

Religious Actions & Socio-Cultural Mobilization A Study of Sabar Srikhetra, Koraput

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Abstract: Religion plays a major role in the everyday social life among the Indians as well as several other parts of the world. During the 18th Century Europe world witnessed religion as one of the major driving force for accumulation of wealth. India being a Hindu majority country, it houses people from almost all major religious community and well known for its multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic, multi-cultural diversity. Religious actions are one of the powerful and eye catching tool that immediately draws the attention of the people. Any attempt to hurt the religious sentiment flares up immediately in the society like a wild fire in the forest and reaches to the people within no time. People start uniting compromising all the existing individual and group differences and personal rivalry for the cause of religion. Religion a universal social institution acts as a binding force among the people and promotes social solidarity among the people. It is a major force of mobilization among people to direct their action towards the achievement of economic, socio-cultural and political goal of the people. This paper is an attempt to highlight how religious actions became instrumental in bringing socio-cultural revolution in the Koraput region and southern part of Odisha after the establishment of Sabar Srikhetra Koraput.

Index Terms: Religion, Action, Culture, Society, Institution, Region

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Max Weber every social action has certain meanings attached with it. [1] The background story behind construction of Jagannath temple at Koraput, popularly known as the Sabar Srikhetra reads like a story. The core idea came in the mind of late Krushna Chandra Panigrahy one of the founder of the Sabar Srikhetra when he came to Koraput from Gajapati and started to help his father in their Hotel business still now exist in the name of Basant Bilas. The young KC is curious to know the than social arrangement, business activities, language used by the people in the Koraput town, and its socio-political conditions. The wave of Odia sentiment that gather momentum after 1936 with the creation of new Odisha state and domination of non-Odia community in the Odisha territory even after independence pose lot of question in the young mind of KC. He was thinking of how to bring socio-cultural revolution in the pre-divided Koraput region and preserve Odia culture was a major challenges before him. Within no time KC understood that, the pre-divided Koraput was the part of Visakhapatnam district under Madras Presidency during the British rule until the creation of Odisha as a separate state in 1936. As a result there was the telugu speaking people largely monopolizing trade and business in Koraput region and having fierce economic and political competition. Their number was also gradually increasing with better business opportunities. The young KC join in politics to take over the issues and won the election of NAC (Notified Area Council) Chairman, Koraput in 1967 and remained in position till 1982. He could read the mindset of the people of the region and understood that the religion and spirituality immediately catches the attention of the people in Indian Society. There are many studies on religion and culture extensively discusses about the role of religion in bringing social development and change, social movement, determining the fate of political action, development of the business enterprises, arising of national consciousness, etc.

During the period of his political career as a NAC Chairman, in his leadership Sri Jagannath Temple at Koraput, known as Sabar Srikshetra has been founded. He was the Secretary of the Sri Jagannath Temple Management from 1972 to till his death 6th April, 2015. This piece of work is an attempt to highlight the role of an individual to bring such socio-economic changes and deeply influenced day to day social life of the people of Koraput. His activities was guided by a deep anxiety and well structure philosophical imagination with an attempt to revive the Odia language, literature and culture, reassert regional identity along the line of Hindu religious ideology. Historically the present day Koraput has a long History and glorious past which was the part of very old (the village exist since the Jaina and the Buddhist period) and forsaken kingdom of Nandapur which later on became the capital of Jeypore Estate.

There are some works by political sociologists and social movement theorists extend our understanding of how religious institutions contribute to expanding democracy and political actions and few focuses directly on what religion might contribute. For instance Max Weber has contributed in the "Protestant Ethics and Growth of Capitalism" where he has pointed out how a kind of religious behaviour inspires people to work hard and accumulate wealth. [1] Weber has also pointed out the main reason for backwardness of Indian Economy is because of its rigid religious practices. But interestingly we are now living in the era of globalization and Indian economy is one of the fastest growing economies of the world only after the China. This economic growth is taking place perhaps due to liberal policy followed in Indians religious practices. It is interesting to know that how a religious culture sought the political action and institutionalized some of the institutions like Sabar Sri Khetra/Jagannath Temple at Koraput, Tribal Museum, Gyan Mandir (TCRC), and COATS under the leadership of Krushna Chandra Panigrahi.

The work also examines about religious institutions as origin of religious culture, and attempts presents how religious cultural elements are incorporated into social movements and helps to shape their internal political cultures, and discusses how this in turn shapes their impact in the public realm. The fact is that the Sabar Sri Khetra/Jagannath Temple at Koraput is initiated with the primary aim to re-establish the loosing Odia language, religion and culture in the Koraput region (pre-divided Koraput) because after India's independence this region has witnessed the gradual increase of non-Odia population mostly comprising of population of neighbouring Andhara Pradesh and Chhatisgarh state. Maintaining social solidarity join their hand together to mobilize people and work for the common goal. [2]

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic plan was made to study religious action of individuals whose active involvement helped the Institution to come up. This study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The information has been collected through the personal visit and interaction with the various functionaries of Sabara Srikhetra, Koraput and its allied institutions. The information obtained from tribal museum, library of COATS and TCRC became immensely useful for successfully writing this paper.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Man Behind Establishment of Sabar Srikhetra

Under his leadership Krushna Chandra Panigrahi the Jagannath Temple (Sabar Srikhetra) at Koraput has been established. He was the Secretary of Jagannath Temple Management Committee from 1972 to till his death 6th April, 2015. Krushna Chandra Panigrahy popularly known as KC as an individual is having multifaceted personality having interest politics, religion and rituals, culture, philosophy, tribal issues, business enterprises, agriculture, etc. This has given him the opportunity to interact with the wider section of the people in the society and exchange their views. KC has many good friends and equally he has also the foes who were neither interested or nor liking his various activities. But it is learnt from the available literature that overall he is having a good public relationships which was one of his major source of strength. In the process of institution building he came across the contact with several politician, bureaucrats, media persons, government servants, business men, shopkeepers, temple priests, tribes and common man. He was having a wide range of population from diversified field and also being a friend he is using their services for various purposes and also helping them as per his capability as and when required. He has been maintaining a kind of stable relationships with some of the people who has been extended unconditional support to Krushna Chandra Panigrahi for the construction of Jagannath Temple as well as some other social institutions.

Among the several numbers of people the place of late Pyari Mohan Mohapatra an IAS officer is unparalleled. He is one of the Advisor of KC and pointed out that, KC is very much fond of pastime like lord Krishna and immediate becomes angry like lord Shiva and works like a bull of lord Shiva without caring any hurdles and difficulties to achieve the goal. He has the skill to bind people having diversified character in a single thread. He is very particular to adhere the rule of law and if needed very liberal to break those rules also. He has a deep interest in reading and writing. Pyari Mohan met KC the then young Chairman of NAC, Koraput for the first time in July, 1971. KC used to speak before District Collector, Koraput for the development and progress of Koraput town. That time Pyari Mohan went back after seven days and came again after five years. With the request of KC and Comrade Harishchandra Baxipatra Pyari Mohan took over the charge of President, Jagannath Temple Management Committee. [2] (Pyari Mohan Mohapatra, Krutire Krushna Chandra: 01-02) From that day onwards he manages the responsibility of President, Jagannath Temple Management Committee, Koraput almost for 40 years till his death in 2017.

An incident took place in their life. One day both KC and PM were in Bastar district of Chhatisgarh, a Sabar tribe ask PM to show his hands but PM denied then the Sabar ask him to show his feet. When he the Sabar repeatedly requested PM show him his feet. After seeing the feet the Sabar said I have seen the feet of other person here (he was KC). Both of you together will do a noble work KC will do more and PM little less. The future predictions of Sabar has come to true. Now both KC and PM are no more in this world but the Sabar Sri Khetra, Jagannath Temple of Koraput standing firmly carrying with lot of memories.[3]

Prof. P.C. Mohapatra the former Principal of DAV College, Koraput and Present Director, COATS has relationship with KC since last 46 years. He met KC for the first time in Hotel Basant Vilas on 25. 7. 1968. KC was the young and dynamic NAC Chairman, Koraput elected in the year 1967 and relentlessly working for the development of Koraput. Whenever we were meeting, it was a nice opportunity to discuss about the overall development of undivided Koraput and NAC Koraput. Prof. Mohapatra pointed out that, the contribution of KC is more in establishing DAV, College at Koraput. With the help of the then District Collector, Premanand Tripathy and Executive Engineer, Anand Chandra Padhy he met the President of DAV Management Committee and the then Governor of Orissa, Ajadhyanath Khosla and became successful in establishing DAV College at Koraput.

As a Chairman of NAC, Koraput he has took lead role and worked for the construction of road, supply of water, construction of Atithi Bhaban, Market Complex, and construction of Bus Stand at Koraput. He took step to supply wheat, rice and kerosene to various wards of Koraput NAC.

The then District Information and Public Relation Officer (DIPRO), late Abhay Mohapatra, and District Welfare Officer late Nanda Kishore Bebartta and Dr. Nirad Kumar Gachhayat were cooperating with us in various developmental works. With the joining of Dr. Jagabandhu Samal, Ramesh Chandra Das and late Daitari Panda in DAV College in the year 1970 we joined our hands together in various activities. Workshops and seminars were organized for the growth and preservation of Odia language and culture. On behalf of the DAV College seminars are organized to address various issues of tribes and its solutions. [4]

It was decided among the friends to organize the first Car festival of lord Jagannath at Koraput in the year 1972. By the grace of lord Jagannath the Car Festival was organized successfully. Prof. P.C. Mohapatra, Prof. Jagabandhu Samal, Ramesh Chandra Das, late Udayanath Sahu, and late K.C. Panigrahi were collecting donations for the Jagannath Temple Management Committee. The relationship of K.C. with the Prof. P.C. Mohapatra has developed in the process of joining their hands together in each activities of the growth and development of the Jagannath Temple at Koraput. The Council of Analytical Tribal Studies (COATS) was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Odisha late Biju Pattnaik on 9th January, 1992. With the directives of President, Jagannath Temple Management Committee Prof. P.C. Mohapatra was called to join as a Director of COATS. By that time Prof. Mohapatra was teaching in BJB College, Bhubaneswar. He took leave for D. Lit research work and joined in COATS as Director and till date he is serving in COATS as the Director. [5]

Prof. Jagabandhu Samal was having a very intimate relationship with KC. As a founding member of Jagannath Temple at Koraput they became more closer with each other while working together for the expansion and development of the Jagannath temple at Koraput. Prof. Samal is now working as the Secretary of the Temple Management Committee an associated with Tribal Museum and COATS.

K.C. Panigrahy has not received any formal degree but acquired a deep knowledge on Indian Polity, Economy, Philosophy, Religion, Society and Culture with his own hard work. He is voracious reader with vivid collection of books, reports, journals and magazines across the discipline. One can understand from his wide range of area of interest with oriental approach to know the

Indian society and culture through an interdisciplinary approach. He was a creative thinker and touched several aspects of social life. He was a philosopher scholar, mentor, priest, social worker and activist, a shrewd politician, a believer of corporate governance, a brilliant entrepreneur, and an educationist, an ardent advocate of tribal religion, language, and literature. A person of having sanskrit knowledge moulded with the thought of Indological and attempted to understand highland culture of Odisha and especial tribal society & culture. It is astonishing that how a person could able to involve himself in so many activities manage to institutionalise his thoughts as an action with the help of his associates. As a patriot and enlighten citizen K.C. Panigrahy was concern with Odia and Desia language, religion and culture of Koraput.

For the expansion and development of Jagannath culture KC took personal interest in building *Chaturdha* image of Lord Jagannath along with Balabhadra, Subhadra, and *Sudarshana* at Motu, Foundation of Jagannath Temple at Nabarangpur, the Patitapaban Bigraha at Sri Trinath Temple at Landiguda, *Chaturdha* image of Lord Jagannath at Kotia village, Shiva Temple at Rangabali Kumbha, laid foundation stone of Sri Jagannath Temple near *Mali Chowk Sri Durga* mountain, *Chaturdha* image of Lord Jagannath at Chalkamba (Gunpur) Jagannath Temple, Building of Shivling at Sukriguda by Sri Jagannath Temple Management Committee Koraput, establishment of Jagannath temple at Tumbhikota, etc. Jagannath Temple at Kalimela, Motu, Bandhugam, Bariniput, Bonda hill, Dayanand Nagar Dadhi Minati Jeeu establishment are his major contributions. He empowered the tribes to worship lord Jagannath in in many of the above mentioned temples where tribes are living.

This shows the agenda of KC Panigrahi's initiative to bring the socio-cultural revolution in the form of religious institution and promote, protect and preservation of Odia language, culture and religion of highland Odisha.

Religious Action Driven Business and Social Reformation

Late Shri Krushna Chandra Panigrahy was a versatile, visionary genius personality of modern Koraput. His contributions for the Socio-cultural, Educational and Economic Development of the people of Koraput region irrespective of religion, class, caste and gender is a praiseworthy initiatives. It will not be wrong to say him as the architect of Modern Koraput because he himself was involved in the preparation of Master Plan for Koraput and he also executed some of them during his work of NAC Chairmanship. He was social activist and a social reformer who has fought to bring social changes through reformations in the field of education, religion and culture. He has seen the plight of the tribes and also experienced the apathy of the government towards the issues like HAL, NALCO, Mali Parbat, Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangha issues of Narayanpatna and Bandhugam Block. Despite the lack of support from the state government, as a social activist he has taken initiative to visit these places alongwith the Bhudan Movement leaders and addressing the people.

He was a Politician and as a politician he has been elected as the Chairman of NAC, Koraput from 1967 to 1982. He was one among the first to hold the Office of the Chairman, NAC, Koraput for such a longer period. During his tenure several new initiatives have taken for the larger interest of the people of Koraput. His political activity was not only confined to Koraput town itself but he was a well known political figure in the pre-divided Koraput and the entire South Orissa.

I can depict him as an Economist especially because of his contributions to regional planning and development of Koraput as well as his knowledge about microeconomic activities by which he has developed a very nice entrepreneurship. As a result the Jagannath Temple Management Committee became a self sufficient unit with the ability to have a turnover of Crores of rupees per annum. He has identified and streamlined the important sources of revenue for the Jagannath Temple Management Committee. The Atithi Nivas, Atithi Bhawan, Shanti Nivas, Jagannath Chitralaya, shopping complex at Mausima Chowk, Koraput are some the major achievement of KC panigrahi and a permanent source of income for the Temple Management.

He was an Educationist and closely associated with the overall educational development of the Koraput region. He has played a key role for the establishment of major educational institutions of Modern Koraput. He was the founder member D.A.V. College, Koraput, B.Ed. College, (DAV CTE), Koraput, Government Womens' College, Koraput, and Dumuriput High School. He has also taken initiative to establish a Tribal University at Koraput and prepared a blue print for it. But unfortunately it has not become true and the Tribal University was established at Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh. He has also taken a lead role during the inauguration and the establishment of Central University of Orissa, Koraput.

He was a person endowed with the knowledge on language and literature. In several occasion he has expressed his views and independent thoughts in his published Magazine "Sabara Srikshetra Samachar". For the larger interest of the people of Koraput region and promotion of local language "Desia Bhasa Sammilani" was one of his important initiatives. He has huge collections of varieties of books and his quest for acquiring knowledge on various subjects inspired him to establish the Gyan Mandir and the Library within the Temple premises. He was the permanent Member of the Utkal Sammilani. He was the Chief Editor of "Sabara Srikshetra Samachar" and "Dangar Katha". He was also the Convener of the INTACH, Koraput Chapter. As a Good Organiser he has successfully organised several Seminars, Workshops, Debate and Discussions various issues of national importance.

IV. CONCLUSION

The major contributors who have given their time and labour for the constructions of Sri Jagannath Temple, Tribal Museum, Tribal Culture and Resource Centre (TCRC) known as Gyan Mandir, COATS, Atithi Niwas, Atithi Bhawan, Shanti Niwas, and other allied institutions are no more in this world. But their religious actions accompanying with political affiliations and bureaucratic support make easier for the founder members to build and instutionalize such a nice organization. Now the temple management making a new venture with tourism facility for the people with the introduction of bus services to the different religious places and tourist destinations.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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