



Rise Of Odia Nationalism And Its Impact Upon The Social Life Of Sambalpur During Colonial Period

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Abstract:

Sambalpur is the hub of Western Odisha. It has unique cultural heritage. The Odia Movement in the 19th century precisely aimed as safeguard the Odia language and culture. The period from 1862 to 1947 saw remarkable progress in the field of western education in Sambalpur. Along with the spread of English Education, the modern ideas like democracy, sovereignty of the people, rationalism and humanism made their entry into Sambalpur. Socio-Cultural life of Sambalpur were deeply influenced by these ideas. The far reaching changes took place in the Socio-Cultural life of the people of Sambalpur after the establishment of Zilla School in 1852 A.D. The Political consciousness began to grow. The language agitation began to emerge. In fact, the foundation of modern Sambalpur laid of new epoch in the history of Sambalpur was ushred in. The active leaders of Sambalpur like Balabhadra Supkar, Braja Mohan Pattanaik, Mahanta Bihari Das, Madan Mohan Mishra, and Sripati Mishra urged for a separate political identity of their own. The cause of the Odia language and Odia culture was espoused by local Newspaper particularly “Sambalpur Hitaisini”. In creating a strong awakening for political identity of the scattered Odia race, credit should be given to sir Basudev Sudhal Dev, Bhima Bhoi, Gangadhar Meher and Brajamohan Panda spread of education proved to be the most powerful tool for bringing about the much immediate social change among the depressed class people. The *Harijan* movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi for welfare of *Harijan* achieved a great success in Sambalpur as well as other parts of Odisha. Progress in Education opened up a new vision for the Odia, women of Sambalpur. A wind of change, blowing already in other progressive province, was being awaited eagerly.

Keywords : Agitation, Amalgamation, Anti-untouchable, Superstition, Thekopara.

1. Introduction-

Sambalpur is the hub of Western Odisha. It has unique cultural heritage. West Odisha was inside the jurisdiction of Central Provinces in 1862 A.D. It was known as 'Odia Country' in government records, Odia was the official language for certain administrative inconveniences like problem faced by Hindi Officials in non-Hindi areas. In the others hand the Odias, who form a linguistic minority lost their identity in these provinces and their welfare got neglected. Odia language faced an uphill task in its struggle for survival. The Odia movement in the 19th century precisely aimed as safeguarding the Odia language and culture. The growing consciousness among the people about their racial distinction, their grievances against administration injustice, Government's arbitrary efforts to stifle the language and cultural of the people forced them to resort to agitation. The genesis of this agitation from 1895 and the ultimate success in amalgamating Sambalpur with Odisha. The active leaders of Sambalpur like Balabhadra Supkar, Braja Mohan Pattanaik, Mahanta Bihari Das, Madan Mohan Mishra and Sripati Mishra urged for a separate political identity of their own. The cause of the Odia language and Odia culture was espoused by local newspaper particularly 'Sambalpur Hitaisini'. In creating a strong awakening for political identity of the scattered Odia race, credit should be given to Sir Basudev Sudhal Dev, Bhima Bhoi and Gangadhar Meher.

2. Origin of Sambalpur

The district of Sambalpur has its own cultural heritage and great historical importance in the field of Social, religions and political consciousness. It is situated between 20^o44` and 20^o14` North latitude and between 82^o39` and 84^o23` East latitude. It is surrounded by the undivided districts of Sundargarh on the North on the South by Bolangir on the East by Dhenkanal and the North West and West by Raigarh and Raipur in Chhattisgarh.¹ In the ancient times Sambalpur was a part of South Kosala comprising roughly the modern district of Raipur and Raigarh in Chhattisgarh and the undivided districts of Sambalpur, Balangir and Sundargarh.² According to the sources from the Budhaghosa, Kosala means one who is clever in the art of plucking, 'Kusa' grass, which is very useful in the performance of Yagnas and the religions sacrifices. So it appears that, this area once used to supply 'Kusa' grass to other parts of India for use of the time of religious rituals.³

The district of Sambalpur has been named after the headquarter town Sambalpur. According to L.S.S.O. Malley, the town itself derives its name from the presiding deity Samalai, whose image was founded by Balaram Dev, the First Chauhan king of Sambalpur, beneath of Simul (Silk Cotton) tree. Ptolemy, the Greek geographer (middle of 2nd century A.D.). In his work geographike refers to a town named Sambalaka situated on the bank the Mananda. Sambalaka and Mananda may perhaps be identified with modern Sambalpur and river Mahanadi respectively.⁴ From time immemorial Sambalpur was famous for the finest type of the diamonds available on the river bed of the Mahanadi. Ptolemy also wrote that diamond was obtained there and was exported to others parts of country for which this parts of the country for was known as ' Hirakhand' all over the world. Tribals of the area were engaged in collection of diamonds from the river Mahanadi. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, mention that a tribe called the "Jhara" used to collect the diamonds and sell those at Kalinga.⁵ Mainly diamonds were obtained from the river IB, a tributary of the Mahanadi near Kosa of Sambalpur. The French traveller Tavernier, writing about the middle of the 17th century A.D., refered to Sambalpur as a region rich in diamonds obtained from the most ancient mines. This region was reputed as containing one of the largest diamond mines in the world. Meanwhile the king of Sambalpur used to be addressed as the 'Hirakhand Chhatrapati' i.e the emperor of the land of diamonds.⁶

The history of Sambalpur can be traced as back as 4th century A.D., when Samudra Gupta, the king of Magadha occupied Kosala. In the historic period, it saw the rise and fall of many dynasties ruling over Sambalpur one after another. After the Guptas and Nalas, the Saravapuriyas, the Somavamsis, the Telugu Chodas, the Kalachuris, the Gangas, the Chauhans. The early history of Chauhans rulers of Patna is known from a Sanskrit work 'Kosalananda Kavya' written by pandit Gangadhar Mishra and a Hindi (Laria) work called 'Jyachandrika' written by Prahallad Dubey in 1664 and 1781 A.D. respectively.⁷ These

two literary works throw much light on the administration of the Chauhan rulers, the King Balaram Dev built the Sambalpur kingdom and after him a numbers of successor were rule over this territory.

The early British administration in Sambalpur was neither judicious nor conciliatory. The resistance movement led by Surendra Sai of Sambalpur against the British imperialism is a landmark in the history of Odisha as well as of India. Surendra Sai, the uncrowned hero of Sambalpur was born in the Chauhan family of Rajpur- Khinda. By 1827, Maharaja Sai, the king of Sambalpur died without a son for which Surendra Sai, who then represented the next line of succession claimed for his succession to the Gadee of Sambalpur.⁸ This act of total negligence to the claim as Rajpur-Khinda family for succession infuriated Balram Singh, the brother of the Dharam Singh who unfurled the flag of rebellion against the British authority. Surendra Sai along with his six brothers enlisted the support of the like minded Zamindar and Gountias organise the rebellion against the British.⁹

The great Indian revolt the so called Sepoy munity, broke out in may 1857. The close of 1857 and the following year witnessed a terrible period in the history of Sambalpur. During that time the British and the rebels were equal strong. The great revolt of 1857 had been suppressed else were in India by 1858. But in the district of Sambalpur, it had continued till 1862. The secretary of the Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces rightly pointed out to Government of India that, “ The Sambalpur district was perhaps the very last district in India, in which the members of the disturbance of 1857 were finally stamped out”.¹⁰ The anti-British feelings were very deep in Sambalpur. But it was specified after much efforts and after Surendra Sai was tried and kept in the Asurgarh Fort. The brave son of Sambalpur breathed his last on 28 February 1884.

3. Review of literature and Methodology

Very little work has far been attempt on the history of Sambalpur and Rise of Odia Nationalism and its impact upon the social life of Sambalpur during colonial period, S.P. Das's (1969) work, *Sambalpur Itihasa* (Odia), Sambalpur in his work, he has not thrown much light on Odia nationalism. Even C.R. Mishra's (1986) work *Freedom Movement in Sambalpur : 1827-1947*, Delhi have not specifically referred to Rise of Odia Nationalism and its impact upon the social life of Sambalpur. Another work of A. Behera's (2018), *Growth of Education and Social Consciousness*, New Delhi, have not thrown much light on social life of Sambalpur and S.P. Padhi's (1973), *Akhanya Taraka Chandra Sekhar*, (Odia), Sambalpur have not referred to the awakening of women. Therefore it is sincerely felt that a historical investigation into the Rise of Odia Nationalism and its Impact upon the Social Life of Sambalpur During Colonial period as much desired.

For preparing such a research paper will be taken to review all the literature available on Odia Nationalism and its Impact upon the Social life of Sambalpur. This work will base on original records available from different sources i.e Government Report, District Gazetteers, Periodical at Odisha state Archives Bhubaneswar, Regional Archives, Sambalpur will also be consulted for scientific and statistical analysis of the data's. Out of the above, the present study based on historical research. I have collected the data interview will be taken from the near and dear of the prominent leaders, field work will be carried out for the collection of the data. The research has collected data both from primary and secondary sources mainly from Official Reports, Gazetteers, Commission's Reports and data from various organisations. After collecting data, the collected data have been analysed and interpreted and results have been drawn.

4. Political Awakening

Towards the close of 19th century, Sambalpur displayed a fresh political consciousness when Odia, the mother tongue of the people was not recognised by the Government to be the Official language of the district. In 1860, Sambalpur was transferred the Odisha Division of Bengal province. Then, by a notification of 30 April 1862, it was made over to the newly constituted Central Provinces.¹¹ The spread of English Education, the modern ideas like democracy, sovereignty of the people, rationalism and humanism made their entry into Sambalpur. Socio-cultural life of Sambalpur were deeply influenced by these ideas.

The growth of political consciousness in Sambalpur was first manifest in a language agitation of the 19th century known as the Odia Movement.

(a) Language Agitation in Sambalpur

The central province was a Hindi speaking province with the exception of Sambalpur district, where Odia was spoken by the people. The Government was aware of this in 1862, when the district was tagged with the central provinces. Ethnologically and Culturally Sambalpur was an Odia region. Since 1862, Odia was used as the Official Language in the district administration not with standing the fact that in all other districts of the central provinces, Hindi was need as the court Language. No change was made by the Government in the Language policy till 1895. In the Government records, the district was therefore termed as 'Odia Country'. This difference gave rise to administrative difficulties between Sambalpur and other districts of the Central Provinces, where Hindi was the official language.¹² The Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces Sir John Woodroff had declared on 15 January 1895 Hindi became the medium of instruction and court language. To remove these difficulties, the Government of the Central Provinces substituted Hindi for Odia as the official language of Sambalpur and simultaneously changed the medium of instruction on school.¹³ The new language policy offered a great opportunity to the Hindi speaking people to qualify for government jobs over the Odia speaking people for their ignorance of Hindi had a relative disadvantage.¹⁴

The 'Sambalpur Hitaisini', a Odia weekly newspaper, stated its publication 30th May 1889 under the patronage of Sir Basudev Sudhal Dev of Bamra at Sudhalpress, Deogarh. The *Sambalpur Hitaisini* published a series of editorials on the issue. Gangadhar Meher from Barpali used to inspire people through his writing on "Bharati Rodan" and "Utkala BharatinkaNibedan" published in Sambalpur Hitaisini created quite a stir among the people.¹⁵ Several public meeting were organised to ascertain the views of the people and educate them on the evil consequences of the new language policy. Dharanidhar Mishra, (the first Matriculate of Sambalpur) a leading members of Odia elite of Sambalpur organised the meeting in the town and neighbouring village. He could mobilize the public opinion the arbitrary decision of the government. In a very well represented public meeting of Somnath Babu, the affected people resolved to submit a printed memorandum to Lord Elgin, the viceroy pleading for the revocation of the order of the Chief Commissioner. The memorandum was signed by about Six thousand persons in Odia and submitted to the authority on 5th July 1895.¹⁶ It was an excellent document in which the misconception and prejudices of the Government were brought under share focus and the cause of Odia Language and culture was strongly defended by convincing arguments in support.

However, inspite of all the public protests, memoranda and personal pleadings by the end of 1895 Odia ceased to be the official Language of Sambalpur. From 1st January 1896 Hindi became the medium of instruction and court language. The imposition of Hindi had an injurious effect upon the mental faculties of the odia children. The number hindi teachers and Hindi School began to increase at the employment of the district went to the benefit of Hindi speaking people.¹⁷ This had a tremendous impact upon the Odia speaking people as the new policy impeded their social and cultural growth. From that year they started continuous agitation on all front for the amalgamation on Sambalpur with the Odisha Division. It was intensified by a group of personal like Madan Mohan Mishra, Brajamohan Patnaik, Mahanta Bihari Das, Sripati Mishra, Balabhadra Supkar and others. Chandra Sekhar Behera after completing his law examination left Nagpur to join the people at Sambalpur. He, before leaving Nagpur had an interview with the private Secretary of the Chief Commissioner and apprised him with the situation of Sambalpur. The secretary made note and expressed his concerned over the issue. He further promised Chandra Sekhar Behera to explain the matter to Chief Commissioner as and when the opportunity would prevail. Chandra Sekhar joined his brother-in-law Baikunthanath Pujari at Sambalpur and both of them took up the cause with all sprit and vigour. They used to tour the villages and inspired the people to come forward for supporting the cause. Chandra Sekhar Behera along with Sripati Mishra, another active leader of the movement, published a series of articles in *Sambalpur Hitaisini* in which they criticised all the official at the Education Department of the district. They parodied peculiar accent of person like Bishnu Panth, Bana Govind Sukla, Golab Singh, Sukhram etc.¹⁸

However, the growing discontentment found its expression in the form of a memorandum, this time signed by Madan Mohan Mishra, Brajamohan Pattanaik and others and it was submitted on 18 January 1901. It was forwarded to the Commissioner, Chhattisgarh on 29 January 1901 and subsequently to the Chief Commissioner on 5 February 1901. Representation were made to meet them viceroy Lord Curzon in 1901. The British Government was finally forced to succumb to popular demand and Odia language was reintroduced in place of Hindi in 1902 in Sambalpur.

(b) Amalgamation of Sambalpur with Odisha

The restoration of Odia as the court language of Sambalpur was partial fulfilment of the objective of the Odia Movement. This success inspired demand for the implementation of Andrew Fraser's suggestion, "Sambalpur ought to be joined with Odisha to which it really belongs". The Amalgamation of Sambalpur with Odisha Division was not far to be attained. After due consideration and exchange of views with the provincial administration, the Government of India recommended the transfer of Sambalpur along with the adjoining feudatory states like Bamara, Kalahandi, Patna, Rairakhol and Sonepur from the Central Provinces to the Odisha Division.¹⁹ The two Feudatory States (Gangpur and Bonai) under the Chhotnagpur Division along with the above mentioned areas were also amalgamated to the Odisha Division and come under the Bengal administration with effect from 16 October, 1905. This marked the end of a successful Odia Movement at the beginning of the 20th Century.

It appears, therefore that Odia language provided the bond of unity among the politically scattered areas inhabited by the Odia. The language crisis and the perilous situation faced by Odia cultural served as a powerful stimulus to arouse the dormant spirit of the Odias and galvanised to vigorous action. Their initial struggle to safeguard Odia-culture intimately assumed a political character, when the Odia Movement of the 19th century got transferred into amalgamation movement of the 20th century. To spearhead the amalgamation movement the elite class like Madhusudan Das and other formed the first political organisation in 1903, which came to be popularly known as the Utkal Union Conference.

The language agitation started in Sambalpur and became widespread in Odisha. Sir Andrew Fraser, Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, visited Sambalpur in 1901.²⁰ When people met him in large number and submitted a memorial to restore Odia language and to transfer the district of Sambalpur to Odisha. Sir Andrew Fraser appreciated the cause of the popular movement of Sambalpur and recommended it owing to the ethical linguistic difference between Sambalpur and other district of central provinces. As a result subsequently in October, 1905 the bulk of the district was transferred to Odisha and remained a part of the province of Bengal until 1st April 1912 when the province of Bihar and Odisha was constituted.²¹ Lastly, Odisha get state hood on 1st April 1936.

5. Social Reformation

i) Upliftment of Depressed class

Observance of untouchability and adherence to it pained Gandhiji most. It was to him the 'miserable enslaving spirit', a "Sin against God and man and is, therefore, like a Poison, slowly eating into the vital of Hinduism". The Shastras do not sanction it. It has come to the society, when it must have been at the lowest ebb. Untouchability among Hindus is thus a unique phenomenon unknown to humanity in other parts of the world. Nothing like it each to be found in any other society primitive, ancient or modern.²² It is being increasingly believe that education can be a powerful means to ameliorate the suffering Harijans and for overcoming the social, psychological and economic barriers under which, they have been reeling since long. The consciousness for upliftment through educating Harijans emerged during the 19th century and it still on. The idea originated with the coming of Missionaries with the East India Company.

A contemporary event of the period was the legislation of Caste Disability Removal Act of 1872. The British government, by introducing a uniform system of law in the country dealt a severe blow to the social and legal inequalities. The act granted equality of treatment to all irrespective of their caste. This forfeited the legal status of caste institution.

We have no any historical evidence or data regarding the depressed class pupils attending school or any special institution established for them in the district of Sambalpur prior to 1905. In 1930 there were 20 primary schools in Sambalpur district specially meant for educating depressed class pupils, attended by 714 in numbers. The total numbers of children of the said class attending school was 1981 during the year under review.²³

In Maneswar (8 Kilometre to the east of Sambalpur town) lower primary School in 1930 N.M. Senapati, Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur found a Ganda (by caste) boy sitting in the open outside a room where a class was going on. The teacher feared that if the untouchable boy sat in the classroom, the other boys would be withdrawn from the school. The Deputy Commissioner took the boy by hand and seated him in the class. He ordered that even if all the other boys were withdrawn, the school would go on with only one Ganda boy. Actually nothing happened. The school went on as usual. It is not that untouchability was abolished but no parent dared to defy the Deputy Commissioner's decision.²⁴ It was the first attempt in the district against the practice of untouchability.

For the first time Gandhiji called the untouchability as Harijan out of sympathy for their poor lot. These people were identified as depressed class and exterior castes. The Harijan movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi for welfare of Harijans achieved a great success in Sambalpur as well as other part of Odisha. The year 1928 was a remarkable year for the people of Sambalpur, when Gandhiji had arrived first time at Sambalpur on 23rd December. He started with Chandrashekhar Behera and was pleased with the behavior of the people of Sambalpur.

Nrusingha Guru, one of the leading lights in the annals of freedom fighters of Sambalpur work for the down-trodden people of Sambalpur. In order to put more life in the National Movement, he put relentless efforts through his Anti Untouchability Movement to carry the Gandhian creed of social orders to the interior of the district. His movement was multi-dimensional. being a true Gandhian, he was confident that untouchability shall have to go. He wanted its removal in every sense.

It was through the efforts of Chandra shekhar Behera and Nrusingha Guru that a committee for the removal of untouchability was established at Sambalpur in the early part of 1929. In 7th February, 1929, Nrusingha Guru organised a public meeting in the town hall (at Sambalpur) and the Congress creed was unanimously accepted.²⁵ The anti-untouchability Movements under the leadership of Chandra Sekher Behera, Laxmi Narayan Behera and Nrusingha Guru assumed a new dimension in 1932. A "District Anti-untouchability committee". Was formed in a public meeting on 26 November 1932 at the Fraser club, Sambalpur. In 18th December 1932, a resolution was passed to admit the untouchables into the temples of Sambalpur district.²⁶

The Government had allowed Gandhiji to carry on the Harijan work from inside the jail in the hope that the attention of the nation would be diverted from political agitation to social reform. With his advice, the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh (AIHSS) was formed with Ghanshyam Das Birla as its President and A.V.Thakkar as Secretary. Its objective was to promote the social, economic and educational well-being of the Harijans. However, the movement, with the unflagging zeal of Nrusingha Guru gained a wider field. On 30th April 1933, The "Harijan Day" was observed.

Gandhiji had to pay a short visit to Odisha and it was his second tour to Sambalpur on 5th May, 1934, in connection with Harijan Movement.²⁷ Gandhiji was given a warm reception by the people of Sambalpur. Gandhiji along with Nrusingha Guru, Benimadhav Supkar and A.V. Thakkar visited Harijan bustee at Thelkopara (a place in Sambalpur town) . He was pleased at the neatness of the bustee and encouraged the Harijan for further improvement. He was given a present of rupees

60 by the Harijans. At 5:00 p.m., a meeting was held on the bed of the river Mahanadi of Sambalpur town. Gandhiji was presented with citation written by Bhagirathi Mishra, ex-editor of "Seva" and it was read out by Benimadhav Supkar, the president of the meeting. Gandhiji then delivered his speech and explain the welfare of the Harijans. At the end of the meeting and amount of rupees 998 had been collected from Jharsuguda and Sambalpur.²⁸

The nationalist struggle against the alien government because more vigorous and purposeful here after. As a result, the Government took some steps for the upliftment of harijans. In 1946, the Temple Entry Authorization Act was passed by the Government of Odisha for the upliftment of Harijans. In the same Year the Government also passed the Odisha Removal of Civil Disability Act, 1946, for the untouchability and it was appended to the Constitution of India later on.

II) Role of poets and writers

The prominent middle class intellectuals played a significant role in the socio- political revolution in the 2nd half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century some of them made remarkable contribution in the field of Odia literature. Some played very important role in the spread of Ideas relating to social reform ideas in Sambalpur. They were bent upon uplifting Odia community from a lamentable State administrative neglect and social degeneration.

Bhima Bhoi (1850-1895), was a blind poet who belong to the Kandh tribe. He could compose poem extempore. Through blind and deprived of education, he composed verses which reveal high philosophical thoughts and divine inspiration, Bhima Bhoi's literary creation always carried a special message for the exploited people of Odisha and he attempted through their pages as much as through his field work to instil a new faith in them. He laid bare the superstition that had polluted the entire social atmosphere and had emasculated the people of Sambalpur and laid stress on a fresh and free National life. Even he could sing the song of eternal sacrifice.³⁰ His following poem became world famous and inscribed on the wall of the United Nation Organisational Hall.

"Pranika Arata Dukha Apramita Dekhu Dekhu Keba Sahu "Mo Jibana Pache Narke Padithau Jagata Udhara Heu" (witnessing the plethora of plights on earth how one could bear with, let my soul go to hell but let the world be saved)".

Gangadhar Meher (1862-1924) is regarded as the nature poet of Odia literature. Through his writing, poet Gangadhar evinced great patriotism, love for language, culture and tradition. His Epic *Utkal Laxmi* and poem *Utkala Bharatira Ukti*, Matrubhumi, Udbodhana and other creation depict his nationalist spirit and project the poet as a great educationalist.³¹ Meherian poetry attempted to resist attacks on Odia language from various quarters during the later Part of 19th century. Gangadhar Meher was not only a great lover of Odia and Sambalpur, but also a great lover of India. Two important factors were responsible to influence Gangadhar to be a nationalist. Firstly, the background of the place where he was born and lived. The resistant movement of the great hero Veer Surendra Sai of Sambalpur against the British ruler was such and even in the history of Indian Freedom Movement, which signified the nationalist spirit of the people of Sambalpur. This was the background of his locality, which encourage him to be a patriot. Secondly, he as a nationalist, was also influenced by the Indian Freedom Movement under the able leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who visit Odisha in 1921. So, this movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi deeply influenced him, and as a result he wrote his lyric *Bharati Bhavana* in 1923 to give expression to his national spirit. Through the lyric, he vehemently criticized the corrupt administration and attitude of British rulers in India. Gangadhar Meher was a liberal nationalist. His revolutionary and appealing litetary works generated great interest among the Odia people to work for the development of their motherland and mother tongue. His writing depict, in an innovative, inimitable, colloquial style, the condition that prevailed in the society the superstition and also political chaos that confronted Sambalpur.

Brajamohan Panda (1890-1965) – Brajamohan, an affectionate son of both the goddess of learning and Riches was born on 5 June, 1890. Brajamohan was not a man to idle away the time by chitchatting of gossiping. Brajamohan was a voracious reader. He got the opportunity to come in direct contact with the celebrated poet and writers of Odisha, specially with Vyash Kabi Fakir Mohan and Swavab Kabi Gangadhar. His own writings :- *Youbana Gatha*, *Prateekshita Radha*, *Huma Jatra* etc. indicate his patriotic feeling and attachment to the mother land. He, himself was not a writer but also a patron of Oriya literature. As fragrant flowers blossom and fade a way in the forest, like that the poetic genius of Gangadhar would not have come in the lime-light in the absence of Brajamohan. Brajamohan Panda could not resist himself from hearing the bugle-call of Mahatma Gandhi and joined the Non co-operation Movement and attended the Congress Session held at Ahamadabad in 1921 along with other fifteen Congress workers of Sambalpur. He opened one High School (1938) at his native place Larambha and he also opened a College (1964) to facilitate the poor students of rural area to go for higher education. Keeping in the view various Development work a “Trust Fund” was creaked to which the contribution for the Brajamohan was the highest. His contribution for the establishment of Gangadhar Meher College, at Sambalpur, Engineering College, at Burla was also note worthy. Rightly people are called him as “Palliratna Brajamohan Panda” as well as a man with firm conviction. Western Odisha lost him on 14th March, 1965 for whom she was proud of.

All this Odia intellectual held before the common man the lens through which he could see what threatens him socially, culturally, politically and which made him ever of the danger that lie ahead. Contribution of Zilla School of Sambalpur to the cause of social and political reformations are remarkable. This school was the product of lofty idealism of a few young intellectuals who were convinced that much of the evil could be eradicated through proper development and training of the young. first time in the history of India, the students of Zilla School were to adopt the Non Co-operation Moment and boycott the classes.³² The walls of the school were filled with posters during the slogans like "do not go to school"

iii) Awakening of women

Among the pioneer women leaders of Sambalpur, Jambobati Devi, Prabhobati Devi and Parbati Giri stood foremost inspired by nationalistic and progressive ideas, they took active part in nation building activities. Most of them were not only great freedom fighters but also outstanding social workers. On the whole, it can be said that they had a tremendous influence on the social, cultural and political life of Sambalpur in the 20th century.

Jambobati Devi (1886 - 1943) Jambobati Devi was one of the most remarkable personality of modern Sambalpur. She was an active participant in the National Movement and a pioneer of the women's movement in Sambalpur. Jambubati Devi was the first woman freedom fighter of Western Odisha and took active part in the Swadeshi Movement.³³ Herself and her husband Bhagirathi Pattanaik and son Prafulla suffered imprisonment for about five times. Jambuvathi Devi took an active interest in the eradication of untouchability and the spread of khadi. As, she was an ardent believe in the Gandhian philosophy of rural movement. Jambobati Devi was not only a distinguished leader of National Movement but also a social worker of national fame. She was basically a humanist. Jambobati Devi is remembered gratefully for her contribution to the upliftment of Sambalpur's down-trodden people

Prabhobati Devi (1910- 1998) Among the great leaders of modern Sambalpur Prabhobati Devi occupied an important place. She is a prominent leader of the Freedom Movement and a famous social worker. She dedicated her life to the cause of the poor, the unfortunate and the oppressed. She was affectionately called Nani (Elder Sister) in the every nook and corner of Sambalpur. Her generosity to the orphan, depressed classes and women of Sambalpur was fabulous. In 1938, she came in close contact with Malati Chaudhary at Bari (Cuttack). In August 1942, Quit India Movement was launched. It spared like wildfire to different of Sambalpur. Prabhobati Devi took important part in the Quit India Movement, when she was only 26 years old.³⁴

She courted important till 1944. On release from prison, Prabhavati Devi opened "Shiksha Shivir" for illiterate women at Bargaon.³⁵

After being released from the jail, she dedicated herself to social service. She joined the Charkha Movement and organised different centers to train the villagers in the use of Charkha and weaving cloth, where constructive activities were undertaken for the upliftment of women and spread of literacy among them. She was a lady of remarkable simplicity. Thus, Prabhavati Devi played a significant role in the building of modern Sambalpur, after independence for the orphans she founded 'Rukmini Lath Balniketan' at Chhachanpali (Near Bargaon).

Parvati Giri (1926- 1995) The next towering personality was Parvati Giri. She is a prominent leader of the Freedom Movement and also a famous social worker. Parvati Giri joined the Freedom Movement when she was only 12 years old. She was one of the pioneers of Harijan welfare in Sambalpur. She was a great champion of Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1942, she took active part in the Quit India Movement for which, she was sentenced to two years imprisonment.³⁶ Parvati Giri was inspired by the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi. She was a great supporter of the Congress movement in Sambalpur. She was a perennial source of inspiration for the oppressed, depressed and helpless. Her activities, no doubt gave a great deal of encouragement to women's movement in Sambalpur. Rightly the people are called her "Banhi Kanya" or daughter of fire.

Thus, these women pioneers were able to awaken a general interest and enthusiasm among the educated and on educated women folk in Sambalpur both through individual and joint efforts. They were not only active participants in the Odia National Movement but were also great champions of women's emancipation Movement. The first meaningful social reform that came in the wake of renaissance was the abolition of inhuman practice of Sati. Thereafter the widows were liberally treated. Consequently, the women in general were found to have enjoyed greater freedom. Ground was also prepared for introduction of widow-remarriage.³⁷ Child-marriage was indirectly discouraged.³⁸ It opened a new vision of the women of Sambalpur. They became conscious of their social status.

Today the women no longer remain confined to the four walls of their houses. They are marching on equal footing with their male partners. Prominent leaders like Jambobati Devi, Prabhavati Devi, Parvati Giri and others freed themselves from the age-old restriction of Purdah and offered themselves at the altar of Freedom Movement. Thus the work of these pioneer women leaders forms a brilliant chapter in the history of social and national progress in modern Sambalpur.

6. Conclusion

It was in the beginning of the 20th century that they started to involve themselves in socio-political movement of Sambalpur. The chief instrument through which the political, social, educational and modern ideas spread in Sambalpur was the modern education. The impact of modern ideas became visible. During the period 1862 to 1947, it was deep and far-reaching. The educated masses and the middle class people of Sambalpur were the first to feel humiliation of foreign subjection. In course of time, the best among them became the leaders, poets, organisers of the National Movement, Language Agitation and Utkal Union Movement as a result, Odisha got statehood on 1st April 1936. The leading mind of Sambalpur like Chandra Shekhar Behera, Dharanidhar Mishra five elite persons like Madan Mohan Mishra, Brajmohan Pattanaik, Balabhadra Supkar, Mahanta Bihari Das, and Shripati Mishra along with Jambobati Devi, Prabhavati Devi and Parvati Giri a wave of unrest swept over the thinking minds as the education progressed. Out of the unrest "The renaissance in Sambalpur" begins to take shape.

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