



# People's Struggle against Feudatory Authority: The Prajamandal movement in Nayagarh, Odisha

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## Abstract

The Prajamandal Movement arose as a powerful weapon of popular resistance against the exploitative and authoritarian structure of feudatory rule in princely states of British India. In Nayagarh State of Odisha, the movement denoted a significant phase in the political awakening of the people against the arbitrary authority of the feudatory ruler and the repressive administrative system. This paper surveys the origin, growth, and nature of the Prajamandal Movement in Nayagarh, also highlighting the role of peasants, local leaders, and nationalist influences in mobilizing mass participation. It examines the socio-economic grievances arising by people against excessive taxation, forced labour, denial of civil liberties, and lack of representative governance that fuelled the movement. This paper to highlight the significant role of Thuabari village in the Prajamandal Movement of Nayagarh which still neglected in History of Orissa. The Prajamandal Movement thus stands as a crucial chapter in the people's struggle for political rights, social justice, and responsible governance in feudal Odisha.

**Keywords:** feudatory, leaders, Durbar, Tax, labour, movement, protest, struggle. Bethi, Rasad, Magana.

## Introduction

The First War of Indian Independence in 1857 paved the way for the creation of approximately 662 *Garjats* or feudatory states across the country. These *Garjats* or feudatory states were established by the British primarily as subordinate fiefdoms under imperial control. The rulers of these states continued, directly or indirectly, to exploit the native population, particularly the peasants. As a result, several revolts and *Melis* (popular uprisings) occurred from time to time. However, the British administration ensured that such rebellions were suppressed with minimum but effective force so that no sustained or organized resistance could flourish against either the princely authorities or British rule. Consequently,

popular movements opposing oppression and exploitation by the ex-princely administrations failed to develop into permanent or effective struggles.<sup>1</sup>

The princely states, also referred to as feudatory states, lack a well- documented and coherent historical narrative of their own<sup>2</sup>. The states were principally characterized by vast expanses of wild and inaccessible jungle and hill tracts. As observed by Cobden Ramsay, the country's natural beauties were extremely fine, massive ranges of timberland and tree clad hills and mountain ranges alternate with well-watered valleys luminous bright in the sun.<sup>3</sup>

The feudatory states of Orissa comprised of a group of twenty- six dependent territories involved to the Division of Orissa.<sup>4</sup> Up to 1940, there were originally Nineteen princely states in Orissa. However, the state of Angul and Banki were annexed to British Orissa in 1840 and 1847 respectively and thereafter remained under direct British administration. Consequently, the number of princely states- also referred to as the tributary Mahals- was reduced from Nineteen to Seventeen. The remaining princely states included Athagarh, Hindol, Athmallik, Baud, Baramba, Daspalla, Dhenkanal, Khandapara, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Narsinghpur, Nayagarh, Nilgiri, Pallahara, Ranpur, Talcher and Tigiria.<sup>5</sup>

On April 1, 1936, Orissa became a distinct province from Bihar. This was made possible by the tireless efforts of many Orissan. The creation of the province, India's first language-based state, met the Oriyas' long-held goal and demand. At the time of its formation, Orissa comprised twenty-six Garjats, or feudatory states. The integration of these states into Orissa was a prolonged process, taking twelve years to complete.<sup>6</sup> In Odisha, the prajamandal movement was launched on 24 June 1937.<sup>7</sup> The Prajamandals were formed by the people of twenty-six Garjat states to protest against the absolute and autocratic rule of the kings, who were supported by the British colonial administration. The movement aimed at securing democratic rights and responsible governance for the people of these princely states.<sup>8</sup>

In the princely States, The Prajamandal Movement essentially known as a Peasant struggle, which was an historic struggle that significantly influenced both provincial and national politics. Initially directed against the misrule and autocratic governance of the princely rulers, the movement later expanded its objectives to demand responsible government and the merger of the Garjat States with Odisha.<sup>9</sup> The Prajamandal movement opposed authoritarian and reactionary monarchs and their ineffective and harsh governance. The earliest popular resistance against Garjat rule emerged in the feudatory state of Nilgiri, a small state located on the border of Balasore. Subsequently, people in the Garjat states of Athagarh, Baramba, Narsinghpur, Nayagarh, and Tigiria organized protests and expressed their grievances through their respective Prajamandal units.<sup>10</sup>

Among the twenty-six Garjat (feudatory) states of Odisha Nayagarh was one of them and, during the British period in India, it was administered under the supervision of the Resident and Political Agent of the Eastern States Agency.<sup>11</sup> Nayagarh is located in the south-eastern part of Odisha, approximately 85 km from Bhubaneswar, the capital of State, and west of Puri district. The district covers a geographical area of about 3,890 square kilometres and has an average elevation of 178 metres above

sea level. Nayagarh lies between 19°54' and 20°32' north latitude and 84°29' and 85°27' east longitude. It is bounded by Boudh and Kandhamal district in the west, Khurda district in east, Cuttack district in the north, Ganjam district in the south.<sup>12</sup> The present Nayagarh district comprises four former Garjat states—Ranpur, Nayagarh, Khandapara, and Daspalla. The indigenous tribal communities of this district were the Savaras and Kandhas. King Suryamani constructed a fort at Nayagarh and adopted the tiger's head as the emblem of the state.<sup>13</sup>

Raja Bagha Singh, the ninth ruler of Nayagarh dynasty was established at Nayagarh Old Town his capital. From that time until the amalgamation of the state with Orissa on 1 January 1948, his successors continued to rule the state. As the twenty-sixth king of Nayagarh K C Singh was ascend to the throne afterwards the passing of his father Narayan Singh king of Nayagarh state in 1919. However, as he was a minor at the time, the administration of the state was placed control by the Court of Wards and managed by Abdul Satar Khan as Superintendent. During his tenure, Khan implemented several reforms, including revenue settlement, construction of village roads, and the introduction of compulsory primary education. Raja Krushna Chandra Singh assumed full administrative authority in 1933.<sup>14</sup>

L.E.B. Cobden-Ramsay mentioned "The twenty-third chief was the last of the lineal descendants of Suryamani Singh." Later Samantha of Paikabankatara, a blood relative of this dynasty ascended the throne of Nayagarh. His sons and grandsons later ascended the Nabadurg throne. Among the various dynasties of Odisha, Nayagarh dynasty is famous and popular.<sup>15</sup>

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To examine the origin and growth of the Prajamandal movement in Nayagarh.
2. To analyse the socio-economic conditions of the people under feudatory (Garjat) rule.
3. To study the role of peasants and local leaders in organizing resistance against autocratic authority.
4. To highlight the demands raised by the Prajamandal, including responsible governance and civil rights.
5. To study the role of Thuabari village in the Prajamandal movement of Nayagarh.
6. To analyse the significance of the Nayagarh Prajamandal in the broader freedom movement of Odisha.

### **Methodology**

The present study adopts a historical and analytical methodology to examine the People's Struggle against Feudatory Authority through the Prajamandal Movement in Nayagarh, Odisha. Both primary and secondary sources have been used for the study. Primary sources include government records, official reports, archival documents, contemporary newspapers of the period and also interviews with old people of Nayagarh. Secondary sources consist of books, research articles, theses, and historical

writings related to the Prajamandal movement, Garjat administration, and the freedom struggle in Odisha.

### **Nayagarh as a Feudatory State: Historical Background**

The history of the establishment of the Nayagarh state around the thirteenth century by King Suryamani is regarded as a significant event in the Odisha's political history. The ruler Suryamani of the Baghela dynasty is believed to have come to Puri on a pilgrimage from Rewa in present-day Madhya Pradesh and later founded his kingdom at Nayagarh. However, some historians hold differing views regarding the foundation of the Nayagarh state by King Suryamani. In *Utkal Itihasa*, Krupasindhu Mishra suggests that the formation of the Nayagarh state took place in the fourteenth century or slightly later.<sup>16</sup> Rama Krishna Nanda, author of *Biswa Parichaya*, also supports the view of Pandit Mishra. According to him, during the 14th century, one of the princesses of the ruling dynasty of Rewa, while traveling to visit Lord Jagannath, encountered a man-eating tiger. She was saved by a local hero, and in recognition of his bravery, the people of the region made him their king.<sup>17</sup> According to L. E. B. Cobden Ramsay, Suryamani Singh was the founder and first ruler of Nayagarh, having come from Rewah in the Central Provinces of present-day of M.P. He Founded a *garh* (fort) at a place called Gunamati in Nayagarh. The people of the region elected him as their king, and he married the daughter of a Mali, who served as the priest of the village goddess. After the death of his first wife, he married a Kshatriya woman, whose descendants subsequently occupied the *gadi* (throne) of both Nayagarh and Khandapara.<sup>18</sup>

According to tradition, the two brothers Suryamani Singh and Chandramani Singh arrived at Gunamati in the Nayagarh region during the thirteenth century. Suryamani Singh is believed to have united the people of Gunamati by killing a man-eating tiger, an act that led to his election as king by the local inhabitants. He subsequently established his *garh* (fort) at Gunamati. The ruling dynasty of Nayagarh belonged to the Rajput Baghel clan. From the foundation of the Nayagarh dynasty, twenty-seven rulers governed the state. Up to the thirteenth generation, each ruler bore the *Singh* surname inherited from his father. Gokul Singh, the fourteenth ruler of Nayagarh, received the title *Mandhata* from the Gajapati ruler of Khurda in recognition of his role in protecting the honour of the Gajapati. Thereafter, the royal family of Nayagarh adopted the honorific title *Mandhata* in addition to their paternal surname *Singh*.<sup>19</sup>

L.E.B. Cobden-Ramsay mentioned "The twenty-third chief was the last of the lineal descendants of Suryamani Singh." Later Samantha of Paikabankatara, a blood relative of this dynasty ascended the throne of Nayagarh. His sons and grandsons later ascended the Nabadurg throne. Among the various dynasties of Odisha, Nayagarh dynasty is famous and popular.<sup>20</sup> K C Singh Mandhata was designated as the 26<sup>th</sup> ruler of Nayagarh later the death of his father Raja Narayan Singh in 1919. As he was a minor at the time, the state was placed control the supervision of the Court of Wards. The administration during this period was carried out by Abdul Satar Khan, who, as Superintendent, introduced several significant reforms, including revenue settlement, the construction of village roads, and the implementation of compulsory primary education. Raja K.C. Singh formally assumed control of the administration in 1933.<sup>21</sup>

## Socio-Economic Conditions under Feudatory Rule

Agriculture played a central role in economy of Medieval Orissa. The fertile soil, river system and climatic conditions of Orissa favoured the growth of Agriculture.<sup>22</sup> According to M.N. Thevenot (1666-67) Orissa to be a fruitful province. Bowrey mentioned that Gingelly coast, which expanded from the Godavari to Puri was very rich and produced rice, wheat, grams, plenty of cow, sheep and goat.<sup>23</sup> During the period of the Prajamandal Movement, the socio-economic conditions in Nayagarh ex-state were marked by acute agrarian distress, feudal oppression, and administrative arbitrariness.

Krushna Chandra Singh Mandhata being a minor, when his father Narayan Singh Mandhata was death, in 1919 so, the Nayagarh state was once again placed control by the administration of the Court of Wards. That time, Nayagarh faced harshly from the Great Famine of 1919, which had far-reaching social and economic consequences for the people. Although the State Superintendent tried to secrete the gravity of the condition, the Political Agent, Mr. Phillips, took note of the acute distress caused by the famine. Recognizing its severity, he introduced certain immediate relief measures, which helped save numerous lives. Despite these interventions, the administration of the Raj imposed numerous harsh and coercive practices upon the common people. These included *Jungle Bethi* and *Road Construction Bethi* (forms of forced labour), widespread corruption and bribery, and other oppressive measures such as *Rasad*, whereby villagers were compelled to supply food and provisions for the camps of senior officers and the Political Agent at their own expense. Such exploitative practices further aggravated the suffering of the people and intensified resentment against the princely administration.<sup>24</sup>

After the princely state of Nayagarh acknowledged British paramountcy, it came under the direct supervision of the Governor-in-Council. In 1923, the Governor-in-Council of Bihar and Odisha assumed administrative control over Nayagarh. Later, in 1933, a new administrative arrangement known as the *Eastern States* was established, including 40 feudatory states of Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. This agency was placed under the control of Resident, who was assisted by three Political Agents, each responsible for a designated region. Among them, Abdul Sattar Khan was appointed as the Political Agent in responsible for Nayagarh.<sup>25</sup>

Abdul Sattar Khan was mostly considered as a very strong and capable administrator, although view was separated about his administration. But it goes without saying that he introduced very several reformatory measures in the state of Nayagarh. In 1928, he started land settlement operations in the state, which continued from 1928 to 1932. Although he brought it about reforms in land tenure system in the state, the people were taxed more and were deprived of many of the rights on land, tree, tanks etc. Additional levies were imposed on forest produce and education. But he made education is most compulsory.<sup>26</sup>

Besides land settlement, Sattar Khan also made compulsory education system and introduced some progressive social reforms in Nayagarh estate. One of the most advanced and challenging measures were the conditional transfer of land belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Under this

provision, no land right by members of these communities could be transferred without the prior permission of the princely authority. He also introduced prohibition on intoxicants and regulated the opium trade, and virtually abolished liquor manufacturing within the state. In despite of the multiple reform measures introduced by him. So, Abdul Sattar Khan was widely feared by the people and peasants. This perception stemmed largely from the rigid enforcement of laws and the revision and fixation of high land revenue across different categories of land tenure, which deepened agrarian pain and exaggerated bitterness against the administration.<sup>27</sup>

The miserable economic condition was a major factor that contributing to popular discontent among the people of Nayagarh state. Like other feudatory states, Nayagarh state was mostly agrarian in nature and there was no industrial development. The main sources of revenue of the state were Land and forest resources. However, the peasants of this state did not enjoy exclusive rights over their land. Their occupancy rights were never transferable without the explicit authorization of the ruler, which could only be gained upon payment of excessive fees. The amount of transfer charges imposed by the state on the cultivators ranged from Rs. 5 to Rs. 90 per acre, depending on the quality of the land. This exploitative land revenue system of feudatory chiefs placed a heavy financial burden on cultivators and intensified their economic hardship.<sup>28</sup> The state's Dewan was remained in control of land administration until the end of December 1942. Land revenue was collected in two equal *kists* (instalments) each year. The first instalment was payable on 1 January, while the second instalment was due on 15 February.<sup>29</sup>

The forest regulations of the state were extremely strict and oppressive. The people were banned from cutting as many as thirty-two varieties of trees. According to these forest rules, cultivators were not permitted to cut trees even from their own holdings. Moreover, they were prohibited from killing wild animals, which frequently caused serious damage to their crops. These restrictive forest policies further serious the hardships of the rural population.<sup>30</sup>

The people of princely states were also required to pay author tax that was grazing tax irrespective of whether their cattle actually grazed within the village. This tax was imposed on each cow and buffalo. In addition, separate grazing fees were charged for access to reserved forests—Rs. 0-8-0 per cow, Rs. 0-4-0 per calf, and one rupee per buffalo.<sup>31</sup> Violations of grazing and forest regulations involved very heavy fines. These measures imposed a severe financial burden on the rural people and increased popular resentment against the state administration.<sup>32</sup>

In Nayagarh state the education and health systems were in a poor condition. Medical facilities were extremely limited, one located at the state headquarters and the other at Odagaon. The educational infrastructure was also insufficient, comprising only one high school, one middle English (M.E.) school, three upper primary (U.P.) schools, and seventy-one lower primary (L.P.) schools. This absence of basic social services reflected the overall neglect of public welfare in the state.<sup>33</sup>

Besides regular taxes, the people of Nayagarh state were enforced to give extra payments. *Magana* it was a compulsory contribution from the tenants of state on special occasions such as the marriage of Raja or his silver jubilee celebration. Those who failed to pay had to face heavy fines. Another practice called *Rasad* was also common, under which people were forced to supply food and other provisions to the Raja, his officers, or guests during their tours. These practices caused great hardship to the people and increased their dissatisfaction with the ruler.<sup>34</sup> The people of Nayagarh were already suffering from poverty and hardship. One more action by the ruler made them brave enough to protest. This led to the *Betel Leaf Agitation* against the state control over betel leaves. The government not only taxed betel but also other tobacco items like bidi, gundi, gundakhu, and even kerosene. These were daily necessities, so the people became very angry and upset.<sup>35</sup>

### **Emergence of the Prajamandal Movement in Nayagarh**

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the people of the feudatory states repeatedly rose in revolt against their oppressive rulers. The rulers responded to these mass uprising with harsh and forceful measures, effectively suppressing the largely uncoordinated resistance. As education spread in the princely states and the Gandhian nationalist movement progressed across the country the nature of unrest in these regions underwent a significant change. The activities carried out by Congress leaders and volunteers in the Moghulbundi districts had a notable impact on the educated populace of the princely states, who could not remain untouched by such development. Motivated by nationalist ideals, several young men from the princely states withdrew from their schools and colleges to actively participate in the Non-cooperation Movement led by Gandhi.<sup>36</sup>

These educated youths took up leadership roles in tenant uprisings within the princely states, including those in Dhenkanal and Talcher (1922), Nilgiri (1928), Baudh (1930), and Talcher again in 1932. Meanwhile, the Congress party continued to conduct its organisational activities covertly in several of these states.<sup>37</sup>

In response to this situation, the Indian National Congress in 1938 resolved to launch political agitations in the Garjat areas. Under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the All India Feudatory Praja Parishad was formed. Following this initiative, the Nayagarh Praja Mandal was established in the Nayagarh princely state. After nearly a decade of struggle, Nayagarh merged with the province of Odisha.<sup>38</sup>

Sri Radhanath Rath, Sri Balunkeswar Acharya, and Sri Govinda Mishra were leaders made to union among the people of the Odisha feudatory states in 1931.<sup>39</sup> Under the presidentship of Sri Bhubanananda Das the Odisha Garjat Jana Sammelan was held at Cuttack for resolved to form Congress Committees in states and condemned illegal practices such as *Magan*, *Bheti*, *Rasad*, *Bethi* (forced unpaid labour), bribery, and other oppressive acts of the rulers.<sup>40</sup>

Subsequently, the Orissa Garjat Praja sammelan was organised at Cuttack on 20 July 1937 by the presidency of Sri Sarangadhar Das, which inspired the formation of Praja Mandals in various princely

states of Odisha. The first popular agitation against the Garjat administration occurred in Nilgiri, a small princely state on the border of Balasore. In the Garjat states of Athagarh, Baramba, Narsinghpur, Nayagarh, and Tigiria, the people raised their voices against oppression under the aegis of their respective Praja Mandal units.<sup>41</sup>

A meeting was held at Dangibandha village in Ganjam district under the leadership of Congress worker Sri Suryanarayan Pattanaik, where the historic decision to form the Praja Mandal was taken. Accordingly, the Nayagarh Praja Mandal was constituted on 6 June 1938 under the presidentship of Sri Narayan Nanda.<sup>42</sup>

The Prajamandal Movement in Nayagarh was established on 6 June 1938 under the leadership of Narayan Nanda. It presented a charter of demands to the Darbar, advocating political and civil rights, the abolition of feudal levies and representation in responsible governance, and in its meeting of 27 December 1938 resolved to persist with agitation until these objectives were achieved.<sup>43</sup>

Accordingly, a public meeting was organised at Kumpapada in the Nayagarh State on 29 June 1938, where Sri Narayan Nanda of Odagaon was elected Interim President of the proposed Nayagarh Praja Mandal, with Sri Kuber Sahu as Secretary and several others as members of the working committee. The Nayagarh Praja Mandal was formally established at Odagaon on 9 September 1938 amid widespread public participation, despite threats from the Durbar administration. Under the leadership of Sri Laxman Moharana and Sri Narasingh Nanda, from the different parts of the state many people joined in the movement. Sri Laxman Moharana as chosen President and presided over the conference, which resolved to place the authentic the people' demands before the Raja for public wellbeing.<sup>44</sup>

The Raja of Nayagarh arrested several Prajamandal workers, which led to the gathering of thousands of people in the front of the palace on 30 December, demanding the immediate released of their leaders. Although the Raja promptly released them and assured the fulfilment of their demands, the people continued their agitation, insisting on a formal royal proclamation conceding their demands. Anticipating further escalation of tension, the Raja sought the assistance of the political Agent, Major Bzelgette. While Bazelgette was addressing the situation in Nayagarh, the ruler of Ranpur requested his intervention on 5 January 1939. As the situation in Ranpur was more volatile than in Nayagarh, Bazelgette proceeded there, where he tragically fell victim to the fury of an agitated mob on the same evening.<sup>45</sup>

## Historic demands of Nayagarh Prajamandal

The several of the people's demands had been organized to be give in to the ruler for redressal. This document, containing seventeen demands, became the first historic charter of the Nayagarh Praja Mandal movement.<sup>46</sup>

1. organised meetings right and to publish newspapers should be guaranteed.
2. Abolished the without wage of Bethi or labour.
3. Abolished the Magan, which collected from the common people of the state for the aims of marriage, Upanayan and funeral functions of the king.
4. The tenant's Legal rights over their land had to be confirmed. Land transfer payment and *Dakhal- Kharaj* fee should be ended.
5. The use of jungle product fuel, bamboo, twigs etc. should be permitted without any royalty and boundary limitations. The abolished should be of grazing tax. The safety of the crops against the damage caused by the wild animals should be permitted without payment of fees.
6. The regulator should be stopped over Import and export products in and outside state for sale of products.
7. Abolished the licence charges on the commercial of betel leaf, *tola, Karanja, Kusum* etc be and also should be abolished taxation on sugarcane cultivation.
8. Abolished the all taxes on the farmstead land. Those completely hold on selling fuelwood for their living should be discharged from the payment of fees.
9. The people of SC class such as *Hadi, Pana, Doma*, who fully dependent for their income by manufacture baskets out of bamboo should be excused from the tax imposed on bamboo.
10. Compulsory actions sure taken to construct bridge on the rivers Dahuka and Sulia.
11. Odia language should be compulsory for published all the rules and regulations in the state and knowledgeable for the info of the public.
12. In each *pargana* of state should be made Paddy granary as was done before.
13. The facilities of irrigation should be available in the regions which part to be pretentious by drought.
14. Limitations on alcoholic articles like Opium, Wine, *Ganja* should continue as it was before.
15. which government officials found involved in collecting suborn from the common people must be arrested.
16. Proficient Taxes must be stopped.
17. In the state responsible government should be recognized. It should work as per laws for the security of the benefits of the people.

## Nature of People's Participation and Leadership

Under the guidance of Sarangadhara Das, the people of Nayagarh decided to make a PrajaMandal. To organize the movement systematically for the fulfilment of popular demands, Sri Narayan Nanda convened a meeting at Dangibandha village in Ganjam district under the presidentship of Congress worker Sri Suryanarayan Pattanaik. In this meeting, the aims and programmes of the All-India States People's Conference were discussed, and a decision was taken to establish a Praja Mandal in the state. Accordingly, on 28 June 1938, a temporary Praja Mandal was organised under the presidentship of Sri Narayan Nanda at Odagaon the sacred shrine of Sri Raghunath Jew.<sup>47</sup> Sri Narayan Nanda was selected

as temporary President along with President Kuber Sahoo, Bharat Nayak as Secretary, and other members were Laxman Moharana, Banchanidhi Senapati, Sudarson Prusty, Janardan Subudhi, Haribandhu Achary, Iswar Patsani, and Laxman Sahoo.<sup>48</sup>

The Executive Committee of the PrajaMandal decided to formally organize the Nayagarh Praja Mandal at Odagaon on the auspicious occasion of Bhadrav Purnima, falling on 9 September 1938. Accordingly, the first regular Praja Mandal (People's Association) was established at Odagaon on that day. Nearly ten thousand people attended the historic meeting, which was presided over by Sri Banchhanidhi Senapati.

The Executive Committee was constituted with president Sri Banchhanidhi Senapati and Sri Kuber Sahoo as Vice-President and joint Secretaries Sri Bharat Nayak and Sri Narasingha Nanda, and other many members were Laxman Moharana, Narayan Nanda, Kasinath Panda, Ramakrishna Adhikari, Janardan Subudhi, Sudarsan Prusty, Haribandhu Acharya, Laxman Sahoo, and Iswar Patsani.<sup>49</sup>

### **Krushna Chandra Singh Mandhata**

Later the death of Raja Narayan Singh Mandhata, his two minor sons (Krishna Chandra and Vrindavan Chandra) were brought up in Hindol under the direct supervision of their maternal uncle, Rajasaheb Bahadur Nabakishore Singh Jagdeb of Hindol. The two brothers went to study at the 'Rajkumar College' in Raipur for their education.<sup>50</sup>

After completing their higher education from Rajkumar College in Raipur, the two brothers returned to Nayagarh. The eldest brother, Krishna Chandra Singh, who had a diploma, married Homa Rajyalakshmi, the second daughter of General Sir Babur Samsheer Jung Bahadur Rana, into the Nepalese royal family on 29 January 1931. Seven months after the marriage, on July 11, 1931, at the age of twenty, Krishna Chandra Singh was officially installed on the throne of Nayagarh, although in reality, on July 20, 1933, he received prior permission from the British government and assumed the title of 'Mandhata'.<sup>51</sup>

Krushna Chandra Singh was a kind and honest ruler. Though some of his courtiers cheated him, he worked hard for the welfare of his people. He improved education, health, culture, and sports, and made Nayagarh town one of the first ex-states in Odisha to have electricity. He also set up orphanages, a cooperative bank, and a public library called *Soubhagya Manjari Pathagar*. His most important work was separating "Debottar Endowments" from the state administration.<sup>52</sup>

### **The Role of Thuabari Village in the Nayagarh Prajamandal Movement**

Thuabari, a village in the Nayagarh region of Odisha, played a notable role in the Prajamandal Movement, which emerged as a mass-based resistance against the feudatory authority of the Nayagarh princely state during the late colonial period. Like many other villages in Nayagarh, Thuabari was deeply affected by oppressive revenue demands, forced labour (begar), and arbitrary exactions imposed

by the feudatory administration. The leadership and collective participation of Thuabari village in the Nayagarh Prajamandal Movement occupy a unique and unparalleled place in the history of popular resistance in Nayagarh. Thuabari present as a village where almost each family members contributed actively to the freedom struggle. This was the distinction of being a symbolic sacrificial centre of the Nayagarh Prajamandal Movement.

The villagers of Thuabari changed to Gandhian thought into grassroots action by Deeply influenced of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals of non-violence, non-cooperation, and national liberation. Men and women alike joined with remarkable bravery and discipline, strengthening the national movement at the village level.

An essential role in mobilising the village was played by Kanduri Parida, a prominent leader of Thuabari, who formally linked with the Nayagarh Prajamandal in 1936. The Prajamandal ideology spread rapidly across the surrounding region by his. The prominent leader Kanduri Parida appeared as a key link between the local people and the broader anti-feudatory and anti-colonial movements.

Anand Chandra Swain was another prominent leader who actively participated in the movement. Their participation encouraged extensive mobilisation, drawing peasants, tribals, and Harijan communities into the struggle. The collective involvement of Ananda Chandra Swain gave the movement very strong mass base and transformed it into a powerful challenge to both colonial authority and the feudal princely administration. Like them others 62 family members of Thuabari village joined in the Prejamandal movement in Nayagarh.<sup>53</sup>

### **Impact of the Nayagarh Prajamandal Movement**

- ❖ **Developing of Political Awareness:** The Prajamandal Movement created widespread political consciousness among peasants, tribal communities, and rural masses of Nayagarh.
- ❖ **Challenge to princely Authority:** The movement directly questioned the autocratic rule of the Baghela dynasty, weakening the moral and administrative authority of the Nayagarh Raja. Arbitrary taxation, forced labour (beggar), and illegal cesses came under public criticism.
- ❖ **Gathering people Participation at the Grassroots Level:** Villages such as Thuabari, Khandapada region, Itamati belt, and surrounding areas saw active participation. This showed that the freedom struggle in Nayagarh was not elite-driven but mass-based.
- ❖ **Decline of Feudatory Exploitation:** Even before formal integration, the movement reduced the intensity of exploitation by making arbitrary actions politically risky for the ruler and his officials.

### **Conclusion**

The Nayagarh Prajamandal Movement was occupying a significant place the history of Orissa's struggle for right of people against the feudal oppression and colonial interference. This study to highlighted the bravery of peasants, tribals, and local leaders who amalgamated to demand justice, civil rights, and responsible governance from the feudatory rulers. Also, strict conditions, forced labour, and

high taxes, the people of Nayagarh organized themselves effectively, showing the power of collective action and grassroots leadership. This movement not only presented the autocratic practices of the rulers but also strengthened political consciousness and democratic aspirations among the common people. In this movement some Leaders like Narayan Nanda, Laxman Moharana, and Kanduri Parida played a crucial role in mobilizing support, while Raja Krushna Chandra Singh Mandhata's well-being creativities showed the importance of progressive administration. Thuabari village played a prominent key role in this movement, with nearly whole family members joining. Leaders Kanduri Parida and Anand Chandra Swain organized peasants and tribals, and making the movement a very strong, inclusive struggle for freedom from both feudal and colonial oppression. Ultimately, the movement donated to the merger of Nayagarh with Odisha and left a lasting legacy in the region's socio-political history, inspiring future struggles for justice and democracy.

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