

The Peasants' Mobilization in Colonial Odisha under the Socialist Leadership

Amit Kumar Nayak

Research scholar

Department of History

Utkal University, Odisha

India

Abstract

The peasants' struggle in Odisha started to surface as soon as the British conquered Odisha in 1803. Those struggles centred round many agrarian and non-agrarian issues. Up to the end of the civil disobedience movement the peasant struggles in Odisha passed through different phases with changing nature and characters--from popular autonomous movements (Paik rebellions, Prajamandal movements, Ghumsur rebellions, tribal movements) to locally organised peasant movements (movements under Praja Pratinidhi Sabha, Zamindari Raiyat's Association). These movements were not purely based on class line. However, with the change of time, the peasants in Odisha being uneducated, backward and relatively less mobilised required a strong ideological current to be united in order to redress its grievances. That, especially, became indispensable in the early 1930s. A band of leaders of the socialist ideology came forward, provided a platform to the peasants in the form of krushaka sanghas and organised them along class-line. This article tries to present how the poor peasants of Odisha were unified and organised under the "socialist ideology". This article also endeavours to highlight major agrarian issues of that time and the challenges faced by the peasant leaders in their effort to redress the peasants' cause.

Keywords: Peasants, agrarian, krushaka, sangha, autonomous, movement, rebellion, socialist and ideology, abwabs, bethi, begari, gothi, raiyat

Introduction

The notion of class-less society, non-existence of private property, dominance of peasants and labours on land and industry, equal distribution of surplus value and an egalitarian society with much say for the oppressed--the cardinal principles of Socialism/Marxism---though originated in western Europe, found its objectification in Russia in the wake of the famous Bolshevik revolution of 1917 when the interim capitalist government was replaced by the Soviet. That was the victory of the proletariat i.e., the workers, the peasants, and the slaves etc., over the age old capitalist system. As this revolutionary transformation of Russian society was an open threat to the European capitalistic society and its brain child i.e., colonialism, as the revolutionary sequel stood by free society and Free State. It was inevitable that the way the revolution was operationalised by the peasants and workers would found its echo in the world, especially, in colonized Asiatic states. India was not an exception to it. This innovative socialist ideas, though reached India in late 1920s,¹ started to gain currency in post civil disobedience movement phase and in Odisha as a part of it, giving birth a complex phenomenon in Indian political circle i.e., the emergence of a band of radical leaders. On the other hand, the post-Civil Disobedience movement India and Odisha witnessed a radical transformation not only in the political horizon but also in the socio-economic sphere as well. It was partly because of the resultant forces that came out of the frustration caused due to the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement and partly due to the gradual loss of confidence in Gandhi's leadership and the efficacy of All Indian Congress Party. This transformation compounded by germination of the socialist ideas found its manifestation in the emergence of radical ideas within or outside the Congress circle, the emergence of class consciousness among the peasants, youths, women and depressed classes. It was too resulted in the formation of numerous class-based organizations, and an era of intense anti-imperialist struggle along the constitutional lines.

Of all those important developments in mid-nineteen thirties, the coming of a new and nation-wide awakening among the Indian peasants realizing their own strength and capacity to organize themselves for the betterment of their living conditions² was the most important, as it was alien to the age old tradition of India. This new awakening among this subaltern class³ was largely a result of, apart from the deep impact of Marxism, the combination of particular economic and political developments i.e., (a) The Depression which brought agricultural prices crashing down to half or less of their normal levels, dealt severe blow to impoverished peasants. (b) The refusal of Government to scale down the taxations (c) The stagnation of prices of manufactured goods.⁴ (d) Inability of Indian National Congress to do more for peasants.

Colonial Odisha bore the same symptoms and transformation in post-Civil Disobedience Movement phrase. A band of young and energetic congress workers filled up with frustration also got attached to the newly emerging radical ideas. It was those leaders who came forward to give a new dimension to peasants' struggle of Odisha by organizing them along Marxian line. Therefore, this article intends to analyze how the peasants were mobilized and aroused around different issues during this period. Apart from it, this article also tries to assess the ability and accomplishments of the leaders of socialist ideology for the peasants cause in Odisha in a broader perspective. In order to draw a balanced judgment as to these objectives, the following questions demand to be answered—(a) what was the background for coming of radical left ideas in Odisha and why were the peasants attracted to it? (b) Who were those leaders, and whether they belonged to the poor peasants' community or outside their community? (c) What is 'mobilization' and why did they need leaders of radical ideas for their mobilization? (d) What were the major peasants' issues and challenges for leader's activism then, and what were the means adopted by the leaders for their mobilization?

Despite huge peasants' participation in the Civil-Disobedience Movement, the assurance of Utkal Provincial Congress Committee (UPCC) or District Congress Committees to the peasants could not be fulfilled because of pre-mature suspension of the movement, for which the peasants in Odisha were no longer ready to have faith in leaders of Gandhian strategy for redressing their immediate grievances. Obviously, they started looking for an alternative avenue, not because of the rise of class consciousness among themselves, in the fast changing Indian politics and in the time of intra-congress crisis.⁵ The situation was becoming complicated gradually due to the economic depression of 1930s, and its negative resultant forces i.e., the hike of prices of consumer goods, high taxation, intensification of zamindari oppression and callous government attitude etc. To be frank, there is no specific class-based organization for peasants in the then Odisha except the *Ganjam District Zamindary Rayots Association*⁶ in comparison with other regions of India⁷. Thus, there was enough space for both the leaders inhibited with radicalism and the participants searching for new outlets, which altogether created a conducive situation for mutual discourse in the periods to come.

Meanwhile, a band of leaders—both young and old, and both experienced and fresh—emerged in the scene. They were Nabakrushna Choudhury, Malati Choudhury, Gourchandra Das, Gouranga Charan Das, Sudhir Chandra Ghose, Dr. Nripen Sen, Surendranath Dwivedy, Manmohan Choudhury, Pranath Patnaik and Guru charan patnaik etc., most of whom were learned in Kashi Vidyapith, a famous institution then. They met secretly and formed "*Utkal Congress Samyavadi Karmi Sangha*" (UCSKS) on the pattern of '*Seva Samiti*' as a forum for discussion and with the objectives of "working effectively for the establishment of an unfettered Socialist Republic in India through all legitimate means with conformity of Gandhian principles"⁸. They also planned, at first, for fighting against Casteism and Untouchability to be nearer of the proletariat. Thus, we see that there was no agenda for peasantry at the outset. But the situation got changed with the development taken place in all-Indian level.

By October 1934, the leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, Minoo Manasi and others, who by then got disillusioned in Gandhian strategy for struggle for independence, formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) at Bombay within the congress party to "give the congress and the national, movement a socialist direction" by "organizing the workers and peasants in their class organizations and waging struggle for their economic demands".⁹ After getting the direction from Jayaprakash Narayan, the organizing secretary of All India Congress Socialist Party, Utkal Congress Samyavadi Karmi Sangha turned into the Orissa branch of the All India Congress Socialist Party in August, 1934. Nabakrushna Choudhury, Malati Devi and S.N. Dwivedy represented Orissa Congress Socialist Party in the first all India Congress of the CSP held at Bombay October 1934,¹⁰ where the participants were directed by Acharya Narendra Dev, to form workers' and peasants' organization as soon as possible and led them to fight for their cause.

Some of the leaders in the Indian National Congress having belief in Marxism, found in the peasant and the labour an insight to carry on anti-colonial struggle through their class-based organizations. Because it was inevitable, argues Mirdula Mukharjee, that the important work of Marxist revolution- arises especially in the colonial countries to unite the workers and peasants by taking up their struggle against economic exploitation and for land¹¹. In 1934 Acharya Narendra Dev directed the local congress leaders to organize the workers and peasants in their class organizations, wage struggles for their economic demands and make them the social base of the national struggle.

Against this background, the Odisha branch of congress socialist party started taking initiative to carry out the direction of the High commands. Soon they found some of the most formidable problems in that direction.

Challenges before the Leaders for Peasants' Mobilization

Forming peasants' as well as *raiyat's* unions or organizing and mobilizing them for their cause was extremely difficult at that time due to some endogenic as well as exogenic factors. The endogenic factors were nothing but the complex composition of the peasantry class in the then time, whereas the exogenic factors were simply the by-products of the combination of the relatively backward looking peasants and the hegemony of the alien zamindari system.

The complex composition of the peasantry community was itself a factor for their passiveness. The peasantry, due to (i) its professional operation from the fellow mate on the basis of place of working and nature of labor engaged (ii) its living in scattered villages in a dispersed way (iii) its complex and heterogeneous composition as a class since it includes bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, semi-proletariat and proletariat, lacks self-mobilization, objectivity in aims, clear cut class consciousness. Eric wolf contends that the peasants often requires outside leaders for their struggle because of certain characteristics of peasants – first, a peasants' work is activated alone on his land, secondly, the tyranny of work weights heavily upon them¹². A.R. Desai also argues that in India the peasants due to organic weakness social and psychological--dispersion on a vast area, heterogeneous, social composition and conservative¹³. In nutshell, we can say that due to illiteracy, ignorance, back-ward looking and being chained in caste-ridden norms. The leaders also viewed the peasant community from these perspectives.

The most formidable challenge before the leaders was the perception of the peasants to their zamindars during that time. It was not strange as the hegemony of the zamindars in the society. (a) Non-availability of suitable area for initiating a radical step. It means that most of the areas were under the control of either zamindars or the feudatory states ,who had hegemony (b) Backwardness of Agriculture coupled with non-existence of any big individual agricultural farmer indifferent to the zamindars (c) Peasants' perception towards the zamindars. S.N. Dwivedy observes the peasants were scared to death by the zamindars¹⁴. As a matter of fact that the zamindars had a propound hegemony over the poor so much so that they were considered to be the *avatar* (incarnation) of God and whosoever dared to challenge it, had to bear the burnt in the form of rigorous punishment. (d) The unholy nexus between the government and the zamindars complicated the whole situation. It means the verdict or justice was obviously in favour of the landed gentry in case a tussle arose between the poor peasant and them. (e) The atrocities of choukidars etc¹⁵.

Against this background, the leaders of Odisha branch of CSP thought that if the peasants were set free from the fear of zamindars, were inhibited with them the confidence that this emerging leaders could be the savior for them and were aroused, educated, organized and politicized along class ideology, an effective peasants' movement could be carried out. The first stage in that direction was to find out the objective issue out of the subjective issues, get them accepted unanimously and mobilize the peasants around it.

Issues

The breach effected by the British conquest of India in her old land system based on village right over land, the coming of land as private property which could be mortgaged, purchased on sold coupled with the negative resultant forces originated out of it, created a situation where the peasantry were compelled to rise in revolt.

Etymologically an 'issue' means an important topic that people are discussing or arguing about or a problem that somebody has with something. An issue or a demand that is potent enough to mobilize the peasantry into protest or revolt is always legitimate and rightful.¹⁶

The analysis of the peasants' demands from the third decade of the twentieth century to the end of the fourth decade of the same century shows the following 'Issues' which mobilized the peasants:

Government taxation emerged as one of the major issues around which peasant protest surfaced in many parts of India.¹⁷ In Odisha too taxation on land or land rent was central to the peasants' resentment in 1930s and 1940s. In the temporary settled estates rent was increased by the zamindars quite disproportionately due to lack of security of tenure and fixity of the rent by the government. In the permanently settled area, due to absence of any regulation from the government the zamindars too used to collect more rents. Apart from it, the frequency in the rent hike abnormally aggravated the situation. The peasant conferences under the banner of congress socialist as well as communist leaders frequently demanded to the government for lowering taxation, remission of taxation as well as proper regulation of the taxation. Besides this, many peasants' movements in Puri, Cuttack and Balasore districts planned and implemented the 'no-revenue' as well as 'no-tax' campaign during the Non Co-operation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement periods.¹⁸

Collection of the illegal dues or cesses called *abwabs* by the zamindars besides the regulated rents had also been an important 'Issue'. T.E. Ravenshwa, the Commissioner of Odisha, wrote to the Board of Revenue that there were few, if any, who do not, more or less in some form or other, levy cesses over and above the settlement rents, and in excess of the legitimate demands due on agreements with their tenantry.¹⁹ Peasants in many princely states along with the demands of UPKS in different conferences and meetings against the collection of *abwabs* amply proved the gravity of the 'Issue'.

The question of tenants' occupancy rights over land they cultivated the trees and ponds they had with their cultivated lands had also been an important 'issue' behind peasants' discontentment in colonial Odisha. Under the permanent as well as temporary zamindari settlement areas, the peasants or tenants did not have any rights to own lands. Even they were not allowed to use the trees and ponds freely. The demands made in every Krushak Sangha conferences in 1930s and 40s and the government legislation on this issue in 1937 certainly proves the rightfulness of the 'issue' for widespread peasants' discontents.

Remission or exemption of rents of debts had also been another important issue. In other words widespread rural indebtedness, a resultant side effect of the newly imposed capitalistic agrarian system deemed to be an important challenge in the way of development of peasantry.²⁰ Having been originated from an agrarian economy, the poor peasants used to go to the village money lenders known as *Sahukars; Mahajans, Sabarkars* for borrowing money known as *runa, karaja*, for various agrarian and non-agrarian purposes. Not finding any way to borrow, the poor tenants had to mortgage his parental lands or cultivated lands for that purpose. Due to high arrears and being unable to pay the sum, the borrower had to suffer from great hardship and oppression from moneylenders. Even this process resulted in rampant transfer of lands to the hands of unproductive moneylenders leading to 'Sub-infeudation' and 'absentee-landlordism'. As a proof of the existence of widespread indebtedness in rural Odisha, S.L. Maddox's final report on the survey and settlement of the province of Orissa show that 80% of the peasants were ... more or less permanently indebted in Orissa.²¹ While the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee's investigation report 1929-30 put the figure of indebtedness of the 822,000 rural householders of coastal Odisha alone at 7 crores.²² Though the government gave advances to cultivators under the land improvement loans Act XII of 1894, the amount of advance was very less and disproportionate on the other hand high interest rates were charged from the beneficiaries. The gravity of this 'Issue' can be easily known provided we see the resolution of the first, second and third UPKS(Utkal Provincial Kishan Sabha) conferences. The pre-election Congress manifesto along with Kisan manifesto of 1936 in Odisha included this issue atop in the agenda. The peasants' campaign in Khurda, Puri, Jajpur, and Cuttack against the growing rural indebtedness in 1930s and 1940s certainly proves the intensity of this issue.

Movements against forced labour variously known as *bethi, begari* and unpaid labour known as *gothi*, etc, seemes to have been an important issue behind peasants' movement in colonial Odisha. In the zamindari areas of Ganjam and Koraput districts as well as in many zamindari estates of the three coastal districts, this phenomenon was rampant. *Bethi, begari* or *gothi* were the means adopted by the landed gentry to compel the poor tenants to be obliged and to fulfill their productive labor in their advantages. The official report of the government confirmed about the practice of such illegal exaction by the proprietary holders and their agents viz., *Sunia bheti, Baha Kharacha, magan, piada miadi, bisodhani, salami, and najrana*.²³ In Sambalpur the zamindars collected dues at *Dasahara, Pousa Purnima and Rakhi Purnima* from the *thikadar*.

The District zamindary Association, Districts Raiyat Sabha of Ganjam, Seragada Raiyat's conference had been demanding the abolition of this hated system in toto. Even the Congress Socialist Party under Nabakrushna Choudhury and subsequent UPKS patronized raiyats' movements demanded its abolition. The peasants' movements assumed serious proportions in the coastal districts of Odisha where the peasants demanded the abolition of zamindary system and *bethi* and *begaris*.²⁴

Many peasants' disturbances in colonial Odisha occurred on the issue of abolition of "a chain of intermediaries" between the state and the actual rural cultivators. The raiyats earnings like the course of a stream passed through the hands of the zamindars, the collectors and numerous other hands till it finds its way into the hands of the revenue secretary where it is lost to public view like the sacred Ganga concealed in the matted hairs of Shiva.²⁵ To quote Prof. Amal Kumar Mishra, the mere existence of so many intermediary interests in land below that of the zamindars viz., *padhans*, *mukadammas*, *Tankidars*, *Sarbarakaras*, *Lakhranj bahaldars*, *kharidars* etc. contributed to make the development of agriculture and the living standard of the agriculturists depending on it, further lopsided..... to a deplorable state".²⁶ As a result of the existence of a pyramidal owners of the produce, the tenants usually suffered the most. This complex system usually resulted in gross oppression and exploitation and above all, in the gradual pauperization of cultivators. The mobilization of the poor peasants along the line of this issue was widespread in both temporarily and permanently settled areas in coastal Odisha in 1930s and 1940s.

The abolition of zamindary system as an agrarian institution side by side setting up of direct connection between the government and the rentee emerged as an eye-catching 'Issue' in the late nineteen thirties and early nineteen forties. The peasants, as a result of growing class consciousness and intense national movement, came to believe that "their whole misery and piteous condition had been originated out of the colonial created and patronized zamindari system. During early phase of the peasants' disturbances in Odisha this 'Issue' was not found at all. However, in the second Utkala provincial Krushak Conference at Puri in 1936, then in the Congress pre-election manifesto, in the Calcutta *Odia Krushak Mahasabha*,²⁷ the leaders demanded 'Outright abolition of zamindari' system in Odisha in late nineteen forties. The peasants were mobilized and induced to forcibly do this under the banner of Communist leaders.

Apart from the above major 'Issues', many others 'issues' induced the peasants to rise in revolt or to organize movements. The root of these issues lied with stagnant agricultural development, government apathy to agriculture, irrigation, safety of cowherds, mismanaged policies related to the export of agricultural produce. One of the most interesting points to note down here was that the peasants used to rise in revolt spontaneously in the wake of severe famine, flood, and rent hike in colonial Odisha, which amply proves the inability of government to tackle the situation as well as indifferences of the same to alleviate them.

In nutshell, it may be concluded that the peasants were mobilized in colonial Odisha by the Socialists during the proposed period occurred along the 'Issues' like against the creation of zamindari system as an agrarian institutions, rigidity in the process of tax collection unregulatedly, collection of illegal cesses, presences of a chain of intermediaries, widespread rural indebtedness, outright transfer of cultivated lands to the unproductive hands, and government inability and indifferences towards impoverished *mofussils* in times of flood, drought and famine. Early steps for peasants' mobilization:

The mobilization of peasantry in colonial Odisha was not accomplished all of sudden. Rather, it took many years to reach at its zenith. The CSP leaders had, as already told, basically two objectives viz., (i) arousing peasants dwelled in *mofussils* and building a positive psychosis among them towards Marxism and the leaders concerned through popularizing the radical ideas of their party ; (ii) Organizing the peasants along class line through the creation of a specific peasants' organization. Therefore, the leaders took recourse to the following ways in fulfillment of these two objectives:

- (a) With the formation of CSP, a weekly Newspaper called *Sarathi* under the editorship of Nabakrushna Chaudhury was brought out. Primarily it aimed at politicizing and uniting the peasantry and working class.
- (b) The CSP leaders also started publishing a weekly journal called *Krushak*. This journal popularized the radical ideas of the Congress Socialist Party and offered a new direction to the peasants' movement of Odisha.
- (c) The *Nabajuga* forum of Revenshaw College²⁸ also started publishing *Rakta Sikha* with a view to propagating radical ideas among the mass.

- (d) Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, a staunch Socialist and a future Communist, edited a Monthly journal called *Adhunika*, in which he left no stone unturned in popularizing the left ideas among the peasants and working class, creating the class consciousness among them.
- (e) The leaders also manipulated all possible opportunities available at that time. For an example, in the wake of a flood of Devi river, the Socialist leaders mainly S. N. Dwivedy visited the flood affected village, distributed relief and mingled with the poor villagers. As a result of which he personally experienced the plights and misery of them.²⁹
- (f) The leaders, especially Malati Choudhury and Gourang Charan Das, moved in remote villages on foot or by bullock-carts propagating against the oppression of zamindars and money-lenders. They went to village from villages, held meetings, getting peasant's signature on a printed appeal to the Government asking for remission in land revenue because of crop failure which was latter on presented to the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, Patna. It was so propound that it touched the hearts of the common people which, in turn, created a positive psychosis in the minds of the chained poor towards the ability of the leaders.³⁰
- (g) One of the important tools used by the leaders in Odisha to mobilize the masses was through their speeches on the occasion of various annual days viz., on the death anniversaries of Gopabandhu Das, Balgangadhar Tilak; on 13 July commemorating the day of Salt Satyagraha, on 1 May observing *Sramik divas* etc.,³¹

Coming of Class-Based Organization and Mobilization of Peasantry

The most commendable work of the CSP leaders in Odisha was the creation of an all Odisha peasants' forum in the form of Utkal Provincial Krushak Sangha (Utkal Provincial Krushak Sangha) in 1935. The leaders like Malati Choudhury, S.N. Dwivedy, Naba Krushna Choudhuri, Gauranga Charan Das and many others played the pioneered role, with Mahatab becoming its president while Malati Choudhury as its Secretary.³² The Utkal Provincial Krushak Sangha, starting from its' first conferences at Bhagalpur in Cuttack District to the dissolution of CSP in 1939, proved its' importance not only as a class organization but also as a peoples' organization in the national movement. The affiliation of UPKS to the All Indian Kisan Sabha, the representation of socialist peasants' leaders of Odisha in AIKS³³, the coming and active participation of many socialist leaders of all-Indian repute in UPKS³⁴, and active role of the socialist leaders in different peasant issues necessitated the coming of a strong political current among the peasantry of Odisha. The peasants' consciousness had been positively transformed when the peasants started demanding abolition of zamindari system in Odisha. The leaders utilized peasants' growing consciousness in the struggle for National Independence. The major demands of the peasants of Odisha under UPKS led by the CSP leaders were including abolition of Zamindari system, a complete remission of rents and taxes for all whose annual income was less than Rs. 250.00 and a debt moratorium for five years³⁵. remission of rents at 50% and remission of arrear land revenue, remission of water taxes, *raiya*'s full rights over the lands, transfer of lands to the tillers, abolition of Zamindari system, Government acts and regulations for socio-economic development of the peasantry like providing free primary education to the poor students, instituting hospitals for poor farmers in rural areas.³⁶ Abolition of the post of the *Sarbarakanas* and appointment of clerks in their place to realize, amendment of forest laws and granting of more privileges to the tenants, construction of good roads, abolition of taxes levied for fishing in chilika³⁷. Even UPKS under the socialist leaders so deeply influenced the Odisha politics in 1940s that the Congress Party in Odisha accepted the demand of zamindari abolition as a principle in the Congress election manifesto in Odisha³⁸. Nomination of many peasants' leaders by Utkal Provincial Congress Committee in the election to the Odisha Legislative Assembly, and Bisanatha Das's, one of the prominent peasant leader, becoming the prime minister in 1937 in OLA were seen as the result of the propound peasants' mobilization in 1940s. Therefore, it seemed that the peasants' mobilization reached at its zenith by the end of 1939 only due to the tireless efforts of the Socialist leaders in Odisha.

Before we make an assessment of the process of peasants' mobilization in colonial Odisha under the Socialist leadership, it deemed necessary to examine the socio-economic background of those leaders who pioneered peasants' mobilization along radical ideologies in order to find out the answer as to whether the peasants were mobilized by the leaders coming from within or outside of their community.

Nabakrushna Choudhury, born in 1901 in a landlord's family of kherasa village of Jagatsinghpur, with sound educational qualification, was a founder member of the UCSKS, UPKS as well as a radical congressman. Malati Devi Choudhury, a civil rights and social activist born in an upper "middle class Brahmin family" in Bengal was too a member of UPKS as well as a Congressmen.

She was also a founder member and active leader of the UCSKS and UPKS. Surendranath Dwivedy, born in a "rich peasant family", was a Congressman, founder member of UCSKS and UPKS. He actively participated in Non-Cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement before joining in peasants' struggle. Gouranga Charan Das, an eminent freedom fighter who was born in a Karana aristocracy family in Cuttack, was an active peasant as well as Dalit leader. He also participated in Civil Disobedience Movement and became the president of Cuttack District *Krushak Sangha* subsequently. Harekrushna Mahatab, an eminent freedom fighter and a whole time Congress worker, belonged to a well-to-do family of Bhadrak. It was he who actively participated in the peasant movement in Odisha in 1930s and 1940s.³⁹

Besides the above leaders, many other actively participated and led the peasants' movements at the local, provincial as well as national level during 1935-39. They were namely Gour Chandra Das, Lingaraj Mishra, Bhagirathi Mohapatra, Loknatha Mishra, Jagannath Das, Dwarikanath Das, Ananta Patnaik, Pani Shankar Roy, Raghunath Mohapatra, Sudhir Chandra Ghose, Dr. Dipen Sen, and many others, each of whom had well socio-economic origin.. In short, the peasants of Odisha were mobilized, organised by the leaders of well-to-do origin with deep faith in socialism in the early nintenth forties.

As we observe that most of the Socialist leaders who led the peasants were drawn from the intelligentsia belonging to either aristocracy family or landowning family or rich peasant family whichever could be marked in case of the leaders of All India Kisan Sabha.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Socialism/Marxism is an anti-thesis of capitalism. It never believes in exploitation, oppression, but envisages inclusive growth, empowered working class and egalitarianism. Socialistic principles, though entered India in early 1920s, found its echo in India as well as in Odisha in post-Civil Disobedience Movement periods when the working class found themselves wandering in smoke. On the other hand some of the congress leaders by that time understood well that no mass movement could be carried out unless there was a mass mobilization. The leaders also realized that the mass belonged to the *mofussil* dwelling poor peasants and workers, with numerous issues. If these issues coupled with the demands of those leaders be unified, it could bring both the classes together to create a common front against colonialism. Against that back ground peasants came under the leftist ideology. Again question comes; how far these leaders became successful in their objectives. The performances of these leaders vis-a-vis the peasants' cause had more or less been successful and magnificent. In a colonial state i.e., British India characterized by autocratic central authority, limited civil rights, strong pro-state apparatuses, acquired social dissension, and limited governance, it was too difficult on parts of the leaders to do something for peasants personally without the state's active intervention. So in Odisha the leaders, first of all, realized that without a special class organization " the anti-feudal struggle could never be fought by the passive peasants ". Again the leaders experienced that unless the peasants were awakened, aroused, mobilized, and politically educated, no peasant struggle would be fought. The peasant leaders also came to understand the fact that unless and until the popular perception to the Zamindars would change, the peasants living in far-off countryside could hardly come forward to fight for their rights.

Under that circumstances, the peasant leaders proved their pro-peasant traits by creating a congenial atmosphere for wide spread peasants' movement. They personally visited the *mofussil*, viewed the peasants' plight as well as the atrocities of the local zamindars, and tried to awaken them. They made the peasants understood that the unholy nexus between the zamindars and the colonial government was the fundamental cause for their plights. The so called socialist leaders created UPKS at regional level, many *Krushak Sanghas* at district levels as well as village levels i.e., Cuttack District *Krushak Sangha*, Puri District *Krushak Sangha*. They organized meetings, Conferences and *Sabhas* within or without Odisha. They used to have been in contact with the peasant leaders of other provinces, with the leaders of AIKS. Many peasant leaders of national influence i.e., Sahajananda Saraswati, Goutam Lal, J.L. Neheru etc., were invited to address the peasants of Odisha, and to inhibit in them the courage to fight for their cause. In that way the leaders tried to strengthen the peasants' movement in Odisha. It were under those leaders that once unorganized and scattered peasant community were so well organized that the UPCC, once adamant to the class organization, unilaterally accepted all the peasants' demands in its' election manifesto. The leaders chalked out many objective issues out of numerous subjective issues of the peasants, throughout the colonial Odisha moderately, and pressurized the government to consider the same in a positive manner.

In nutshell, it could be concluded that the Socialist leaders were successful in accomplishing the objectives of (i) Creating a class approach, (ii) Creating a framework of organization to mobilize the peasantry independently, (iii) Publishing the *Krushak*, *Sarathi* etc., and propagating the radical ideas among the masses, (iv) Expanding the mass base of Congress party for future struggle for independence.⁴¹ The way they performed throughout the above said period had left a strong and indebt legacy on the peasants' struggles for legitimate rights in the years to come in Odisha.

Notes and References

Bipan Chandra, et.al, Indian Struggle for Independence, New Delhi, 1989, p.300.

Ibid., p.343.

The Subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci's words to any "low rank" person or group of people in a particular society suffering under hegemonic domination of ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation. The only groups Gramsci had in mind at that time were the workers and peasants. To Ranjit Guha, the Subaltern is that clearly definite entity which constitutes "the demographic difference between the total Indian population and the so-called 'elite'". El Habib Louai, Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to spivak: Historical developments and new applications, African journal of History and Culture (AJHC), vol. 4(i) January 2012, pp.4-6.

op.cit., p.343.

Different sets of opinion arose within the Indian National Congress as to what course the national movement should take in the post-Civil Disobedience Movement period. The Gandhians argued for starting constructive works in the villages while another group led by Dr. M. A. Ansari, Asaf Ali etc., argued for the revival of constitutional method of struggle by taking part in forthcoming election. On the other hand, the Left led by J.L. Neheru argued for resumption of non-constitutional struggle for the abolishment of the capitalist system and establishing a socialistic state. In short it can be said that there was an intra-Congress crisis in post-CDM period.

A raiyats' association under the name of Ganjam District Zamindar Ryots Association or Sabha was founded in 1919 with Biswanatha Das as its president. He founded this organization with a view to "protecting the rights of peasants and raiyats covering almost all zamindari estates in the districts of Ganjam then under Madras presidency", and "to fighting against the colonial government." Dr. V.Rajendra Babu, Orisara Baraputra Biswanath Das (Odia), Bhubaneswar, 1998, p.92.

Raiyat's Association and Agricultural and Labour unions were formed in Andhra in 1923, Kishan Sabhas started in Punjab, Bengal and U.P in 1926-27, the Andhra provincial Raiyat's Associations in 1920, U.P. and Oudh Kishan Sabhas in 1918-20. Even these Associations had greatly influenced the All Indian Congress Committee's agenda for Kishan community in 1930s. A.R. Desai, Social background of Indian Nationalism, Mumbai, 2008, p.177.

Surendra Nath Dwivedy, Quest for Socialism; Fifty years of struggle in India, New Delhi, 1984, p.30.

Bipan Chandra, et.al, Indian Struggle for Independence, New Delhi, 1989, p.304.

Op.cit., p.90.

Mirdula Mukharjee, Peasants in India's Non-Violent Revolution: practice and theory, New Delhi, 2004, p.421.

12. Erick Wolf, Peasant Wars in the twentieth century, New Delhi, 1970, p.294.

A.R. Desai, Social Background Of Indian Nationalism, Mumbai, 2008, p.182.

Surendra Nath Dwivedy, op .cit., p.51.

Ibid., p.52.

Mirdula Mukharjee, op.cit., p.466.

Ibid., p.467.

A.C.Pradhan, Freedom Movement in Khruda, Orissa Review, Bhubaneswar, August 2007, p.5.

Proceedings of the Lt. Governor of Bengal, Revenue Department, No.41, Commissioner of Orissa to Board of Revenue, No.218, 11 September, 1871., p.237.

S.L. Maddox, Final Report on the Survey and Settlement of the province of Orissa (Temporary Settled arrears) 1890-1900, Vol.II, Calcutta, 1900, p.124.

K. Deivasikhamoni Mudaliar, Report on the Condition of the Co-operative Movement in Orissa, Cuttack, 1938, p. 143.

- Rajib Lochan Sahoo, *Agrarian change and peasant unrest in colonial India: Orissa (1912-1930)*, New Delhi, 2004, pp.129.
- J.K. Samal, *Economy of Colonial Orissa*, New Delhi, 2000, p.30.
- The Star of Utkala, Cuttack, 11 September, 1912.
- Amal Kumar Mishra, *The Raj, Nationalist and Reforms*, Bhubaneswar, 2007, p.195.
- The Nabeen, Berhampur, 8 December, 1936.
- The Nabajuga Sahitya Sansad consisting of eight members was a literary-cum-cultural forum created by a group of students of the Ravenshaw College with the objectives of disseminating progressive, revolutionary and radical ideas among the associates of the forum. Ananta Charan Patnaik and Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi pioneered the movement. Chandi Prasad Nanda, *Vocalizing Silence: political protest in Orissa*, New Delhi, 2008, p.56.
- Surendra Nath Dwivedy, op.cit, p.61.
- ibid., p.57.
- Rajib Lochan Sahoo, op. cit, p.227.
- Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting domination.....*, New Delhi, 1992, p.88
- Odisha was represented by Harekrushna Mahtab, Lingaraj Misra, Nabakrushna Choudhury, Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Surendranath Dwivedy to the first conference of AIKS in 11 April, 1936 at Lucknow(Chandi Prasad Nanda, *Vocalizing Silence: political protest in Orissa*, New Delhi, 2008, p.68.); Odia Krushak Sammilani was organized on 29 November 1936 at the Willington Squire of Calcutta which was attended by a galaxy of eminent Krushak Sangha as well as Socialist leaders of Odisha like, Harekrushna Mahatab, Jagannath Das, Dwarikanatha Das, Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, Surendranath Dwivedy, Gour Chandra Das, Anata Patnaik, Pari Shankar Roy, Rajkrushna Bose, and Nabakrushna Choudhury. ,(The Nabeen, op.cit., 17 December, 1936).
- Mohanlal Goutam, the Secretary of Uttar Pradesh peasant organization, presided the first conference of Utkal Provincial Krushak Sangha held at Bagalpur of Cuttack Districts., (The Nabeen, op.cit., 7 February, 1936); J.L. Nehru, a staunch socialist of that time, came and attended many meetings on 12 November 1936 at various places in Odisha viz., Delanga, Jatani, and Puri etc. Neheru applauded the mass and told that the oppression of police would cease to exist very soon and “the peasants were requested to join in peasants’ movements and conferences in the body.,(The Nabeen, op.cit., 17 November, 1936); Swami Sahajananda Saraswati, the leader of Bihar Kishan Sangha, attended the second session of Utkal Provincial Krushak Sangha at Puri on 15 November 1936.(Ibid., 8 December, 1936).
- Those were demands of UPKS to Utkal Provincial Congress Committee before the holding of election to Odisha Legislative Assembly under the Government of India Act, 1935. Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting domination*, New Delhi, 1992, p.90.
- Those were some of the eye catching demands made in the all India kisan manifesto passed in AIKS session on 21 August, 1936, which had its echo in Odisha.
- That resolution was passed in the Banapur session of the Puri District Krushak Sangha on 15 June, 1937 under some veteran socialist leaders., Rajib Lochan Sahoo, op.cit., pp.77-78.
- K.M. Patra, *State Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1912-1947*, New Delhi, p.96
- All the data regarding the Socio-Economic and Political backgrounds of the concerned personalities have been freely downloaded from the internet.
- Sunil Sen, *Peasant Movements in India: mid-nineteenth and twentieth century*, Calcutta, p.73.
- Urmila Das , *Peasant Movements In Orissa Under British Raj,(Peoples Movements In Orissa During The Colonial Era, Ediated by A. C. Pradhan and A. K. Patnaik)*, Bhubaneswar, 1994, pp.27-28.