws that affected the tenants and deprived them of a major portion of their produce. Soon the ryot movement encompassed the whole of Madras Presidency. N.G. Ranga joined hands with Biswanath Das in 1924.\(^{85}\)

In the princely states of Orissa the condition of the peasants was extremely poor. The peasants had no right over their land and the land was taxed heavily. Besides, there were different kind of abwabs such as: hospital cess, forest cess, road cess, sugar cane cess, income tax, bidi, tobacco, pan, coconut, coir, plough tax, salami (for permitting widow to adopt), bethi, beggar, rasad and magan. The peasants showed much enthusiasm during the Non-Cooperation Movement and implemented the 'no-tax campaign' against the Rulers.\(^{86}\)

A public meeting was organized in Keonjhar in May 1921 to rally against the bethi and rasad. Accordingly, on 17\(^{th}\) May 1921, a hartal was organized in Keonjhar. Estate authorities enforced Section 144 of Indian Penal Code when peasant mobs courted arrest.\(^{87}\)


\(^{87}\) Pati, Biswamoy, op. cit., pp. 32 – 33.
Similarly, in Dhenkanal, at the end of the nineteenth-century, the Manager of the State contemplated the enhancement of rent under a new settlement. One thousand people came and protested as a consequence of which the idea was abandoned. But again in 1922 the management wanted to revise the settlement and enforced it just then. Against both of these measures there as much resentment and agitation. Some redress was affected but four of the leaders were charged with conspiracy and were sentenced to imprisonment for three years. This gave a setback to the movement. But in this area the exploited people rose independently and Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee was virtually remained out of the movement. 88

Thus, it was quite evident from the Viceroy's telegram to London on February 1922 'that the peasants in some parts of Orissa have been affected'. 89

Although, the Non-Cooperation movement came to an end in 1922, the peasant unrest in Kanika continued despite the repressive policy of the British Government as well as the Estate authority. Chakradhar Behera led the peasants in their fight against the Raja till 1924. 90

After the suspension of Non-Cooperation Movement as in the rest of the country the Congressmen in Orissa divided into two groups i.e., the Pro-changers and No-changers. The Pro-changers wanted to enter the legislature under the Government of India Act, 1919 and the No-Changers wanted to undertake the Gandhian constructive programme while boycotting the legislature. The following Pro-Changer Congressmen were elected from Orissa to the Bihar and Orissa

Legislative Council and to the Central Legislative Assembly. They were; Godavarish Mishra, Jagabandhu Singh and Radha Ranjan Das, elected to the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council and Nilakantha Das was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly.\textsuperscript{91}

On 28th and 29th June 1929 the first All Orissa Provincial Congress Conference was held at Cuttack under the leadership of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, the Chemist of Bengal. The conference resolved to work out the constructive programme of the Congress. Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mohapatra attended the conference immediately after being released from jail.

After release from Jail Gopabandhu Das fully devoted himself to the constructive programme of the Congress. He laid particular stress on promotion of Khadar. In 1925 and 1926 he set up spinning centers in Puri. Similarly, after release from jail Hare Krushna Mahatab, started constructive programme of the Congress in Balasore district.

In December, 1927, Mahatma Gandhi visited Orissa for the third time. He visited various khaddar production centers. He advised the people to give up fear, promote khaddar movement; removal of untouchability and not to be slaves to intoxicants.\textsuperscript{92} Gopabandhu Das made arrangements for observance of the ‘All India Bardoli Day’ on 12th June, 1928. But when the day was celebrated at Puri, he could not attend it due to high fever. He died of that fever on 17th June 1928 and his death came as a great blow to the national aspirations of Orissa.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., p. 94.