

# The Growth of English Press in Odisha



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THE year 1866 marks a turning point in the history of modern Odisha. A terrible famine struck Puri, Cuttack and Balasore districts, in which nearly ten lakh people, almost a third of the population, perished. It not only exposed weaknesses and deficiencies in the colonial administrative system; it threw the backwardness of the population of Odisha into sharp relief. The British, shocked by their failure to deal with the natural calamity, started introducing several welfare measures. Steps were taken to develop waterways. The False Point, which was considered to possess a great potential as a future harbour, was now surveyed and deepened, and the Kendrapara canal was excavated to establish communication with Cuttack. The East India Irrigation Company, which had been set up in 1862, paid more attention to the excavation of canals. The existing Jagannath Trunk Road and the Cuttack-Sambalpur Road were improved and new roads such as Cuttack-Chandbali Road via Kendrapara, Cuttack-Taladanda Road and Kandarpur-Machagaon Road were constructed. The idea of laying a railway line of the Bengal Nagpur Railway was mooted to link Cuttack directly with Calcutta and Madras. Cuttack Hospital was established in 1874, which became the Orissa Medical School the following year.

Berhampur, then a part of Madras Presidency, became a Municipality in the year 1867. Two years later, in 1869, Kendrapara and Jajpur were constituted into Municipalities. In 1876, Cuttack Municipality was formed. The following year, Balasore Municipality was constituted

and in 1881, Puri became a Municipality. These Municipalities took charge of providing light, drinking water, medical relief and primary education to the public.

For the first time, in 1868, the idea of uniting Odia-speaking tracts into a single administrative unit was expressed by Sir Stafford Northcote, the Secretary of State for India. Steps were taken to improve educational facilities in the province; Cuttack College, later known as Ravenshaw College, came to be set up in 1868.

The Famine awakened the emergent Odia middle classes to the need for voicing their views and opinions. *The Utkal Dipika*, a weekly edited by Gouri Shankar Ray was brought out in 1866 and articulated the aspirations of Odia-speaking people. It was followed by other periodicals such as *Balasore Sambad Bahika* and *Sambalpur Hiteishini*. Of course, in 1861, five years before the catastrophic famine in 1866, the first Odia magazine *Bodha Dayini* was published from Balasore.

The beginning of English journalism in Odisha can also be traced to the Famine. In 1869, two periodicals, *Cuttack Argus* and



*Cuttack Standard* made their appearances, which were followed by another periodical named *Cuttack Chronicle*. A weekly titled *Orissa Patriot* edited by Kalipada Banerji was also published from Cuttack. Another weekly named *Orissa Students* edited by Laxmi Narayan Dasgupta was published from Kendrapara around the same period. In 1905, Babu Khirod Ray Choudhury brought out *Star of Utkal* from Cuttack. Around the same time, a few enterprising journalists of Ganjam brought out an English weekly named *Ganjam News* from Parlakhemidi, the great seat of Odishan culture. These periodicals had a limited readership as the spread of English education in Odisha was slow and there was almost no mechanism for the circulation of these pub-

lications. Three years before the formation of the Orissa Province, on 5th May 1933 to be exact, *The New Orissa*, the first English daily of the soon to-be constituted new Province made its appearance from the Asha Press of Berhampur. It was edited by the great Sashi Bhusan Rath, who was ably assisted by Mr. Sharma and Mr. K.N. Acharya, who came from Madras. During the time of the Second World War in 1942, the Odia daily *Asha* along with its sister publication *New Orissa* changed hands. Mr. M.L. Jajodia, a businessman from Calcutta, who later settled down at Cuttack, purchased it. These two papers gave effective support to war efforts of the British administration and received Government aid. Both were closed down in 1951, marking the end of a great chapter of the pre-independence era journalism in Odisha. However, the *Asha* which was controlled by a Trust set up by Brindavan Nayak in the seventies, resumed its publication from Berhampur.

In the early pre-independence period two English weeklies, *The Orissa First* edited by K.N. Acharya and *The Observer* edited

by Mr. M.S. Mahanty, were brought out from Cuttack. *The Orissa First* commanded respect and prestige in official and enlightened circles.

In the post-independence period, *The Eastern Times*, a publication of the Prajatantra house in Cuttack, made its maiden appearance on the 1st of April 1948. *The Amrit Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta also published an edition from Cuttack, which discontinued after two years. A new English daily titled *News of the World* was published from Cuttack by an enterprising press worker in 1976.

Towards the later part of the twentieth century, with the increase in urban population, demand for English newspapers was greatly felt in Odisha. With the rise in number of English medium schools in the cities and towns, the English reading public became quite visible. Leading English dailies such as *The New Indian Express*, *The Times of India*, *The Economic Times*, *The Business Standard*, *The Statesman*, *The Pioneer*, *The Telegraph*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Asian Age* and *The Political and Business Daily* started bringing out their Bhubaneswar/Cuttack editions. *The Sambad* group brought out an English daily named *The Sun Times*, which later stopped its publication. At the moment, the *Dharitri* house is bringing out an English daily named *The Orissa Post*. These newspapers either bring out a complete local edition or devote a few pages to Odisha news. The Visakhapatnam edition of *The Hindu* also carries a few items of Odisha news. Together, they play an important role in the growth of English press in Odisha.

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## Empowering Forest Dwellers



SARADA LAHANGIR

ANNA Kujur is a familiar name among the tribal people of Sundargarh district. She is a symbol of hope and strength for the people who fight for their rights. She appears in a cotton saree and a pair of slippers, a jhola hanging from her shoulder. This 47 year old tribal woman from Sunajor (Kuten Pain) village moves from village to village, creating awareness among people about the Forest Rights Act (FRA). Anna travels 20 to 25 kilometres almost every day, either on her bicycle or on foot, to facilitate the work of tribal people-helping them get their patta, pursuing their claims and, above all, helping them know their rights under FRA. People call her Anna di. She has so far helped about 2000 tribal people obtain their patta or record of rights.

Sugal Ekka, 44, a woman of Gothbandha village, is all praise for Anna. She says, "Since we had not got the patta of our land, landlords and some others used to demolish our house and take control over our land. We are small farmers who depend on the forest. Unless we cultivate land, we have nothing to eat. However, it was a routine for them to come and destroy our crops. They even threatened us. Due to poverty, I could not send my three children to school. As far as I remember, we never had a day without a problem. However, with the support and guidance of Anna di, we applied for the patta and got it in 2008. After obtaining the right over our land our life took a turn for the better. Now we grow vegetables, seasonal crop on our land and lead a smooth life. And the credit goes to Anna di who works selflessly for people like us."

Malti Balka, 40, a woman from Buda Jharana says, "Till we got our land patta in 2008, we earned our livelihood as daily labourers. Since job was not always available here, it was extremely difficult for us to feed our children. We went to the forest to collect minor forest produce but time and again we were threatened by forest officials, who drove us away. We have been living here since our forefathers' days; still we were branded as encroachers. We did not know how to fight injustice. Sometimes we were forced to migrate to distant places to eke out



a living. Under Anna's leadership, we raised our voice for our rights over the land, which we subsequently got. And now we are very happy. After years of struggle, we have succeeded. Everything has been possible only because of Anna di who has braved all odds for our sake."

Tribal people account for about 50 percent of the population of Sundargarh district. Most of them depend on forest and cultivation for their livelihood. Forest provides them sustenance in the form of minor forest produce, water, grazing grounds and land for shifting cultivation. Like people elsewhere, thousands of tribal people in Sundargarh district have been living in or near the forest lands for decades. As they depend on forest for livelihood, they love and guard it. But unfortunately, even after the implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006, they did not have the legal right over their home, land and livelihood. It is true that under the FRA-2006, they got the Right to use; Right to protect and conserve the forest they live in. However, at the grassroots

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level, things continued as usual. A few government officials exercised power over the forest and forest dwellers. Almost all forest-dwellers inhabiting protected areas faced brutality at the hands of the forest officials. There was a time when these ordinary tribal people, even after having a long and deep bond with the forest, had nothing to show as their own. They ran from pillar to post to get their rights over the land they lived in for decades. But each time their voice went unheard. Their trouble increased when landlords, their henchmen and forest department officials exploited them by demolishing their house and destroying their harvest.

It is during this crucial time that Anna Kujur emerged as an agent of change for the tribal people. Anna, who herself has suffered as a poor landless tribal, vowed to put a stop to the misery of the unfortunate and down-trodden people and bring solace and happiness to their lives. "From my childhood, I wanted to serve people and fight injustice. In the year 2000, I started Athkosia Adivasi Sangathan and have been fighting for their right under this banner. In 2003, I got three-day training from the Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) on the rights of the forest dwellers. After the training, I could know about the Forest Rights Act and the right of the forest dwellers. When Forest Rights Act 2006 came in place, it became slightly easy to achieve my goal. Being at the helm of organising awareness programmes among the forest dwellers of around 148 villages, I mobilised the forest dwellers to be united and to demand for their rights over land. With the help of villagers, we set up a village fund to meet the financial needs for official purposes. It was a challenging task to get the work done and pursue the files in various offices for the land patta but with the help of CSD activists, I could move forward. Today, it gives me immense pleasure when I see the people who got their land patta and are cultivating their land," explains Anna.

Anna, who married Nicholas, has two

daughters and two sons. Being a woman, she faced opposition from the society and from her family as well. Initially, her husband did not want her to keep aside the household work and go out to work for the benefit of others. Many times he has beaten her up. But Anna has never given it up, rather she tried to find out a way to convince her husband and gather courage to face the challenges. One day, Anna took him to a public meeting, where all spoke highly of her. Interestingly, what made her husband happy was that he was also honoured for the good work of Anna. He realized his mistakes and decided to support her. Now he also works actively for the tribal people.

"I was giving her a lot of pain by not giving her support. I realise that her work and her struggle are not limited to the family; it is for the larger community. I also realise that her work requires a lot of patience and courage that most women do not possess. She is the strength of my family," says Nicholas with a sense of pride.

Anna showed tremendous courage to help people in trouble. She noticed that corruption by the forest officials created hindrance in getting patta. In order to get bribe, these petty officials did not hesitate to perpetrate atrocities upon forest-dwellers. Anna wanted to stop all this.

In 2011, she exposed the corruption of the forest officials and got the Ranger suspended for taking bribe from a tribal. She learnt that Banmali Bek, a tribal from Bhalubahal village of Tangarpalli block, was asked by the Ranger of Sanpatra Palli Forest Range to pay a bribe of Rs 2000 to get his approval on the joint verification report for the land patta.

Being a tribal who earned his livelihood as a daily labourer, it was impossible for Bek to fulfill the demand of the Ranger. Bek neither had knowledge nor did he possess courage to oppose the forest official. He met Anna and explained his problem. She guided him and asked him to inform the Vigilance official. Bek did the same, and as a result, the Ranger was caught red-handed. Thus Anna made it a telling example of the forest officials' exploitation of the innocent tribal people.

Today, these tribal forest dwellers believe that the implication of the Forest Rights Act 2006 has become a great success only due to the selfless and dedicated work of Anna. They now produce different kinds of seasonal crops and live without fear.

"No doubt our inherent and democratic right over the forests can be finally restored because of the FRA 2006, but it is also a fact that it would not have been possible if Anna di would not have guided us, facilitated our work and stood by us to fight for our right. We know what an uphill task it was and how it has been achieved. It was all possible due to the dedicated effort of Anna Kujur. We wish there were people like Anna Kujur in every village," said Lundu Tikka and Sadhu Tikka of Sunajor village.

Now Anna is working hard to get community right over the forest under FRA. "My aim is to get Kuten Pain village the status of a revenue village. One day, I will succeed," she sounds confident.

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## How Burari beats off social stigma in the fight against TB

SUMEDHA KIRTI



A throat infection led Prabha Shankar, a resident of Burari in north Delhi to visit a physician over three years ago. After visits to numerous doctors, including ayurvedic and homeopathic ones, Shankar was finally diagnosed with tuberculosis in March this year.

The World Health Organization's Global Tuberculosis Report 2014, published recently shows that 9 million people developed TB in 2013, and 1.5 million died, revealing that there are almost half a million more cases of the disease than previously estimated.

The WHO statement also states that around 3 million people who fall ill from TB are still being 'missed' by health systems each year either because they are not diagnosed, or because they are diagnosed but not reported.

"Diagnosis of tuberculosis takes a lot of time and there is still a social stigma attached to it. What we call 'awareness' on this disease, should not be limited to knowing about it but also taking openly about it even if one has the slightest suspicion. We need to convey this from family to family and remove the stigma," says Shankar.

To combat social stigma, poor adherence to drug regimens and interrupted treatment that are the contributing causes for the spread of TB, the Lilly MDR-TB partnership with TB Alert under the guidance of the Central TB Division of India is helping make TB treatment accessible to communities by empowering local healthcare providers in areas where medical care and medicines are not easily available.

One such area where the TB program has shown results is Burari.

"As far as the TB program is concerned, every one lakh population is supposed to have a DMC (Designated Microscopy Center). Since Burari is an urban-rural settlement, earlier there was no facility. The nearest hospital is

11 kms away, which is in Kingsway Camp. So people either wouldn't go to the hospital or buy some medicine from the nearest chemist to treat themselves," says Sunita Prasad, program manager, Lilly MDR TB partnership.

Before commencing on the project Prasad says a survey was conducted and government help was sought.

"We chose areas which were urban slums or resettlement areas. To identify the area, we had a base survey. We understood the fact that there was no health facility around and people had to either lose a day's wage or invest two-three days to actually go and get themselves diagnosed," she said.

"The government also said on the basis of their data that the area was under-served...The findings also suggested that the area did not have enough case directions. There were a lot of people who were suffering from TB but not getting diagnosed," says Prasad.

According to their data, every year 2 million people die from tuberculosis. With 1.9 million new TB cases each year, India has the highest incidence of tuberculosis in the world accounting for nearly one-fifth of the global incidence.

Although the rate of multi-drug resistant strains of TB (MDR-TB) is relatively low in India, when translated into absolute numbers it comes to an astounding 131,000 cases and presently in India today, two people die from TB every three minutes. Prasad feels that eradication of this disease is only possible when there is more openness about it and it is discussed across platforms.

