

LAKSHMAN NAIK

A STUDY IN TRIBAL PATRIOTISM

Nihar Ranjan Patnaik



Academy of Tribal Dialects & Culture

In this delightful volume efforts have been made to depict the patriotic movements of the tribals of Orissa against the aliens during the British rule. The tribals who were victims of the excessive exploitation, social degradation and political oppression of the aliens rose and fought against adverse circumstances. The unprecedented mass uprisings culminated into August Revolt of 1942 under their redoubtable leader Lakshman Naik and this movement was one of the revolutionary outbursts which forced the British authorities to quit India. Lakshman Naik was hanged and became a martyr. This book reveals how this tribal leader had unique command and respect among the masses and left a legacy of inspiration for the people for whom he worked and sacrificed his life. This work is indeed an original contribution to the study in tribal patriotism.

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A STUDY IN TRIBAL PATRIOTISM

DR. NIHAR RANJAN PATNAIK



ACADEMY OF TRIBAL DIALECTS & CULTURE
HARIJAN & TRIBAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT
ORISSA

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DEDICATION

Sahid Laxman Naik was an embodiment of patriotism of the tribal people of Orissa. He was in fact a person possessed by the spirit of nationalism and like a divined *Disari* of the tribal religious tradition he proselytised his people in the creed of nationalism. The Indian freedom struggle saw many mighty heroes. Sahid Laxman Naik was among them just a small figure, but his contribution was like that of the legendary squirrel of the Ramayana who participated in the construction of Setubandha to Lanka by carrying handful of sands smeared to its wet body. The nation can never afford to ignore his sacrifices. He shall stand out for ever as a valiant martyr in the history of the freedom movement of the Indian people.

The Academy of Tribal Dialects & Culture is committed to commemorate the memory of the great tribal personalities of Orissa by installing their statues, observing their birth and death anniversaries and bringing out monographs on their lives and works. Sahid Laxman Naik is foremost among them and his statue has been installed on the Adivasi Ground at Bhubaneswar and at his birthplace in the village Tentuligumma in a remote corner of Koraput district. An authentic book on his life and activities written in lucid Oriya by Dr. Nihar Ranjan Patnaik has been published in 1990. Now we offer this second book in English by Dr. Patnaik with a view to informing a larger reading public of the country and abroad about the instinctive patriotism of a tribal man of Orissa.

Our thanks are due to the author Dr. Patnaik, Prof. Bipan Chandra, Hon'ble Minister Sri Chhotray Majhi, President and Sri D. P. Bhattacharya, I. A. S., Vice-president of the Academy for making this publication possible on the birthday of Sahid Laxman Naik on November 22, 1992.

THE BOOK IS DEDICATED IN THE SACRED MEMORY OF SAHID LAXMAN NAIK AND IN HONOUR OF HIS FELLOW TRIBESMEN.

Khageswar Mahapatra

Director

Academy of Tribal Dialects & Culture

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FOREWORD

I have great pleasure in introducing Dr. Nihar Ranjan Patnaik's fascinating study of Lakshman Naik. Over the last 30 years or so, several major studies of the all-India leaders of the Indian National Movement have been published. But the study of local-level leaders has been relatively neglected. Yet the movement acquired its striking power primarily from the grass-roots movements led and organised by local leaders

The Indian national movement was a many splendoured movement encompassing the political activity of the diverse Indian people. The tribal people in different regions of India played a significant role in its mass phase after 1918. Lakshman Naik's role was to make him a legendary figure in Orissa, and he deserves to be better known in the rest of our country. Dr Patnaik's study fulfills the need.

Dr. Patnaik fully brings out the social and physical setting of Lakshman Naik's endeavours in the Koraput area in general and the more specific taluk of Malkanagiri. Malkanagiri was a part of the Jeypore estate, which administered the tribal and non-tribal population through the village heads known as Mustadars or Naiks, who helped the Raja's officials collect the land revenue.

Apart from the revenue demand of the Raja and exploitation by the Mustadars, the tribal and non-tribal peasants were crushed under the triple burden of goti, bethi and gudem-terms properly defined in Dr. Patnaik's study. Furthermore the traditional rights of the peasants over-forest produce and forest use were gradually eroded.

Lakshman Naik was born on 22 November 1899 in the family of a tribal Mustadar in the village Tentuligumma. What is more important, he was heir to a prolonged tradition of rebellion both against the colonial authorities and the local rajas and chieftains.

The Koya revolt of 1879 became a part of the recent historical memory of the people of Malkanagiri while the Bastar uprising of 1910-1911 inspired the young Lakshman. The Rampa rebellion led by Alluri Sitaram Raju during the 1920s had a direct bearing on the political formation of the youthful Lakshman. One of the participants in the Rampa rebellion, Chandra Kutia, became a friend of his. Perhaps the idea of acquiring the Desari traits of acting as a priest, medicineman and astrologer to his people to acquire roots among them was adopted from Sitaram Raju's practice. He also gradually acquired a competent knowledge of Oriya.

Lakshman Naik succeeded his father as a Mustadar in 1930, but he was not happy with the position. He continued to work on his land along with his relatives. Moreover, he worked even more actively for the welfare of the tribal peasants under his jurisdiction, undertaking measures such as the widening of roads and digging of drains and helping them avoid the clutches of the moneylenders. But he was appalled at the treatment meted out to the rural people by revenue inspectors and forest guards, and he had to tolerate it all as a silent bystander.

And, then, a new turn in his life came in the 1930s when, as Dr. Patnaik bring out so well, the overall framework and climate of his activities came to be provided by the national movement and the Indian National Congress. The Congress came to Koraput in the heady days of the Anti-Simon Commission Movement, Led by Radhakrishna Biswasray, who resigned his job in the government, the movement took off in Koraput and struck deep roots. Many from the area participated in the Civil Disobedience campaign.

Lakshman Naik came into contact with Congressmen when in 1936 he attended meeting of

Congress workers in Malkanagiri and decided to join the Congress as a regular four-anna member. The Congress became highly popular in the region especially among the tribal and non-tribal poor, and Lakshman played an active role in this. This led to his becoming the President of the Primary Congress Committee of Tentuligumma and a member of the Koraput District Congress Committee.

Lakshman was determined to play a full and all-sided role in the national movement. He was also inspired by Gandhiji and his ideas of Construction work. In December 1937 he joined the 3 month long Nuaput training camp for constructive workers. The camp put special emphasis on the propagation of Khadi.

The Nuaput Camp left an abiding impact on Lakshman Naik. Inspired by non-violence, he now gave up hunting and meat-eating. He also became more active in doing political work among the people wandering from village to village, walking 'through dense forests and mountains' and swimming across rivers. This phase of his grass roots political work has been discussed at length by Dr. Patnaik, who also brings out the nature and content of political agitation at the popular plane among the tribal people.

Lakshman Naik also led numerous local struggles around people's day-to-day demands and problems such as the practice of illegal tax collection at market places petty oppression by the raja's employees and large-scale sale of liquor, opium and other narcotic drugs. He also led a major no-tax campaign in his area. This led to his being deprived of his position as a Mustadar and the land assignment that went with the position. The people rewarded him by calling him "the Gandhi of Malkanagiri",

Lakshman was an active participant in the individual Satyagraha Movement of 1940-41. He courted imprisonment twice. It was, however, in the Quit

India movement of 1942 that he achieved his height as a patriot and a leader.

The failure of the Cripps Mission in April 1942 led to frustration and anger among the Indian people. Inspired by Gandhiji, they now began to move towards the final assault on the alien regime. Active political and ideological preparations began all over the country. Orissa and Koraput were in the forefront of these preparations. On 31 July, the Congress workers of Koraput including Lakshman Naik met at Jeypore and discussed the preparations for the coming struggle.

As soon as the news of the arrest of Gandhiji and other Congress leaders on 9th August reached Orissa, the people of Orissa erupted. In the Malkanagiri area the popular outburst was led by Lakshman Naik who organised several massive protests. As a result of one of his mass actions- the massive attack on the police station at Matili- the police arrested Lakshman and framed him for murder. Lakshman was to die a martyr's death at the hands of the colonial administration and pass into a legend. His was a life fulfilled. Dr. Patnaik has narrated this last heroic episode in the life of Lakshman Naik in graphic details. He has also reproduced at length the poems composed at the time of Lakshman's martyrdom as also later.

One of the determinants of a people's calibre is the treatment that the later generations accord to their great daughters and sons who have spent their lives in the service of the people. Dr. Patnaik's is a highly praiseworthy effort to bring alive before the people of India the life of one of its most outstanding sons.

BIPAN CHANDRA

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PREFACE

The tribal people are as free as the wind and the birds. Freedom is the very essence of their philosophy of life because they are born and brought up in the midst of nature and thus develop a tremendous love for it. When these freedom-loving tribals fall victims to injustice and tyranny and were shackled by chains of servitude their souls begin to weep and rebel. Moreover they are born and bred in the midst of rugged hills, dense forests, deep water courses and an insalubrious climate. Their climate and geography have determined the nature of these tribals. They are found to be brave and courageous right from their birth. They have in them a strong urge for freedom and natural justice. How against such a background, could the tribals of Orissa tolerate the exploitation and oppression of the British, an alien power, in their own land specially at a time when they had a natural leader like Lakshman Naik in their midst ? Lakshman Naik led an uprising mainly though not wholly, of tribals against British Imperialism and its subsidiary princely estate of Jeypore in Koraput District of Orissa during the August Movement of 1942. Lakshman Naik, acknowledged as the Gandhi of Malkanagiri, was viewed as a potential threat by the Jeypore estate as well as the colonial administration. He was falsely accused of beating a forest guard to death for which he was himself hanged to death. Knowing that he was innocent, Lakshman Naik was not at all worried about his death. He remained brave and courageous while stepping into the gallows. Before he was hanged to death, he

told his followers, "I know Swaraj will definitely come. But I feel sorry that I shall not be able to see Swaraj." This speaks eloquently of his greatness and firm faith in the attainment of India's independence. He can be ranked with all such great martyrs of India as Sahid Bhagat Singh and others—who are the salt of the earth. Their heroism galvanises communities and nations. India, in fact, has few examples of Lakshman Naik's combination of idealism, dedication and realism. The memory of his martyrdom would inspire the Indians for ever to fight for the cause of their mother-country. This volume is mainly intended to illustrate the ideals of Lakshman Naik and his role in a rousing patriotism among the tribals.

To the best of my ability most of the original materials as available on the subject have been consulted. Original materials in both manuscript and printed form like Government records, reports, despatches, gazetteers and a few other contemporary works have been studied in Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta, Andhra Pradesh Archives, Hyderabad, National Archives, New Delhi, the Record Room of the Orissa Secretariat, Bhubaneswar, The Tribal Research Bureau, Bhubaneswar, District Collectorate Rooms of Ganjam and Koraput, Mathili Police Station and Berhampur jail. The National Library of Calcutta, the Orissa Secretariat Library, Orissa State Assembly Library, H. K. Mahatab Library and Orissa State Museum Library located in Bhubaneswar have also been used for the purpose. Besides, I have gone round such places of Ganjam and Koraput districts where the Quit India Movement had taken violent forms. I have also

interviewed several freedom fighters who were associated with the August Revolt of 1942.

The idea of writing the present work came from Professor Khageswar Mahapatra, Director, Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture, Bhubaneswar. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to him for his constant encouragement and valuable advice at every stage.

I am particularly indebted to my intimate friend Souravmay Das, Lecturer in English, V. N. College, Jajpur Road whose accurate translation of some portions of my Oriya book *Swadhinata Andolanare Odissara Adivasi O' Sahid Lakshman Naik* incorporated in this book is highly commendable. Without his invaluable assistance the completion of this work could have been delayed.

I am very much grateful to Sri Bhagaban Chandra Mohanty, Department of English, Bhadrak College who went through the manuscript and toned up the standard of the work. I also recall with pleasure and gratitude the valuable help rendered to me in preparing the volume by Prof. Manmath Nath Das, Prof. Rajendra Prasad Das, Prof. Gorachand Patnaik, Prof. Karuna Sagar Behera, Prof. Prabodh Kumar Mishra and Dr. Mahesh Prasad Dash. I must record my obligations for their timely help to Sri Saraf Chandra Maharana, Srimati Annapurna Maharana of Cuttack, Sri Dolgobind Pradhan, former M.L.A., Sri Nirmal Kumar Das of Orissa State Assembly Research Wing and Inspector General of Prisons, Orissa.

I am extremely grateful to the renowned historian Prof. Bipan Chandra of Jawaharlal Nehru

University, New Delhi who has been kind enough to write a 'Foreword' for the book.

I do wish to acknowledge a deep and abiding debt of gratitude to my father Prof. Jagannath Patnaik and to my mother Mrs. Basanti Patnaik, who as a source of inspiration gave me encouragement and excellent advice from time to time.

Finally, I express my obligation to the Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture, Harijan and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Orissa for undertaking the publication of the book.

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ROLE OF THE TRIBALS OF ORISSA IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Born and bred in the lap of nature, the tribals are free like the birds. Equally free and frank is also their life-style. So the soul of these liberty-seeking people cries out whenever they fall victims to injustice and oppression and are fettered by slavery. They do not, at such times, have among them a Rousseau or a Marx to teach them the lessons of liberty. Yet they arise, raise fiery slogans and sing songs of freedom.

The tribals are forest-dwellers. They are born mighty and valiant. So how could they submit to the tyranny and exploitation let loose by the Britishers? Naturally this attitude finds an active expression in the form of revolt.

In the national level, historians are of the opinion that the tribal uprising against the British rule started first in 1820. But much earlier, a tribal uprising had germinated on the soils of Orissa. Hardly had a decade passed since the British had laid the foundations of their political rule in India after winning the battle of Plassey in 1757, when the tribals of Orissa, led by their respective leaders, launched struggles to protect and preserve their independence from the British occupation.

The first spark of the tribal revolt against the British regime was seen in the Ghumsar region of Ganjam in southern Orissa. This Ghumsar came under the East India Company in 1766, and the Madras Government appointed Edward Cotsford as the Resident of the entire Ganjam region including Ghumsar. Krishna Bhanja was then the Raja of Ghumsar. Not knowing the sentiment of the tribals, the British authorities imposed exorbitant taxes on the estate of Ghumsar. It was resisted by Raja Krishna Bhanja. He refused to pay the increased quantum of tax. To him countless cave dwelling tribal men and women of the state extended support. How could the tribals who loved their freedom most bear to suffer the tyranny meted out by the British rulers? Aligning themselves with Raja Krishna Bhanja they fought against the British power in 1768. Many laid down their lives in the battles that ensued. At last the revolt came to an end. But the desire for freedom from foreign occupation did not die. Probably it was the first ever bloody freedom struggle by the tribals in the whole of India.

Another tribal revolt was surfaced by Narayan Dev, the Raja of Parlakhemundi. He opposed the British regime with the aid and support of his tribal subjects. About thirty tribal patriots laid down their lives for the motherland in the battle that broke out between the tribals and the British at Jalmura. Of course the revolt subsided for a time. Later on, the Rani Patamahadevi of Parlakhemundi put up a stiff resistance against the British forces.

Soon after the revolt of Parlakhemundi the Khonds of Ghumsar fought a pitched battle against the British power. Not only the tribal men of Ghumsar

alone, but also of neighbouring Baud, Daspalla, and Nayagarh revolted against the British Raj under the leadership of one Vikram Bhanja, the benevolent Raja of Ghumsar. Meanwhile Srikar Bhanja took up the reins of the state after Vikram Bhanja. He also offered stiff resistance with the help of his tribal subjects. This insurrection disarrayed the British administration to such an extent that they were constrained to declare the area a 'deserted zone'.

Another fierce revolt against the British which became famous as the Paik Rebellion broke out in 1817 in Khurda region. The first scene of this great rebellion was enacted when a group of about 400 Khonds from Ghumsar reached Banpur and revolted against the British. These rebel Khonds, giving out battle cries, attacked the local police station and other government offices, killed many employees and looted government properties. The Paik Rebellion led by Baxi Jagabandhu would not probably have been triggered off had not the formidable Khonds assisted in loot and arson that day.

The threats of a recurrence of another uprising at Ghumsar after the Paik Rebellion caused tremors among the British. Moreover, tribal revolts flaming out in the Princely States proclaimed non-cooperation with the rulers.

Again serious public discontent surfaced, following the decision of the British Government to dethrone Dhananjay Bhanja, the benevolent Raja of Ghumsar. This accumulated discontent turned into a fierce Khond uprising in 1837. This uprising was led by a valiant Khond leader Dora Bissoi. He launched and kept up a mighty offensive against the

British Government until he was finally captured and imprisoned, undergoing untold suffering in its wake. Dora Bissoi breathed his last in 1846. The ideas and awareness which he was able to provoke among the Khonds against the British regime prepared strong grounds for the freedom struggle in later times.

This Khond uprising of Ghumsar deeply affected the neighbouring States. The Khonds of Baud State also revolted against their own Raja in 1837. They along with other hillmen also revolted against the British Government. The tribals of Daspalla also joined this uprising. Likewise, in far-off Angul, another movement broke out against the British Government. This struggle turned so fierce that the British Government was forced to remove the Raja of Angul from the throne in 1848. They brought it under their direct administration. The tribal insurrection in Ghumsar thus laid the foundation of the future struggle against the British in the Princely States of Orissa.

Chakra Bissoi was another honoured freedom fighter who led the Khonds in their struggle for independence. He voiced his dissatisfaction against the British policy of administration, particularly in the abolition of Meriah, i. e., the practice of human sacrifice. He was himself a mobile revolutionary institution. Making his way through forests and hills, the frenzied enthusiasm and awakening which he aroused among the Khonds bore testimony to his heroism, fearlessness, patriotism, and popularity. The way Chakra Bissoi united the Khonds and managed to persist in his unrelenting struggle against the British power makes it a very thrilling chapter in Orissan history.

The tribals raised another rebellion against the British Raj in 1855. It took place in the border regions of Orissa and the rebels this time belonged to the Santal Community. That was because the Government formerly had engaged the poor Santals on unpaid labour in the construction of new railway lines in Eastern India. These Santals who languished in poverty were forced to work on very low wages. How could the freedom-loving tribals endure this type of cruel treatment by the white people? At last the Santals living in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa launched an armed rebellion against this economic exploitation. Four brothers, namely Sino Murmu, Kanhu Murmu, Chanda Murmu and Bhai Murmu spearheaded the Santal uprising with their revolutionary leadership. This uprising, no doubt, failed, but the enthusiasm and the tenacity with which the Santals fought against the mighty British Government will remain treasured in the history of the freedom struggle.

The so-called 'Sepoy Mutiny' took place in the year 1857. As a matter of fact it was the first war of Indian Independence. As in other parts of India, this mutiny started in the Sambalpur region of Orissa but here it started under the leadership of Surendra Sai. He was supported by the tribals of the Khond, Gond, Binjhal and Santal communities. The great 'Sepoy Mutiny' no doubt ended unsuccessfully, but the tribal communities of Orissa set rare examples of anti-British sentiments and patriotism.

In 1868, the Bhuyan tribals of Keonjhar rebelled against their tyrant Raja Dhanurjay Bhanja and against the British Government supporting him. This rebellion was led by the Bhuyan hero Ratna Nayak. He united the Bhuyans, Kols and the Juangs living in Keonjhar,

and determined to put on the throne one Brundaban Bhanja in place of Dhanurjay Bhanja, and so he launched the rebellion against the British authorities. This rebellion was put down most ruthlessly. Many rebels, on being captured, were either sentenced to death or exiled for life. Ratna Nayak was sent to the gallows to become a martyr for the motherland.

The inhuman manner in which the British Government crushed the revolt only served to fan the discontent of the Bhuyans. Of course the Bhuyans seemed to have suspended their programme of revolt for two decades. But all their accumulated discontent and anger exploded in 1891. This time the Bhuyans were led by Dharanidhar Bhuyan. The Bhuyans, by the thousands, joined the revolt and attacked the Raja's palace. The British authorities sent troops to defend the Raja Dhanurjay Bhanja. Their superior fire power and deceitful manoeuvring left the Bhuyan uprising unsuccessful. Dharanidhar was captured and thrown into jail. The revolt which was launched against the economic exploitation perpetrated by Raja Dhanurjay Bhanja was, in fact, directed against the British imperialism. This revolt, even though it failed to deliver the goods, taught the British Government a very hard lesson.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the great incantations of the famous tribal leader Birsa Munda who wanted to end the Queen's rule reverberated on the Indian soil. The way the Mundas of the border regions of Orissa, rising in revolt in January 1900 under the able leadership of Birsa, unsettled and struck terror into the British Government makes it a thrilling chapter in the history of the

freedom struggle. The British Government opened fire upon the Munda rebels assembled on Dombari hill, killing hundreds of men, women and innocent children. This incident is as pathetic as it is heart rendering,

Another tribal revolt led by Nirmal Munda broke out in the Gangpur state of sundargarh. The inhuman firing upon the unarmed tribal people at Amko Simko, near Raiboga, on the 25th April, 1939 added yet another bloody chapter to the history of the Indian freedom struggle. Originally launched against the Rani of Gangpur state, this famous Munda uprising was, in fact, anti-British in stand, for the Rani, ensconced in the protective care of the British Government, unleashed a reign of terror and exploitation on the subjects.

In 1942, during the August Revolution, all the tribal men and women of Koraput wholeheartedly joined the freedom struggle and unsettled the British administration. Lakshman Naik himself was the greatest manifestation of anti-British attitude. His greatness and nobility are reflected in the way he smilingly went to the gallows. Lakshman Naik will be treasured in memory for ever by the people of Orissa as well as India for his supreme sense of patriotism.



KORAPUT — LAKSHMAN NAIK'S PLACE OF ACTION

Koraput has the distinction of being the largest district of Orissa. Lying between latitudes 20°3' and 17°50' south and 81°27' and 84°1' east, Koraput has an area of 9875 square miles with Kalahandi and Raipur situated to its north, Bastar to the west, East-Godavari and Vizagapatam to the south, Srikakulam and Ganjam to the east. The district has an irregular shape, resembling the English letter 'Y'.¹

The unfavourable geographical location and climate, particularly the lack of communication, hampered the growth and development of this district in the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth. The official papers and brochures made special mention of the unhygienic climate of the forest and hilly areas.² Koraput was then usually compared to the Andamans or the Black waters.³ Though the

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1. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput* (Cuttack, 1945), p. 1.
 2. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2196 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 169/42, 1942, J. S. Wilcock, District Magistrate, Koraput, to C. H. Masterman, District Magistrate, Vizagapatam, March 7, 1942.
 3. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, (In Oriya, Cuttack, 1972), p. 212.

local inhabitants were used to enduring the unfavourable climate, the people coming from the plains had to suffer a lot. Kalajar had a very high rate of incidence. Malarial infection was a common phenomenon.⁴ A journey to Koraput used to take one through dense forests and mountain passes. There was no other mode of communication with Koraput except by bus, through Andhra Pradesh. Jeypore, in Koraput, was also equally inaccessible and unhealthy a place - that was why Jeypore was known as the 'Jamapur' (the abode of death).⁵ During the freedom movement, the British Government used to deport the Satyagrahis to Koraput in order to keep them off the national mainstream. Surendranath Dwibedy, a veteran freedom fighter of Orissa, on being transferred from Cuttack jail to Koraput, for the same reason, composed a poem on 17th October 1944 about Koraput thus :

The forests are dark and deep
That hem the hilly terrains of Koraput,
Tigers, bears and wild pig roam around
Whose fond game is the hunt of men.
Is that why they have exiled me from Cuttack ?
In the hope that I shall fall a victim
To Malaria and Kalajar, the scourge of the place.
Such foolish hopes and absurd designs
Cannot put out my life
Before my cherished goals are attained.⁶

4. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 212.

5. Chintamani Mohanty, *Jeypore* (In Oriya, Bhadrak, 1934), p. 2.

6. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 231.

The poem thus reflects the hostile surroundings of Koraput.

The population of Koraput was far too little in comparison with the coastal districts of Orissa. According to 1941 Census the population of Koraput was 1, 127, 862.⁷ The tribals constituted 83 per cent of the total population.⁸ The numerical strength of some of the major tribal communities was as follows :

Khonds—182,784, Parajas—129,747, Dombs—103,888, Savaras—52,518, Gadabas—33,139, Koyyas—27,891, Gonds—24,783, Jatapus—15,173, Khond Doras—5781, Dhruvas—2797, Bonda Parajas—2565, Didayis—1661, and Gondias—1178.⁹

These tribals can be divided into three major groups. The first group belonged to the Dravidian family. Chief among them were the Khonds, the Parajas, the Gonds and the Koyyas. The second group belonged to the Munda or Kolha species, chiefly comprising the Savaras and the Gadabas. The genesis of the third group is still unknown. They mostly belonged to the Bhumia and the Matia tribes ¹⁰

7. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 1.

8. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 60.

9. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 63

10. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 60.

Living a peripatetic life in forests, the tribals of Koraput, though short in height-in comparison with the people dwelling in the plains, were strongly built and had immense strength. With that much as their capital means, they struggle against nature for their existence. They are satisfied if the barest minimum requirements of life are met. They are truthful and remain pledged to their words. These tribals are again different from the dwellers of the plains in matters of their religious behaviour and social life. They profess an unflinching faith in the village deities. Superstitions most often deeply affect their social life.

The practice of bonded labour called 'Goti' and the practice of corvee called 'Bethi' were prevalent among the tribal people of Koraput. Dire need and scarcity often compelled the poor tribals to take loans from the rich sowkars, the money-lenders. They were then retained as servants to work on the fields and at the residences of the Sowkars until the loan was paid back in full. It was not so easy for them to repay the loan and consequently, they languished as bonded labourers for life. Even if one was able to return the money one would still continue as a labourer as no, other means of livelihood was available for him.¹¹ Again the tribals were forced into unpaid labour following the practice of corvee. On the whole the tribals, being subjected to penury and exploitation, eked out a very hard life.

11. *Report of the Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee, Orissa, 1940* (Cuttack, 1940), p. 43; R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, pp. 116-117.

Orissa was made a separate province on the 1st April 1936. On that very day, Koraput was declared a new district,* comprising the Jeypore estate. Many administrative changes were necessitated in the wake of the creation of the new district. The administration was vested in a Collector-cum Magistrate, who was also the agent of the Governor. The district was split into two sub-divisions namely Koraput and Raygada. One Deputy Collector was appointed for each sub-division. The Koraput sub-division was further subdivided into five taluks and Raygada into three¹² Under Koraput came the taluks of Koraput Proper, Jeypore, Nowrungpur, Malkanagiri and Pottangi. Raygada comprised the taluks of Raygada Proper, Gunpur and Bissam Cuttack. The administration of each taluk was vested in a Sub-Deputy Collector, who, in addition, also exercised magisterial powers. This was broadly the structure of administration for Koraput District and its taluks.

The measures adopted to tackle the law and order situation may be examined. A unit of Police force was set up for the first time in 1863. Captain Galbraith was posted as the first ever Assistant Superintendent of Police. Two years later, Jeypore was given the status of a separate Police District, but Raygada Sub-division continued to remain under Vizagapatam police District. Though the Head

* Before it, Koraput was a part of Vizagapatam District under Madras Presidency.

12. N. Senapati and N K. Sahu (Ed.), *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput* (Cuttack, 1966), p. 273.

Quarters of the Police Superintendent was shifted to Koraput, the Police District continued to be known in the name of Jeypore till 1936. It was the Police set-up in Koraput in 1941, on the eve of the Quit India Movement. The Police Organisation consisted of one Superintendent, two Assistant Superintendents, one Sergeant - Major, two Sergeants, nine Inspectors, forty-one Sub-Inspectors, fifty-six Head Constables, and five hundred and fifteen Constables. The Police force was responsible for putting down tribal unrest or revolt, guarding the prisons and the District Treasury. The Police District was divided into three sub-divisions. This apart, the Police District consisted of nine circles, thirty-one Police Stations and eleven outposts.¹³

This was broadly the administrative and law and order machinery of Koraput District, the seat of Lakshman Naik's nationalistic activities.

Malkanagiri was an important taluk or sub-division which was in turn Lakshman Naik's main stage of action. Situated in the southernmost end of Koraput, it remained cut off from the sub-divisional town of Jeypore by high mountains in the north. To its west lay Bastar region and the Shabari (Kolab) river, and high mountains, hemming in, formed the eastern boundary. The beautiful Sileru (Machhkund) river which flows through the eastern part merges with the Shabari near the village of Motu to its

13. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput* pp 150-151.

north.¹⁴ On the whole, the triangular region measuring some 2288 square miles which extended from the confluence of the Sileru and the Shabari near the village of Motu in the southern most part of Orisaa, into the interior of Orissa as far as Baipariguda, formed Malkanagiri sub-division.

Geography is the eye of history, So the geography of Malkanagiri has deeply influenced its history. The two beautiful rivers, the Sileru and the Shabari, flowing on either side, like the two arms of nature, seem to hug Malkanagiri into a tight embrace. The Modgul mountain range of Andhra Pradesh, lying to the south of the Sileru, or the Machhkund and the Bondaghat mountain range of Orissa stretching for miles stand as guard for Malkanagiri. On the other side the Shabari or the Kolab that separates Orissa from Madhya Pradesh meanders down. It is flanked by high mountains on both sides. The current of both these rivers is very strong. The Machhkund in its way down has formed the beautiful Duduma fall, and the Kolab has the awesome Bagra fall. There lies a tract of plain land, one hundred miles long and twenty miles wide, extending right from the middle of the southern-most end of Koraput upto Jeypore. A road, which was the only reliable means of communication stretched across the middle of this plain towards Jeypore. Fourteen miles along this road from Jeypore lay Baipariguda, Govindapali thirty-one miles away ; Matili and Malkanagiri lay forty and sixty

14. R. C. S, Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 173.

miles apart from Jeypore respectively.¹⁵ This tract of land lying between Malkanagiri and Baipariguda was densely wooded. Those forests were the happy hunting grounds of wild animals. This tract of dense forests is interspersed with hills, raising their heads very high, with mountain streams flowing down in sing-song rhythms, and with the huge trees, almost touching the bottom of the sky, which seem to be standing as the witnesses of time since prehistoric ages. The soil of this region is not generally suitable for cultivation. Except for the table-lands, the entire region adjoining the Sileru becomes very dry in summer. The rivers and the streams also dry up. The stony surface of the earth becomes iron hot in the scorching sun. Hot wind starts blowing. The flora and the fauna, even human beings, suffer miserably in the blazing heat. Again during the rains many areas become awefully damp. Very often, sudden rush of water following heavy downpour in the catchment areas put the rivers in a spate.¹⁶ Such a hostile geographical location and climate do not favour cultivation in Malkanagiri. Of course the south-western monsoon causes heavy rainfall in the subdivision. Paddy and other food grains are produced by clearing up the forest land. But it does not prove to be a very profitable occupation.¹⁷ The climate of Malkanagiri, thus touches both the extremes. Not

15. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, (In Oriya, 2nd Ed., Berhampur, 1981), p. 13.

16. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 5.

17. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 5.

only does the aridity of the land during the summer adversely affect agriculture, it also causes water scarcity, making it difficult for the local people to collect drinking water. On the other hand, many areas used to remain so much inundated in the rainy season that communication was totally disrupted.

Malkanagiri, a land of dense forests and mountains, has a mythological legend behind it. It is said that Malkanagiri is really Dandakaranya, the capital city of King Dandaka of the Ramayan fame. It was there that Lord Ramachandra spent his days of exile. The modern Malkanagiri is the distorted name of the ancient Malyavantagiri. Maithili has been distorted into Matili, and river Siladri of ancient times into the Sileru.¹⁸ The local inhabitants pride themselves on the heritage of the Ramayan era.

Notwithstanding the unfavourable climate and surroundings in and around Malkanagiri, villages at an average distance of ten miles came to be set up. There was not even a single good road for communication. A journey from one village to another, or to the town near-by took one through the jungles and across the rivers. Of course, with the construction of new roads, though not that good, the population of Malkanagiri almost doubled within a period of thirty years, i. e. between 1901 and 1931.¹⁹

18. Souvenir, Orissa Pradesh Congress Plenary Session, Bhubaneswar, December 1988, S. M. Ali's 'Biplabi Sahid Laxman Naik'.

19. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 173.

The density of population stood at 39 per square mile in 1940. Except for the comparatively well populated villages like Govindapali, Matili and Salimi lying to the north, Motu and Podia to the south, the population in other parts of Malkanagiri was sparse. The tribal people living there chiefly belonged to the Koyya, Bonda, Gadaba, Paraja and Bhumia communities. Apart from them, non-tribal people belonging to the Paik, Mali, Gonda, Domb, Rana, Hadi and Pana communities also lived there.²⁰

A brief survey of the socio-economic conditions of Malkanagiri before the emergence of Lakshman Naik is warranted,

By the Regulation XXV of 1802, Permanent Settlement was introduced in Vizagapatam. The Jeypore Estate was then handed over to Rama Chandra Dev for a sum of 16,000 rupees. Seventy years later in 1872, the Raja of Jeypore brought Malkanagiri which had been leased out to one Bangara Devi, under his own rule.²¹ The system of administration in Malkanagiri during the British Raj followed two separate lines. The onus of law and order, through the judiciary and the police, was chiefly vested in the Government machinery, whereas agriculture, forestry

20. Nihar Ranjan Patnaik, *Swadhinata Andolanare Odissara Adivasi O' Lakshman Naik* (In Oriya, Bhubaneswar, 1990), p. 16.

21. N. C. Behuria, *Final Report on the Major Settlement Operations in Koraput District, 1938-64* (Cuttack, 1966), pp. 55, 68.

and revenue, etc. were put under the Raja's superintendence. Revenue Supervisors and Forest Guards were appointed to assist the Raja. The practice of Mustadari was then in vogue. Village heads called Mustadars were employed to help the Royal staff, particularly the Revenue Collectors. They were also known as 'Naiks' or 'Chiefs' at some places. They usually discharged the duties of village chiefs and in exchange enjoyed some hereditary rights. The power and authority they enjoyed almost matched those of petty land-lords. The people could manage to get only a small portion of the land area registered against their names. The rest remained under the Raja's possession. These Mustadars used to oversee these lands on behalf of the Raja. They would collect land-revenue from the farmers and deposit it with the Raja's Amin. In return, they enjoyed the privileges of some rent-free lands and in addition they had with them the Raja's permission to make use of some of forest produces. These Mustadars enjoyed the privilege of exploiting the villagers. Often they demanded extra land-revenue, or extra crop-share. The villagers on their part tried to keep the Mustadars in good humour, for their displeasure meant the loss of the land.

It was not that the villagers had a smooth sailing. Inhuman practices like Goti, Bethi and Gudem drove them to misery and penury. Following the practice of Bethi, the people were forced into doing labour by the Government officials, the royal staff and the Mustadars, with little or no wage at all. The life of these bonded labourers was much more pathetic than that of the American Negro slaves. This practice of forced labour bred hatred among the

local people, for the government and the administration.²² Another abominable practice was that of bonded labour, called Goti. A poor tribal man would usually take a very small amount of loan from the money-lender. Then the debtor became contract bound to work for the usurer at his home and on his fields until the loan was repaid in full with due interest. The usurer would finally extort many times more than was due to him. Very often, even though fully paid, the shrewd money-lenders would not relieve the unlettered bonded labourer by taking up the accounts. Consequently the unfortunate tribal-man had to spend his whole life in the service of the money-lender. On many occasions, the Mustadars, playing the usurer, exploited the villagers.²³ Gudem, another cruel practice, was also prevalent in Malkanagiri. The government officials, the staff of Jeypore Raja and even the government contractors had the power to take away from the villagers anything they liked without or with very little money offered as tips. Any protest against the deprivation of their hard-earned property only served to invoke punitive measures like physical torture and fine. At times, keeping in tune with Gudem, the land-lords and the money-lenders would procure food grains and domestic live-stock at very nominal prices. The simple, unlettered tribal folks who could not keep accounts were subjected to economic exploitation.

22. *Report of the Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee, Orissa, 1940* (Cuttack, 1940), pp. 49-50.
23. B. S. Deo, *The Goti system in Jeypore Agency* (Jeypore, 1939).

Because of the practice of Gudem which was extensively followed, the people of Malkanagiri remained crushed under the pangs of poverty.²⁴

The tribal people of Malkanagiri also suffered in other matters. There was no uniform law determining the land revenue. With regard to different times and places, the people had to pay more rent in proportion to agricultural products. Moreover, unauthorised felling of trees in the forest entailed upon one a fine of one rupee and a fowl. As a rupee was almost a rarity to come by in a place like Malkanagiri, the people found it impossible to pay the fine.²⁵ There was also another dimension to their suffering which need be highlighted. Tax and excise duty imposed on opium also fanned public discontent. Moreover there was no uniform system of pricing in Malkanagiri. People had to pay more for commodities coming from outside, whereas their own produces were sold at very low prices. Rice was selling 26 seers a rupee as against salt selling at five rupees per maund. They had to buy essential commodities like salt and Kerosene oil at very steep prices. These factors forced the poor tribal people to run into debt from money-lenders. The financial problems further

24. *Report of the partially excluded Areas Enquiry Committee, Orissa, 1940*, p. 53.

25. Gyanendra Pandey (Ed), *The Indian Nation in 1942* (Calcutta, 1988), p. 188, B. Pati's 'Storm over Malkanagiri ; A Note on Laxman Naiko's Revolt, 1940'.

worsened following a steep rise in the population of this area after 1921.²⁶

The much neglected and exploited tribal people also faced many other problems on the social front. They remained illiterate for generations. There was no school, not even an educated person to teach the unlettered.²⁷ Taking advantage of their illiteracy, the usurers and money-lenders exploited the tribal folks by faking up the accounts and records. Moreover the people were easy victims of superstitions. They were scared of the wrath of the Gods and Goddesses and in order to propitiate the village deity 'Mauli Ma' offered animal sacrifices. Animal sacrifice followed by feast and carousal, singing and dancing, customarily marked the tribal festivals. Neither doctors, nor hospitals were available for the treatment of patients. The village medicineman (Dishari) would usually treat the patients, give nostrums prepared from herbs, would often puff them with magic incantations. It was then the turn of the patient and the members of his family to pray the village deities for recovery. Many people perished for want of treatment. In this condition the Raja's staff and the government officials also used to exploit the poor tribals. They did not even bother for their education medical care and wellbeing. The illiterate tribal folks were thus doomed to languish in poverty. The meagre yield of paddy or maize was not

26. Gyanendra Pandey (Ed), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, pp. 188-189.

27. K. M. Patra, *Orissa State Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1912-1947* (New Delhi, 1979), p. 192.

sufficient to see them through even for half a year. As a result, they had to depend upon the forest and forest produces for survival. They had to survive upon wild berries, tubers and upon game and bird hunting. Struggling against the forces of nature and depending upon the forest and forest product, the tribals knew, their forefathers had managed to survive for ages. This entailed that they would also suffer in silence, without the murmur of a protest.

EARLY LIFE OF LAKSHMAN NAIK

Lakshman Naik's life was associated with a place called Baipariguda. It lies fourteen miles away from Jeypore along the Malkanagiri road. The place is mostly inhabited by tribals belonging to the Bhumia, Gadaba, Koyya and Paraja communities. A police outpost and a small hospital had been established there by the year 1940.¹ Situated on the banks of the Kolab river, Tentuligumma is a small and beautiful village, which comes under Baipariguda Police Station. The Kolab flows eight miles to the south of Matili. Tentuligumma lies across the Kolab, twelve miles beyond Bara, Udayagiri and Sanagumma villages. As for an alternative the Kolab can be approached by crossing the Tara and Ramgiri mountains, from the other side of Baipariguda. And Tentuligumma lies just on the far side of the Kolab.² Lakshman Naik was born there in Tentuliguma on the 22nd of November 1899.^{3*}

1. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 161.

2. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 14-15.

3. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 23

* Sriharsha Mishra in his work *Swadhinatara Jayajatra* (Cuttack, 1980, p. 123) has mentioned that Lakshman Naik was born in the year 1893.

Tentuligumma is located in the fringe areas of Koraput and very close to the borders of Madhya Pradesh. The post office of Salimi covers Tentuligumma that comes under Matili Police Station. Enclosed on all sides by the Tulsi, Dangar Leki and Luleru mountains this village resembles a blackhole. The far side is flanked by the Kolab river and the Tara mountains. It was as difficult to venture out overcoming all these obstacles as it was to approach the place from outside.⁴ A dense forest infested with wild animals surrounded the village. Every year man-eaters took a regular toll of human lives Tentuligumma was neither too big nor too small a village. Some ninety families lived in Tentuligumma at the time of which seventy belonged to the scheduled castes and the rest to the Bhumia tribe.⁵

These Bhumia aboriginals chiefly inhabited the western and southern parts of Jeypore Taluk and the northern part of Malkanagiri.⁶ The Bhumias numbered about 18,000 in 1942.⁷ The Bhumias are considered to be a sub-caste of the Baiga tribe living in Madhya Pradesh.⁸ The then Assistant Agent of the

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4. *Utkal Prasang*, Vol. 37, No. 1, August 1980, p. 1, Bina Devi's 'Se Eka Sphulinga'.
 5. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 22, N. Das' 'Martyr Lakshman Naik, a hero of freedom movement'.
 6. R.C.S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p.79
 7. L. N. Sahu, *The Hill Tribes of Jeypore* (Jeypore, 1942), p. 101.
 8. R. V. Russell and R. B. Hira Lal, *The Tribes and Castes of Central Proviness of India*, Vol. II, (London, 1916), p. 80.

British Governor stationed at Jeypore, H. G. Turner, divided the tribals inhabiting the area into two major groups—the Kolhas and the Dravidians. It is believed that the Bhumias belonged to the Kolha tribe.⁹ This view was also supported by a number of anthropologists¹⁰

There is no legend to suggest as to when, how and from where these Bhumias came to inhabit Koraput.¹¹ It is believed, the name of the tribe, i.e., Bhumia suggests their origin from the soil (Bhumi)¹² The tribe is called Bhumia, for they deem themselves to be the progeny of the soil.¹³ Their legend and tradition confirm that they were the first to start farming in the highlands of Koraput.¹⁴ That is why they take it that they have the first land the foremost claim on the soil and that their ancestors ruled over the land in ancient times.¹⁵ The Bhumias, unlike other tribals, speak a dialect of Oriya rather than a separate tribal language.¹⁶ Their spoken language does not

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9. M.A. Sherring, *The Tribes and Castes of the Madras Presidency* (1st pub., London, 1909, Indian Reprint, New Delhi, 1975), p. 200
 10. R. V. Russell and R. B. Hira, Lal, *The Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces*, Vol. II, p. 308.
 11. R. C S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 79.
 12. *Gazetteer of the Central Provinces*, 1870
 13. Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandala* (Bombay, 1960), pp. 9-10.
 14. E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), Vol. I. p. 238.
 15. Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandala*, p. 10.
 16. R.C.S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 79

have any phonetic difference among various sets of letters.¹⁷ Probably these half-nomadic tribal Bhumias, having settled down at some particular place, started farming in course of time. Later on they followed some of the Hindu customs and beliefs, and also accepted the language as their own.¹⁸ A small hamlet, Kendupoda by name, is situated two miles away from Baipariguda. There stands the temple of Birukhomb, worshipped by the Bhumias with faith and devotion.¹⁹

Lakshman Naik was born into this Bhumia tribe.

Lakshman's father, Padlam Naik, was a popular tribal leader. Pleased with his courage, fearlessness intelligence and competence, the Raja of Jeypore appointed him a Mustadar. Four villages, namely Tentuligumma, Bejuniguda, Ainlaguda and Lekiguda were placed under his authority. Consisting of about two hundred families, this cluster of four villages had a population of about one thousand. Though not far from one another, these villages were cut off by natural barriers like rivers, hills and forests. The native village of Padlam was bigger than the other three.²⁰ All these villages were highly underdeveloped, with a predominantly tribal population.²¹ Padlam's native village Tentuligumma consisted of

17. L.N Sahu, *The Hill Tribes of Jeypore*, p. 104

18. Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandala*, p. 11.

19. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 162.

20. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 23

21. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha* (In Oriya Cuttack, 1985), p. 260.

sixty houses, with his own exactly in the middle. The Bhumias, generally live in joint families. In some cases, such families had as many as fifty to sixty members²² Padlam's was one such example of a joint family. Padlam had two other brothers, who shared his house with their spouses and children. Padlam had also three sons. Sonia Naik, being the eldest, followed by Lakshman Naik and the youngest Dhana Naik. As all of them lived together in a joint family, Padlam had built a house, big enough to accomodate such a large family. It was a mudbuilt house thatched with a variety of grass called 'Puri', with ten rooms, a wide courtyard and high mud verandahs running around. In front of the house was an earthen platform where the residents of these four villages used to gather to appraise their leader of the day-to-day problems facing them. Seated on this platform, Padlam Naik, as the Mustadar of the village, would listen to their grievances. The village main-road, fringed with houses on both sides, passed by the side of this platform.²³ Padlam could watch the activities going on in the village from this platform. He could read and write a little though he did not formally attend any school. The tribal people held him in high esteem for this achievement. As the Mustadar, Padlam owned about one hundred acres of land. This apart, he also had some pairs of oxen which he required for ploughing and also, had other domestic animals like cows, sheep, and goats. As the head of such a large joint family he faced no difficulties in running the family because of his vast properties.

22. L. N. Sahu, *The hill Tribes of Jeypore*.

23. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 24.

Being the son of an influential Mustadar, Lakshman Naik could have lived a happy and comfortable life. But he was made of a different stuff. He lived a hard life right from his childhood. He used to do his work himself. Like other village lads, he worked on the fields. He would take out the cattle into the forest for grazing.²⁴ Besides gathering wild fruits and roots, Lakshman used to do small game-hunting in the near-by jungles. The surrounding areas of Tentuligumma were densely wooded and that was why the villagers were very enthusiastic about hunting. They always carried bows and arrows for their safety and security, and also for hunting. Like other villagers, Lakshman Naik developed from childhood a strong fascination for hunting. The forest adjoining Tara mountain was the centre-stage of his hunting expeditions. Shooting down flying birds or scurrying animals greatly enthused him. For this he came to possess a licensed gun when grown up.²⁵ This plateau hemmed in by forests and hills was without a school.** This fact made reading and writing a distant dream for the children of this region. The local teachers who acquainted the children with the alphabet received a remuneration

24. *Prajantra Saptahiki*, January 24-30, 1988 p. 34, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Desamatrukara Charanatale Eka Mahargha Sonita Arghya : Laxman Naik'.

25. *Adivasi*, Vol IX, 1967 68, No. 1, p 22.

** Till 1942, there was not a single matriculate among the Bhumias. Arjun Naik, a student of Jeypore H. E. School was in the matriculation class that year. (L. N. Sahu, *The Hill Tribes of Jeypore*, p. 101)

of three rupees a month.²⁶ However, Padlam Naik did not let his worthy and promising son Lakshman go unlettered, as he himself somewhat knew how to read and write. He did all that he could do for his son. Lakshman was initiated into studies at the age of twelve.²⁷ Padlam taught Lokshman the letters, writing them first on the sand-slate. Though not very good at writing, Lakshman could write out his name and could read letters and other simple books.

Lakshman Naik evinced a friendly disposition from childhood. He was not given to pride or vanity as the son of the Mustadar. He merrily spent his time with his friends. Chief among his playmates were Gobinda Pujari, Bhalu Domb and Bana Sing Bhumia.²⁸ Lakshman excelled all of them in everything, as much in a game of tree-jumping as in shooting.

He was a lover of nature right from his childhood. The magic beauty of nature overwhelmed him. Tentuligumma had a very fascinating natural setting. The Kolab river flew down close to the village. The Tara mountain laid out its touching landscape from a distance. Moreover, the location of the village was interspersed with vast mango groves. One and half miles upstream of the village is to be seen a lovely waterfall in the river Kolab,

26. V. Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts* (Nellore, 1971), p. 249.

27. *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLVI, No. 1, August 1989, p. 171, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Quit India Movement'

28. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 23.

descending down from a height of twenty feet. Lakshman spent his time watching the water-filled awesome Kolab, enjoying the soft murmur of the waterfall, beholding the greenery of the Tara mountain or swinging down the branches of the mango trees. At some distance beyond the waterfall, in the upper reaches of the Kolab lay the Gupteswar Cave, a beautiful scenic spot on the banks of the river. The pathway leading to the cave is lavishly fringed with Champa trees. The entrance to the cave measured nine feet wide and eight feet high. Inside the cave stood a block of ten feet high, phallus-shaped natural stone, worshipped as Lord Gupteswar - the hidden God. The Lord had been named 'Gupteswar' for having remained hidden in the cave for years.²⁹ Lakshman Naik frequently visited the deity's abode and spent his time in the lap of nature.

Time rolled by and like the phases of the moon, Lakshman grew up into a sturdy young man. He was tall, broad and a solidly built person with neatly carved out limbs, and firm and flexible muscles.³⁰ He displayed extraordinary qualities during his youth. The primitive Bhumias, at his age, were more inclined to singing and dancing. Specially on festive occasions the young Bhumias would compose and sing lovely songs. to the fancy of the young women of their tribe. Though Lakshman had great fascination for songs, he would compose them on the beauty of

29. R. C. S, Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p 162.

30. *Utkal Prasang*, Vol. 37, No. 1, August 1980, p. 1, Bina Devi's 'Se Eka Sphulinga'.



Lakshman Naik's Family : Raghu Naik (son). Manguli Naikani (wife) and Bansingh Pujari (brother-in-law)

the hills and forests, on the rivers and streams, on the sky and the earth. Another trait of his character was his disbelief in the practice of castiesm. The caste-system, though not rigorously followed, prevailed to some extent among the tribal Bhumias. On the line of caste, they were sharply divided amongst themselves into two groups - the higher and the lower. The higher section of the Bhumias even refused to touch water from the hands of the lower Bhumias. Not only that, the Bhumia women-folk refused food even when offered by the Brahmins. Only the Bhumia males were allowed to partake meals at the Brahmin house.³¹ Those social malpractices deeply agitated his mind. Again customarily the Bhumias did not dine with the Dombs. Some Domb families were then living in his village. Turning a blind eye to the practice of castiesm, Lakshman would dine at the Dombs'.³²

Lakshman married at the age of nineteen one Manguli Bhumia,*** the daughter of Ghasi Bhumia of village Sanagumma.³³ The marriage was a union of partners, as though made for each other. Manguli proved to be an enterprising wife for a talented Karmayogi like Lakshman Naik. He would remain busy from dawn to dusk, doing the routine household chores and waiting upon the elders of the

31. L. N. Sahu, *The Hill Tribes of Jeypore*, p. 101.

32. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 27.

*** Manguli Bhumia (Naik) died in 1974.

33. *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLVI, No. 1, August 1939, p. 172, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Quit India Movement in Orissa'.

family hand and foot. She did not pride herself on being the Mustadar's daughter-in-law. She could mix and mingle with one and all. Apart from being accomplished in household chores, she even knew the art of planting and transplanting paddy seedlings. But she was not very good at singing and dancing. She only lacked this accomplishment as the worthy wife of a great man like Lakshman. However he was blessed with a son, one and half years after his marriage. The baby was christened 'Raghunath'. Five years later, a daughter, who was given the name Kaushalya, was born. On the whole, Lakshman Naik lived a happy married life.

Right from youth, Lakshman protested against oppression and injustice. The poor tribals of his village were oppressed by both the Government and the feudal lords. The Amins, Revenue Inspectors, Forest Guards, and Policemen often used to visit his village. They were brought into the village in palanquins carried by the villagers. They usually stayed at the Chief's or the Mustadar's place. In other words, it was in the house of Lakshman's father Padlam, that these officials were lodged and entertained. Padlam would exhaust all his capacity and means to satisfy them. The villagers were bound to part with anything they would set their eyes on, or else they were subjected to punishment and physical torture. The simple, innocent and unresisting tribals of this region were used to the oppression, meted out by the Government officials and members of the royal staff. These villagers had been looking upon these officials as their 'Masters' or 'Lords' since a long time past. All that the tribals could say to their orders was 'Yes,

my Lord' or 'As you wish, my Lord'.³⁴ Young Lakshman revolted against this oppression and victimization. He was of the opinion that the Amins, Forest Guards or the Policemen could come to the Village on foot—for they had legs. Why should they be carried in palanquins ? Again, what legal or moral right did they have to take away by force the hard earned food grains or the domestic animals belonging to the villagers ? Unable to stomach their manner and behaviour, Lakshman would go out whenever these officials visited the village. Once they had left, Lakshman would challenge his father about the propriety of their action. His father would explain that it was their local tradition, handed down for generations. It was not as if he could do away with old customs and traditions. It would not make any difference even if he was replaced by another Mustadar. Lakshman, while listening to all this, would wonder how long these tribals had to undergo suffering and exploitation in the name of custom and tradition. He turned his ire against these officers, against the Raja, and the Government. He thought that they were the root of all troubles, the central point of all oppression and exploitation. They wanted the tribals to remain illiterate and neglected for ever, so that they could exercise their authority upon them without any opposition and their authority would be far more deeply entrenched. Lakshman made up his mind to launch a revolt against this sort of persecution. He wanted the tribals to get rid of the superstitions, deeply rooted in their customs.

34. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 9, 20-21.

He tried to convince them that these customs and traditions had been cunningly designed by the oppressive ruling class. The villagers had to be infused with courage, and organised in order to be able to protest. The people of the neighbouring villages had to be united and equally encouraged in this regard. So many plans and designs crowded Lakshman's mind.

A mass uprising in Malkanagiri on an earlier occasion had deeply influenced Lakshman Naik. Many years before his birth, in 1879, the Koyyas, inhabiting the Rampa regions of East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, had launched a revolt.³⁵ At the root of this trouble lay the oppression meted out to the local people by the Police Inspector and other Constables. The situation reached such a pass that the road and the market adjoining the Police Station became deserted.³⁶ In April 1880, the Koyya rebel leader, Tomma Dora, supported by his followers, occupied the Podia Police Station. The local Inspector and six other Constables lost their lives in an armed conflict.³⁷ Colonel Macquoid of the Hyderabad regiment rushed to Motu, with a reinforcement of a hundred soldiers in order to save Motu from the rebels. But he had to return to Hyderabad without

35. I. P. Minayeff, *Travels in and Diaries of India and Burma* (Calcutta), p. 158;

A. R. N. Srivastava, *Tribal Freedom Fighters, of India* (New Delhi, 1986), p. 42.

36. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, pp. 35-36

37. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2414 KOR, Agent to Governor, Vizagapatam, to Sri Ram Chandra Deo, Maharajah, May 12, 1880.

being able to repulse the attack by the Koyyas. After this incident Tomma Dora rode the waves of popularity to be acclaimed as the king of southern Malkanagiri. But afterwards the Police killed Tomma Dora in an attack. The revolt ended with his death.³⁸ The people of Malkanagiri always fondly cherished the memories of this uprising. Again, in between 1910 1911, another famous uprising had been launched by the tribals inhabiting Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh. Popularly known as the Bastar uprising, it had deeply affected the neighbouring areas.³⁹ Though Lakshman was then a small boy, the story of the revolt as recounted by the elders always inspired him.

Another uprising that took place when Lakshman was still young terribly disturbed him. This uprising (known as Fituri in local dialect) of Rampa was led by Alluri Sitaram Raju.⁴⁰ It took place in the Madgole region of Andhra Pradesh and the Malkanagiri areas of Koraput. The tribal people of Rampa suffered miserably on account of the existing provisions of the forest law,⁴¹ Moreover,

38. R Guha (Ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, I (New Delhi, 1982), pp. 126-129, D. Arnold's 'Rebellious Hillmen: The Guden-Rampa Risings, 1839-1924'.

39. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 36.

40. Hyderabad Archives, Madras Government, Public Department, G. O. No. 572, Hapell's Report, July 23, 1923.

41. B. R. Nanda (Ed.), *Essays in Modern Indian History*, (Delhi, 1980), p. 160, K. S. Singh's 'The Freedom Movement and Tribal Sub-Movements, 1920-1947',

cruel practices like Bethi forced the people into living like beasts.⁴² Alfred Beyson was then the Deputy Tahasildar there. He was also a contractor. The wage for the labourers as fixed by the Government was six annas, but Alfred would pay only two annas, while keeping for himself the rest four.⁴³ This apart, he also perpetrated torture and oppression on the people keeping in tune with the practice of Bethi. As a result the Koyyas inhabiting the region rose in revolt under the leadership of Alluri Sitaram Raju. The sparks of this revolt were also seen in Malkanagiri. Sitaram, accompanied by his comrades, visited Malkanagiri in 1923 hoping to secure arms and amunition and other forms of help. But by then the Government had shifted all firearms of the Police Station to some other undisclosed place.⁴⁴ It was heard that Sitaram Raju visited Malkanagiri Tahsil Office and the Treasury. Without taking away money or any other thing, he only signed the register authenticating his visit.⁴⁵ This uprising continued for two

42. M. Venkatarangaiya (Ed.), *The Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad, 1965), Vol. III, pp. 366-360, T. G. Rutherford, Special Commissioner, Agency Operations to Madras Chief Secretary, August 22, 1924.

43. Sriharsha Mishra, *Swadhinatara Jayajatra*, p. 75.

44. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 36.

45. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 32.

46. A. R. N. Srivastava, *Tribal Freedom Fighters of India*, p. 43.

years.⁴⁶ The government soldiers were rushed from different places to put down the rebellion. Many people were killed in the struggle. The Raja of Jeypore generously helped the government forces to crush the uprising.⁴⁷ The impact of this revolt on the people of Koraput can easily be imagined. However at last Alluri Sitaram Raju was killed in action and the revolt came to an end.

The uprising of Rampa taught Lakshman how to launch a united struggle against the oppressive rulers.⁴⁸ His friendship with Chandra Kutia greatly helped him in this regard. Chandra Kutia who had earlier participated in the Rampa uprising, was a Koyya tribal youth, hailing from Kukurkonda, a small village situated close to Salimi. Lakshman Naik very often called on Chandra Kutia. He would also enquire about the uprising. He listened with rapt attention while Chandra Kutia described the objectives of the uprising and the techniques of guerilla warfare. He would wonder at the possibility of a similar revolt in Malkanagiri, in the same context as in Rampa. He then decided to fight against injustice and appression by joining hands with Chandra Kutia. But the way the Rampa uprising had met its end disappointed him. Lakshman could not thereafter meet Chandra Kutia, for he had either laid down his life in the struggle or had gone into hiding. This incident also somehow dampened his spirits.

47. M. Venkatarangaiya (Ed.) *The Freedom Movement in Andra Pradesh*, Vol. III, pp. 87-88.

48. Kapil Kumar, *Congress and Classes : Nationalism, Workers and 'Peasants'* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 132, B. Pati's 'Peasants, Tribals and the National Movement in Orissa (1921-1936)'.

On the contrary, the Rampa uprising taught him a good many lessons. Like Sitaram Raju, he wanted to share the tears and joys of the people in order to win their hearts. Sitaram gained popularity by helping people with his medical art and knowledge in astrology.⁴⁹ This popularity helped him assume leadership of the innocent tribals of his area. With this in mind, he took up the profession of the village priest and medicineman. He treated the patients with nostrums prepared from herbs and plants.⁵⁰ He also practised exorcising. As the village priest he enjoyed the privilege of worshipping the village deities, and also earned the right to perform sacrifices to the chanting of incantations. The mastery over these two arts not only earned him popularity, but also made him powerful. People began to look upon him with love and regard.

His companionship with Chandra Kutia taught him the techniques of guerilla warfare and also added many other dimensions to his personality. Moving alone through forests and hills he became more brave and fearless. Moreover he became more familiar with the people of the neighbouring villages and could get to know better their mind

49. *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 38th Session, Bhubaneswar, 1977, p. 516, Sumit Sarkar's 'Primitive Rebellion and Modern Nationalism : A Note on Forest Satyagraha in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement'; B.R. Nanda (Ed.), *Essays in Modern Indian History*, p. 160, K. S. Singh's 'The Freedom Movement and Tribal Sub-Movements, 1920-1947'.

50. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 260.

and line of thought.⁵¹ It now became fairly easy for him to organise the people.

Meanwhile, Lakshman's father Padlam Naik grew old. As the Mustadar, it proved difficult for him to get to know and solve the problems of the four villages. Padlam wanted his eldest son Sania to take over as the Mustadar. But Sania was a man made of a different stuff. He was not meant for the responsibility which the post demanded. Failing in this Padlam next wanted Lakshman to shoulder the responsibility of the family and the village as well. Accordingly old Padlam retired from his job in 1930 and Lakshman succeeded him. It was not that a headman's son was only entitled to replace his father, but the job, besides popularity, demanded some other special qualities. Fortunately Lakshman was endowed with all these. Before he assumed charge, he had been visiting and befriending the people of his native village, and also of the adjoining villages. He used to arbitrate land disputes, settle the debts of the villages by himself checking the accounts and records of the money-lenders. He even treated ailing people with herbal preparations as and when necessary. His long association with his father made him perfectly fit for the job. This apart, he had another achievement. He had acquired a good knowledge of Oriya, the language spoken in towns, by frequently visiting Matili, Jeypore Palace and the Revenue Office at Ramgiri. He could speak to the countrymen in the local dialect, and as much frequently in Koyya language as in chaste Oriya.⁵² None had any

51. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik* p. 33.

52. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 36-37.

reservation about his being nominated as the village headman.

Lakshman Naik's principal task as the Mustadar was to collect land revenue from the subjects and deposit the same at the Royal Palace, that is, with the concerned officers of the feudal lords, and to arrange provisions and bearers for the officers on tour.⁵³ In addition he had to bear the maintenance of his family. By then he had a holding of 80 acres of land and an additional 20 acres of arable land on the river bank. The size of his family was also equally large, and all of them had to depend upon agriculture for their subsistence.⁵⁴ Consequently the maintenance of such a large estate and that of the family were vested in him.

After taking over, Lakshman strove for the social and mental development of the tribals. He first undertook welfare measures in the villages which included widening of roads, digging drains, setting up of parks and above all, rehabilitation programmes. During the off-season when the people would go unemployed, Lakshman would engage them in these projects. Not only that, he also felt concerned about intensive farming for increased production and for that he would try to learn new techniques of farming by visiting different places where such farming had been undertaken. Besides economic

53. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 260.

54. *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 41st Session, Bombay 1980, p. 709, B. Pati's 'Storm over Malkanagiri : A Preliminary Note on Laxman Naiko's Revolt (1942)'.

development, Lakshman wanted to strengthen the unity and solidarity of the people by bringing about a new consciousness through cultural programmes. He spared no efforts to make their community life more pleasant and enjoyable by arranging entertainment programmes, singing, dancing and opera shows on festive occasion⁵⁵ Within a few days, Tentuligumma came to be known as an ideal village. The headmen of other villages also sought his advice and opinion on different matters.

But Lakshman Naik was not at peace with himself. He had to wait upon and serve the Revenue Inspectors and the Forest Guards on visit to his village. The villagers had to bear with their cruel treatment. Though he bore everything silently, his mind and soul often revolted against them. He could not make out now to save his fellow tribals from social evils like Goti, Bethi and Gudem. But he firmly believed that the day was round the corner when all these social evils would come to an end, and people would leave a sigh of relief. Lakshman eagerly looked forward to that auspicious moment in future and carried on with his work.



55. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 38-39.

CONGRESS MOVEMENT IN KORAPUT AND LAKSHMAN NAIK

Koraput played a major role in the history of Indian freedom struggle. The people of Koraput, particularly the tribals, are freedom-loving and they do not like being put under slavish domination. Therefore, whenever their independence is at stake, exploitation and oppression became unbearable, they always rise in revolt against the government.¹ Koraput was then no exception to the nation-wide anti-British struggle launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The local Congress leaders were more than eager to see Koraput join the mainstream of the national freedom struggle. But, in fact, the freedom struggle was not very widespread in the beginning. The people were not very much aware of the objectives of the movement. A drive to enroll primary members to the Congress was undertaken in 1929 as the first step to popularise the Congress movement.² Gopabandhu Choudhury, a prominent Congress leader of Orissa, was engaged at the time in spreading Gandhian thought and Congress ideology by setting up Gandhi Seba Sangha Centres. The Congress workers toured Koraput to spread

1. See Bipan Chandra's *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi, 1961).

2. N. Senapati (Ed.), *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 74.

the message of Khadi and to influence the people, to take part in the programmes of the Congress. One Radhakrushna Biswasroy of Koraput was in the service of the British Government. He wrote to Gopabandhu Choudhury, seeking his advice on joining the Congress. Gopabandhu Choudhury advised him to give up the job and join the freedom struggle. Consequently, he resigned from government service in 1929 and joined the Congress and went on to become a prominent figure of the Congress movement in Koraput.³ During the salt movement in 1930, many volunteers joined the strike and courted arrest under his leadership. They were later released following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.⁴

In the years 1929 and 1930 the Souras of Gunpnr launched an agitation against paying taxes. This agitation assumed such alarming proportions that the British authorities were forced to exempt them from paying tax for that year.⁵

Orissa became a separate province in 1936 and Koraput was made a district thereof. Sir John Austin Hubback was appointed the first Governor of Orissa. A few days after assuming charge, Sir

3. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 98.

4. *Navina*, March 3, 1931 ;

Who's who Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput District (Cuttack, 1969), p. i ;

N. Senapati (Ed.), *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 74.

5. Kapil kumar (Ed.), *Congress and Classes : Nationalism, Workers and Peasants*, p. 137.

Hubback wanted to visit the highland areas like Koraput. The news of the first ever visit of such an important personage as the Governor created a sensation in the whole of Koraput. The Raja himself, his officials and the Government servants stationed there swung into action to make all arrangements for the Governor's visit. Provisions of food like rice and mutton, fuel and even cooking materials were arranged and kept ready. Unpaid bondsmen to be used in his service, were also collected from the villages near-by. Game-hunting had to be arranged for the Governor's entertainment. The Rameswar-Gupteswar forest was selected for this purpose, as wild animals abounded in it. At last, the Governor paid his visit, enjoyed his stay over there and returned to the capital. But the untold misery which the people of Koraput in general and of Ramgiri in particular were made to suffer was unparalleled in history. Granaries were made empty of ricestock just as vegetables from kitchen-gardens and milch cows and fowls from sheds were forcibly taken away. The people could not reconcile themselves to the undesirable way they were made to part with their hard-earned money and property. Lakshman Naik, their leader, was also at his wits' end, for the misery of the people was boundless. He told everything to Nilakantha Patra, a close associate, living at Ghumar, who on his part proceeded to Jeypore to submit a report to the Congress leadership. He took up the matter with Radhakrushna Biswasroy. In the end a detailed report was sent to the 'Samaj'* for publication. This news item, when published, evoked

* The Samaj was and continues to be a Leading newspaper of Orissa.

severe public reaction. The reaction was so severe that the British Government at last issued orders for paying compensation. The local people who had suffered loss and damage during the Governor's visit were duly compensated. It was almost a personal victory for Lakshman Naik. It was because of his complaint, given coverage in the 'Samaj', that the plight of the people came to public notice and compensation was paid. This move bore double benefits for him. First, he learnt how to achieve his goals and get his demands fulfilled through public unity. Secondly, this incident gradually heightened his faith in the Congress. The very fact that the Congress played a vital role in securing them due compensation drew the hillmen and the people of the depressed class towards it and its plan of action.⁶

after this incident, a meeting was convened at the residence of Raghunath Patra to promote and spread the Congress plans. The meeting was attended among others by Radhamohan Sahu, who was in charge of the Malkanagiri unit of the Congress. Besides the Congress workers, some other village chiefs and Mustadars were also invited to the meeting. Lakshman Naik also attended this meeting. The meeting discussed in detail the tenets of Gandhian thought, the objectives of the national freedom struggle and the British Government's policy of exploitation. All those who attended the meeting, including Lakshman Naik, felt that complete independence could be attained only by the Congress with the Mahatma Gandhi taking the lead. They all joined the Congress that day and pledged

6. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 43-45.

to take part in the freedom movement.⁷ Lakshman Naik was enrolled as a 'Four Anna' member** of the Congress.⁸ By the year 1936, Lakshman Naik, as a newly enrolled member of the Congress, launched out into a new life.

Since 1936, the Congress programmes were followed and implemented on an extensive scale because of the strong organisational leadership of Radhakrushna Biswasroy. As the first step, he organised the people to fight against old and inhuman practices like bonded labour and corvee. The success of this move heightened the people's faith in the Congress. Moreover, the people also realised that the Congress was the only organisation that could put an end to their suffering. Consequently, the tribals, the poor and the downtrodden joined the Congress and started spreading its message, plans and programmes. The Congress as an organisation, soon found great favour with the public.⁹ Three persons, Radhakrushna Biswasroy, Radhamohan Sahu and Sadashib Tripathy, greatly contributed to the popularity of the Congress.¹⁰ Lakshman Naik also played

7. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 45-46.

** At that time, if one had to join the Congress as a primary member, he had to contribute four annas towards membership.

8. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV (Cuttack, 1957), p. 91.

9. *Who's Who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput District*, p. 1,

10. Gyanendra Pandey, (Ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, pp. 191-192.

a significant role to popularise the Congress. The fact that he could drive home the principles and policies of the Congress and draw the hill-men towards it, bore irrefutable proof of his able leadership. Because of this he rose to become the President of the Primary Congress Committee of Tentuligumma and also an influential member of the Koraput District Committee.¹¹ He courted arrest for the first time in 1936, while motivating the people at the Matili market against paying any illegal tax.¹²

People gradually came to appreciate more and more the plans and programmes of the Congress. The public support which the Congress enjoyed in Koraput and in Malkanagiri was reflected in the elections held in 1936. All the three Congress candidates, Radhakrushna Blswasroy, Radhamohan Sahu and Sadashib Tripathy, were elected to the Orissa Legislative Assembly. Those who were defeated, included Bidyadhar Singhdeo, a kinsman of the Raja of Jeypore, Balakrushna Patra, the Raja's lawyer and Harihar Mishra, a prominent member of the Utkal Sammilani. It was obvious that the people of Koraput wanted to elect only Congress candidates as their representative.¹³ The people of Malkanagiri extended firm support and ensured the victory of the Congress candidate Radhamohan Sahu. The event of these

11. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol IV, p. 91.

12. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 91.

13. Balabhadra Pujari, *Sahid Laxman Nayak* (In Oriya Bhubaneswar), p. 11.

three candidates sweeping the elections accelerated the Congress movement in Koraput.¹⁴ Moreover, the campaign for the elections in 1937 also made the people politically more conscious.¹⁵ Following the massive public support extended in favour of the Congress, the then Revenue Minister of the Congress Ministry, announced in the Legislative Assembly that all illegal taxes imposed in Jeypore Estate would be abolished.¹⁶

Constructive work played an important role in the Gandhian strategy of the Indian National Movement. It was primarily organised around the promotion of Khadi, spinning, and village industries, national education, struggle against untouchability and social uplift of the Harijanas and the tribals, and boycott of foreign cloth and liquor. Above all it meant going to villages and identifying with the villagers. Constructive work was symbolised by hundreds of Ashrams and training centres which came up all over the country, almost entirely in the villages. Here the social and political workers got practical training in production of Khadi and yarn and in work among lower castes and tribal people.¹⁷

Training camps were at the time organised on behalf of the Congress. The District Committees

14. N. Senapati (Ed.), *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 75.

15. *Who's who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput, District*, p. ii.

16. *Indian Annual Register*, July-December 1937, p. 268.

17. Bipin Chandra, *Indian National Movement: The Long-term Dynamics* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 37.

also set up centres for imparting training in Khadi and other constructive enterprises at some places. Such training camps were also considered necessary for spreading the Congress plans and programmes on a large scale. Radhakrushna Biswasroy, the then District Congress President and member of the Orissa Lagislative Assembly, came forward to set up such a training camp. At last in December 1937, a training camp was inaugurated at Nuaput, *** near Jeypore, by a senior Congress leader, Gopabandhu Choudhury. Arrangements had been made to impart training to some 350 Congress workers belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes, in Khadi and in other fields.¹⁸ Acharya Harihar Das, Godabarish Mishra and Gokulananda Mohanty visited Nuaput, stayed there for some days and also supervised the training programmes on the request of Gopabandhu Choudhury.¹⁹ The then Chief Minister of Orissa, Biswanath Das, also rendered all possible help to make successfull the various programmes of the training centre. It was remarkable that Lakshman Naik attended the training camp.²⁰

The training camp at Nuaput, which was attended by both young and old alike worked for about three months. The workers were given training in cotton plantation, spinning, hand-weaving, and in the use and utility of Khaddar. The trainees were

*** Nuaput was situated at a distance of seven miles from Jeypore.

18. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 198.

19. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 22 ;
Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 198.

20. V. Paghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, p. 248.

imposed upon with the fact that the countrymen could become self-reliant in clothes only with the Khaddar. Mahatma Gandhi had once remarked that Khadi was not only an example of clothware, it was the tool of freedom, the foundation of a new emerging society; it should not be valued at the market price and that it had very high ideals.²¹ Special efforts should be made for the promotion and extensive use of Khadi. The slogan for the workers was, "Spin your cloth and husk your food", "The spinning wheel is the Sudarshan Chakra, the wheel of God", and "Freedom would come out of the point of the distaff".²² They were also given training in scouting and in village welfare. Sporting Khaddar half-pants and shirts, the workers would begin their morning by doing physical exercises. They also practised the wielding of lathies. They would then tour different villages in single files to carry out various welfare measures like village cleaning, digging sewage drains, plantation of trees and construction of village roads. The workers were given training on how to make use of advanced technology in agriculture, make compost from village garbage, and take care of domestic animals and also in the measures to be followed in the event of epidemics breaking out in the villages. Intellectuals and eminent Congress leaders often visited the camps and by way of discussion threw light on the Congress action-plan, on Gandhi's thoughts and ideas and on the different dimensions of social development. Mass prayer was an integral part of the workers' daily routine.

21. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 182.

22. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 49.

The training laid special emphasis on discipline, character building and non-violence. It was based upon the eleven-point principles of Gandhiji, which included faith in God, non-violence, total prohibition, celibacy, not hoarding more than required, physical labour, humility, fearlessness, using indigenous (Swadeshi goods, giving up sensuality and abolition of castism²³

After undergoing training, the Congress workers would return to their respective villages and spread the message of freedom. These trained workers later on became the Chief co-ordinators between the Orissa Congress and the residents of Koraput.²⁴

Lakshman's personality underwent metamorphosis after his return from the training camp. Indoctrinated with the ideas of non-violence he gave up hunting²⁵ The country-made gun of the expert marksman no more fired at the wild boar or deer. He also completely gave up eating non-vegetarian dishes.²⁶ As the village priest, he used to sacrifice goats, sheep and fowls before the village deity. This practice also came to an abrupt end. Others in the village also followed suit and ceased offering animal sacrifices.

23. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 49-50.

24. Gyanendra Pandey (Ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, p. 192.

25. B.R. Nanda (Ed.) *Essays in Modern Indian History*, p. 160, K.S. Singh's 'The Freedom Movement and Tribal Sub-Movements, 1920-1947'.

26. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 22.

Back from the training camp, Lakshman Naik started living a new life, inspired by the principles and ideas of the Congress. He would finish brushing his teeth and doing other morning chores well before sunrise. He would then, along with some other villagers, make floral offerings and worship the spinningwheel-spangled Congress tricolour and the portrait of Gandhiji, followed by the singing of the 'Ramdhun' and some other favourite prayers of Gandhiji's. Then it was for him to come out to the open courtyard. He ate very little food. His meals which used to be very frugal consisted of rice and gruel, supplemented by a little tamarind and a pinch of salt. It is believed that it was also the menu for all Congress workers. This was to prepare them in advance for jail, where the inmates were served with this kind of food. In addition to this, the Congress workers also practised sleeping on the floor on hey-beds.²⁷ People used to gather in the open yard to meet Lakshman Naik. Apart from the villages he was in charge of, people from other villages also visited him for aid and advice. He would discuss with them various problems facing them and would suggest remedies. This apart, he also spared time for the Congress. The organisational activities were conducted on the guidelines received from the Congress office. He would send the Congress workers to collect membership fees. Apart from collecting subscriptions, the workers used to spread out to promote Khadi and make people aware of the Congress plan of action. They would also inform

27. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 58-59.

Lakshman of the problems facing the people. Letters received from various places were attended to and replies sent to the Congress Office. Balaram Pujari, a trusted follower of Lakshman, assisted him in drafting letters. Two other close associates, who assisted him in these matters were Banasing Pujari and Motiram Singh.²⁸

Lakshman Naik often toured the villages. Whenever he went out he would tell his wife, Manguli that he was going to fetch Swaraj.²⁹ It was his old habit to walk through dense forests and mountains and swim across rivers. He wandered from village to village till sunset. The road running through the jungles was the happy hunting ground of the wild animals. Unable to return home, he would call it a day and would sleep wherever night overtook him. He would make do with whatever food was offered and make his bed on any Verandah. The journey would be resumed next morning. All that he carried included a Congress flag and a sling bag hanging down his shoulders with a pen, a receipt-book and a towel in it. People used to crowd around him wherever he went. They came to him for various reasons like seeking solutions to village land disputes, or nostrums for illness. They would ask him about spinning or seek his suggestions on joining the Congress. They used to appraise Lakshman of their problems and grievances as if he were a dear kinsman, or a Messiah, out to mitigate their suffering. Lakshman would give them a patient hearing, offer

28. D. Nanda, *Sahid LaxMan Naik*, p. 60.

29. *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 41st Session, Bombay 1980, p. 713.

sensible advice and speak in a very soft and soothing voice. His style of speaking was evident from his address to fellowmen in rural and colloquial dialect which reads :

"I have come from Tentuligumma, covering a distance of twenty miles, only to see you, to have a few words with you. Mother Mauli, the village deity has bountifully granted us everything. We have forests and mountains, land and rivers, and everything. We grow gold in this rocky woodland. But can we enjoy the benefits ? The soldiers of the Raja forcibly take away our hardearned money and property they also beat us. Do you appreciate all this ?" ³⁰

The audience, on hearing this, would fumble for words. This was a practice which continued over a long period of time. No one had previously sought their opinion on the age-old problem of exploitation and persecution. Though unable to answer, they would feel encouraged in his presence.

Lakshman would continue : "Brothers, do you get frightened ? Speak out aloud whatever troubles your mind, or else we would all die of our agony. Our children would also suffer. We have to find a way out of this trouble, Do you think I know more than you do ? My dear brothers, just spare a moment and think whether the Guards or the Revenue Inspectors who visit us are stronger than we are. If they are not, then why are we scared of such men ? That they are the Raja's man is the

30. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 66-67.

only reason of our fear and the Raja is under the domination of the British Governmen. The have arms and ammunitions. No one can bully us if we get rid of the Raja and the white men. Not only do I speak thus alone. Mahatma Gandhi, a great son of India, has also the same thing to say.

"Gandhi, the great, says : Let not the people heed the government, pay the tax, or subject themselves to corvee and bonded labour. A single individual doing it alone might incur the wrath of the police and undergo penal measures. But a mass resistance will force the white people into quitting our country. How do you appreciate my idea ?"³¹

The native hillmen would try to understand his point. Truly, they had been and were being persecuted. They had to eke out a life marked by poverty, misery and scarcity. It was time they arose and took up arms against injustice. After all, they were human beings, made of flesh and blood. There was absolutely no reason why a particular group would go on exploiting and persecuting while the other group would take everything lying down. Why should the white men rule over our country, leaving their own ? That was why the Congress had launched a movement against the British and Gandhiji had called upon the people to join the freedom struggle. At last, all of them present would agree to join the National Movement and would swear in the name of Mother Mauli to follow the principles and ideals of the Congress. Then they would be enrolled as members of the Congress. Lakshman, his task at one village finished, would move ahead in his mission.

31. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 67-69.

In this context one is reminded of the lines of Banchhanidhi Mohanty, a revolutionary poet hailing from Balasore District, which reads thus :

"Brothers, leaving the life of comfort
And the job of slavery
Eat the Coarse and put on the coarse
For the God is the last refuge.

Without 'Swaraj', there is
No hope ever for redress
No hope ever for release
From the shackles of misery.

People, not free to speak
Without fear or favour
Cannot make a great nation.

Fascinated by the foreign cloth
Giving up our own,
We invited our doom."³²

Lakshman Naik was mainly entrusted with the various organisational responsibilities of the freedom movement. His foremost duties, among other things, included resisting the oppression let loose by the Government and the Raja's staff, preventing the practice of illegal tax collection at market places and also the practice of corvee, closing down shops selling liquor, opium and other narcotics, ridding the people of fear, inculcating a sense of unity among them and above all, organising and arousing them emotionally for freedom.³³

32. Collected from *Banchhanidhi Padyabali*.

33. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 261,

Performing such superhuman feats through public awakening demanded astute leadership and a towering personality on the part of the leader. Lakshman Naik was a genius and had a personality, as hard and bright as diamond. Commenting on his personality, the famous Oriya novelist Gopinath Mohanty once wrote, "He was peace-loving, non-violent, simple and innocent in his thought, belief and action. He would wander deep into the forests and hills. He worked hard, suffered pain and hardship, but persisted in his mission undeterred. He never hankered after praises, nor did he want to become a leader or acquire power and influence. He always deemed himself to be an ordinary worker, dedicated to the cause of the nation. He was extremely popular with his fellow men, but on the other hand, the money-lenders, the rich and the traders, specially the Government officials who were tax-hungry and had let loose their reign of tyranny and exploitation, and whose profiteering habit and covetousness came to a grinding halt, because of Naik's activities were sharpening their tools to fix this simple, credulous, brave but poor man".³⁴

The success of the Congress in the last election was directly responsible for the great awakening even in the far jungle country of the Orissa States. And the desire for freedom from all bondage was more insistent among the illiterate villagers than among the educated people of the towns.³⁵ Influenced and inspired by Lakshman Naik, many people

34. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 261.

35. Nehru Memorial Museum Library, AICC, File No. G 35/1939, p. 5.

of Malkanagiri joined the Congress and merged themselves in the national mainstream. The public reawakening took a new dimension. Not only in Malkanagiri alone, the clarion call of the Congress movement reverberated throughout the whole of Koraput. Ever since the Congress candidates were elected from Koraput in the elections held in 1937 and with the Congress forming the government in Orissa it was as if the people had had a fresh lease of life, and a sense of renewed courage. People indulged in some minor incidents of rioting. For example, a local Police Sub-Inspector was attacked with an axe, when he arrested some jubilant people and removed the Congress flag which they were trying to hoist.³⁶ Moreover the people flouted the forest law. This became evident when they started 'Podu' a form of shifting cultivation on a large scale. Not only the people of Malkanagiri or Koraput defied the forest law, the people inhabiting the neighbouring areas of Bastar also followed suit and unauthorisedly felled trees by the thousands. A good number of trees were also cut to be used for the construction of the Congress Ashram in Koraput. Moreover, a rumour gained currency to the effect that the Congress Chief Minister would dismiss any Police Officer or Magistrate who dared prevent the felling of trees. Many other such rumours were also floated in order to draw people towards the Congress. In July 1938, it was rumoured that Mahatma Gandhi would shortly visit that area and anyone failing to produce the Congress ticket would be afflicted with

36. *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 41st Session. Bombay 1980, p. 712.

disease.³⁷ The Congress also proclaimed that there would be no taxation or no unjust forest law under 'Swaraj'.³⁸ Gandhiji and his ideals had such profound impact that people started worshipping the portrait of Gandhiji in many Congress offices of Koraput.^{****39} People in large numbers joined the Congress. By October 1938, the Congress had as many as 50,048 persons enrolled as primary members.⁴⁰ The subscription collected from the members was sufficient for purchasing a car, a typewriter and a steel almirah for the District Congress Committee. Moreover a library could also be set up with this money.⁴¹

The Congress movement in Malkanagiri gained grounds in such a phenomenal way only because of an influential and popular leader like Lakshman Naik. He called upon the people of his own and

37. Gyanendra Pandey (Ed.), *The Indian Nation In 1942*, p. 193.

38. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. V, p. 51.

39. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. III, July-December 1942, p. 194.

**** In entire Orissa, the Koraput District occupied the second position in this matter. The first position was secured by the Cuttack District where 58,878 persons were enrolled as primary members of the Congress.

40. *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 41st Session, Bombay 1980, p. 712.

41. Gyanendra Pandey (Ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, p. 193.

other villages not to pay any tax, even though he himself was a mustadar. The local Revenue Inspectors, Policemen and Forest Guards and other officials lodged complaint upon complaint against Lakshman with the Raja and the British Government. As a result, he was declared a traitor and a rebel leader. He lost his title along with the land he had been hitherto enjoying. Even then Lakshman Naik remained firm and steadfast. He was a living symbol of determination like an immovable distant summit. He spearheaded the fight against the age-old oppression, persecution, exploitation and suffering.⁴² He marched ahead undeterred on the path of duty with the sole aim of putting an end to injustice and achieving independence. Others only followed him as though spell-bound. People started calling him the Gandhi of Malkanagiri.⁴³ By then he had taken over as the President of Matili Primary Congress, Organised and formed by Radhamohan Sahu. His self-less and dedicated leadership made the Congress organisation in and around Matili unusually strong. About two hundreds people in Matili alone had been enrolled as subscribing members of the Congress between 1941 and 1942. A village without a spinning wheel was almost impossible to come by. Residential schools were set up at Udaigiri, Pendraguda and Tentuligumma as measures to strengthen the Congress movement.

There was another reason for the popularity of Lakshman Naik. He had undertaken various

42. *Utkal Prasanga*, Vol. 37, No. 1, August. 1980, p. 2, Bina Devi's 'Se Eka Sphulinga'.

43. Gyanendra pandey (Ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, p. 194.

welfare measures in and around his native place. For example, he built a road, six miles long, running from Hantalguda to his native village Tentuligumma. Moreover he got a bambo-bridge built across the confluence of the Kolab and the Saptadhara rivers. This apart, he had also set up schools for the children of the neighbouring villages. He could manage to get these and other constructive measures done by volunteers.⁴⁴

Meanwhile the Second World War broke out in Europe on the 3rd September 1939. The Indians could not afford to forget that the British authorities had gone back on their commitments made to Indians during the First world War. The Indian National Congress warned the British Government against involving India in the war. The World War brought Enland to a terrible pass. England suffered defeat on several warfronts and this event sent signals that England was on the verge of a certain defeat. Gandhiji was moved at the miserable prospects, confronting the British. He declared on the 1st June, 1940, "We do not want our independence at the cost of British defeat and desrtruction". Under these circumstances, India made huge financial aid and manpower available to Britain as a part of Gandhiji's efforts to make the allied forces strong. But only one condition was laid down that after the end of the war, England would grant full autonomy to the Indians for making their own constitution and forming a popular government. But much to India's misfortune, Sir Winston Charchill,

44. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, pp. 91-92.

a die-hard imperialist, took over as British Prime Minister. It was not even within his wildest dreams to grant independence to India. But in a bid to keep the Indians somewhat satisfied during that critical juncture that England was passing through, Churchill instructed the Viceroy to grant limited constitutional privileges. A proclamation to this effect was made on the 8th August 1940, which became famous in history as the 'August Offer'. A few constitutional benefits were granted. But no time-frame was set for implementing these measures. The Congress, under the leadership of Gandhiji, rejected out-right these uncertain and vague proposals. Under these circumstances Gandhiji was forced to opt for some other means to realise the objectives of the Congress. The revival of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the only course left open for him. But he was not in favour of a Mass Civil Disobedience, because, he had realised that paralysing the administrative machinery during the crises of war would only precipitate England's defeat. Gandhiji as a principal statesman felt pity for England and wanted other measures to be followed. This heralded the dawn of a novel form of movement which came to be known as Individual Civil Disobedience Movement. The Congress workers accordingly were to break the law individually. It was decided that the Satyagrahis could individually undertake any suitable action plan in a non-violent manner.

It is easy to appreciate a bloody revolution or uprising. There is no dearth of such examples in history. But a peaceful revolt or revolution is a unique strategy of war. Mahatma Gandhi was the Commander-in-chief of this movement.⁴⁵

45. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab* p. 6.

This novel form of revolution was launched in November 1940. The credit of being the first and second Satyagrahis went to Acharya Binova Bhave and Jawaharlal Nehru respectively. They were immediately put behind bars. Subsequently other Satyagrahis were also imprisoned.

Pranakrushna Padhiari was nominated as the Provincial Dictator to conduct and supervise the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement in Orissa. In the first phase, Gandhiji selected a batch of twenty-seven persons from Orissa to offer Satyagraha⁴⁶ The movement was set in motion on the 1st of December 1940.⁴⁷ About five hundred people, the majority of whom belonged to Koraput, courted arrest.⁴⁸

A list of persons willing to join the movement was prepared and chief among them were Radhakrushna Biswasroy, Radhamohan Sahu, Nilakantha Patra of Jeypore; Sadashiva Tripathy, Sadananda Mohanty, and Lakshmi Chandra Das of Nawrangpur; and Kapil Patra and Satyanarayan Majhi of Kotpad. Lakshman Naik was nominated to represent Matili.⁴⁹

It was a matter of pride and glory for Lakshman to take part in the freedom struggle. In between 1940 and 1941 he offered Individual Satyagraha

46. *The Samaj*, November 25, 1940;
S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana* (In Oriya, Cuttack 1972), p. 164.
47. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV p. 63.
48. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 243.
49. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 74-75.

twice, once in the area coming under Ramgiri outpost of Jeypore. next in the area under Matili Police Station along with seven other local colleagues.⁵⁰ He was sentenced to nine-months' rigorous imprisonment.⁵¹ Besides this jail term, he was also fined three hundred rupees.⁵² However all the Congress workers were released after undergoing imprisonment for four to five months.

During the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement, the Congress urged the people not to co-operate with the Government in its preparation for the war. Lakshman Naik prevailed upon his people against co-operating with the Government or giving any financial assistance and manpower. He also firmly urged his people not to give money or anything gratis which the Policemen, Forest Guards and Excise Officials used to demand illegally and forcibly.⁵³ He took every opportunity to speak to the people on the problems of market-tax, bonded-labour and Corvee. Ridding the people of their fear, he organised them against these evils. The timid people who used to cower in the presence of the Police, the Forest Guards and the Revenue Inspectors and eat an humble pie before them now dared to speak to them, 'I refuse to pay, We do not agree, We would not give anything

50, *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 41st Session, Bombay 1980, p. 712.

51. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 91.

52. B. R. Samrath (Comp.), *Swadhinata Sangramara Yudho* (In Oriya, Jeypore, 1963, p. 1.

53. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 23.

or do anything for you".⁵⁴ An extra-ordinary sense of awareness dawned upon the people. Even when Gandhiji and the Congress laid emphasis upon non-violence, the oppressive measures adopted by the Raja and the Police forced the people in some areas of Koraput to resort to violence. The torture and oppression by a particular Amin in Kashipur had crossed all limits of tolerance. Not only was he given to exploiting the local people, he always liked to be carried in a palanquin by them. The palanquin-bearers, greatly enraged, one night threw the Amin in to a deep ditch, where he had a watery grave. Another Amin, on the plea of collecting land revenue, once struck a farmer of Nandapur on the head in a market-place. Being unable to tolerate this, the farmer also clubbed the Amin, hitting him hard on the head. But it was very remarkable that, notwithstanding the incidents of violence taking place in other parts of Koraput, not a single incident of violence did ever occur in and around Matili during this period, though the Police and the Amins were equally given to oppression and exploitation.⁵⁵ This became possible only because of Lakshman Naik. He could perfectly drive home the values of non-violence.

It was a critical time for Lakshman Naik, for the authorities deemed his activities as hostile to the law and order of the district. Lakshman was a sort of terror for the local Government officials, who used to exploit the innocent tribals of Koraput. They incensed

54. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 9.

55. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 75-76.

the then British Agent by fabricating stories against Lakshman Naik. They also set some local money-lenders, usurers, village headmen and other opportunists against him.⁵⁶ But his personality, devotion to duty, and above all his popularity sustained him through.

56. V. Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, p. 250.

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

A breathtaking scene of the great Indian Freedom Struggle was enacted in the year 1942 and that was the Quit India Movement. This movement aimed at bringing doom for the British rule in India. Never before had any other event created such an unquiet storm in the political horizon of India.

Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India in 1932 to find a solution for the political problems facing India. After having conferred with the Viceroy and the members of his advisory Council, he held discussions on various problems with the Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Depressed Classes League. Then he submitted his plan. It made two important recommendations besides a few minor ones. Those were to give India a Dominion Status and to set up a constitution-making body after the war. Both the recommendations were no doubt a remarkable advance over the famous August Offer of 1940, because of the definite commitment given therein. Still then no political party was found to have been satisfied. All the parties considered the proposals as mere palliatives, a temporising measure just to win the co-operation and loyalty of the Indians during the critical days of the war.¹ Cripps really

1. Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi, _____), p. 455.

did not mean to give them something substantial. Mahatma Gandhi was said to have made an interesting remark by saying that Cripps had brought a sort of 'Post-dated cheque on a failing bank'. Indeed, Cripps came to India with a spirit of 'take it or leave it'. Side by side, Indians rightly considered then that Cripps' recommendations were carefully prepared in England just to cheat the Indians and never to help in the achievement of self-government. This was evident from the swift departure of Cripps from India. However, it was on the 11th April 1942 that Cripps recommendations were withdrawn.

Meanwhile Cripps after his return to London vehemently criticised the Congress Party saying that it was solely responsible for the failure of his Mission. This false accusation enraged the leaders of the Congress. Simultaneously another false propaganda was started by the British press, stating that the British Government was not in a position to transfer power to the Congress Party, because it did not represent all sections of the Indians. Thus the failure of the Cripps Mission coupled with false propaganda made the Indians frustrated. To add to the frustrations of the Indians, a rumour made the political situation tense in India. And that was about the possibility of Japan's invasion of India. During the Second World War, Japan was believed to have planned for the Indian invasion in 1942 from the eastern frontier.* As a precautionary measure the

* The fear of this Japanese attack was also in the minds of the British Officials of Koraput District. It can be seen in the Letters of P. T. Mansfield, Chief Secretary to Government of Orissa, J. S. Wilcock, Collector, Koraput and S. V. Ramamurthy, Chief Secretary to Government of Madras kept in Government of Orissa, Special Section Confidential Files No. 169/42, 1942 (Orissa State Archives Accession No 2196 Con) and No. 205/42, 1942 (Orissa State Archives Accession No. 2235 Con).

British Government planned to evacuate from this region. They also planned to withdraw their establishment from Malaya, Singapore and Burma. When this was made known to the Indians they became panicky. At this critical time, Gandhiji somehow thought that if the British would be made to leave India immediately, there would then be no cause for Japan to invade India. Thus he wrote in May 1942 "The presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes that bait". So he wanted to give a final call to the British to quit India immediately so that they would transfer power to the Indians and not to the Japanese.² In this context he further wrote in the *Herijan* of the 5th July 1942 issue "Do not leave India to Japan but leave Indians in an orderly manner".³

Meanwhile the destructive effects of the Second World War on India, particularly on Bengal, started showing up. The war created severe economic handicaps and the farming community was very badly affected. The economic crises coupled with the fear of a Japanese attack struck terror among the Indians and also threatened the political scene.⁴ Gandhiji, with a view to making use of this opportunity to attain his goals, decided to call upon the

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2. Jagannath Patnaik and Nihar Ranjan Patnaik, *History of Freedom Movement in India and National Integration* (Cuttack, 1986), pp. 87-88
 3. *The Harijan*, July 5, 1942.
 4. P. N. Chopra (Ed.), *Quit India Movement : British Secret Report*, (Faridabad, 1976), p. 105, Wickenden's Report.

British to quit India.⁵ He believed that if the call for quitting India was given through nation-wide movement, the British Government might, out of fear, come to terms with the Indians. So he made arrangements for drafting a resolution to that effect. That came to be known as the Quit India Resolution.

With a view to drafting the Quit India Resolution the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha on the 14th July 1942. The blue print of the Quit India Movement was prepared. Thereafter the All India Congress Committee met on the 7th August 1942 at Bombay to ratify the resolution. With little modification the historic Quit India Resolution was finally passed on 8th August 1942. The proposals demanded an immediate end to the British rule in India. The Congress Working Committee further resolved that in case the British Government did not immediately declare the independence of India, the Congress Committee would launch a mass movement for independence on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale under the leadership of Gandhiji. Gandhiji thereafter addressed the Congressmen on the night of 8th August, "Here is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is 'Do or Die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt. We shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery". Orissa was represented at this meeting by Harekrushna Mahtab, Malati Choudhury,

5. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 76, pp. 60-61.

Surendranath Dwibedy, Pralhad Roy and Lakshminarayan Mishra.⁶ Reports also indicate that Radhakrushna Biswasroy represented Koraput in that Congress meeting.⁷

Gandhiji believed until the last that the British Government would concede to the demands of the Indians without complicating the matter any further. But he was mistaken. Even the then Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, refused to give an interview to Mira Ben whom Gandhiji had sent to explain the matters.⁸ Not only that, Gandhiji and other members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested on the morning of the 9th August, the day following the passing of the Quit India Resolution.⁹ Then Gandhiji was detained at the Aga Khan Palace in Poona. Other members of the Congress Working Committee including Harekrushna Mahtab were sent to Ahmednagar Fort of Bombay.¹⁰ On that very day twenty-four other Congress workers were picked up from Cuttack and other places in Orissa. Prominent among them were Gopabandhu Choudhury, Naba-krushna Choudhury, Rama Devi, Bhagirathi Mohapatra, Biswanath Das, Nityananda Kanungo, Rajkrushna Bose, Surendranath Patnaik, Pranakrushna Padhiari,

6. *The Samaj*, August 13, 1942.

7. *Who's Who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput District*, p. ii.

8. R. C. Majumdar (Ed.) *History and Culture of the Indian people : Struggle for Freedom* (Bombay, 1969), Vol. XI, pp. 647-648.

9. Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence*, p. 460.

10. *The Samaj*, August 17, 1942.

Madan Mohan Patnaik, Sadashib Tripathy, Radhakrushna Biswasroy, Manmohan Choudhuri, Radhanath Rath, Acharya Harihar Das, Loknath Mishra, Sudhir Chandra Ghosh, Nilambar Das, Karunakar Panigrahi, Surendranath Das, Rabindra Mohan Das and Maulana Muhammad Atahar.¹¹

The British Government also declared the Congress party unlawful. The Congress funds were forfeited, while all the records of the Congress Office were destroyed. Political organisations like the Congress Committees of Balasore district and Bhadrak town, the Congress Ashrams of Bhadrak and Agarpada, and the Congress Committee of Dhamanagar were declared illegal by the British Government.¹²

The famous Quit India Movement was launched following the arrest of Gandhiji and other Congress leaders. The British authorities anticipated that these arrests would serve to make the situation calm. But Gandhiji's influence was so powerful that the movement swept the whole country like wild fire, even when Gandhiji and other leaders were away in jail.¹³ Of course, neither Gandhiji nor any other Congress leader had issued any specific guidelines for the movement. In spite of this, other Congress leaders framed a twelve-point action-plan to continue the

11. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 173.

12. *The Samaj*, August 10, 1942;
Who's Who Compilation Committee,
 Vol. 59, D. O. No. 1101c, August 13, 1942.

13. S. C. De, *Story of Freedom Struggle in Orissa* (Bhubaneswar, 1990), p. 90.

movement.¹⁴ The action-plan included among other things observing hartals, non-payment of taxes, making of salt and paralysing Government Offices and Police Station. It was also resolved to take to non-violent means to implement these programmes. Because the adoption of a non-violent form of struggle would enable the participation of the mass of the people who could not have participated in a similar manner, or whose involvement could not have been so deep in the movement.¹⁵ Accordingly, strikes, processions and meetings were organised throughout India. Strikes were particularly widespread in educational institutions and in factories. Many factories were closed down. Trade and commerce in big cities came to a halt. Both men and women, students, workers, farmers representing different sections of society came together under the banner of the Congress. They took out processions, singing the national anthem and shouting slogans against the British Government. However, everything was done in a peaceful manner.

Of course the Congress had not given a call for Civil Disobedience. But what started off as an act of individual angry defiance later on swelled into a movement and ultimately turned into a mass revolution.¹⁶

14. R. Tottenham, *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances of 1942-43* (New Delhi, 1943), pp. 27-28.

The Amrita Bazar Patrika, August 15, 1947.

15. Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement : The Long-term Dynamics*, p. 46.

16. Khageswar Mohapatra, *Bharatare Swadhinata Sangram*, (In Oriya, Cuttack, 1974), p. 221.

The British Government could have tactfully managed the situation and arrived at an agreement with the Congress. Instead, The British Government used brutal force and other repressive measures to put down the movement. The Satyagrahis were lathicharged, firing through rifles and machine-guns was resorted to. Even the women were dishonoured. The way the Indians continued their freedom struggle in a peaceful and non-violent manner with remarkable fortitude, courage and heroism, despite the repressive measures and merciless persecution unleashed by the British Government marked a new phase in the history of the Indian freedom struggle.¹⁷

However the Quit India Movement took a different turn following the repressive measures adopted by the British Government. Gandhiji's concept of non-violence could no longer remain as the guiding principle of the movement. It turned violent. The skies vibrated with the 'Do or die' slogan of the Satyagrahis. The enraged Satyagrahis set fire to Police Stations and Post Offices, damaged railways and telegraph lines, looted government trasuries and killed British Officers. In some places, the rebels formed 'Parallel Governments'. So the Government became more and more ruthless in their action to crush the movement.

In Orissa, which was staunchly a Gandhiite province,¹⁸ the people did not remain idle when the

17. Sriharsha Mishra, *Swadhinatara Jayayatra*, p. 103.

18. Nicholas Mansergh, *The Transfer of Power* (London, 1970), Vol. II, p. 499, Lewis to Linlithgow, July 29, 1942.

whole of India was seized by the storm of the August Revolt. The farmers and labourers, the youth and the students of Orissa did not lag behind and were eager to set burning examples of their sacrifice and patriotism in the August Revolt.¹⁹ Surendranath Dwibedy, a Congress leader from Orissa, was scheduled to call on Gandhiji on 9th August when he had gone to Bombay to attend the Congress session. He went to Birla Bhawan in the early hours of the morning that day, only to find that Gandhiji had been arrested and taken away by the Police. Surendranath Dwibedy had to return without getting any direct instructions from Gandhiji for the August Revolt in Orissa. He then met Gandhiji's Secretary Pyarelal, who handed him a brief directive from Gandhiji which read thus, "India is independent from today. Resort to all possible non-violent means to end the British rule in India and achieve independence. Paralyse the Government machinery, be your own leader. This is the final battle. There cannot be any compromise",²⁰ The Congress leaders returned to their respective stations with this message. Surendranath Dwibedy translated this directive into Oriya and sent it by post to all District Offices.²¹ In no time the message of August Revolt spread to every nook and corner of Orissa. Protests, rallies, processions, students' and workers' strikes were launched in the wake of the arrest of Congress leaders. Acts of violence like attack on various Police Stations, cutting off telegraph lines, blowing off railway lines, setting fire to Post

19. Sriharsha Mishra, *Swadhinatara Jayayatra*, p. 105.

20. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 13.

21. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 42.

Offices and government guest houses which marked the movement continued unrestrained.²²

The British Government took all possible steps to put down the movement with an iron hand. Repressive measures like rounding up, arrests, searches, confiscation and destruction of property, lathi-charge, intimidation, fine, firing were liberally used. Temporary jails were set up when all other jails became overcrowded with prisoners. Government troops in uniform, with guns resting on their shoulders, marched on the streets to strike terror into the people.²³

As mentioned earlier, the youth and the students of Orissa were eager to set examples of their sacrifice and patriotism in the wake of the Quit India Movement. At first, they did not know how to translate their enthusiasm and excitement into action. They did not have any organisation. They regretted that they could do nothing when the Congress leaders were being arrested one after another and thrown into jail.

Cuttack was the focus of all attention. The students launched a strike on 11th August. A huge public meeting was convened at Gourisankar Park. The action-plan for the August Revolt was made known to all who attended the meeting.²⁴ The meeting was followed by a procession which went round the city. This marked the beginning of the

22. Sriharsha Mishra, *Swadhinatara Jayayatra*, p. 105.

23. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 250.

24. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. V, p. 62.

August Revolt in Orissa.²⁵ The local Congress leaders also wanted to firmly associate the students in the movement. The students, being deeply influenced, left schools and colleges behind and resolved to break all government laws.²⁶ In this context, the students of Ravenshaw College made the first attempt to paralyse the government machinery. It was resolved at a large students' gathering inside the campus to appeal to the Principal and the teaching staff to resign from government service. When the students went to the college on 15th August, they found the college office set on fire. None of the teaching staff or other employees of the college was present. The students then started, setting fire to office files and records, almirahs, telephone and other articles.²⁷ The students were led by Banamali Patnaik, Ashok Das, Biren Mitra, Surajmal Shah and Bibhudendra Mishra.²⁸ A police inquiry was conducted later on. Bibhudendra Mishra and Surajmal Shah were arrested under the National Security Act of India and put in Berhampur Central jail,²⁹ After this incident strikes and hartals broke out in all educational institutions of Cuttack.³⁰

25. Balaram Mohanty, *August Biplab*, (In Oriya, Cuttack, 1946), pp. 114-115.

26. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 92.

27. Balaram Mohanty, *August Biplab*, p. 115.

28. Biswambar Parida, *Mukti Sangram O' Orissa* (In Oriya, 1978), p. 53.

29. Home Political I, 1942, File No. 18/9/42 Political.

30. *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLVI, No. 1, August 1989 (Freedom Movement in Orissa), p. 170, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Quit India Movement in Orissa.'

The message of the Quit India Movement swept through Orissa. Processions, meetings and student-strikes broke out in protest against the arrest of Congress leaders. At Bari, which was the seat of work of Gopabandhu Choudhury and Rama Devi, the August Revolt manifested itself in its true elements, which greatly inspired the people of Orissa.³¹ The angry mob burnt down the uniforms of Constables and Chaukidars when the Police sieged the Congress Ashram at Bari.³²

The very next day on 17th August, another sensational event took place at Bhandaripokhari falling under Bhadrak Sub-division. An army of about four to five thousand demonstrators led by Baishnab Charan Naik and Muralidhar Naik burnt down the Police Station, Police Staff-quarters, the Post Office and the Government Sub-treasury at Bhandaripokhari.³³ This event virtually turned into a conflagration.³⁴ They also beat up two Policemen.³⁵ The demonstrators also cut off telegraph lines and pulled down the wooden bridge on the Jagannath Trunk Road.³⁶ This enraged the Provincial Government into imposing a collective fine of six thousand rupees

31. Balaram Mohanty, *August Biplab*, p. 116.
32. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 93.
33. *Who's Who Compilation Committee*, Vol. 57, Report of the S. D. O. Bhadrak, August 18, 1942.
34. Jagannath Patnaik, *Raktatirtha Iram* (In Oriya, Cuttack, 1986), p. 10.
35. *The Samaj*, October 12, 1942.
36. Home Political I, 1942, File No. 3/31/42 Political.

on the twelve adjoining villages.³⁷ Many people were injured in Police firing.³⁸ Sixty freedom fighters were taken into custody in this connection ³⁹

Soon after, on 21st August the tremors of the Quit India Movement rocked the area around Matili Police Station, in the aftermath of which Lakshman Naik was hanged on framed charges. That thrilling act of the August Revolt, before being recounted, calls for a close study of the repercussions of the Quit India Movement in Koraput.

Before the Quit India Movement was launched, an urgent meeting of the Congress workers of Koraput was convened at Jeypore on July 31, 1942. The meeting was attended among others by Lakshman Naik. They discussed the Quit India proposals.⁴⁰ It was decided in the meeting that Radhakrushna Biswasroy would represent Koraput in the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress and he also accordingly attended the Bombay session. He went into hiding following the mass arrest of Congress leaders on the 9th August. He despatched some secret codes, along with other notes for the Congress workers of Koraput.⁴¹ He was arrested on his way back and was put in Koraput Jail. Koraput District

37. *The Amrit Bazar Patrika*, September 13, 1942.

38. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 95.

39. Balaram Mohanty, *August Biplab*, p. 122.

40. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 91.

41. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 73.

Congress Committee was declared unlawful and the Office of the Koraput Congress Committee was seized by the Police.⁴² Two other Congress leaders, Radhamohan Sahu and Sadashib Tripathy, were also arrested.⁴³ The Government could not cut off Koraput from the main stream of the August Revolt, even after putting into jail three most prominent leaders of Koraput. The movement created an unprecedented public awakening in Koraput.⁴⁴ The people of this area, particularly the tribals, took it for granted that the British rule had come to an end and they could live freely in peace and comfort.⁴⁵

The message of the August Revolt was circulated in the whole of Koraput through secret bulletins.⁴⁶ The message included Gandhiji's call for the final struggle which was as follows : (a) Replacement of the existing administrative machinery with Panchayat Raj system (b) Peace-keeping force to be raised in

42. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2370 Con., Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 484, 1942, Koraput District Special Report, Case No. 83, August 17, 1942.

43. *Who's Who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput District*, p. ii.

44. M. N. Das (Ed.), *Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa* (Cuttack, 1977), p. 270.

45. A Moin Zaidi, *The Way out to Freedom* (New Delhi, 1973), p. 130.

46. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2441 Con., Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 649/42, 1942, Office of the Superintendent of Koraput, Report No. II, October 7, 1942.

each Panchayat, (c) Violation of all the laws of the British Government (d) Non-payment of land-revenue, felling of trees and making of salt to continue (e) Forcibly to accupy the lands of the zemindars who did not valuntarily agree to distribute some of the land amongst the farmers (f) Those persecuting the Congress workers and causing damage to Congress property be socially boycotted.⁴⁷ It was not that Gandhiji had literally said this, but such a message was deliberately circulated to enthuse the common men with the broad ideas of the Quit India Movement while Gandhi and other Congress leaders were away in jail. The Congress workers without waiting for any other special directive swung into action to strengthen the movement.⁴⁸

Such a message deeply enthused the freedom fighters of Koraput. On the strength of it they declared Koraput independent and went on rampaging in groups. The revolt spread through the tribal tracts like a wild fire.⁴⁹ Hartals were observed at many places and shops and markets were closed down. Burning down of the government buildings and Post Offices, incidents of arson, loot and riot and other acts of violence rocked the whole of Koraput, making it appear as though a skilled local leader were organising the movement there.⁵⁰ But the truth

47. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 86.

48. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 99.

49. Nihar Ranjan Patnaik, *Swadhinata Andolanare Odissara Adivasi O' Lakshman Naik*, p. 78.

50. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 99.

was that there was an element of spontaneity about everything that took place. A revolutionary zeal and excitement lay at the root of this spontaneity. In the absence of the three main leaders, the responsibility to expedite the programmes of the movement fell on less known and less influential leaders who expeditiously discharged their duties. Moreover it was fairly easy for those leaders to incite the simple and artless tribals of Koraput.⁵¹ The Congress leaders announced that the tribals of Koraput were independent. They would not have to pay tax or land revenue if the Congress formed the government and the forest-law which went against their interest would be repealed.⁵² Apart from these assurances, the Congress workers, banked upon their superstitious nature to attract the tribals into the movement.⁵²

On August 13, 1942, two young men from Jeypore, holding Congress flags, read out a message of Gandhi at a public meeting. The message was believed to have been sent from Bombay by post.⁵⁴ This message aroused the local people to such frenzied heights that the sparks of the movement were seen spreading far and wide in Koraput.⁵⁵

51. Y. B. Mathur, *Quit India Movement* (Delhi, 1979), p. 95.

52. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol V, pp. 51-52.

53. Y. B. Mathur, *Quit India Movement*, p. 97.

54. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol IV, p. 89.

55. K. M. Patra, *Orissa State Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1912-1947*, (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 192-193.

By the 14th August 1942, most of the Congress leaders of Koraput had been taken into custody except Lakshman Naik. He prepared to continue the struggle with the help of Balaram Pujari and two hundred other followers. Each holding a Congress flag and a lathi with a sling-bag containing a picture of Gandhi slung over the shoulder, these workers moved in the dense forests from one end of the district to another, calling upon the people to join the movement in large numbers.⁵⁶ The people swore on oath that they would continue untiringly the direct struggle against the British Government until Gandhi, the Great, was released from jail.⁵⁷

On 14th August, not only did the strikers raid the shops at Nandpur in Koraput, they also looted a wholesale depot.⁵⁸ About this incident the Koraput District Special Report Case No. 35/42 mentions thus : "On 14. 8. 42 a large party of Congress Workers and local people came pouring into Nandpur village and by 2 P.M. the crowd had assumed as large a proportion as 600-700. Under the lead of Bhagban Kimudu of Kimuduguda P.S. Nandpur a meeting was held near the P. W. D. Inspection Bungalow, Nandpur where Bhagban and another local hot-head, Neelakantha delivered inciting and objectionable speeches. The S. I. who took down verbatim notes of their speeches

56. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 91.

57. *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLVI, No. 1, August 1939 (Freedom Movement in Orissa), p. 170, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Quit India Movement in Orissa'.

58. S. C. De, *Diary of Political events in Orissa* (Cuttack, 1964), p. 46.

arrested the 2 with the help of his staff, under the Defence of India Rules. When the P. S. staff with the 2 arrested accused left the place, the mob followed them. No sooner had the party reached near the P. S. than the mob broke upon to Arack Shop, Excise Depot and Cattle Pound and broke the doors and furniture, split the liquor, set fire to the records etc. and released the impounded cattle."^{59**} However there a crowd numbering one hundred nineteen persons offered themselves for arrest.⁶⁰ Twenty-five of them were detained for prosecution and the rest were dispersed.⁶¹ The very next day, a huge crowd marched to Jeypore. The Police tried to disperse the crowd when they assembled at a market place.⁶² Again that day, a crowd of about

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59. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2372 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 500, 1942, Superintendent of Police, Koraput to Superintendent of Police, C.I.D., Orissa, August 19, 1942.
- ** For detail, see Nandpur P.S. Case Nos. 13-15/42 u/s 454/395 I.P.C. (Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2372 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 500, 1942).
60. H K. Mahtab (Ed), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. V, pp. 86-87.
61. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2372 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 500, Superintendent of Police, Koraput, to Superintendent of Police, C. I. D., Orissa, August 19. 1942.
62. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2370 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No 484, 1942, Koraput District Special Report, Case No, 83, August 17, 1942.

one thousand people gheraoed the Jeypore Taluk Office. Some of their leaders were arrested.⁶³ This enraged the people and they blocked the entrance to the Police Station. Though the Police managed to disperse the crowd by resorting to lathi charge, the daring of the freedom fighters amid Police repression became a subject of not discussion in and around Koraput. On the other hand, it became a matter of concern for the Police.⁶⁴ After this incident the Police swung into action to arrest Lakshman Naik. His friends advised him to flee Jeypore immediately. Lakshman trekked through the jungles and reached Ghumar that very night. Ghumar was the native village of his faithful friend, Nilakantha Patra.⁶⁵ He thought that he would be safe there.

Another incident took place that day. The Congress workers gathered in front of an opium kiosk at Badhighar and urged the Vendor, Sadashiba Choudhury, to surrender all opium in stock. These Satyagrahis were mainly tribals and farmers living under Matili-Podua Police Stations. They entered the premises of the shop, each holding a lathi and a Congress flag. Frightened Sadasiba Choudhury surrendered his opium stock weighing ten tolas (about one hundred grams) the balance and the weights to the Satyagrahis. Through this act of theirs the Satyagrahis wanted to prove that the Government had no

63. H. K. Mahtab (Ed), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 89.

64. *Orissa Review*. Vol. XLVI. No. 1, August 1989 (Freedom Movement in Orissa), P. 170, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Quit India Movement in Orissa'.

65. *Adivasi* Vol. IX. 1967-68, No. 1, p. 24,

authority to collect excise duty on opium.⁶⁶ Inspired by the success of this operation, the crowd marched towards the residence of Keshab Patra, the Mustadar of Bodhighar. Patra was extremely unpopular with the local farmers, for he employed very stern measures to collect land revenue from them. Most of the peasants who gheraoed the opium stall were the ryots of Keshab Patra. They seized this opportunity to give vent to their seething discontent. But Keshab Patra was away at a nearby village, Gobindpalli, and his absence disappointed the Satyagrahis. Then they moved towards Khogan, a place some three miles away from Badhighar. The Satyagrahis forced Padma Bissi, a liquor vendor, to close down his liquor shop. They also removed the sign-board. Returning to Badhighar market they trampled on the wares displayed.⁶⁷ These acts of violence might be described as the outburst of public anger against the British Government.⁶⁸

On 17th August, the Congress workers, armed with lathis, assembled at the Revenue Rest House of Jeypore located at Semiliguda. The Police, on reaching the spot, dispersed the crowd of Satyagrahis.⁶⁹ In Gunpur events took a different turn.

66. Confidential File on Lakshman Naik at the Matili Police Station.

67. Confidential File on Lakshman Naik, at Matili Police Station.

68. Nihar Ranjan Patnaik, *Swadhinata Andolanare Odissara Adivasi O' Lakshman Naik*, p. 82.

69. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, P. 89.

The Congress workers picketed the liquor shops, the court and other business establishments and courted arrest.⁷⁰ In another incident hundreds of people thronged the Dasmantpur Police Station and told the Police, "Now the British are gone. This country is ours. You better join us and proclaim our independence".⁷¹ The Police selectively picked up eight rebel leaders and dispersed the rest.⁷² A similar incident took place at Lakshmipur. An angry mob surrounded the Police Station and set fire to the records.⁷³ Another outburst of public anger was seen at Guneipada Shandy, situated thirty miles west of Padwa Police Station. On 18th August 1942, about 400 Congressmen armed with Congress flag and sticks visited the Shandy at about noon, shouting 'Gandhiji-ki-joy'. They incited the people not to pay shandy tax. Just then Shandy Contractor, Mangala Ratan, came on his round and issued a stamped receipt to one Sonu Ratan's son. The Congressmen immediately snatched away the receipt, tore it and demanded from the Shandy Contractor, why he had disobeyed the mandate of the Congress. The Congressmen now went on destroying the shandy huts of the shopkeepers, spilt kerosene out of the oil tins, tore the mill thread and destroyed the mill cloths of many stall keepers. They also looted the shops of the confectioners and ate their sweet-meats. They chased the

70. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 99.

71. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 99.

72. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 89.

73. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 89.

Shandy Contractor and beat the constable out of the shandy.⁷⁴ Such incidents repeated themselves at many places in Koraput. At some places people caused extensive damage to the Reserve Forests by felling trees. They even blew up a bridge at Amapanighat situated on the borders of Koraput and Kalahandi.⁷⁵ The situation assumed such alarming proportions that the British Government apprehended that these incidents would soon turn into a *Fituri* (uprising).⁷⁶ It may be recalled that the British Government had been confronted with revolts on many earlier occasions. But the way the people spontaneously came forward to lay down their lives for independence created a memorable chapter in the history of Indian Freedom Struggle.

Possessed by the spirit of independence, the people of Koraput were up in arms to deal the last blow at the British rule. In this context one is automatically reminded of the lines of Banchhanidhi Mohanty who fermented public awakening in Balasore area through his revolutionary poems. Once he wrote :

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74. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2368 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 502, 1942, Special Report Case No. 53, Koraput District, Charges against Gopi Gadava and six others of looting etc. under Sections 148, 395 and 323 I. P. C.
75. *Orissa Review*, Vol. XLVI, No. 1, August 1989 (Freedom Movement in Orissa), p. 170, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Quit India Movement in Orissa'.
76. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 100.

"For one who has relished
 The taste of nationalism
 And the honey of freedom
 Can stake his life and youth
 Without regrets or ever looking back".⁷⁷

For Lakshman Naik, each day, beginning from the 17th August till his arrest, was memorable. On the 17th August, supported by the Congress workers, he raided the liquor shops at Kongrabeda and smashed the wine vessels and containers. He then proceeded to Kuntipalli with his followers at noon. They were accompanied by people belonging to tribal and milkmen communities. Weilding tathis and flaunting Congress flags they raided the liquor shops at Kuntipalli and smashed the barrels and other instruments used for brewing.⁷⁸

The next day, on 18th August, Lakshman Naik led another raid. He and his followers smashed another wineshop at Sindhabeda. The charge of raiding an opium stall at Salimi, lying some eight miles to the west of Sindhabeda, was given to Padlam Naik of Kaliaguda. Padlam, leading a brigade of Congress workers reached Salimi at about 3.00 P.M. One S. Chandrasekhar Patnaik was selling opium on his Verandah. Padlam and his party, on reaching the place, destroyed opium weighing about thirty-eight tolas. Bhima Naik, a close associate of Padlam, tore up the accounts book into pieces. There followed a brief tussle between

77. Collected from *Banchhanidhi Padyabali*.

78. Confidential File on Lakshman Naik at the Matili Police Station,

Chandrasekhar Patnaik and Bhima Naik.⁷⁹ This incident however, just stopped short of turning more violent.

Another person became famous like Lakshman Naik, Balaram Pujari and Padlam Naik for implementing Congress programmes in Malkanagiri. He was Moti Singh, the Nayak of Tanguda. He was popularly known in that area as 'Lal Raja'. He joined the Congress in 1940 as primary member. As the village chief he exercised great influence over the people of Tanguda. Both Lakshman Naik and Balram Pujari called on Lal Raja at Domapalli market on 19th August. It was decided that the liquor shop at Pushpalli would be attacked under the leadership of Lal Raja. Accordingly he and his party reached Pushpalli at 4 P. M. They told the Vendor, Dayanidhi by name, that the "British Raj" had ended, that 'Swaraj' would be established, and that no tax or otherwise would be paid. Then they forced the Vendor to close down his shop. This apart, they also smashed the equipments used for brewing liquor. Dayanidhi was physically removed from the scene by Lal Raja when he tried to resist. The amount of damage was nearly sixty rupees.⁸⁰

This event brought Lakshman greater fame. The people of Malkanagiri looked upon him as an angel sent by God to liberate them from the shackles of bondage. People used to swarm near him like bees around a hive wherever he went.

79. Confidential File on Lakshman Naik at the Matili Police Station.

80. Confidential File on Lakshman Naik at the Matili Police Station

The people marvelled that it was for them that he braved the sun and rain and took to the forests for their sake. It was he who told the people that Swaraj had marked the end of the British Raj. Nobody had to pay any illegal tax. All were free. There would be no economic exploitation. Could all this be true? People were drawn towards him before they could verify his statements. Mesmerised by the magic in his words, they would only query him as to what was his instruction for them and what they would have to do. The innocent, guileless tribal folks started believing that Lakshman Naik would be their king, should there be any change in the administration.⁸¹



81. Gyanendra Pandey (Ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, p. 196.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SIEGE OF MATILI POLICE STATION

Even as the whole of Koraput shook under the explosions of the August Revolutions, the Government and the freedom fighters focussed their attention on Koraput. By then the Government had declared the local Congress Office unlawful and had sealed it off. Close by, there was a Khadi Store, which was frequented by Congress workers. It was managed by one Kora Prasad Patnaik. The store, because of its proximity to the Police Station, was under strict surveillance. It was reported that a Policeman in plain clothes kept a constant watch on it.¹ After the closure of the Congress Office, this Khadi emporium was the only reliable centre of information for the Congress workers. The workers were very doubtful as to how the information and directives could reach them without alarming the Police. The Police searches, arrests and raids then going on throughout Orissa heightened the apprehension that the Congress plans and programmes would be miscarried should there be any leakage of the secrets.

One day a man with a sack on his head was seen coming towards the Khadi Store. Hardly had he got up the Varendah when a C. I. D. Officer rushed

1 D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 79.

at him. He found that the man was not a Congress worker. He felt about the content, which turned out to be husk. As it was no use seizing the husk bag, it was allowed to be brought inside and the bearer went away. But the proprietor of the Khadi store, Kora Prasad, smelt fishy about the contents from the way the bag was brought to his store. It was unsafe to open the sack in the shop with the Policeman watching outside. Moreover, the Police Station lay closeby. So he sent the sack to one Krushna Chandra Patra. The sack, when opened there, yielded some sheets of paper with something written on them. It came to be known that Radhakrushna Biswasroy had sent from Bombay the plan and programmes of the Quit India Movement to be undertaken in Koraput. As per his directive the Satyagrahis would launch the Quit India Movement against the British Government throughout Koraput. The movement would be intensified through demonstrations, Satyagraha and non-cooperation with the Government. These programmes were scheduled for the 21st of August. That day, Congress workers were to take out processions and march to various Police Stations. They would shout slogans until arrested, urging the British Government to Quit India. Copies of the directive were secretly sent to various Congress centres that very day. The Congress leaders were given a copy of the directive.

Nilakantha Patra of Ghumar received a copy of the message. Lakshman Naik learnt everything from it. He decided in consultation with Nilakantha Patra that the people from the neighbouring villages would be mobilised and a huge procession taken to Matili². They decided to stage a demonstration in

2. V. Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, pp. 250-251.

front of the Police Station there. They would only squat peacefully without resorting to violence and shout slogans against the British Government. Lakshman Naik promptly despatched written copies of the programmes fixed for the 21st August, to all the villages coming under Matili Police Station. The directive was written in the tribal dialect, making it easy for the local people to follow. Even Gandhiji's famous message, 'Do or die' had also been translated into the local dialect.³ In order to ensure the success of the agitation scheduled for the 21st August, Lakshman Naik toured each and every village and briefed the people lucidly in simple tribal language that, upon its success rested the future of Malkanagiri. This struggle for freedom would be their stroke upon the British rule. Nilakantha Patra and Balaram Pujari helped him in this undertaking. Lakshman Naik was so popular that people took his words as divine message. People were then possessed with a frenzied enthusiasm for independence. They believed that a new administration would take over with the people forming their own government, that they would live a different life, and that there would be the dawn of freedom. They eagerly looked forward to the 21st day of August.

Matili, then under Malkanagiri Tahsil, lies along the Jeypore-Malkanagiri road. Situated in the north-eastern part of the sub-division, it is twenty-seven miles away from Malkanagiri and forty miles from Jeypore. The population of Matili was 1934 in the year 1941. By that time, a dispensary, a school and a Police Station had already been set up at Matili.⁴

3. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 81.

4. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 173.

The area coming under Matili Police Station was a prominent centre of the National Movement⁵ The Malkanagiri Police Circle comprised three Police Stations, one at Malkanagiri, another at Venkatapallam and the last one at Matili. This apart, the Malkanagiri Police Circle had also two Police Outposts.⁶ Even though Koraput District had as many as thirty-one Police Stations and eleven Outposts, the secret reports regarding the proposed siege of Matili Police Station unnerved both the British Government and the staff of the Raja of Jeypore. There was also another reason for their apprehensions. They were not so much frightened of the Congress workers as of the Bonda tribals. Until then the Bondas had not directly joined the Congress Movement. They inhabited the remote hilly region of the Matili Police Station. They were violent and belligerent by nature. It stood greatly to his credit that Lakshman could mobilise the Bondas to lay a siege to Matili Police Station.⁷ This event terrified the local Police, the Government and the Raja's officials. They apprehended that the proposed demonstration to be led by Lakshman Naik might turn into an attack.⁸ The Congress workers and their supporters might suddenly abandon peaceful means and take recourse to violence. Given the chance, the demonstrators would not only beat up the Police personnel,

5. N. Senapati (Ed.), *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 421.

6. R. C. S. Bell, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 151.

7. V. Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, p. 251,

8. Koraput Collectorate Room, S. C. No. 18/1942, 'Judgement in Late Laxman Naik Case'.

they might also kill some of them. It was in the fitness of things for such a small police force to think on these lines, for they had let loose terror and inhuman oppression on the villagers and Congress workers on the pretext of putting down the movement. At places elephants had been put into use for attacking the innocent people.⁹ The Police were aware that, given an opportunity, the suppressed villagers might retaliate through a mob attack. These factors made the Police frightened and apprehensive. It was a challenge for the district Police authorities. They did not spare any efforts to foil the demonstration and the siege. The District Police Superintendent knew that a small posse of Policemen was too inadequate to check the demonstrators. He directed all Police personnel of the adjoining areas, excise guards, forest guards, peons of the Revenue Department and all the peons and guards of the zemindars to report at Matili Police Station without delay. Moreover, the Officer-in-charge of Matili Police Station also requisitioned a contingent of the Reserve Police force.¹⁰ Not satisfied with the security arrangements, the Police authorities, visited each and every neighbouring village and warned the people not to join the proposed agitation, on the 21st August. They also threatened the people of serious consequences. They arrested and put into lock-up any local Congress leader that they chanced to come

9. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 177.

10. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 24,

across. The news of these illegal arrests reached Lakshman Naik. He promptly sent secret messages that the Congress leaders, most likely to be arrested, should go into hiding. They should secretly reach the venue of demonstration on the 21st of August.

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MATILI FIRING

The appointed day came. It was the 21st day of August, 1942, a lunar Friday in the month of Sravan. Unending streams of humanity were seen moving towards Matili even before sun-rise. People came not only from the neighbouring villages but also from all directions*—some from across the Kolab and Garia rivers beyond the Ramagiri mountains, others trudging through the Gupteswar forests, bowing to Lord Gupteswar on their way for the success of their mission. Some came trekking through the deep and far-stretching forests of Bondaghats, while others the beautiful hilly terrains

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- * The people came from following villages : Tentuligumma, Sindibeda, Kamrabeda, Ghuspalli, Sedenga, Dalpatiguda, Atalguda, Timsiput, Sarangpalli, Sangumma, Kukudaguda, Luler, Udaigiri, Karpanpalli, Bausighat, Nuaguda, Kaliaguda, Barabeda, Katapalli, Mufdar, Rangabeda, Masariguda, Kaudiguda, Kupuliguda, Naikaguda, Tanguda, Gangala, Bandguda, Malibakaguda, Pangam, Machhaguda, Amguda and Tankguda (Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2369 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 466, 1942, Superintendent of Police, Koraput District to Dy I. G., Orissa S. B, Cuttack, Special Report, Case No. 54, Report I, August 24, 1942.)

of the Luleru mountaints. People in swarms poured into Matili to taste the proverbial nectar of freedom.

The rains had set in, filling the rivers and streams with flood water. Muddy water streamed down in all directions. The under-growth had made passage difficult. Snakes, scorpions and insects swarmed around. The people, however, cared a fig for these hazards and continued to march relentlessly. They had gone through much pain and suffering. They could, as yet, endure a little more to bring all suffering to an end. People coming from far off places had set out the previous night. Going without food and drink, undeterred by rivers and forests, they continued their journey through the dark night. People belonging to the adjoining areas started collecting at the break of dawn, raising speculations, as though an epic battle were going to be fought. It would be a fight between violence and non-violence. The Good would triumph over the evil, they thought. and in justice and oppression would come to an end. The foundations of the British Government would crumble. This would be their last blow at the root of the British empire. There could be no going back on their part. They seemed lost in the reveries of independence. The call of Laksbman Naik had mesmerized them. Drawn by his magic, people unquestioningly followed their respective leaders. Each group, flaunting a Congress flag and chanting Ramdhun, marched ahead. Occasionally they would burst out into the slogan 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi'.

It had been previously decided that all should gather at Matili market place. The market site was an open place and big enough to accomodate such a large

crowd. The market used to be held once a week on each Friday. People came there from far and near for selling and buying their goods. These markets or 'Shandies' as known in the local dialect, played an important role in the transactions of their daily life.¹ The Congress activists had set their eyes on these market places during the course of the Freedom Struggle, for they knew, they could brief the people coming there about the Congress agenda of action. Moreover these market places were the epicentres of the anti-tax agitation. Matili market had another distinction that it was one of the two or three big markets of Malkanagiri. There used to be a huge gathering on market days.² Probably that was why Lakshman Naik had instructed every one to gather at Matili market place. On the other hand the Government was worried over the report of a heavy turn out at Matili market.³

Being a Friday, it was a market day. The place teemed with Congress activists and their sympathisers in addition to the usual market crowd. There was hardly any empty space in the market. Innumerable Congress flags fluttered in the sky. It appeared as if a second Jallianwalabagh meeting was going to be held, Undaunted by fear and unassailed by doubt, the people were ready to bare their chests before bayonets for liberating the motherland from slavery. An unprecedented fervour gripped the people, steeped in nationalistic feelings.

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1. Y. B. Mathur, *Quit India Movement*, pp. 97-98.
 2. N. C. Behuria, *Final Report on the Major Settlement Operations in Koraput District, 1938-64*, p. 39.
 3. Gyanendra Pandey (Ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, p. 204.

There was a liquor shop very close to Matili market.⁴ The presence of such a huge crowd, particularly the presence of Lakshman Naik and other Congress leaders, frightened the shop keeper Shankaraya. He took to his heels and disappeared after closing down his shop. It was not Shankaraya alone who suffered loss on account of having closed his shop. The market-contractor, Narasingha Pujari, also incurred heavy losses. The sellers and vendors refused to pay the market rent in support of the movement. Under these circumstances, nobody could be forced. Narasingha Pujari knew that he could not escape the wrath of the people if he chose to use force. It would not have come as a surprise if the irate mob had gone to the extent of killing him.

It was about half-past nine in the morning. The monsoon rain had restrained itself even though the sky was heavily overcast. Balaram Pujari, a close confidant of Lakshman Naik, asked the people to assemble at the open space lying to the west of the market. By that time, more than one thousand people, besides the usual market crowd, were already present.⁵ The Congress workers stood in files. Lakshman Naik sank into the ground the pole of a Congress flag in front of all. After saluting the flag, Lakshman Naik in his characteristic style briefed the people about the agenda of the day. From there they would proceed to Matili Police Station. There, in

4. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix-C (Patna High Court Judgement)

5. *Who's Who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput District*, p. iii.

front of the Police Station, they would hold a meeting. The Congress flag would be hoisted atop the Police Station. They would squat until they were arrested. As a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Lakshman warned everybody that they should refrain from violence, even if they were beaten up by the Police. Everything must be done in a non-violent manner.⁶

Thereafter the people marched in files towards Matili Police Station. Holding a Congress tricolour, Lakshman himself led the procession. The Government, however, maintained in its reports that the demonstrators were armed with lathis and shouted slogans to the following effect—"We are warriors. We have brought Gandhi Raj. The British Government is no more. We will burn down the Police Station and kill all officers who oppose us. If we succeed we will proceed to Malkanagiri, and loot the Government treasury there".⁷ But there was little substance in the allegations made by the Government. Lakshman Naik had repeatedly urged the people to demonstrate peacefully. If some of the Congressmen carried lathis, it was purely in self-defence. It was not unusual for the people to have carried lathis as protection against the attack of wild animals, for they had to come through dense forests and mountains. It was not that the demonstrators carried sticks for the purpose of attacking

6. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 86-87.

7. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix—C (Patna High Court Judgement).

the Government or members of the Raja's staff. Their sole aim was to hoist the Congress flag atop Matili Police Station and court arrest.⁸

Sub-Inspector Jagannaikulu Dora was then the Officer-in-Charge of Matili Police Station. The clever Police Officer had prior information of such an agitation. Therefore counter measures had already been taken to tackle the situation. It had been decided upon that the Police personnel of Malkanagiri and Venkatapalam Police Stations would reach Matili on the 21st August and help the local Police to tackle the situation. In addition the services of other local Government officials had also been requisitioned. B. S. Nanda, the Divisional Inspector of Police at Malkanagiri reached Matili with a contingent of armed Police on the morning of 21st August. Sub-Inspector K. Ramamurty of Venkatapalam also reached Matili with armed constables well in advance. Beside the Divisional Inspector B. S. Nanda, Sub-Inspector Jagannaikulu and Sub-Inspector K. Ramamurty, two other Assistant Sub-Inspectors and seven constables were present on duty. According to the Government Report, altogether twelve Policemen were put on duty. Moreover, there were also present with them the Excise Sub-Inspector M. A. Rasid Baig and four peons, the Revenue Inspector Narasingham and Forest Guard Ramayya, both in the service of the Jeypore Raj, with two peons, the local doctor and compounder and the Veterinary Stock-man and nine villagers. During the morning the Sub-Deputy Magistrate

8. Balabhadra Pujari, *Sahid Bira Laxman Naik*, p. 20.

Majibur Rahman and an Inspector of the Public Works Department came to the Police Station,⁹

The Police Station was half a mile away from the market place.¹⁰ Lakshman Naik and others reached there in half-an-hour's time. On seeing them approach, the Divisional Inspector of Police, B. S. Nanda with his party, intercepted them on the road lying about two hundred yards to the east of the Police Station. There followed an exchange of hot words between the two sides for a long time. Lakshman Naik and his followers were unable to decide their next course of action and returned to the market. They were followed by the Divisional Inspector and his party who remained to observe their actions.¹¹

A procession with music was formed round the market. A meeting was also held presided over by Lakshman Naik,¹² He addressed the gathering in the local dialect thus :

9. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2369 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 496. 1942, Superintendent of Police, Koraput District, to Dy I. G., Orissa S. B., Cuttack, Special Report, Case No. 54, Report I, August 24, 1942 ; H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix-C (Patna High Court Judgement).
10. N. Senapati (Ed.), *Orissa District Gazetteers, Koraput*, p. 75.
11. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV' Appendix-C (Patna High Court Judgement).
12. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX. 1967-68, No. 1, p. 24,

"Brethren. Gandhi, the Great, has given a call to the British to quit India today. The old Raja of Jeypore is dead. Everything, the villages, forests and fields, now belong to us. The practice of bonded labour and corvee no longer exists. There is now no tax for felling trees. We own this land, its flora and fauna. The Police Stations, Revenue Office and all other various offices now belong to us."¹³

It was noon by then Lakshman Naik and his followers once again were on their way to blockade the Police Station. Meanwhile, the Police party led by the Divisional Inspector had returned to the Police Station. On their arrival, they held detailed discussions and took such measures as they deemed fit to protect the Police Station from the Congress workers. The Police Station was a thatched building standing in a small compound, about 130 feet square with gates on each side, surrounded by a drainage ditch and a low flimsy fence. It stood back on the north side of the road about 700 feet from it and was again surrounded by a clearing made in the forest, about 200 yards square. There was a ditch along the road side. The Divisional Inspector posted four constables at the gate of the inner compound armed with muskets and bayonets and ten rounds of ammunitions each, and he drew up the remainder of his force close to the road by the culvert going across the roadside ditch. The Divisional Inspector B. S. Nanda and Sub-Inspector Jagannaikulu Dora, both armed with revolvers and guns, were in command of the force.¹⁴

13. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 90.

14. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix-C (Patna High Court Judgement).

The demonstrators led by Lakshman Naik finally reached the Police Station. He was shouting slogans like 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Joy (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi)' and 'Bande Mataram (Homage to the motherland)'. They all advanced to enter the compound. But the police guarding the Police Station obstructed them holding their lathis out as a barrier. There followed a brief scuffle between the Police and the demonstrators who, bound by their earlier resolve, did not hit the Police. But they were firmly resolved to hoist the Congress tricolour atop the Police Station. Majibur Rahman, the Magistrate on duty, ordered a lathi-charge. The Police resorted to lathi-charge without prior warning.¹⁵ But this order was highly unlawful. The Satyagrahis completely outnumbered the Police force and their lathis. Even though mercilessly beaten by the Police, they did not hit back. Of course they tried to enter the compound forcing their way through the gate. Meanwhile the Police caught sight of Lakshman Naik, the leader of the demonstrators. Some of them dragged him on to the Verandah and brutally beat him up. Lakshman Naik fell down after being severely injured. The Police torture did not end there. In order to add to his suffering, the Police even burnt his moustache. The people who had accompanied Lakshman Naik watched the miserable suffering of their beloved leader in mute silence. The Police force was inclined to think that the cruel treatment meted out to Lakshman Naik would make his followers take to their heels in fright. But it was not for them to retrace their

15. *Who's Who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput District*, p. IV.

steps which had been firmly set on the road to independence. Balaram Pujari and others could no longer tolerate the inhuman torture that Lakshman had been subjected to. The angry mob tried to force their way into the Police Station by breaking the bamboo fence running around it. The Policemen and Peons who tried to obstruct them were pushed down in the scuffle that ensued. Sub-Inspector Ramamurty and Constable Mohanty were among those who fell down. This incident probably injured the pride of the self-conceited Policemen. Enraged, they suddenly opened fire upon the unarmed people. The Government Report indicated that the Police altogether fired twelve rounds under the order of the Magistrate on duty, this apart, the Police Sub-Inspector Dora used his twelve bore gun and fired three rounds.¹⁶ Though the by-standers fled the Place in panic when firing started, the Congress workers did not buzz an inch. Linga Bhumia, a Congress worker from Timasguda village, climbed atop the thatched roof of the Police Station to hoist a Congress flag. But his dream could not be fulfilled. Before he could hoist the flag, a bullet hit him in the head and he fell down dead. Nakul Madkami of village Sargiguda promptly caught hold of the flag which he also could not hoist as, shot in the chest, he died on the spot. According to Government Report, five persons were killed and seventeen injured in the Police firing.¹⁷ But undoubtedly

16. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix-C (Patna High Court Judgement).

17. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix-C (Patna High Court Judgement).

the death toll was much higher than is admitted in the Government Report. Those who died martyrs included Samray Naik of Manjariguda, Kende Sunajbaria from Kiang, Gopi Pujari from Sangumma, Balaram Bhumia from Temurupalli, Udainath Odi from Baisakha Ghat and Gurukotia of Timasput. Besides, Arjun Kutia of village Kuduraguda who was bayoneted and Narasingha Domb of Nuaguda who was shot in the abdomen were seriously injured. Later on they both succumbed to their injuries. The Policemen had badly mauled and broken the arm of Lakshman's brother-in-law, Bansingh Pujari.¹⁸ All the demonstrators were more or less injured.

These events took place before the very eyes of Lakshman Naik. He was greatly dismayed at the agony and suffering of his dear ones. He could do little for them when their piteous cries rent the air. He lay helplessly on the Verardah of the Police Station. He had been so badly beaten up that it was impossible for him to sit up. Just then some Policemen came to him. They turned their ire at Lakshman Naik, the man who had instigated the people to attack the Police Station. He had emboldened the simple and timid tribesmen who used to cower in the presence of the Policemen into such daredevils that they could now challenge the armed police, that too in the Police Station itself. They thought everything would be alright if Lakshman was eliminated. All of a sudden a Policeman stepping forward struck Lakshman Naik on the face with his bayonet and this barbaric stroke instantly made him senseless. The Policemen took him for dead and felt relaxed. They dragged and threw him into the ditch near the

18. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 92-93.

compound. They then heaved a sigh of relief. The area in front of the Police Station looked like a cremation ground.

Meanwhile another incident took place. The Forest Guard G. Ramayya was put on duty to drive away the demonstrators from the compound. He was an opium addict and that day he was not in his senses. He recklessly got inside the crowd and started beating them indiscriminately. He was hit by a stray bullet when the Police opened fire upon the crowd. Probably he was hit in the head and he fell down dead.¹⁹ But a different colouring was put on the incident in the report submitted by the Police. They maintained that Ramayya was assaulted by Lakshman Naik and Balaram Pujari. Balaram first hit him on the right side of his neck with his lathi. Then Lakshman struck him on his head, killing him instantaneously.²⁰ As a matter of fact, Ramayya's death was a blessing in disguise for the Policemen. They wanted Lakshman Naik, the kingpin, sentenced to death under the provisions of the law. That opportunity came as a windfall.²¹ Even though Ramayya was killed in Police firing the Doctor was influenced into giving the report that Ramayya died as a result of the lathi-blows he received on the head and it was Lakshman Naik who gave the blow. So Lakshman Naik was made out to be responsible for Ramayya's

19. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 26.

20. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix - C (Patna High Court Judgement).

21. V. Raghaviah, *Tribal Revolts*, p. 253.

death. That Lakshman Naik, a votary of non-violence, did not club Ramayya to death was the truth.²² For, struck with bayonet, Lakshman Naik was lying unconscious before Ramayya was killed. In fact, Ramayya was killed in Police firing. Of course, Ramayya's body was found from that part of the ditch where Lakshman Naik had been thrown. But it did not mean that Lakshman had struck Ramayya. It was very likely that Ramayya, in a state of opium-induced stupor, might have fallen into the ditch and died from profuse bleeding after having hit his head hard on a stone.²³

A sense of terror gripped Matili in the wake of the Police firing. The panic-stricken people closed the market and fled. The people did not even light their hearths, let alone stir out. There prevailed a tense situation all around.

It soon got dark. The sun went down behind the distant hills. It also started drizzling. It seemed as though nature, moved by the suffering of the victims of the firing, shed tears in the form of rain-

22. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 42 ;
Binod Kanungo, *Jatīyakabi Birakishore* (In Oriya, Cuttack, 1977), p. 112 ;

S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 177 ;

B. R. Nanda (Ed.), *Essays in Modern Indian History*, p. 160, K. S. Sing's 'The Freedom Movement and Tribal Sub-Movements, 1920-1947'.

23. *Who's Who of Freedom Workers in Orissa, Koraput District*, p. IV ;

Balaram Mohanty, *August Biplab*, p. 177.

drops. There Lakshman Naik lay unconscious in the drain. The Police, taking him for dead, left him there in the drain. He gradually regained his consciousness after a long time, but was unable to move as a result of merciless clubbing. He looked around in the dark, but there was nobody to be seen. It was almost certain for him to catch pneumonia in case he lay any longer in the drain. He could not decide what to do. But he had to get out of it to continue the fight for independence until dead. He was ashamed of returning home. Instead, he decided to move to Jeypore. He would decide there his future course of action in consultation with other Congress workers. Moreover, he wanted to escape the Police. Jeypore was some thirty-five miles away from Matill Police Station. Lakshman Naik rose to his feet in spite of excruciating pain. It was not possible to see through the pitch darkness. He slowly moved forward, from the Police Station into the forest. He could recognise the medicinal plants in the forest. He collected some leaves and herbs to clot his wounds with. Thereafter he resolutely marched ahead towards Jeypore."

Lakshman Naik reached Jeypore at midnight the following day. He first went to the local Congress Office, which he found closed. He had friendly relations with many local Congress workers. He used to meet these workers in connection with the agitational programmes of the Congress. But it was almost

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24. Sahid Lakshman Naik Memorial National Seminar on Inter State Study of Tribal Languages and Culture in Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal, March 29-30, 1991, Calcutta, Nihar Ranjan Pattnaik's 'Lakshman Naik—A Veritable Martyr', p. 4.

impossible to locate any of them that night. The Congress leaders and workers had been forced to go into hiding, following the repressive measures adopted by the British Government. However a local resident recognised Lakshman Naik and took him home. Realising that the severely injured man badly needed rest, he lodged Lakshman in a room upstairs. The host then called on Balabhadra Pujari, a prominent Congress worker, who lived nearby, in the hope that he might be of some help. Balabhadra Pujari immediately came to see Lakshman whose agony and suffering rent his heart.²⁵ He wondered how cruel the Police were ! As puppets in the hands of the foreigners they could strike at their fellow country-men and bathe in the blood of those who were their own.

Balabhadra Pujari heard from him all that had happened. They held discussions at length inside the closed room to chalk out the next course of action. At last it was decided to keep away from the Police. All the Congress workers also should go underground for same time. Everything had to be done secretly. It was also timely for Lakshman to go into hiding. Moreover, it was not safe for him in Jeypore. So he ought to leave immediately for his native place Tentuligumma and hide himself in the neighbouring forests and hills for some days.

Lakshman Naik set out for his native village before sunrise. He reached Ramgiri via Joynagar. He had very intimate relations with the Ramgiri forests and the Tara Hills, in the loving care of

25. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 98-99.

which he had spent his childhood and youth. Now in this hour of crisis, the same forests and hills were more than eager to offer him shelter. Lakshman spent a week there. His wounds, regularly plastered with the paste of leaves and herbs, gradually healed up.

Meanwhile, the events at Matili took a different turn. The Policemen who had left Lakshman in the ditch taking him for dead, found the body missing the following morning. They wondered if he could have revived. The Police could hardly believe that Lakshman Naik had escaped death after being severely struck and thrown into the gutter. They feared that in case he was alive, the anti-government agitation would gain further momentum. So the Police launched a massive hunt for Lakshman Naik. Information was sent to all the neighbouring Police Station to track down and arrest him—as he was a murderer who had clubbed Ramayya to death.

The matter did not end there. The Government and the officials of the Raja let loose an inhuman and barbaric oppression on the villages of Tentuligumma and Matili. Congress sympathisers, wherever found, were tied up and dragged to the Police Station. Despite heavy downpour they would be left in the open, tied to poles like animals. Moreover, they were also subjected to severe physical torture. The whole of Matili reeled under waves of panic.²⁶ The misery and suffering of the people of Tentuligumma crossed

26. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 26.

all bounds.²⁷ Besides the Police force, the Paiks (soldiers) of the Raja also unleashed a reign of terror. They beat up all Congressmen. Elephants were pressed into service to damage the corn fields. The Police brought false charges that the demonstrators had planned to burn down the Police Station and kill the Policemen. The Police managed to get recorded the dying statements of Narasingha Domb and Narasingha Kutia, both undergoing treatment for injuries sustained in the Police firing, that they had come to burn down the Police Station.²⁸

Lakshman Naik, then in hiding, was kept informed of every development. He could no longer tolerate the misery and suffering of his comrades, colleagues and kinsmen. Something had to be done to boost their sagging morale so that they would not break down. After hiding for a whole week in the forest, he returned to his native village on the 28th of August. The villagers were as much inspired as they were delighted at the return of their beloved leader. Lakshman, as before, got down to his usual business of looking into the problems of the villagers. He once again became active and lively. It appeared as if not only the village and the villagers, but the whole country looked up to him with great expectations. But this was not to last for long. Everything came to an abrupt end after four days.

It was the morning of the 2nd September. The sun rose as usual, above the distant hills, Lakshman

27. Orissa State Archives, Accession No. 2452 Con, Government of Orissa, Special Section, Confidential File No. 23/43, 1943, Confidential Report of Koraput District, April 27, 1943

28. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 94-101.

Naik, after finishing his daily chores, chanted Ramdhun. He next started making yarns with his spinning wheel. Just then a man came hot foot to inform him that the Police had surrounded the village. After a short while, four to five Policemen reached there. Lakshman Naik did not run away like a coward. After hand-cuffing him the Police party searched for others. They then caught sight of Lakshman's son Raghunath and tied him up. Both the father and the son, and some other villagers of Tentuligumma were arrested and taken away to Matili Police Station. On their way back, they also arrested Bansingh Pujari, the brother-in-law of Lakshman Naik. Bansing's arm had been fractured in the incidents of the 21st August. By that time many other Congress workers had also been rounded up and detained in the Police Station. The Police, later on released Lakshman's son Raghunath, who had been illegally taken into custody, only after his mother paid thirty rupees as bribe.²⁹

The detainees were tortured inside the Police Station. On 8th September all the detainees were brought outside the Police Station. The liquor vendor N. Sankaraya and a hotel owner Padmanav Panigrahi were summoned to the Police Station. The Police along with N. Sankaraya and Padmanav Panigrahi identified from among the detainees those who had come to seige the Matili Police Station.³⁰ After the identification parade was over, they were all sent to Koraput Jail. Tied with rope around the waist, they were paraded all the way to Koraput Jail. Some of

29. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 103.

30. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 104.

them had been seriously injured in the Police firing and the wounds were still green. After they were made to walk for some distance Lakshman Naik protested against the inhuman way they were being taken to jail. He refused to move any further and told the Police that he would prefer death to carrying out such inhuman orders. The Police could not make them move, even after exhausting all means of torture and reasoning. Lastly, they were all huddled into a Police lorry and sent to Jeypore Jail. ³¹

31. V. Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, pp. 253-254.

TRIAL OF LAKSHMAN NAIK

The trial of Lakshman Naik and his fellow activists was nothing more than a sham. The Police charged Lakshman and fifty-three others with murder, looting, arson and other acts of violence.* They were also chargesheeted accordingly. The criminal case was admitted for preliminary hearing in the Court of Somanath Mishra, the then Deputy Collector-cum-First Class Magistrate of Koraput. After cross-examining some of the witnesses he was satisfied that the case had some prima-facie evidence against the accused and committed the case to the Sessions Court for trial.

V. Ramanathan** was then the Additional Sessions Judge of Koraput. The case of Lakshman Naik and others was transferred to his court for trial. Lakshman Naik and Balaram Pujari were charged, under Section 302 of I.P.C. with murder and others were prosecuted for being involved in rioting, looting and arson. Altogether thirty-three persons were produced as witnesses against the accused

* The number of this case in Matili Police Station was 58/1942, U/S 302, 148, 149, 120-B, 323, 325 I. P. C

** Later V. Ramanathan became the member of the Board of Revenue, Orissa.

on behalf of the prosecution. Chief among them were the Magistrate Majibur Rahman, the Divisional Police Inspector, B. S. Nanda, Sub-Inspector Jagannaikulu Dora, Sub-Inspector K. Ramamurty, the Revenue Inspector of the Jeypore Raj, Narasimham, one excise Sub-Inspector, one officer of the P.W.D., the liquor vendor N. Sankaraya, the market contractor Narsingha Pujari, another contractor Haider Baig, two usurers Madhab Balaram and Abdul Pir Khan. Besides them, the local doctor, compounder, peons of the Excise Department and other Police Constables also made their depositions. R. Jagannath Rao, *** the court lawyer of Jeypore Raja, was appointed the public prosecutor. No lawyer was engaged to represent Lakshman Naik and the co-accused.

The Government maintained its charge that Lakshman Naik and Balram Pujari instigated the people to attack the Government establishments. Preparations for the raid on Matili Police Station were made with the active connivance of Lakshman Naik. The mob, accordingly armed with lathis, came to raid the Matili Police Station on 21st August, 1942. They were shouting slogans like "We will burn the Police Station and kill all officers who oppose us. If we succeed, we will proceed to Malkanagiri, and loot the government treasury there". They also shouted similar slogans in front of the Police Station. The Magistrate on duty, Majibur Rahman, declared the crowd unlawful and ordered the Satyagrahis to

*** In the post-independence period, R. Jagannath Rao could be a member of Parliament and a Minister at the Centre too.

disperse immediately. But in defiance of the order they tried to force their way into the Police Station by pushing back the Police force. In the process they assaulted and severely injured Sub-Inspector Ramamurty and Constable Mohanty. Upon this, the Police then resorted to lathi-charge. The Police force, being completely outnumbered, were overpowered by the Satyagrahis and the Police Officers and Constables were more or less injured. Around this time, Balaram Pujari went near the Forest Guard Ramayya and struck on the right side of his neck with a lathi. Thereafter Lakshman Naik hit him hard on the head as a result of which he fell down dead. The Magistrate, on seeing their own men severely injured and Ramayya dead, ordered the Police to open fire. This submission by the Government paved the way for awarding heavy punishment to Lakshman Naik and his comrades. That Lakshman Naik and Balaram Pujari had murdered Ramayya was testified to in the court among others by the Sub-Inspector Ramamurty and Sub-Inspector Jagannaikulu and the Revenue Inspector of the Jeypore Raj, Narasimham,

Lakshman Naik and other co-accused submitted that the charges framed by the Police were baseless. They had gone to the Police Station only to stage a demonstration and hoist the Congress flag. They did not have any plans to burn the Police Post or assault the Police personnel. Moreover, none of them, neither Lakshman, nor Balaram Pujari, was responsible for the death of Ramayya.

But V. Ramanathan, the Additional Sessions Judge, Koraput, held the deposition made by Lakshman Naik and others as untrue and was satisfied

with the statements of the prosecution as true. After recording the evidence given by both the sides, he stated in his judgement, "I do hereby convict Lakshman Naik of Ramayya's murder, under section 302 of I. P. C. and sentence him to death. He is to be hanged by the neck till he dies. Moreover, though found guilty and convicted under the Defence of India Rules, no other sentence is passed". The other forty-nine persons including Balaram Pujari, convicted of setting fire to the Police Station, inciting violence, assaulting the Government Officials, committing loot and arson, and violating the Defence of India Rules, were sentenced to life imprisonment, the first nine years being rigorous. Only four from among the fifty-four accused persons were acquitted as charges against them could not be proved. They included Arjun Bhumia, Sania Bhumia, Sambaru Bhumia and Lachhman Bhumia.

After the judgement had been pronounced, Lakshman Naik was sent to Berhampur Jail for execution. The remaining forty-nine convicted remained in the Koraput Jail to undergo their term of rigorous imprisonment.

LAKSHMAN NAIK HANGED

Berhampur Jail had been built as a Central Jail. Political prisoners from various districts of Orissa were sent and kept there. The ordinary prisoners occupied the roofed cells of the jail. Separate cells had been constructed during the Quit India Movement to accomodate a large number of Satyagrahis. An outer boundary wall was constructed outside the jail.¹ Inside, large rooms without any stone or mud wall were erected by enclosing the empty space with bamboo screens. The bamboos were smeared with tar. Ten to twelve such thatched rooms, each known as a ward, had a door, with a temporary latrine inside. There was a drum in each room, to be used as an urinal. Sweepers used to sweep the wards clean each morning. Each ward had the provision of a window made of a few iron-bars. During the wet season, rain came spattering down into the rooms as the windows had not been fitted with wooden panels.² All the doors were closed at 9 O'clock in the night to reopen at 5 the next morning,³ Of course, armed sentries were always

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1. Ramchandra Ram, *Sangrami*, (In Oriya, Cuttack, 1986) p 58.
 2. Rayguru, *Agnipath*, Part-I (In Oriya, Cuttack, 1986), p. 72.
 3. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 184.

on guard around the rooms. A huge gate, always locked and guarded by the warders, lay in between the old jail and the new one.⁴

The high security prisoners, though classified into A and B categories, were kept together and they enjoyed equal facilities in matters of food and drink. It was only with regard to being given the facilities of razor blades and toilet soaps and of keeping correspondence with the outside world that there was some difference.⁵

Nityananda Kanungo, Pranakrushna Padhiari and Rajakrushna Bose were kept in Ward No. 2 ; Biren Mitra and Aparna Patra in Ward No. 4 ; Biswanath Das in Ward No. 5 ; Gopabandhu Choudhury, Acharya Harihar Das, Chatu Babu and Nabakrushna Choudhury in Ward No. 6 ; Surendra-nath Dwibedy in Ward No. 7 ; and Radhanath Rath, Umacharan Patnaik and others were put in Ward No. 8.⁶

Lakshman Naik, being under death sentence, had been in the condemned cell since the 16th of November 1942. No other inmate of the jail was allowed to meet him even if they so desired.⁷ Lakshman Naik was kept in Cell No. 14.⁸ Many of the

4. Rayguru, *Agnipath*, Part-I, p. 72 ;

Interview with Sarat Chandra Maharana.

5. S N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 183.

6. Rayguru, *Agnipath*, Part-I, p. 73.

7. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 185.

8. S. N. Dwibedy, *August Biplab*, p. 143.

detainees were eager to see him. So they would go near Cell No. 14, on some pretext or other to have a look at him ⁹ Once Lakshman told a relative who had gone to see him, "I am leaving. Because of Gandhiji's endeavours India shall be independent. You should all enjoy the benefits of independence together".¹⁰

Radhakrushna Biswasroy, Radhamohan Sahu and Sadashib Tripathy and other Congress leaders of Koraput were kept in Berhampur Jail. They and other Congress leaders of Orissa were greatly disturbed over the death sentence awarded to Lakshman Naik. It was decided upon their advice, to go in for appeal in the Patna High Court against the death sentence passed by the lower court and a letter to this effect signed by Lakshman Naik was sent to Radha Charan Das, a lawyer from Berhampur. The letter read as follows : ¹¹

"Dear Sir,

I have been sentenced to death on the charge of murdering G. Ramayya, a forest guard of Jeypore Estate. Even though innocent, I am now under the penalty of death as a victim of the malafide intentions of the Police. I have been working as a sincere Congress worker for the last so many years. I look upon Mahatma Gandhi as my ideal and his principle

9. Interview with Dolagobinda Pradhan, a freedom fighter and former Minister of Urban Development, Orissa.

10. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 185.

11. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp. 109-110.

of non-violence as the supreme vow of my life. I have always been very careful so as not to deviate from this path of non-violence under any circumstances. That day after I had spoken on the resolves of independence, a large number of people, in defiance of the Police order, stood peacefully in front of the Police Station to court arrest. Ramayya was really killed in the inhuman and senseless firing which the Police opened on the innocent people. I had been struck with lathis and bayoneted in the face before the Police opened firing. I lay unconscious as a result of this Police torture. In these circumstances it was utterly impossible on my part to be able to attack and kill Ramayya. I am innocent before God and also in my conscience. I now look upon you as my only saviour. I have already filed my appeal in the honourable High Court. I would request you to kindly keep touch with me and furnish all relevant information to my counsellor in the High Court after examining the necessary documents.

Yours faithfully,
Lakshman Naik
(Convict No. 661)."

Radha Charan Das received the letter in time. He immediately called on Umacharan Patnaik in jail and discussed this problem with him. An appeal was accordingly filed in the Patna High Court against the conviction of Lakshman Naik. The appeal was heard by Justice H. R. Meredith and Justice Peter H. R. Brough. Pitambar Mishra appeared on behalf of Lakshman Naik and other appellants and the public prosecutor represented the Government. The Defence Counsel submitted that Lakshman Naik was a worshipper of non-violence. It was not his inten-

tion to commit murder or assault any one on the eventful day of 21st August. The demonstrators only wanted to court arrest by shouting anti-government slogans. But the gory incidents were the handiwork of the Policemen on duty. He further argued that there was no conclusive evidence to suggest that Lakshman Naik had murdered G. Ramayya, for the six approvers present on the scene did not testify on oath to the effect that Lakshman had killed Ramayya. Moreover, the Excise Sub-Inspector, the P. W. D. Inspector and a villager named Nilakantham could not give any conclusive opinion confirming the charge. These arguments, though submitted against the conviction of Lakshman Naik, failed to convince both Justice Meredith and Justice Brough. In their judgement delivered on January 13, 1943, they upheld and confirmed the death sentence passed on Lakshman Naik.¹²

The top-ranking leaders then in jail made an attempt to move an appeal in the Privy Council against this death sentence. A committee comprising Umacharan Patnaik, Bhagirathi Mohapatra and Lokanath Mishra alias Panka Babu was formed for this purpose. Unfortunately the appeal could not be moved in time in the Privy Council because of many problems that had cropped up. Interestingly the Calcutta High Court struck down as null and void the law under which Lakshman Naik was sentenced to death. But, as ill luck would have it, Lakshman Naik

12. H. K. Mahtab (Ed.), *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV, Appendix-C (Patna High Court Judgement).

was hanged a few days before this declaration of the Calcutta High Court. ¹³

However it became gradually certain that Lakshman Naik could not be saved from the gallows. But the signs of courage, patience, contentment and patriotism were writ large on his face while he sat waiting for death in the solitude of his condemned cell.¹⁴ Until the last, he remained fearless and had faith in God. He recited stanzas from the *Bhagabata*, written by Jagannath Das.¹⁵ This apart, he also sang Ramdhun and the favourite devotional songs of Gandhiji. He always remained worried about Mother India. He regretted that he could not liberate his motherland from the British hands during his life time. The national poet of Orissa, Birakishore Das wrote a poem expressing the feelings and sentiments of Lakshman Naik, his last moment's offerings to Mother India thus :

"In sleep or in dream
Or even when awake
Your image keeps haunting me,
Many a distraction
Cannot make me forget
Nor can fear restrain my mind.

Though much blamed and defamed
I became a Yogi pining for your love
For which I am now sent to the gallows
And I shall miss you beyond tomorrow.

13. Ramchandra Ram, *Sangrami*, p. 69.

14. Binod Kanungo, *Jatihakabi Birakishore*, p. 125.

15. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 262.

Not knowing to cut your throat
 Not submitting, or keeping the mouth shut
 I took upon myself to serve
 My countrymen, whom I could not disown.

I unmasked the sweet-tongued sychophants,
 Lost everything for telling the truth,
 Now I stand accused as the
 Greatest sinner
 For I demanded the key to open my own home.

My last begging to you
 I be hanged by a fellow countryman,
 Let my head roll,
 Let my soul spread its wings
 Meditating upon your lotus feet.

If I am reborn, to a loving mother like you
 Under the canopy of the beautiful sky,
 I do not desire kingdom or kingship,
 Glory and power,
 Except that I be reborn
 As a blade of grass on your soil".¹⁶

Banasingh Pujari of Tentuligumma was a companion of Lakshman Naik. He was shot in the right arm during the raid of Matili Police Station. He recovered after a prolonged period of treatment at Cuttack Hospital. He was also sentenced to life imprisonment along with his other colleagues. Before being shifted to the special ward following the death sentence, one day Lakshman Naik emotionally told Bansingh Pujari, "I would die, for it has been decided by the British Government and the Raja of

16. Binod Kanungo, *Jatiyakabi Birakishore*, pp. 113-114.

Jeypore. I shall follow the writ of fate and consequent upon it, innumerable people of this country would attain independence. Gandhi Raj would be established. Those who are languishing in jail shall be set free".¹⁷ Afterwards, Lakshman Naik instructed Bansingh Pujari to take care of his wife, son and other members of his family after his death. He should also ensure that they pride in his death rather than grieve for him.¹⁸

The day of the execution drew near. The order was passed to the effect that Lakshman Naik was to be hanged on the 29th March 1943 inside Berhampur Jail. Though it was kept a closely guarded secret, everybody came to know of the order just the day before.¹⁹ Additional units of armed police were deployed in and around Berhampur Jail. The scene inside the jail almost resembled a military barrack.²⁰ Everybody was weighed down with sorrow at the sad realisation that Lakshman Naik would be hanged the very next morning. All were deeply anguished, shocked and enraged. In those days the condemned persons were customarily asked by the jail authorities as to who they would like to meet, and what they would like to eat on the last day. Lakshman Naik, on being so asked, said in reply, "I would like to see my fellow prisoners and eat what they are given to eat."²¹ That day the jail authorities informed

17. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 27.

18. V. Raghavaiah, *Tribal Revolts*, p. 255.

19. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 185.

20. Interview with Dolagobinda Pradhan.

21. *Orissa Legislative Assembly Debates*, Ninth Assembly, Sixth Session, August 9, 1987, Vol. VI, No. 1, p. 14.

Lakshman that Radhakrushna Biswasroy, Radhamohan Sahu and Sadashib Tripathy wanted to have a last meeting with him.²² Radhakrushna Biswasroy and Radhamohan Sahu were so much grief-stricken that they could not summon up courage to go into the cell and see Lakshman Naik. At last Sadashib Tripathy, getting the better of his agonised feelings, quietly entered the cell of Lakshman Naik. Lakshman greeted him with smiles. It appeared from his smiles as if nothing had happened to him, nor was anything going to happen. He only said, "I have nothing more to say ; many of my fellow brothers laid down their lives ; many others including the leaders languish in jail under these circumstances ; what should I say, or why should I grieve for myself ? But there is one thing. I regret that I cannot see 'Swaraj' for which we have been struggling hard. This is all that I miss in life."²³

The national poet Birakishore Das rendered in a poem the last words of Lakshman Naik and it was recited by Dolagobinda Pradhan at a meeting organised inside the jail that evening. It read as follows :

"Friends, bid me a happy farewell
For my time has come
And it is time for me to go.

Not being able to vent my feelings
My agonies lay buried in my mind,

22. Ramchandra Ram, *Sangrami*, p. 69.

23. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 116 ;
Souvenir, Orissa Pradesh Congress, Plenary
Session, Bhubaneswar, December 1988, S. M.
Ali's 'Biplabi Sahid Laxman Naik'.

Not blessed to see India free
 For which I set my hopes high
 Brothers, bid me good bye
 For it is time for me to go.

I do not regret my death,
 For I have to, sooner or later,
 Remember to tell my children of me.
 I shall again be reborn
 Into the Free India.
 Brothers, bid me good bye
 For it is time for me to go".²⁴

All the inmates of Berhampur Jail offered prayers and kept awake throughout the night of the 28th March.²⁵ Nabakrushna Choudhury and other prisoners wept throughout that fatal night.²⁶ At the break of dawn, when Lakshman Naik was being taken to the gallows, all other convicted political prisoners lodged in ordinary wards shouted slogans, as decided earlier, like *Bande Matram*, *Inquilab Zindabad*, *Hail Free India*, *Victory to Mahatma Gandhi* and *Victory to Lakshman Naik*. Other political prisoners kept in the other side of jail equally shocked and excited, also shouted similar slogans. The condemned cell of Lakshman Naik opened amidst slogan-shouting. After reciting lines from the '*Gita*' Lakshman Naik gallantly marched towards the gallows

24. *Orissa Legislative Assembly Debates*, Ninth Assembly, Sixth Session, August 9, 1987, Vol. VI, No. 1 p. 15.

25. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 262.

26. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissre Swadhinata Andolana*, p 18.

as a hero. He was singing Gandhiji's favourite devotional song :

"Ram, the glory of the Raghu Dynasty,
And who is called Raghava
Is the saviour of the downtrodden
And the Lord of Sita
Let the Supreme One
Who is also known as Allah and Iswar
Imbue people with good sense".²⁷

On his way to the scaffold, when asked by the Jail Superintendent to mention his last wish, Lakshman solemnly said, "If the Sun is true, and so is the Moon, it is then equally true that Mother India shall be independent. Now show me your gallows".²⁸

It was then five in the morning. The Jailor, Nayar, as required under the law of the jail, was present to execute the hanging. A blackhood was put on his head. Ramamurty, a zemandar of the jail, pulled the lever bringing the iron plate under his feet down.²⁹ Everything ended with this. Lakshman Naik remained clasped in the icy-cold embrace of death. Prananath Chhotray, the Doctor, was present to declare him dead. Swan, the British Magistrate, though required under the law of the jail to remain present at the time of the execution near the scaffold, only signed the papers on the report of the Doctor

27. *Orissa Lagislative Assembly Debates*, Ninth Assembly, Sixth Session, August 9, 1937, Vol. VI, No. 1, p. 15.

28. D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 117.

29. Ramchandra Ram, *Sangrami*, p. 69.

and went away.³⁰ All excitement and the crescendo of slogan-shouting gradually died down. Gopabandhu Choudbury was seen speaking pathetically to others in a feeble voice, "Why any longer? He cannot hear hereafter."³¹

The news of his hanging was not communicated even to his family and kinsmen. His dead body was not even shown to a group of social workers from Berhampur. Their desire to cremate his dead body with due honour was not granted. The dead body was buried inside the jail compound.³²

In order to strike terror into the people the local authorities of the Government announced the news of Lakshman's hanging to the beat of drums, Lakshman's son Raghunath came to know of the news of his father dying a martyr from the drum beats.³³

All the prisoners of the jail observed fasting that day. Not a hearth was lit in any mess. They all joined a prayer meeting in the evening and offered glowing tributes to him.³⁴ A song written by the national poet Birakishore Das was recited in the condolence meeting. In that song, Lakshman salutes Pune, the city where Gandhiji was kept in prison, and says :

30. Ramchandra Ram, *Sangrami*, pp. 69-70.

31. Gopinath Mohanty, *Dhuli Matira Santha*, p. 262.

32. Ramchandra Ram, *Sangrami*, p. 69.

33. *Adivasi*, Vol. IX, 1967-68, No. 1, p. 27.

34. S. N. Patnaik, *Odissare Swadhinata Andolana*, p. 185.

" Grieve not for me,
 I am not dead,
 For I shall not die.
 With nothing except the treasure of memories
 I leave this world
 Burning out the lamp of my life.
 From the heavens, and from the skies
 Longingly, I shall be looking at you.

Though innocent, yet to the gallows sent
 It is what makes me content
 Paying my homage to Pune
 I lay down my life for my country.

So long as you live and take your breath
 Not to give the exploiters your faith
 Never retrace your steps homewards
 Before uprooting the legacy of exploitation.

Fear not, my dear, if everything is
 Overturned in the deluge of
 All powerful time
 That rushes to wash out the sins of the world.

The parting words for the last war
 Not to let down and deprive
 The poor, the farmer and the wage-earner
 Of a little food to eat,
 Of a little cloth to put on,
 For they are the other self of God." 35



35. Binod Kanungo, *Jatiyakabi Birakishore*,
 pp. 126-127.

EPILOGUE

India had to go through much sorrow and suffering, oppression and persecution, ups and downs, before it finally achieved independence on August 15, 1947. Indians were overwhelmed with unprecedented ecstasy and frenzy when the cruel fetters of slavery that had spanned over a period of two centuries snapped. Of course Lakshman Naik did not live to see India win freedom, but he remained indelibly imprinted in the mind of independent Indians. He shone on the political horizons of India as a great luminary of the Indian Freedom Struggle. Lakshman will live down through the ages as a rare offering of blood at the feet of the motherland.¹

It was almost a herculean task to arouse the nationalistic feelings among the tribals of hill-hemmed Malkanagiri. It was rather a great surprise that he could indoctrinate them in the canons of his own idealism and bring them into the mainstream of the freedom struggle of India. Lakshman always felt concerned for the poor and the unlettered countrymen. Just minutes before his execution, Lakshman told Biswambar Parida on a chance meeting, "It is our

1. *Prajatantra Saptahiki*, January 24-30, 1988, p. 34, Jagannath Patnaik's 'Desamatruka Charanatale Eka Mahargha Sonita Arghya, Laxman Naik'.

final struggle. Sure, I shall die. Our country shall be independent. The responsibility to govern the country shall fall on the Congress. I request them, those who on behalf of the Congress would assume the reins of administration, to do this much — to ensure that my half-clad, starving countrymen get a piece of cloth each to wrap themselves in and just enough food to fill their stomachs. Then only my soul would rest in peace."²

Lakshman Naik was a living symbol of selflessness. As a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi, he was a votary and worshipper of non-violence.

Lakshman Naik dreamed of a free and fair society, without exploitation. He wanted life to be dignified, complete and without fear, for himself as well as for fellow countrymen. This perhaps was his crime, an unpardonable crime in the eyes of the British Government. He committed the crime in the sense that he loved this country girdled around by forests and hills, loved his motherland made incomparably beautiful by the jungles and mountains, rivers and streams. The irrepressible and formidable struggle stemmed from his endeavours to translate his dreams and desires into reality. That was his greatest crime.³

Keeping his integrity and sincerity for independence in mind, Birakishore Das, the national poet of Orissa, rightly imagined Lakshman Naik's life, here and beyond, in the following poem :

2. Biswambar Parida, *Mukti Sangram O' Orissa*, p. 52.

3. *Utkal Prasanga*, Vol. 37, No. 1, August 1980, p. 1, Bina Devi's 'Se Eka Sphulinga'.

"Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
 It is for us that you mounted the scaffold
 Inspired by the clarion call
 To join the mainstream of freedom struggle.
 You laid down your dear life
 For the people whom you like,
 Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
 To glorify Koraput you were born,

Koraput, a place so dark and deep
 where the sun through its forests cannot peep,
 Inhabited by the guileless and the simple
 Who do not banish the Gods and Goddesses
 Into the monasteries, mosques or churches,
 Eating food never seasoned with ghee,
 Yet sturdy, hard and sinewy,
 Not knowing the ruler or the king
 To whom as subjects they do belong.

Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
 In such a place being born
 Whose lessons in patriotism did you take
 To put the noose around the neck ?
 Who was the mother whose nectar of milk
 Made you such a hero ?
 Who were the friends
 With whom playing in the dust
 You learnt to brave the bullets ?
 Which nursery school you did attend
 To make history for the land ?
 Who initiated you into action
 Without arms and without weapon
 You jumped to blazing fire
 To make mother-land free ?

Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
 For us the struggle you did join,

Organised and rallied the people
 When the clarion-call echoed all round
 With head held high in triumphant glory,
 You became the leader to tell our woeful story,
 Laying it straight
 For the foreigners to quit this land,
 Not to drain the blood till the end,
 For we shall govern our own land.

Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
 To this, a deaf ear they did turn,
 The clarion-call in Koraput
 Sent tremors throughout,
 The people excited and angry
 The rebel-race in an uprising
 Attacked and went on raiding
 Public offices, bungalows and forests,
 A guard was killed
 How does one know who did it ?

Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
 Though innocent, yet you faced conviction,
 The police arrested you in their fury,
 In a mock-trial without jury
 Sentenced you to death and kept you in jail,
 Heavily guarded in your cell,
 Many a people urged you
 To beg mercy for life.
 Not being afraid of death
 Like a monarch, you shot back,
 Never in myth or in history
 Falsehood has ever attained victory,
 Let me die for the sake of truth,
 For it is the guiding principle.
 Why should I plead guilty without guilt ?
 Rather I shall blaze a fire in my death,

Oh ! Brother Lakshman.
 For this bold and resolute stand
 Benumbing us and rending our heart
 The altar of death was renovated
 Many times lasted to be sure
 As the hour of doom drew near.

Oh ! Brother Lakshman
 I cannot forget the day
 Which was agog with excitement,
 That you would leave this mortal world.
 All tense and torn within,
 The inmates came to see and mourn,
 For the night would pass into dawn
 Except for you,
 Your parting words on the last day,
 It is for history to say
 You said :
 'It is not before long
 The foreigners would to their country return,
 Your land would be left to you,
 I did all that I could do'.

Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
 With the sun setting in the west
 The world by the ominous night was beset,
 We being huddled into cell one after another,
 Without food and without water,
 We kept awake pressing the ear
 Against the panel of the iron-door,
 As the clock chimed four
 Preparations began for your tour.
 We all shouted 'Victory to Bapuji'
 When Ramdhun wafting from your cell
 Chilled our hearts to stone
 Escorted by the sentries of the jail

When you came out of your cell,
I cannot put to wards
What happened here afterwards.

Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
They put out your flame of life,
We were left here sighing and wailing,
Baji Rout in heaven got up smiling,
Ready to welcome with a garland,
With flowers chosen from the Heaven's garden
And each smeared with sandal - wood paste.
When introduced by comrade Bhagabati,
Utkalmani got up smiling
And hugged Lakshman,
Mayadhar and Hrushi came running,
From 'Biraja land' they were hailing,
On the soil of Iram shedding their blood,
On the path of death they all trod,
Old friends joining hands
Made the abode of death a happy land,
Comrade Niranjan singing the welcome song
Composed by poet Banchhanidhi
Hailing from the land watered by the Salandi
Rent our poor hearts.

Oh ! Brother Lakshman,
Away in a land unknown,
Only tell me and do the favour—
How many ages I have to suffer
Before I am blessed to see you again."⁴

Truly, Lakshman's life has become a legend, for the people of Orissa, particularly for the people of Malkanagiri. They believed that men like him do not cease to be. Death could not overtake him and

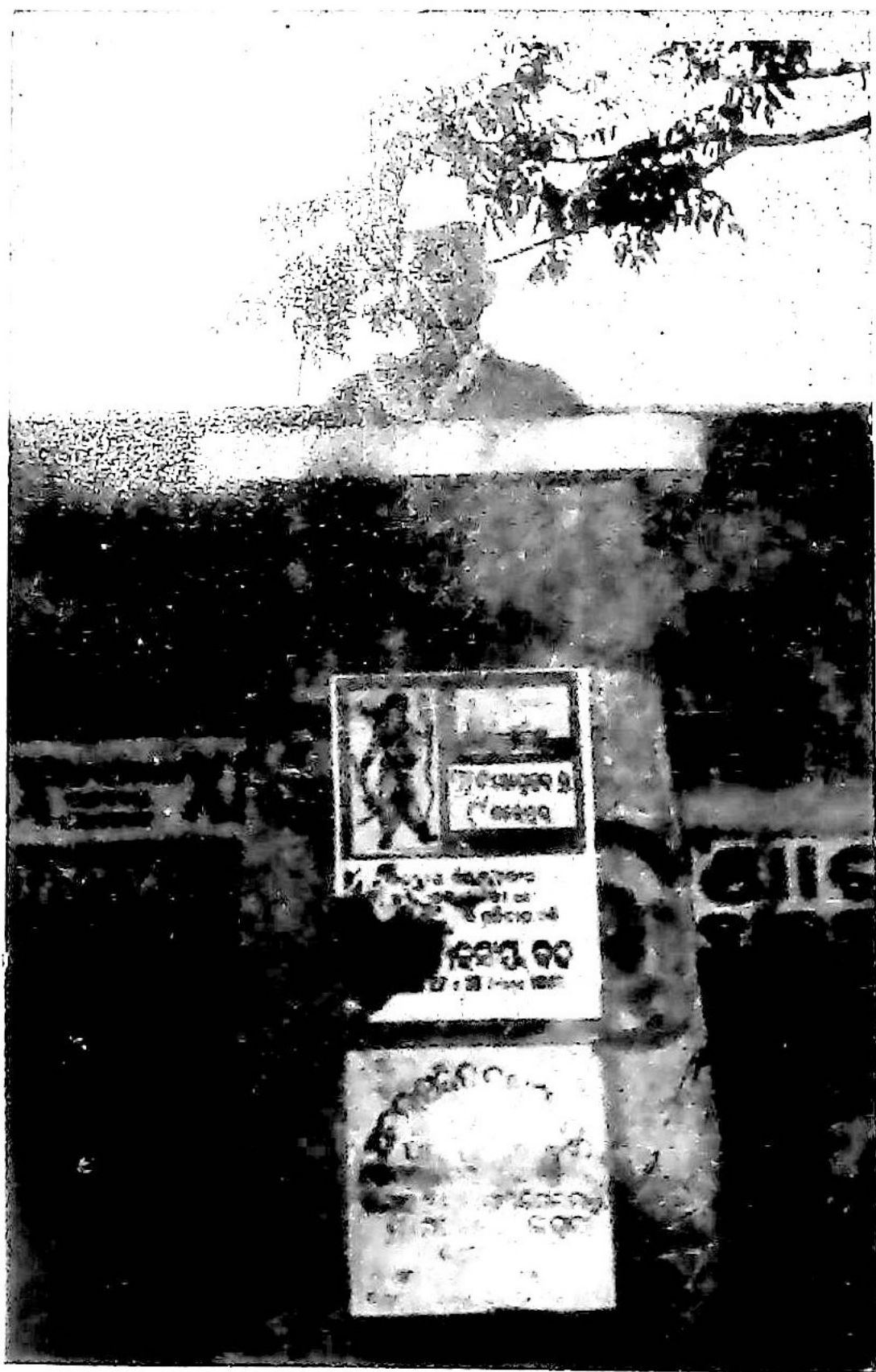
4. Binod Kanungo, *Jatiyakabi Birakishore*, pp. 120-125

the likes of him. They did not believe that Lakshman was no more. Once a Police party had been to Tentuligumma, the native place of Lakshman Naik, in December 1943. They came to know that his relations and the villagers believed that he was still alive and was kept in Sambalpur Jail.⁵ T. Sangana, after being elected to Parliament in the first ever elections after Independence held in the year 1952, visited Malkanagiri. A rumour got circulated throughout Malkanagiri that Lakshman Naik, having been made a Minister as a reward for his sincerity and devotion to the Congress ideology, was coming to visit their area. People from all over Malkanagiri came to see the stranger. But they were much disappointed to find T. Sangana in place of their beloved Lakshman Naik.⁶ There are still some aged persons who believe that Lakshman Naik is not dead that he just cannot die. He will remain immortal for ages, in the minds and hearts of the local people.⁷

Lakshman Naik was an unquiet storm, a venerated revolutionary, for whom the motherland was superior even to the heavens, and who, having sacrificed his life in the process of liberating the motherland, remains enthroned in the hearts of Indians. Great is Lakshman. Greater even is his patriotism. He was not only a hero, but a great leader of the masses.



-
5. Confidential File on Laxman Naik at the Matill Police Station.
 6. *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 41st Session, Bombay 1980, p. 716.
 7. *Utkal Prasanga*, Vol. 37, No. 1, August, 1980, p 3, Bina Devi's 'Se Eka Sphulinga'.



Statue of Lakshman Naik (with Gandhi cap) in Jeypore hospital compound

APPENDIX-A

LIST OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF MALKANAGIRI SUBDIVISION
WHO TOOK PART IN QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT*

Name	Father's Name	Village	Post-Office	Police Station
1	2	3	4	5
Lakshman Naik	Padlam Naik	Tentuligumma	Salimi	Matili
Bansing Pujari	Mukunda Pujari	"	"	"
Gopinath Pujari	Mukunda Pujari	"	"	"
Arjun Naik	Sanyasi Naik	"	"	"
Bhalu Barik	Mangala Barik	"	"	"
Sanu Harijan	Ramchandra Harijan	"	"	"
Raghunath Naik	Lakshman Naik	"	"	"
Dhana Naik	Padlam Naik	"	"	"
Ramchandra Naik	Sanyasi Naik	"	"	"
Ghasi Pujari	Laichhan Pujari	"	"	"
Samara Naik	Budura Naik	"	"	"
Sadhu Bhumia	Ghasi Bhumia	"	"	"
Madhu Bhumia	Ghasi Bhumia	"	"	"

* B. R. Samrath (Comp.), *Swadhinata Sangramare Yudha*, pp. 1-44.

1	2	3	4	5
		Sanagumma	Salimi	Matili
Arjun Pujari	Sanyasi Pujari	"	"	"
Mansing Naika	Ramsing Naika	"	"	"
Gulu Bhumia	Madhu Bhumia	"	"	"
Laikan Bhumia	Guru Bhumia	"	"	"
Mangala Bhumia	Guru Bhumia	"	"	"
Gopinath Pujari	Chandra Pujari	"	"	"
Chaitan Pujari	Bhajaman Pujari	"	"	"
Chandra Pujari	Mukund Pujari	"	"	"
Bagana Pujari	Damu Pujari	"	"	"
Mansing Harijan	Kumulu Barik	"	"	"
Samaru Naika	Bulu Naika	"	"	"
Laichan Bhumia	Kada Bhumia	"	"	"
Ghenua Bhumia	Padlam Bhumia	"	"	"
Somanath Chalan	Damu Chalan	"	"	"
Udhab Pujari	Damu Pujari	"	"	"
Kandra Pujari	Chandra Pujari	"	"	"
Dinabandhu Pujari	Baya Pujari	"	"	"
Narasingh Chalan	Bala Chalan	"	"	"
Somanath Bhumia	Jagannath Bhumia	Bejiniguda	"	"
Budra Chalan	Sanu Chalan	Kartanpalli	"	"
		"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Gora Dalei	Gopi Dalei	Khapara	Salimi	Matili
Budu Kumar	Narasingha Kamar	Udaigiri	"	"
Arjun Naik	Purandar Majhi	"	"	"
Jagannath Bhumia	Budra Bhumia	"	"	"
Sanya Bhumia	Hari Jiram	"	"	"
Sana Pujari	Samaru Pujari	"	"	"
Mangala Chalan	Malu Chalan	"	"	"
Madhu Bhumia	Lachman Bhumia	"	"	"
Raghu Bhumia	Bursu Bhumia	Lakaguda	"	"
Ramchandra Bhumia	Sanya Naik	"	"	"
Arjun Naik	Budra Naik	Likitiguda	"	"
Natha Barik Domb	—	"	"	"
Sanu Barik	Jayram Barik	Luleru	"	"
Raghu Bhumia	Jinu Bhumia	"	"	"
Arjun Bhumia	Bhanu Bhumia	"	"	"
Sanya Bhumia	Pandu Bhumia	"	"	"
Mulya Harichandan	Ghasi Harichandan	"	"	"
Bansing Pujari	Damu Pujari	"	"	"
Narasingha Harijan	Rup Chan	"	"	"
Arjun Pujari	Damu Pujari	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Dam Bhumia	Bidya Bhumia	Sindhiguda	Matili	Matili
Lakshman Samrath	Narasingh Samrath	Sarangapalli	"	"
Budra Katia	Budra Katia	"	"	"
Raghu Pujari	Mansingh Pujari	"	"	"
Bansing Chalan	Dhan Chalan	"	"	"
Sukra Chalan	Gangadhar Chalan	"	"	"
Sukra Naik	Ramchandra Naik	Katlaguda	"	"
Sing Katia	Mangala Katia	Kallaguda	"	"
Samara Katia	Raghu Katia	"	"	"
Chandra Chalan	Dhan Chalan	Netalgandi	Gobindapalli	"
Bansing Pujari	Mukund Pujari	"	"	"
Konde Sunajharia	Katu Sunajharia	Kyang	Salimi	"
Muni Midiami	Takudu Midiami	Talpadar	"	"
Sanu Bhumia	Lakma Bhumia	"	"	"
Udayanath Bhumia	Mangala Bhumia	Bhainshaghat	"	"
Kusan Pujari	Gobind Pujari	"	"	"
Mangala Bhumia	Ganga Bhumia	"	"	"
Balaram Bhumia	Chakra Bhumia	"	"	"
Lachman Gaud	Budra Gaud	"	"	"
Sana Pujari	Raghu Pujari	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Chandra Bhumia	Sanya Bhumia	Bhainshaghat	Salimi	Matili
Sambaru Naik	Irma Naik	Nuaguda	"	"
Bagana Madkami	Narasingha Madkami	"	"	"
Ramchandra Bhumia	Lachman Bhumia	"	"	"
Nilam Bhumia	Ghenua Bhumia	"	"	"
Nakul Pujari	Sana Pujari	Barubeda	"	"
Sanyasi Bhumia	Ganga Bhumia	"	"	"
Takudu Pujari	Bandaka Pujari	Temurupalli	"	Matili
Balram Bhumia	Shyam Bhumia	"	"	"
Bhika Bairagi	Bhadu Bairagi	"	"	"
Kasa Madkami	Deba Madkami	Katepalli	"	"
Ramdhar Odi	Sanu Odi	"	"	"
Chenua Madi	Sukudas Madi	Saragiguda	"	"
Kendu Naika	Baga Naika	"	"	"
Ramchandra Bhumia	Anda Bhumia	"	"	"
Ramdhar Bhumia	Budra Bhumia	"	"	"
Sanu Pujari	Budra Pujari	"	"	"
Sunadhar Madi	Mukdas Madi	"	"	"
Sanu Madkami	Budra Madkami	"	"	"
Mangala Madkami	Rama Pujari	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Guru Durua	Aita Durua	Rengawada	Salimi	Matili
Somaru Durua	Lakma Durua	"	"	"
Nakul Durua	Sanu Durua	"	"	"
Diaru Durua	Buda Durua	"	"	"
Soma Durua	Lakma Durua	"	"	"
Soma Durua	Keni Durua	"	"	"
Bhagirathi Naika	Sanu Durua	"	"	"
Budu Durua	Gaguru Durua	Mahupadar	"	"
Bandhu Durua	Aita Durua	"	"	"
Budra Durua	Bhadu Durua	"	"	"
Laikan Durua	Saradu Durua	"	"	"
Ghenua Durua	Lakma Durua	Bedurupalli	"	"
Sambaru Durua	Mangudu Durua	"	"	"
Baga Naika	Mangala Naika	Katapalli	"	"
Mukra Kandiki	Baga Kandiki	"	"	"
Tukudu Madi	Baga Madi	"	"	"
Madkami Muda	Madkami Budra	"	"	"
Bhagaban Bhumia	Samaru Bhumia	Sarangpalli	"	"
Jaysing Bhumia	Bhadu Bhumia	"	"	"
Budra Bhusdi	Samra Bhusdi	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Narasingha Kanamadi	Adya Madi	Dusanad	Salimi	Matili
Dhanurjay Pujari	Bhima Pujari	Bakiliguda	"	"
Sambaru Pujari	Sanadhar Pujari	"	"	"
Jagannath Naik	Mangala Naik	"	"	"
Hari Pujari	Jayram Pujari	"	"	"
Balaram Pujari	Hari Pujari	Padiaras	"	"
Bhima Naik	Dinabandhu Naik	Kaliaguda	Chedenga	"
Padlam Naik	Mangala Naik	"	"	"
Jagannath Naik	Mangala Naik	"	"	"
Hatiram Naik	Gobinda Naik	"	"	"
Mangaraj Naik	Arjun Naik	"	"	"
Jadu Putia	Guru Putia	"	"	"
Mansing Putia	Suku Putia	"	"	"
Samara Naika	Malu Naika	Majharguda	"	"
Samara Bhumia	Budra Bhumia	"	"	"
Narasing Bhumia	Budu Bhumia	Kodiguda	"	"
Nityananda Ghasi	Dullabh Ghasi	"	"	"
Sana Madkami	Ramachandra Madkami	"	"	"
Sunadhar Dura	Ram Dura	"	"	"
Laikan Bhatarā	Hachman Bhatarā	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Hatiram Chandal	Bhikari Chandal	Ambaguda	Matili	Matili
Keshab Khada	Chandra Khada	"	"	"
S. Guruligam	S. Chelmaya	Matili	"	"
Mangaraj Naik	Lachman Gaud	Champajharan	Gobindpalli	"
Chaitan Pujari	Sanya Pujari	Kupiliguda	Chedenga	"
Samara Naik	Arjun Katia	Atalguda	Matili	"
Hari Pujari	Sambaru Pujari	"	"	"
Hatiram Katia	Mangara Katia	"	"	"
Ram chandra Katia	Arjun Katia	"	"	"
Sanya Katia	Kusan Katia	"	"	"
Guru Katia	Sanya Chalan	Timasput	"	"
Linga Katia	Samara Katia	"	"	"
Gela Shisha	—	Ambapada	"	"
Sibarat Bhumia	—	Sindhiguda	"	"
Sanyasi Baka	Sanadhar Baka	Naikguda	Bhejaguda	Malakanagiri
Irma Baka	Gobardhan Baka	"	"	"
Chandra Baka	Ganga Baka	"	"	"
Laikan Baka	Basu Baka	"	"	"
Dama Pujari	Chandra Pujari	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Daya Baka	Gobinda Baka	Naikguda	Bhejaguda	Malkanagiri
Chandra Bhumia	Raghu Bhumia	"	"	"
Oma Bate	Dambaru Bate	Maliguda	"	"
Narasingha Naik	Arjun Baka	Chalanguda	"	"
Ram Chandra Machha	Shyam Machha	Machhaguda	Kudumulugumma	"
Agadhu Mali Chaudhury	Anam Chaudhury	Kudumulugumma	"	"
Motising Madkami	Ganga Madkami	Tangaguda	Bhejaguda	"
Sukra Gate	Mangala Gate	Mukaguda	"	"
Bansing Gate	Mangala Gate	"	"	"
Laikan Baka	Gabinda Baka	"	"	"
Raghuram Baka	Adaku Baka	"	"	"
Bhuja Baka	Suku Baka	"	"	"
Nilakantha Dura	Gobinda Dura	Saunliguda	"	"
Mangala Madi	Sukra Madi	"	"	"
Ramchandra Bate	Sanyasi Bate	"	"	"
Rama Kape	Lakma Kape	Bandhguda	"	"
Dambarudhar Khara	Balram Khara	Bapan Palli	Balimela	"
Hatiram Bhandari	Ramsing Bhandari	Baya Naikguda	Bhejaguda	"
Gobinda Kape	Laikan Naik	Raunliguda	"	"
Guru Gauda	Nila Gaud	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Ramaya Domb	Kandra Domb	Gangala	Bhejaguda	Malkanagiri
Mangala Kape	Madhu Naika	"	"	"
Gobinda Kape	Budra Kape	"	"	"
Ramchandra Kape	Guru Kape	"	"	"
Jaysing Phataka	Budra Phataka	"	"	"
Dinabandhu Phataka	Damodar Phataka	"	"	"
Gangadhar Kape	Hatiram Kape	"	"	"
Sanyasi Kape	Budra Kape	"	"	"
Kusan Kape	Budra Kape	"	"	"
Dama Kape	Budra Kape	"	"	"
Ramsing Madi	Sanya Madi	"	"	"
Baliar Sing Phatka	Damodar Phatka	"	"	"
Laikan Kape	Malu Kape	"	"	"
Raju Gauda	Laimutu Gand	Gangala	"	"
Narasingh Dura	Laikin Dura	Rajuguda	"	"
Dhandila Pula	Maru Pula	Katameta	"	"
Arjun Kalakura	Bhima Kalakura	Pulapalli	"	"
Sambaru Gaud	Bhalu Gaud	Bhandaripangam	"	"
Inga Kandiki	Takudu Kandiki	"	"	"
Bagana Sia	Kukund Sia	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Arjun Sia	Ganga Sia	Bhandaripangam	Bhejaguda	Malkanagiri
Keshabajhi Teka	Suka Teka	"	"	"
Harising Jhilimi	Sambaru Jhilimi	Gatuguda	"	"
Arjun Jhilimi	Baghamaru Jhilimi	"	"	"
Hari Kalakura	Laikan Kalakura	Durumaguda	"	"
Butisanya Kalakura	Kukund Kalakura	Pakhnaguda	"	"
Gobind Jhala	Sanu Jhala	Biralakshanpur	"	"
Jayram Jhala	Mukund Jhala	"	"	"
Mukund jhala	Sanu Jhala	"	"	"
Gangadhar Jhala	Mukunda Jhala	"	"	"
Sambaru Naika	Baga Pujari	Pitatang	Padmagiri	"
Ramchandra Bhumla	Tukudu Bhumla	"	"	"
Lakshman Kandiki	Inga Kandiki	"	"	"
Sukra Madkami	Mangaraj Madkami	"	"	"
Gangaram Chalan	Padia Padiami	Akur	"	"
Budra Padiami	Baga Padiami	"	"	"
Pakulu Madkami	Kana Madkami	"	"	"
Deba Madkami	Muka Madkami	"	"	"
Mundra Madkami	Kasa Madkami	"	"	"
Ram Durka	Padia Durka	Patitang	"	"

1	2		3	4	5
Pandra Durka	Ramu Durka		Patitang	Padmagiri	Malkanagiri
Bhima Madkami	Mangudu Madkami		"	"	"
Narasing Madkami	Chinga Madkami		"	"	"
Baga Padiami	Irma Padiami		"	"	"
Sukra Kurami	Deba Kurami		"	"	"
Sanya Kandiki	Kasa Kandiki		"	"	"
Gangadhar Odi	Deba Odi		"	"	"
Ganga Dube	Rama Dube	Mendaguda	"	"	"
Tukudu Dube	Rama Dube	"	"	"	"
Guru Naik	Sukra Buruda	"	"	"	"
Gopinath Padiami	Ganga Padiami	Udupa	"	"	"
Lalia Padiami	Lakma Padiami	Pedakanda	"	"	"
Lakma Madkami	Irma Madkami	"	"	"	"
Pola Madkami	Mada Madkami	"	"	"	"
Gangadhar Madkami	Mada Madkami	Matiguda	"	"	"
Mangala Padiami	Ganga Padiami	Jharapalli	"	"	"
Kandru Padiami	Irma Padiami	"	"	"	"
Dama Padiami	Guru Padiami	"	"	"	"
Indramohan Padiami	Ganga Padiami	"	"	"	"
Damodar Padiami	Irma Padiami	"	"	"	"

1	2	3	4	5
Venkatswami Patnaik	Subana Patnaik	Malkanagiri	Malkanagiri	Malkanagiri
Budharam Samrath	Narasingha Madi	"	"	"
Ramchandra Behera	—	Bejjangiwada	Gampakanda	"

APPENDIX- B

LIST OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS WHO
DIED IN MATILI FIRING*

	<u>N a m e</u>	<u>Village</u>
1.	Nakul Madkami	Sargiguda
2.	B. C. Naik	Samara
3.	Linga Bhumia	Timasguda
4.	Arjun Kutia	Kukudaguda
5.	Narasingha Domb	Nuaguda
6.	Samray Naik	Manjariguda
7.	Gopi Pujari	Sanagumma
8.	Guru Kotia	Timasput
9.	Balram Bhumia	Temurupalli

* D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 122.

APPENDIX - C

LAKSHMAN NAIK'S CASE IN THE
COURT OF ADDITIONAL SESSIONS JUDGE,
KORAPUT

.....

Session Case No. 18 of 1942

The 13th day of November 1942.

King Emperor (Mathili P. S. Case No. 58 of 1942)
Complainant.

Lokhan Naiko and 53 others.....Accused.

Case committed by—Sri Somanath Mishra,
Treasury Deputy Magistrate.

Present (Judge) V. Ramanathan, Esquire, I. C. S.
Additional Sessions Judge, Koraput

Finding of the Judge.

Accused No. 1 is found guilty U/s 302 I.P.C, 147
I.P.C. U/s 5 D. I. Rules, Rule 35 D. I. rules,

Accused No. 2-10, 12-17, 19, 22-54 are found
guilty under section 302 I. C. read with section 149
I. P. C , 147 I, P. C. and under rule 35 D. I. Rules.

Accused Nos. 11, 18, 20 and 21 not found guilty,
Sentence or order.

Accused No. 1 Sri Lokhan Naiko is convicted
under section 302 I. P. C. and sentenced to death
subject to confirmation by the Hon'ble High Court.
He is also convicted under section 147 I. P. C. of

committing a prejudicial act under rule 38 (5) D. I. Rules and of approaching the Police Station, Mathili with intent to damage it under rule 35 Defence of India Rules and is convicted of these offence and no separate sentence is passed.

Accused No. 2-10, 12-17, 22-54 are convicted under section 302 I. P. C. read with 149 I. P. C. and each sentenced to transportation for life. They are convicted U/s 147 I. P. C. and each sentenced to R. I. for 2 (Two) years. They are also convicted U/s 35 of the Defence of India Rules and sentenced to R. I. for 7 (Seven) years each. All the above sentences will run concurrently.

Accused Nos. 11, 18, 20, 21 are found not guilty of the charges tried against them and acquitted to the same and they are directed to be sent at liberty unless they are required to answer any other charges.

●

APPENDIX - D

JUDGEMENT OF PATNA HIGH COURT ON
THE APPEAL OF LAKSHMAN NAIK

Date Reference No. 4 of 1942 (Orissa)

and

Criminal Appeal No. 27 and 28 of 1942 (Orissa)

Reference made by V. Ramanathan, Esquire,
I. C. S., Additional Sessions Judge, Koraput in his
letter No. SC. 18/42 dated the 13th November, 1942.

In the case of

The Kind Emperor Versus Lakhan Naik, Accused.

In support of the reference :— The Public Prosecutor
for Orissa.

Against the reference :— Mr. Pitambar Mishra.

Appeal - 27

Appeal - 28

Lakhan Naik, accused :— Appellant.

1. Balaram Pujhari, 2. Arjuno Naiko. 3. Arjuno Naik. 4. Sambaru Naik, 5. Kendu Naik, 6. Bhima Naiko, 7. Jagannath Naik 8. Udainath Odi, 9. Nityananda Ghasi, 10. Chaitan Pujari. 11. Deenabandhu Pujari, 12 Chandra Pujari, 13. Bula Bhumia, 14. Banga Pujari, 15. Raghunath Bhumia, 16. Arjuno Pujari, 17 Somu Domb, 18. Padalam Naik, 19. Balaram Bhumia, 20. Bhika Bairagi, 21. Dhanurjayo Naik, 22. Sambaru

Naiko, 23. Gopinath Pujari, 24. Bansingh Bhumia, 25. Guru Kotia, 26. Narsingh Challan, 27. Krishna Pujari, 28. Bhalu Domb, 29. Guru Goudo, 30. Kosa Madkami, 31. Hatiram Kotia. 32. Samaru Bhumia, 33. Hatiram Chandal, 34. Kondisunna Jhoria, 35. Somanath Bhumia, 36. Mongala Madakami, 37. Budhu Kumar, 38. Somanath Bhumia, 39. Krishna Chandra Bissoi, 40. Somanath Bhumia, 41. Sonnasomar Naik, 42. Hori Pujari, 43. Mangaraj Naik, 44. Bhaga Naik. 45. Balaram Bhumia, 46. Guru Naik, 47. Kalakora Arjuna, 48. Narasingh Dhurva and 49. Motiram Singh Madakami,

Accused Appellants

Versus

The King Emperor Respondent

For the appellants :— Mr, Pitamber Mishra
for the Respondent ;—The Public Prosecutor for Orissa

P r e s e n t

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Meredith.

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Brough.

Brough J.

This is a death reference and connected appeal by one Lakhan Naik, who was sentenced to death and an appeal by 49 other accused who were sentenced to transportation for life by the Additional Sessions Judge, Koraput, for the murder and complicity in murder of a man named Ramayya in the course of a riot which occurred at Mathili in August, 1942.

In the latter half of August, 1942, Mr. B. S. Nanda, the Divisional Inspector of Police at Malkanagiri, received information that an attack was likely to be made on the police station at Mathili. He therefore, collected such force as he could, and went to the police station to deal with the expected attack. On the morning of August 21st, he was present at the police station himself, Jagannaikulu Dora, Sub-Inspector of Mathili, K. Ramamurty Sub-Inspector of Venkatapalam, two Assistant Sub-Inspectors and seven constables making twelve police in all. There were also present with him an excise Sub-Inspector and four peons, the Revenue Inspector and Forest Guard, the deceased Ramayya, both in the service of the Jeypore Raj, with two peons, the local doctor and compounder and the Veterinary Stock-man and nine villagers. During the morning, the Sub-Deputy Magistrate and an Inspector of the Public Works Department came to the police station. I may say that out of this party of 35 people one was killed and twenty-one were injured in the course of the riot that eventually took place, and 28 of them have given evidence before the Sessions Judge.

At about 9-30 a.m. mob. led by Lakhan Naik (accused No. 1) of about a thousand people carrying Congress flags and armed with lathis, advanced from the village to the police station. They were shouting slogans : "We are warriors. We have brought Gandhi Raj. The British Government is no more. We will burn the police station and kill all officers who oppose us. If we succeed, we will proceed to Malkanagiri, and loot the government treasury there". The Divisional Inspector with a part of his party met the mob about 200 yards east of the police station on the road, and

barred their way. After some argument, the mob withdrew to the market nearby to decide their future action. They were followed by the Divisional Inspector and his party who remained to observe their actions. A procession with music was formed round the market, and speeches were delivered including a speech by Lakhan Naik, a note of which was made by the Divisional Inspector at the time. The speech was much to the same effect as the slogans which had already been shouted. It was: "Brethren, we are warriors. The British Government is gone, and Mahatma Gandhi is our King. Maharaja of Jeypore is dead. Proceed on. Let us first loot and burn the police station. Let us kill the government officials; and then proceed to Malkanagiri and loot the treasury". After the speech, the mob were worked upto a sufficient state of enthusiasm to resume their march to the police station, and at about 12 o'clock they again went to the police station. The Divisional Inspector and his party returned to the police station before them, and took such measures as he could for its defence. The police station is a thatched building standing in a small compound, about 130 feet square with gates on each side, surrounded by a drainage ditch and a low flimsy fence. It stands back on the north side of the road about 700 feet from it and is again surrounded by a clearing made in the forest, about 200 yards square. It is not clear whether this clearing is fenced or not, but there is a ditch along the road side. The Divisional Inspector posted four constables at the gate of the inner compound armed with muskets and bayonets and ten rounds of ammunitions each, and he drew up the remainder of his force close to the road by the culvert going across the roadside ditch. The remainder of his small police force were in front

and the others of his party in the second rank. The police and some one, at any rate, of the other had lathis. He himself had a revolver, and it appears that Sub-Inspector Dora had a single barrel 12 bore gun of his own which he got hold of subsequently and used to good effect. When the mob arrived at the entrance to the compound, the police obstructed them holding their lathis out as a barrier but without using them endeavoured to persuade them not to enter the compound. But this time the Sub-Deputy Collector, Mr, Majibur Rahman, had arrived and he declared the assembly an unlawful assembly and ordered the crowd to disperse. The crowd did not do so, but led by Lakhan Naik (accused No. 1) and Balaram Pujari (accused No. 2) pushed the police and their helpers backwards towards the inner compound. While this was going on, some members of the crowd who, as I have already said, were armed with lathis which were short heavy lathis of green bamboo, assaulted Sub-Inspector Ramamurty and constable Mahanty and injured them severely. Upon this the Divisional Inspector on instructions from the Magistrate ordered his force to use their lathis or as the witness put it, ordered lathi charge. This proved ineffective. The police force and their helpers being completely outnumbered were overpowered and forced further back. It was during this stage of the riot that most of the police party received their injuries. The Divisional Inspector himself received a slight injury on the hand which had the effect of damaging the action of his revolver so that it could not be fired. The Magistrate and others of the party were injured, and the forest guard, Ramayya, was killed. He received two blows, one on the neck and shoulder and the other on the head which fractured his skull and drove the

fragments into his brain and must have killed him instantly. He fell into the drain surrounding the inner compound just to the west of the entrance. While this exchange of lathi blows was going on between the police and the leaders of the mob, others of the mob had got round the sides, and some of them had got into the inner compound. Sub-Inspector Dora had with a constable gone towards his quarters which were to the west of the compound and got his own gun. The Magistrate seeing the death of Ramayya and the injuries that were being inflicted on the others of his party, told the Divisional Inspector to open fire. He did so, and the armed constables at the gate opened fire and used their bayonets. They fired 12 rounds in all. At the same time Sub-Inspector Dora used his gun, and fired three rounds with one of which he killed a man who had climbed on to the verandah of the police station and was in the act of setting fire to the thatch and with another of which he killed another man. Besides those two men, three others were killed and seventeen injured, mostly by the armed police. Shortly after firing was opened, the mob began to disperse, and the Divisional Inspector immediately gave orders to cease fire and the position seems to have been restored about half-past twelve.

At half-past one, in the police station itself Sub-Inspector Dora wrote a report which was the First Information Report in this case. He gives substantially the account of the occurrence that I have set out above. He adds that Ramayya was beaten to death by Lakhan Naik and Balaram Pujari, and he stated that 25 named persons and many others of certain villages took active part in the mob. The

persons he named included accused Nos. 1 to 26 and 38.

On that Information Report charges were brought against 54 people before the Additional Sessions Judge at Koraput. Lakhan Naik accused No 1 was charged under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code with the murder of Ramayya. He was also charged with making a prejudicial speech contrary to Rule 38 of the Defence of India Rules. Balaram Pujari was also charged under section 302 with Lakhan Naik, of the murder of Ramayya. The remaining 52 accused were charged under section 302 read with section 149 Indian Penal Code of being members of an unlawful assembly in the prosecution of the common object of which Ramayya was murdered. All the accused were also charged under section 147 of the Indian Penal Code with rioting, and under Rule 35 of the Defence of India Rules with committing prejudicial act by attempting to burn the police station. At the trial the learned sessions Judge Convicted Lakhan Naik of the murder of Ramayya under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code, and sentenced him to death. He also convicted him under section 147, Indian Penal Code, and Rules 35 and 38 of the Defence of Indian Rules, but imposed no separate sentence. He acquitted Laichan Bhumia (accused No. 11) Arjuna Bhumia (accused No. 18) Sombarum Bhumia (accused No. 20) and Sonia Bhumia (accused No. 21). He convicted all the remaining accused (the appellants in Cr. A. appeal No. 28) under section 302 read with section 149 of the Indian Penal Code, and sentenced them to transportation for life, under section 147 to two years' rigorous imprisonment and under Rule 35 of the Defence of India Rules to seven years rigorous imprisonment, the sentences to run concurrently,

Before the learned Sessions Judge and in the petitions of appeal the principal line of defence was that Lakhan Naik was an apostle of the doctrine of non-violence and that the other members of the assembly also adhered to that doctrine, and that they had no intention of assaulting or killing any government servants, but rather that they wished to court arrest and that the riot that transpired was due to the action of the police in voluntarily assaulting the mob. Mr. Pitambar Mishra, who was appeared for the appellants in this Court and who has taken every possible point and said all that can be said on behalf of his clients, very properly did not think fit to add to his difficulties by taking that point before us. It is perfectly clear that the intentions of the mob were to assault, if not to kill, the Government servants present and to burn the police station and that the first resort to force was by the mob and that the police only acted in self-defence, and that in fact, it is quite clear that it was only due to the fact that the Divisional Inspector and his policemen and other helpers and in particular Sub-Inspector Dora kept their heads and displayed great courage and discipline that a very serious tragedy was averted with a comparatively small loss of life. If the police had failed to display the resolution and courage which they did display, I have no doubt that the whole or most of the party would have been murdered.

Before us Mr. Mishra has made four points. In the first place he has submitted that the evidence before the court as to the fact that Lakhan Naik (accused No. 1) was the actual assailant of Ramayya is not such as to warrant a conviction on the charge of murder, and secondly, in support of that contention

he submits that an inference adverse to the prosecution should be drawn from the failure of the prosecution to call six persons who were present at the incident but who did not give evidence, particularly the excise Sub-Inspector, the officer of the Public Works Department, and one Neelakantham a viller. Thirdly, he says that having regard to the circumstances of the case and the form of charges under section 147 a conviction of the accused generally under section 302 read with section 149 of the Indian Penal Code is not warranted. Fourthly, he has submitted that in the case of ten of the accused the evidence that they took part in the riot is not sufficiently conclusive to warrant a conviction on any charge. He very properly did not attempt to argue that the conviction of Lakhan Naik under rule 39 of the Defence of India Rules for making a prejudicial speech, or of the accused generally under section 147 of the Indian Penal Code for rioting and under Rule 35 of the Defence of India Rules for doing a prejudicial act in attempting to burn the police station could be challenged.

With regard to the first point as to the evidence directly implicating Lakhan Naik in the murder of Ramayya, it is necessary to examine in detail the evidence of the 28 eye-witnesses. Nine have given evidence describing the death of Ramayya. The Divisional Inspector himself (P. W. 33) stated that Ramayya was killed, but he does not attempt to give any description of how he died, or name his assailant. It appears in fact that at the time of Ramayya's death he was somewhere away to the east of the entrance to the compound. Sub-Inspector Ramamurty (P.W. 1) states that Ramayya was hit by Balaram Pujari on the right side of the neck with a lathi and was hit by a

stick (but later corrected to a lathi) by accused No. 1 Lakhan Naik. Ramayya fell down and died. Mr. Mishra pointed out in criticism of the evidence of this witness that apart from the general difficulty of observing details in a riot such as this he had himself been previously injured by a lathi wound on the head which according to the medical evidence, would have rendered him unconscious. The medical evidence also was that he would have recovered rapidly, and he himself, although not directly asked as to whether he did at any moment lose consciousness or not, leaves the impression that he lost consciousness, if at all, for a very short time, but that after his wound he was standing leaning on the fence, a little distance to the West of the entrance. It is however, perfectly just to say that the evidence of this witness on a point of detail although given in good faith is in the circumstances not very reliable.

The next important witness is Sub-Inspector Dora (P. W. 2). This officer was injured but not seriously and a general consideration of the course of the incident makes it perfectly clear that he kept his head to a remarkable degree throughout the incident, and I have little doubt that it was largely due to his courage and presence of mind, with that of the Divisional Inspector, that the mob was dispersed with so little serious injury to the police party. He prepared the First Information Report immediately after the occurrence, and his evidence as a whole shows that he observed accurately what came within his vision and did his best to report it faithfully to the Court. On this subject he states : "I had seen Lakhan Naik and Balaram Pujari attacking Ramayya. He was given a lathi blow by Balaram Pujari on the

right side of neck. Lakhan gave a blow on the head. Ramayya fell dead".

The next witness of importance on this point was Narasimham, the Revenue Inspector of the Jeypore Raj (P. W. 14). He also, in my judgement, kept his head and was a careful witness. He states : "I observed Ramayya being beaten with lathis by the accused Lakhan Naik and Balaram Pujari. He fell down to the ground and died instantaneously. He does not state which accused struck which blow. It has been pointed out to us that Sub-Inspector Dora was a police officer and (P. W. 14) was an officer of the Jeypore Raj and therefore, they are interested witnesses. I have therefore, scrutinized their evidence with great care. With regard to Sub-Inspector Dora I observe that although he names these two accused in the First Information Report as being the assailants of Ramayya he does not there state which of them struck which blow. It may be therefore, that his evidence on this point should not be taken as conclusive. On the other hand having regard to his evidence as a whole and that of (P. W. 14) I see no reason to reject their statement that Lakhan Naik and Balaram Pujari were the assailants of Ramayya.

There are six other witnesses who in fact speak to this point, and I will refer to their evidence shortly. Firstly, there is (P. W. 13) peon of (P. W. 14). He states that he saw Balaram Pujari dealing a blow with a lathi on the neck of Ramayya, and Lakhan Naik striking him on the head. To some extent this witness is not such a satisfactory witness as the more responsible officers and his evidence does not add very much to theirs.

Three further witnesses (P. Ws. 15, 16 and 17) who were inhabitants of Mathili, the last being in the employ of Jeypore Raj, state that they saw Lakhan and Balaram assaulting Ramayya, but none of them state which of them delivered which blow, except (P.W. 15) who in cross-examination, but not in his evidence in chief, states that Lakhan was the one who hit him on the head. I think there evidence does corroborate the evidence of the Sub-Inspector and (P.W. 14) that these two accused were Ramayya's assailants, though it throws no real light which of them struck the fatal blow. Two other witnesses also depose to these facts. One (P.W. 18), a villager and arrack vendor, but it is clear that this witness has allowed his imagination to run away with him, and his evidence is not to be relied on. The last witness is (P. W. 19), police constable Mohanty. He is in the same position as Sub-Inspector Ramamurthy (P. W. 1), in that he had himself been injured before Ramayya was assaulted, and in those circumstances, it is doubtful how far he was capable of accurate observation afterwards. The general criticism made by Mr. Misra that it is not possible in a confused fight of this kind for witness to observe individual incidents correctly I must reject. It is a matter of notoriety that it is possible even in the most confused circumstances, and in the state of great mental stress, for a person, who keeps his head, to observe accurately circumstances within his range of vision. It may well be that in such conditions a person would not observe every incident, In fact it is most unlikely that he would, but in certain incidents, either because they are brought particularly to his notice, or simply by accident. Now it is to be observed that Ramayya was the only man killed on the police side in this riot, and it is clear

that he must have been killed instantaneously. That is a circumstances which is likely to have attracted the attention of any one who happened to be looking in his direction at the time when he was killed. The witness in my judgement are reliable on this point and were all capable of observing what happened. Sub-Inspector Dora was then retiring from the entrance to the police clearing from the roadside towards his quarters to the west of the enclosure and states that he was to the right of Ramayya and to the west and Prosecution witness No. 14 was not very far away, (P. Ws. 15 and 16) were said to be quite close. In these circumstance I see no reason to reject their evidence.

I find it, therefore, proved that Ramayya was killed by a combined attack by accused Nos. 1 and 2 Lakhan Naik and Balaram Pujari. I do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to show which of the two struck the fatal blow, but in my opinion that does not make any difference to the decision which ought to be come to by this court. It is open to us to pray in aid section 34 of the Indian Penal Code, The murder was committed by the two accused in furtherance of their common intention and each of them is liable for the murder as if he alone had done it. Accordingly, in the case of the accused Lakhan Naik I would convict him of the murder of Ramayya under section 302 read with section 302 read with section 34 of the Indian Penal Code.

I should say that with regard to the submission made by Mr. Mishra as to the failure of the prosecution to call the Excise Sub-Inspector and the officer of the Public Works Department and the

other eye-witnesses that I do not think that in this case the prosecution have acted improperly. I fully appreciate that in certain cases, in fact in most cases it is the duty of the prosecution to call all persons who are alleged to have witnessed the occurrence and the defence are entitled to draw a conclusion adverse to the prosecution from their failure to call any witness. But every case must depend upon its own circumstances. In the first place, there must be a limit to the number of witnesses which the prosecution is required to call, In this case they called 28 eye-witness, and they may well have thought that no useful purpose would be served by calling six more. Secondly having regard to the general nature of the evidence led in this case, it is impossible to draw any conclusion adverse to the prosecution from their failure to call these witnesses, except the conclusion that these witnesses had nothing useful to say on this particular point. Only nine of the twenty-eight witnesses examined were able to say anything on this point and the other nineteen were merely silent. No single witness suggested to any one that one of these two accused as being the assailants. In these circumstances the most that could be said is that these six witnesses, if called, would not have supported the prosecution on this point, but there failure to do so would not have affected the credibility of the witnesses who did depose to the circumstances in which Ramayya met his death and whose evidence, I consider should be accepted.

The next point is the charge under section 302 read with section 149 of the Indian Penal Code against the accused generally other than Lakhana Naik, Section 149, so far as it is material for this purpose, reads as follows— " If an offence is committed by any member

of an unlawful assembly in prosecution of the common object of that assembly, or such as the members of that assembly knew to be likely to be committed in prosecution of that object, every person who, at the time of the committing of that offence, is a member of the same assembly is guilty of that offence". It was submitted by Mr. Mishra that the common object of the unlawful assembly was to overawe by criminal force certain public servants and to commit the offence of mischief and assault. He argued that the murder of Ramayya was not committed in prosecution of that common object. He also attempted to argue that the members of the assembly must not be taken to have that murder was likely to be committed in prosecution of object. In my judgment, however, his contention cannot be accepted in place of the very clear evidence in this case. In the place, the mob was a very large one of a thousand at least, armed with very formidable weapons, green heavy lathis. The party opposed to them was small but, as they saw, armed with fire-arms. They were twice met and remonstrated with by the police, once by the market before the assembly was held and again later at the entrance to the police enclosure. The speech that was made to them and the slogans that were shouted by the members of the mob, made it perfectly clear that injury, which might result in death or deaths, was intended against the government officials. I have already stated the substance of the speech made by Lakhan Naik in the market. All the prosecution witnesses state that when the mob came to the police station they were shouting slogans. The general substance of the slogans is in every case the same I will take the evidence of the Magistrate, Mr. Majibur Rahaman (P. W. 8), as a sample. He gives the slogans as follows :—

That they were warriors they would kill all Government servants and burn police station'. His evidence is amply corroborated by other witness. Some of them, it is true use the word 'beat' instead of the word 'kill', but they all emphasise 'We are warriors' and the fact is that the police station was to be burnt and government officials were to be killed or beaten. I am afraid that in a case of this kind with a mob of a thousand men attacking a party of thirty-five with heavy lathis. I am unable to draw any substantial distinction between being killed and being beaten. It is material to observe that the Divisional Inspector in cross-examination expressly states that he heard the mob using the word 'pujo' (kill). In my judgement, therefore, it is impossible to contend that persons who were members of the assembly and joined in the assault on the police station were not aware that murder was likely to be committed in the course of that assault, and they were all therefore in my judgement, liable to conviction for the commission of murder under the provision of section 149 of the Indian Penal Code.

The last point in the case is the question of the identification of the various accused. Mr. Misra has gone through the case very carefully, and drawn our attention to all the cases in which the identification is open to doubt. They are ten in number, and I will refer to them in detail in a moment. With regard to the other accused, the identity cannot be questioned. To start with the mob suffered casualties to the extent of five killed and seventeen injured, and many of those injured are before the Court. When they have been clearly identified by witnesses and are shown to have been injured, it is impossible for them to contend that they were not present. Another

class including a number of the accused besides being identified by witnesses admit that they were present but state that they were only going to court arrest. In view of the evidence, which cannot be disputed, it is as I have already said, impossible, in my judgement, for any member of this assembly to say that he was only going to court arrest. I find it clearly established that the members of the assembly must have known that they were proposing to burn the police station and assault the government servants, and must have intended to take part in the assembly with that object. A third section of the accused are identified specifically by particular prosecution witnesses who name them as their assailants, Such identification cannot be challenged. There is one accused No. 6. Kondu Naik, who does not fall in to any of these classes, but he was identified by no less than eight witnesses against only one of whom can any serious suggestion be made and therefore, I hold that his presence in the assembly is proved,

The remaining accused are No. 13, Dinabandhu Pujari. He was only identified by the Revenue Inspector (P. W. 14) and the local arrack vendor (P. w. 18). Prosecution witness No. 18 is a witness, who, as I have already said, has allowed imagination to run away with him. I cannot, therefore accept his identification. Prosecution witness No. 14 is in my judgement, a careful and truthful witness but this man admits that he was at the market where the Revenue Inspector went, and he may well have failed to distinguish as to what time in the morning he saw him, In any case, in a case of this kind I would not care to convict on the evidence of one witness alone.

Accused No. 16 Bagana Pujari—His case is the same as that of accused No, 13.

Accused No. 26. Dhanurjaya Pujari or Naik—He was identified by (P. Ws. 14, 18) and two other witnesses, villagers in the police party (P. Ws. 23 and 31). It does not appear that except (P. W. 14 and P. W. 18) who, as I have said is not a reliable witness. these witnessess know this man previously, or had any special reason to remember him. On the whole therefore, in a case of this kind I think that the better course is to held that his presence in the assembly has not been established beyond a reasonable doubt.

The next is accused No. 48, Mangaraj Naik. He is identified by Sub-Inspector Dora and (P. W. 14). The Sub-Inspector however did not name him in the First Information Report and in the absence of any explanation as to why this was done and of any overwhelming body of corroborative evidence implicating him in the assembly, I do not think that It would be proper to hold that his presence has been established without all reasonable doubt.

Accused No. 49, Bhaga Naik—He is also only identified by (P. W. 14) and one other witness, (P. W. 17), who is in fact the attendant of (P.W. 14), I therefore, think that there is not sufficiently independent testimony in this case to corroborate the identification by (P. W. 14) and in this case too I hold that the presence of this accused has not been proved.

Next there are accused 51, Guru Naik, No. 52 Kalakura Arjun, and No, 53, Narasingh Dhurva. All

these are identified by Sub-Inspector Dora, but not named in the First Information Report, and by another witness as in the case of accused No. 48 and for the same reasons I do not think it would be proper to uphold the conviction in these three cases.

Lastly, we have accused No' 54, Motiram Singh Madkami, who is also not named in the First Information Report and is identified by the Divisional Inspector (P. W. 33) and constable (P. W. 23). But the Divisional Inspector failed to recognize this accused in Court, so that the substance of his inclusion depends on the evidence of the constable alone. I do not think it would be right in this case to convict him on his evidence alone. I therefore hold that this accused has not been satisfactorily proved to be present in the mob.

With regard to the question of sentence, in the death reference, in my judgement, it has been proved beyond a shadow of doubt that Lakhan Naik led this mob, and it has been proved to my satisfaction that the mob did intend to commit murder or such serious injury that death was likely to result to a number of police-men and other government officials. He knew that the police were going to defend the police station and he encouraged the mob to attack the police and the station and he led the attack in person. This much is perfectly clear from the evidence. in the course of this attack he is proved to have assaulted Ramayya with a lathi. If he did not strike the blow that caused his death, it is only an accident, though it is clear that both blows were aimed at the head. If Lakhan's was the blow which only hit his neck and shoulder that was not any fault

of Lakhan's. It was only due to the exceptional presence of mind and courage of the police and their helpers which prevented murder being committed on a very much larger scale and in my judgement, there is no reason for not passing the extreme sentence in this case. I would accordingly accept the death reference, dismiss the appeal No. 27 and direct the sentence of death to be confirmed and carried into execution.

With regard to appeal No. 28, as I have said, except in the case of the ten accused I have named, I would affirm the conviction under section 302 read with section 149 of the Indian Penal Code, and it is not open to court even if we so desire to do otherwise, than confirm the sentence of transportation for life, I would also confirm the conviction and sentences on the other charges. In the case of the ten accused I have mentioned I should allow their appeal and set aside the convictions and sentences against them on all charges.

SD. PETER H. R. BROUGH

Meredith J,

I entirely agree.

Patna High Court,

SD. H. R. MEREDITH

Patna, the 13th January 1943.

O. P. A.

APPENDIX - E

LIST OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS ACCUSED BY THE POLICE
IN THE MATILI INCIDENT OF AUGUST* 21, 1942*

Name	Father's Name	Age	Occupation	Caste/Tribe	Village
1	2	3	4	5	6
<u>Death Sentence :</u>					
Lakshman Naik	Padlam Naik	42	Cultivation	Bhumia	Tentuligumma
<u>Life Imprisonment and Nine years Rigorous Imprisonment :</u>					
Balram Pujari	Hari Pujari	35	"	"	Matili
Arjun Naika	Sania Naika	32	"	"	Tentuligumma
Arjun Naika	Chandra Naika	48	"	"	Udaigiri
Sambaru Naika	Iram Naika	33	"	"	Nuaguda
Kendu Naika	Bagha Naika	34	"	"	Sariguda
Bhima Naika	Dinabandhu Naika	46	"	"	Kaliaguda
Jagannath Naika	Mangala Naika	30	"	"	Kaliaguda
Udainath Odi	Mangal Odi	28	"	"	Bansiaghat
Nityananda Hantal	Ballav Hantal	32	"	Hantal	Kodiguda

* D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, pp, 118-121

1	2	3	4	5	6
Chaitan Pujari	Chandra Pujari	27	Cultivation	Bhumia	Sanagumma
Dinabandhu Pujari	Baya Pujari	45	"	"	"
Chandra Pujari	Mukunda Pujari	50	"	"	"
Bulu Bhumia	Mudu Bhumia	29	Coolie	"	"
Bagan Pujari	Damburu Pujari	28	Cultivation	"	"
Raghunath Bhumia	Bima Bhumia	38	Cultivation	Bhumia	"
Arjun Pujari	Damu Pujari	32	"	"	"
Sanu Domb	Jayram Domb	36	"	Domb	"
Padlam Naik	Mangal Naik	35	"	Bhumia	Kaliaguda
Balram Bhumia	Shyam Bhumia	38	"	"	Temerapalli
Bhika Bairagi	Ram Bairagi	33	"	Halua	Pujariguda
Dhanurjay Pujari	Adu Pujari	37	"	Bhumia	Bakiliguda
Sambaru Naika	Bhaga Naik	38	"	"	Pitha Thuma
Gopinath Pujari	Chandra Pujari	32	"	"	Sanagumma
Bansing Bhumia	Mukund Bhumia	40	"	"	Tentuligumma
Guru Kotla	Sania Kotia	28	"	Kotia	Timishipur
Narasing Chalan	Samaru Chalan	36	"	Bhumia	Bejaniguda
Kusun Pujari	Gobind Pujari	35	"	"	Banslaghat
Bhalu Domb	Mangal Domb	36	Labourer	Domb	Tentuligumma
Guru Goud	Nela Gaud	40	Cultivation	Goud	Kupuliguda

1	2	3	4	5	6
Kosha Madkami	Arjun Madkami	40	Coolie	Goud	Kotaipalli
Hatiram Kotia	Arjun Kotia	40	Cultivation	"	Atalguda
Samaru Bhumia	Buduru	37	"	"	Majoarguda
Hatiram Chandai	Ramgiria Bhikari	35	Coolie	Chandal	Ambaguda
Kondi Sunajharia	Mahan Sunajharia	26	Coolie	Sunajhria	Parenga
Sanyami Bhumia	Gaya Bhumia	37	Cultivation	Bhumia	Udaigiri
Mangal Madkami	Ram Madkami	40	"	"	Sirigiguda
Budu Kumar	Narasing Kamar	30	Coolie	Kamar	Udaigiri
Somanath Bhumia	Dhan Bhumia	30	"	Bhumia	"
Krushna Chandra Bishoy	Dayanidhi Bishoi	25	Teaching	Paik	"
Somanath Bhumia	Jagannath Bhumia	30	Cultivation	Bhumia	Kortampa
Son Samar Naika	Arjun Naika	30	"	Kotia	Atalguda
Hari Pujari	Sukra Pujari	40	Coolie	"	"
Mangraj Naika	Lachhman Gaud	28	Cultivation	Gauda	Champajhar
Bhara Naika	Mangal Naika	42	"	Bhumia	Kotapalli
Balram Bhumia	Chakra Bhumia	24	"	"	Bansiaghat
Guru Naika	Aita Durba	33	"	Durba	Rengawada
Kalakura Arjun	Bhima	40	"	Bhumia	Bandarpanka
Narasingh Durba	Lachhan Durba	35	"	Rana	Kotameta
Motiram Sing Madkami	Ganga Madkami	40	"	Bhumia	Tanguda

1	2	3	4	5	6
<u>Acquitted :</u>					
Laichhan Bhumia	Guru Bhumia	36	Cultivation	Bhumia	Sanagumma
Arjun Bhumia	Benu Bhumia	25	"	"	"
Sambaru Bhumia	Chasi Bhumia	40	"	"	"
Sanla Bhumia	Arjun Bhumia	40	"	"	"

APPENDIX - F

LIST OF THE ACCUSED FREEDOM FIGHTERS
DIED IN THE JAIL AFTER THEIR ARREST*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Village</u>
Lakshman Samrath	Sarangpalli
Shukru Gote	Jaunliguda
Gobind Kobe	Palnga
Chandra Madkami	Naikguda
Dam Pujari	Chalanguda



* D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 123.

APPENDIX - G

LIST OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS WHO
DIED IN THE JAIL DURING THEIR
LIFE IMPRISONMENT*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>
Udainath Odi	28	Bansiaghat
Arjun Naika	48	Udaigiri
Chaitan Pujari	28	Sanagumma
Chandra Pujari	50	Sanagumma
Narasing Durba	35	Kotameta
Kende Sunjharia	—	Kiang

* D. Nanda, *Sahid Laxman Naik*, p. 122.

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INTERVIEW WITH FOLLOWING FREEDOM FIGHTERS :

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