

MODERN ODISHA

Ghumsar Rising under Dara Bisoi

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • July 21, 2017 • Updated September 20, 2022 • 5 min read



From the beginning of British rule under the Madras authority, there has been growing discontent among the tribals of Ghumsur. The British did not pay adequate attention to Ghumsur's administration. Eventually, the tribals of Ghumsur, led by Dora Bisoi, rose up in rebellion against the British authorities.

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Cases of the Ghumsur Uprising

Numerous factors contributed to Dora's revolt against the British.

- To begin, the British's suppression of Meriah in the Kandha-dominated area of Ghumsur was a direct attack on the Kandhas' traditional religious faith. Additionally, the Christian missionaries' activities enraged the Kandhas and turned them rebellious.
- Second, up to 50% of land revenue was collected through coercion, which hurt tribal sentiments. As a result, the tribal people became enraged and desired vengeance against the British.
- Thirdly, the Ghumsur Bhanja rulers had no cordial relations with the British. Afraid of being apprehended by the British, Dhananjay Bhanja, the ruler of Ghumsur, fled into the jungle and sought assistance from the Kandhas. The Kandhas desired to assist him due to his status as their ruler.
- Finally, the dissolution of the Bhanja ruling family following Dhananjay Bhanja's death in 1835 served as the immediate impetus for the rebellion. Following his demise, two members of the royal family, Brundaban Bhanja and Jagannath Bhanja, rebelled and were supported by Dora Bisoi, the tribal chief of the Kandhas of Ghumsur.

Events of the Uprising

Under the leadership of Kamal Lochan Dora Bisoi, the Kandha tribe rose up in rebellion. Benniah Kandha was born in the village of Binjigiri, near the town of Kullada in the lower Ghumsur region. He was a 'Maliah Bisoi' or 'Head Agent' of the Kandhas in the Odisha

district of Ghumsur. He was an excellent swordsman and a skilled wrestler. As a result, he became the leader of the Kandhas and the king of Ghumsur's 'Agent of Kandha Attainment.' He was appointed as the Ghumsur army's Commander-in-Chief. He had effectively managed Ghumsur's military affairs. He had put up a good fight against the British authority at Ghumsur while fighting with the British army.

British counter-rebellion measures

The British authorities took several measures to quell Dora Bisoi's rebellion. When Dora Bisoi's rebellion became intolerable, the British authority in the Madras Presidency dispatched George Edward Russel to put an end to the rebellion. During this time period, Dhananjay Bhanja had fled Ghumsur and sought refuge beneath the Kandhas of Ghumsur. However, it is believed that, rather than paying revenue to the British Government, he took a large sum of money with him to continue and support the rebellion in collaboration with the Kandhas of Ghumsur. Meanwhile, on 11 January 1836, Russel arrived in Ghumsur to put an end to the rebellion. He was accompanied by a colossal army in order to fight the Kandhas. Despite this, the British Government of India directed the superintendents of the Tributary Mahals to assist Russel in suppressing the rebellion on a regular basis.

Dora Bisoi's preparation for the rebellion

Raja Dhananjay Bhanja died on 31 December 1835, leaving his family in the care of the Ghumsur Kandhas. At this critical juncture, individuals such as Brundaban Bhanja, Jagannath Bhanja, Madhu Bhanja, Baliar Singh, Sundaray Bisoi, Sangram Singh, and Nanda Bisoi stepped forward to bolster Dora's rebellion against British authority. Due to the fact that these tribal leaders lived in the forest, they were intimately familiar with the jungle area. They seized the opportunity and engaged in guerrilla warfare during this rebellion. Dora, the rebellion's leader, now intended to fight the British by concealing themselves in the jungles and ghats and launching surprise attacks on the British army.

The British operation

Captain Butler led the British troop to the Ghats on 14 February 1836 in order to apprehend Dhananjay Bhanja's family members. He was tasked with two primary responsibilities:

1. to apprehend royal members
2. to reclaim the treasury from Dhananjay Bhanja.

Dora had incited the Kandhas to attack the British troop. When the British troop reached the Ghats on their way to Udaygiri, they encountered Kandha resistance. When the British troops forcibly removed the Kandha villages' fowls, they sowed the seeds of hostility with the Kandhas of Ghumsur.

The Kandhas' defiance

Between Udaygiri and Durga Prasad, the rebellious Kandhas attacked a British detachment. Thirteen soldiers (sepoys) and two European officers, Lieutenant Bromly and Ensign Gibbon, were killed in that encounter. Prior to that, British forces captured several Kandhas and imprisoned others following this incident. On the other hand, the Kandhas led by Dora Bisoi fought the British forces valiantly. The British also became cruel in their suppression of the rebellious Kandhas of Ghumsur as a result of this.

British forces conducted a special operation to apprehend Dora Bisoi.

The British attempted to arrest Dora in Ambhajhara and Jiripada but were unsuccessful. Dora had been serving as the movement's key leader up until that point. The British searched numerous locations in an attempt to apprehend him. He moved from location to location and eventually sought refuge at Angul. Due to their failure to apprehend Dora Bisoi, the British offered a reward of 5,000 rupees to anyone who could apprehend him. In this regard, the Angul Tributary Chief betrayed him. Raja Somnath Singh of Angul played a critical role in the surrender of Dora Bisoi on the instruction of Henry Ricketts, the Commissioner of Odisha. Finally, in 1837, Raja Somanath Singh of Angul surrendered Dora Bisoi to British forces.

Consequences of the Uprising

Following the arrest of their leader Dora Bisoi, additional rebellious leaders were apprehended. They were tried and sentenced to prison terms. As a result, Dora was sentenced to life in prison and died in the Ooty prison in 1846. 40 rebellious individuals received death sentences, 29 received life sentences, and two others received the same sentence for eight years. Similarly, others who were involved in Ghumsur's rebellion were imprisoned. Following the arrest of Dora Bisoi and other insurgent leaders, the British Government renegotiated their relationship with the Kandhas. Sam Bisoi was appointed Chief of the Kandhas by the British after he played a significant role in the capture of Kamal Lochan Dora. Following this, Dora Bisoi's rebellion came to an end.

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