

Sadasiba Tripathy - A Revenue Reformer Of South Odisha

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Abstract

Sadasiba Tripathy was the unique politician who made his mark in the history of Revenue Law Reforms for the State of Odisha and scaled upto the position of Chief Minister of Odisha and in the course lost 270 acres of land that he had inherited from his parents. This simple measure can give the clear picture and personality of Sadasiba Tripathy, the worthy son of Koraput district. This bold Freedom Fighter of Koraput will remain forever in the heart and history of Koraput and Odisha for his great contribution and selflessness to the extent that he never groomed his family members to occupy political positions.

Sadasiba Tripathy, has actively participated in the freedom movement of India from the Koraput district as a member of Congress. Responsible for political awakening of the people of Adivasi infested Koraput district, he gave a lead to the people of Koraput district in Freedom Movement. He was imprisoned for one year during individual Satyagraha Movement, 1941 and kept under detention from 1943 to 1945 during 'Quit India Movement' while serving as Secretary, Odisha Bhoodan Yagan Samiti, from 1958-1961 and continued to be a member of A.I.C.C. and its Executive Body, P.C.C., from 1938-1955. Has been a Minister for a total period of twelve years and the main portfolio was Revenue throughout. An expert in Revenue Administration of Odisha he Piloted the Odisha Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Bill.

Key Words: *Bhoo dan, Adivasi Satyagrah, Zamindari etc.*

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Early Life

Dr. Sadasiba Tripathy is the worthy son of Nabarangpur, born on 21st April 1910. His father was Lingaraj Tripathy. Sadasiba Tripathy was born with a proverbial silver spoon in his mouth, brought up in the lap of relative plenty, shed his life of ease for a great cause, shouldered a heavy mantle with a high degree of composure and passed away in apparent ignominy. He was the second son of Ramanatha Tripathy and Radhamani, but was adopted by his father's younger brother Lingaraj Tripathy. Tripathy's family had migrated from Rukmini, a small village near Baliarsingh village in Purushottampur Police Station area of Ganjam district to Nabarangpur, sometime in the second half of the 19th century. His first inning as a minister was stated on 26th February 1952 in the H.K. Mahatab ministry. He was entrusted with the departments of Revenue, Excise and Food and Supply Departments.

Sadasiba married to Tillotama Tripathy. They have three sons. The elder son was Sarat Chandra Tripathy, the second son was Prafulla Chandra Tripathy and the third son was Subash Chandra Tripathy.

Education

Sadasiba had his early education in Nabarangpur. In the year 1917 Sadasiba was admitted into the Minor School of Nabarangpur for his early schooling at the age of 7 years. Then Sadasiba moved to Jeypore for high school studies. He passed matriculation, then known as Secondary School Leaving Certificate (S.S.L.C.) in the year 1927. After matriculation there was no college in the present undivided Koraput district other than to go to Paralakhemundi or to go to Visakhapatnam for higher studies. So Sadasiba has decided to become a teacher. In this connection he has admitted in the teachers training institute at Berhampur in the year 1927. After staying two years in Berhampur he has returned back to Nowrangpur after completion of his teachers' training diploma programme.

Career

During Sadasiba's stay at Berhampur he was very much inspired with Niranjana Patnaik, Sarala Devi Mahatma Gandhi and their struggle against British for the independence of India. After completion of his training programme, Sadasiba joined the Jeypore School which was constructed by Raja of Jeypore, Vikram

Dev Verma, III and stayed at the Sunari Street of Jeypore. He has served in the Jeypore school for nine years, i.e. from 1929 to 1937.

Participation in the Freedom Movement

In the year 1935 Sadasiba came to contact with Radhakanta Viswasroy during his teacher ship at Jeypore. The then Koraput region was under the agency of Visakhapatnam agency. It was a part of the Jeypore Zamindari. Abounded by hills and forests, the area was largely inaccessible. The autochthonous population of the region, largely drawn from self regulated tribal communities, had very negligible external contact. They even tenor of life in a tribal village was often disturbed by the sudden appearance of a revenue official, or a forest guard or a police constable. Consequently freedom movement touched this area only in early thirties.

Mahatma Gandhi started the Freedom Movement in India against the Britishers after his return from South Africa. His Civil Disobedience Movement had an impact on the minds of the freedom fighters of undivided Koraput District. Being inspired by the call of Gandhiji, the leaders of undivided Koraput District opened a branch of Indian National Congress. Sri Radha Krishna Biswasray (who was then known as Gandhi of Koraput). Sri Radha Mohan Sahu and Sri Sadasiba Tripathy were the founders of Congress organization in Koraput district. Sri Biswasray divided the work among themselves. Accordingly Sri Sadasiba Tripathy was to organize the movement in Nabarangpur area (Sri Biswasray worked for Koraput and Sri Radha Mohan Sahu worked for Jeypore and Malkangiri Area). At that time Sri Tripathy was a Science Teacher at Jeypore High School. Being inspired by Sri Biswasray he left the job. At that time he was residing at Sunari Street, Jeypore and his house for a short time became meeting place of freedom fighters. So as per the decision of Congress leaders Sri Tripathy left Jeypore and came back to Nabarangpur for organization of Congress work. Then Nabarangpur became his work place. Sadasiba Tripathy was one among those leaders of the Koraput region who blew the bugle of freedom in this region.

Sadasiba Tripathy became an active member of the Indian National Congress. He paid four Annas as subscription towards his membership. He also started wearing khadi dress and followed Mahatma's principles (like prohibition, truth, non-violence etc). It became a news in Nabarangpur area when Sadasiba joined the Indian National Congress. Sri Sadasiba inspired other leaders of Nabarangpur area. Among them were Sri Laxmi Chandra Das, Sri Sadananda Mohanty, Sri Anaji Rao, Sri Jagannath Tripathy, Sri Simanchal Behera, Md. Baji, Sri Raghunath Choudhury and many others. Some of the leaders from outside Nabarangpur were also inspired by the call of Sri Tripathy. Sri Rabi Singh Majhi, Sri Bali Pujari, Sri Balaam Kalar of Umerkote, Sri Raidhar Jani, Sri Sanu Majhi of Dabugaon, Sri Madhab Pradhan and Sri Syam Sundar Prahani of Baghsiumi, Sri Miru Harijan of Patri were among them who joined the freedom movement.

The year 1936 was a landmark in the history of Odisha. On 1st April of that year Odisha became a separate province. About ninety percent of the Jeypore Zamindari came under the new district of Koraput, the largest district in British India. Under Government of India Act. 1935 provincial Assemblies were set up. For Odisha Provincial Assembly elections were conducted. There were three seats for undivided Koraput District. Those seats were Koraput, Jeypore and Nabarangpur. From Nabarangpur seat, Sri Sadasiba Tripathy contested through Congress ticket. His contestant was Sri Harihar Misra and Sri Sadasiba Tripathy became victorious in this election.

For the training of Congress workers Sri Radha Krishna Biswasray started an Ashram in Nuaput near Jeypore. It was just like the Sabarmati Ashram of Mahatma Gandhi. The Ashram started in the year 1938. In the first stage it was proposed to train 350 Congress workers. From Nabarangpur Sri Sadasiba Tripathy, Sri Laxmichandra Das, Sri Raghunath Choudhury and others attended Nuaput Ashram Training Centre. Sri Biswanath Dash, Maa Ramadevi, Sri Naba Krushna Choudhury, Smt. Malati Devi and other eminent freedom fighters visited this Nuaput Ashram.

At the national level a significant event took place. For the post of Congress President Netaji Subash Chandra Bose contested against Mahatma Gandhi's candidate Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramaya. After the training from Nuaput the Congress leaders of Nabarangpur went to Cuttack to cast their votes for Congress Presidency in 1938 with 26 members of Nabarangpur Sri Sadasiba Tripathy went to Cuttack. It is to be noted here that Netaji Subash Chandra Bose defeated Pattabhi (Mahatma's candidate).

From 1939 onwards Sri Sadasiba Tripathy worked tirelessly for Congress. He moved from village to village to spread Gandhiji's message. At that time 2nd World War started. England became a party to it. Sri Tripathy convinced the people not to pay tax or war donation to Government. He also joined the individual Satyagraha, called by Mahatma. He initiated people to spinning and mobilized them to take oath on Gandhiji's principles. When his name and fame spread as an active freedom fighter he was arrested by the police for his activities. Sri Tripathy was imprisoned in Nabarangpur Jail and then sent to Berhampur Jail. At that time the atmosphere of Jail was worst for the prisoners. He raised voice against the prevailing unhealthy environment of jails and bad behavior of Jail officials. There in the jail he met Laxman Nayak who was later hanged.

The Congress opposed the Second world War efforts of the British government and offered Satyagraha all over the country in 1940. Sadasiba Tripathy was among those who were detained in this connection. Congress adopted 'Quit India' resolution on 9th August 1942. There were demonstrations all over the country. For his alleged involvement, Sadasiba Tripathy was arrested on 11th August 1942.

Post Odisha formation made him contest successfully in a Congress ticket for the Stag Assembly in 1937. Self-Rule was granted and again he was elected in 1946. He was drafted to the ministry in 1948 and continued under different leadership as a Minister till 1956, after being elected in 1952. He was again sent to the State Assembly in 1961 (Umerkote Constituency) and 1967 (Nowrangpur Constituency).

His first inning as a minister was stated on 26th February 1952 in the H.K. Mahatab ministry. He was entrusted with the departments of revenue, excise and food and supply departments. When H.K. Mahatab was shifted to Bombay as Governor, Nabarkrushna Choudhury took over the charges of Chief Minister of Odisha. But Sadasiba Tripathy continued in the ministry without any change in his portfolios till 22nd September 1956. Sadasiba Tripathy was inducted into the ministry once again when Biju Pattnaik took over the charges as Chief minister. During the period i.e. from 23rd June 1961 to 2nd October 1963 he was in charge of the ministry of forest in addition to old portfolios of revenue and excise. After 2nd October 1963, Biren Mitra becomes the Chief Minister of Odisha, still Sadasiba Tripathy continued in the Ministry upto 22nd February 1965.

In the meanwhile Biren Mitra resigned as Chief Minister of Odisha. Sadasiba Tripathy was absent in the capital he was in his own home town Nabarangpur on a private visit. He was informed by the party to return immediately to the capital in regard to solve this problem. When Sadasiba Tripathy reached Bhubaneswar he was surprised with the offer of the Chief Minister ship. He was elected as the leader of the Congress Legislative party defeating Pabitra Mohan Pradhan on 21st February and took over the charges of Chief Minister ship on 22nd February 1965. As Chief Minister he was to shoulder the responsibilities of the ministers of finance, industry, planning and coordination, mines and Geology, Power Agriculture, commerce in addition to his old portfolios revenue.

In this context it may be mentioned that he was averse to the formation of coalition Government with their political adversary, the Ganatantra Parishad, under the leadership of Dr. H.K. Mahtab. He saw only opportunism in this compromise. This dispensation hurt him deeply. He resolved to dissociate himself by resigning from the Assembly and even from the primary membership of the party. His contemporaries in Nawarangpur saw him donning the holy gerua symbol of renunciation a step towards sanyas from the active political life. The emergence of the indomitable Biju Pattnaik on the political scene changed his course of life and he reconciled himself to join the heralding of another era. He sprang up with renewed vigour, joined the Ministry and continued till he reached the pinnacle of success that any politician could dream of – to be the head of Government.

Sadasiba Tripathy had already garnered a reputation as an able administrator having spent quite a good number of years as a guiding star of Revenue, Excise, Forest, Civil Supplies and Transport deptts. But the quintessence of his leadership was found in the Revenue Department where he proved himself worthy of it in his long stint. He had been born in an agriculturist family and had acquainted himself with the vagaries of nature-from heavy down pour to scanty rainfall, their impact on the rain-fed land and the much dependant tribal poors where the half clad tribals to survive on debt thrust by the money-lenders and at a soaring interest-rate. When clearing the debt became too stupendous, they had to dispose the patch of land and to court bonded labourship for generations. The relic of the pre-independence era still persisted there by reducing most villagers and tribals to penury. Such inhuman exploitation was unbearable on his part. Since it might take years to train them to alleviate their lot, he devised an Act-Regulation 2 of Odisha 1956, which explicitly retained the right of ownership of a tribal, which forbade him to dispose off his land even in direst stringency. This Act was heavenly-sent and through it the tribals are now able to protect their land from the rapacious urban landlords and other greedy rich, one might anticipate a Vinoba with his Bhoodan Movement or the Land Ceiling – Surplus Act of Government of Odisha. Such was his foresight and this Act, providential as it was, immortalized its founding father. It was also instrumental for laying the edifice of the later day law related to the bonded labour which extricated a labourer from eternal bondage, embraced due to non-payment of even a small amount borrowed.

The Abolition of Zamindary was no mean feat. It paved the way for fair distribution of wealth and land from the haves to the have-nots. One might see the irony of its implementation – Sri Tripathy himself was its great victim having been deliberately divested of hundreds of acres of ancestral property in one stroke. Thanks to his senior mentor the saintly Naba Krushna Choudhury for espousing and implementing this great cause.

Destiny played a role in his elevation to the Chief Ministership of Odisha in 1965. This period was remarkable in many ways. Almost all ministerial colleagues had resigned as they could not succeed in their design to make him relinquish the exalted office. Thanks to the party high command, notably the Congress President, K. Kamraj Nadar, who douses the fire of embitterment and cautioned that the mass resignation, if not withdrawn instantly, would be accepted. This firmness strengthened Tripathy and he continued till the end of

the term. Though survived the political onslaught, he suffered a major heart stroke that rendered him immobile for a pretty length of time, which signaled that this quitting the burden was round the corner. The media was rife with speculation. Several proposals were doing their round-from Dr. Mahtab to Biju Patnaik, Biswanath Das to Nilamani Rout. A bed-ridden Chief Minister was not spared by the revolting student mass concurrently agitating for establishing an university each at Berhmapur and Sambalpur. He assured them, once for all, that if at all an university would be set up at one place, the other would not be deprived of it. There would emerge two universities, if circumstances favoured. That he could establish two universities in one stroke, despite the centres for biddings, bears testimony to his sagacity and leadership.

It is not possible to chronicle his achievements from electrification of Lord Jagannath Temple at Puri to promulgating Odia as the official language of the State, to chairing a Committee to publish District Gazetteers of Odisha, to leasing the Government Land for setting up the Barabati Stadium for promoting games/sports among the young men and women of the State and so on. All these and many more would bear witness to the stewardship, to his clean image and honest work. Several Commissions- Saraju Prasad, Mudholkar, Khanna, to name to a few were set up, to inquire into the alleged misdeeds, acts of nepotism and charges of corruption. While other political figures were hounded, he emerged unscathed, thanks to his adherence to lofty Gandhian principles which he pursued till his end.

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