

MODERN ODISHA

Khurda Rebellion (1804-05 CE) and Jayi Rajguru

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Odisha witnessed a number of resistance movements against the British Raj in the nineteenth century, led by common people, landholders, Zamindars, and feudatory chiefs. Four of these resistance movements were particularly violent and posed a serious threat to British rule in Odisha. All of these resistance movements occurred in Odisha as a result of a strong dislike for the new rule, the oppressive revenue system and high rent, the threat to vested landed interests' traditional privileges, and other factors endangering the lives and property of the Odisha people.

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Nilakantha Mangaraj, the Raja of Harispur with whom the special Commissioner for Odisha had signed a treaty engagement in December 1803, began the resistance movement by insubordination against the British authorities. He was dismissed for defying the British authorities and imprisoned until April 1805, when he was released on the condition of good behaviour and regular tribute payment. Since the Maratha period, the British and Raja of Kanika's relationship has been strained due to practical activities on the Odisha coast under the latter's patronage. British traders frequently complained to the Raja of Kanika about the harassment they endured. In 1803, when the Raja assumed control of Odisha, he entered into an agreement with the British, agreeing to pay tribute. There were signs of relationship improvement. However, in 1804 conflict erupted between the Raja of Khurda and the British, who discovered a covert alliance between Khurda and Kanika. Even the Raja of Kujanga was expected to become a part of this anti-British alliance.

Causes of Khurda Rebellion

Numerous factors contributed to the Khurda uprising, which are discussed below.

The British's deception of the Raja of Khurda

The Raja of Khurda had surrendered to the Marathas the Mahals of Lambai, Rahang, and Puri in exchange for military assistance in his war against the Raja of Paralakhemundi. Following the Marathas' expulsion, the Raja anticipated that the British would restore Mahlas

to him. However, the British's refusal to comply naturally enraged the Raja. Colonel Harcourt categorically denied the Mahals' restoration.

Difference between Raja of Khurda and the British

During his march from Ganjam to Puri in September 1803, Harcourt relied on the Raja of Khurda's goodwill for troop provision and convoy movement. He had promised to pay the Raja one lakh rupees in exchange for facilitating his passage. The Raja received Rs. 70,000 in two instalments, but the remaining Rs. 30,000 was deferred indefinitely.

Jayi Rajguru's attempt to reclaim the Parganas

Mukundadeva-II, Raja of Khurdha (1795-1817), greeted the British in 1803 following their conquest of Orissa. He hoped that the British would restore to him the four Parganas (Rahang, Serain, Chaubiskud, and Lembai) that he had lost to the Marathas. Due to the king's minor status, his regent Jayakrisna Rajguru or Jayi Rajguru travelled to Cuttack to argue for the restoration of the Parganas and a reduction in the annual Peshkash. They refused to comply with both demands. Rather than that, they pressed the king to sign an agreement on their terms. They desired Rajguru's dismissal by the king. Jayi Rajguru foresaw the British's evil designs. He formed an alliance with the chiefs of the states of Khurdha, Kujanaga, and Kanika. The king of Khurdha made all necessary preparations for war with the British. Jayi Rajguru, the Dewan of Khurdha, 's approach proved fruitless. Harcourt also summarily rejected Rajguru's request for a reduction in the amount of the annual tribute.

Efforts of the Khurda King and his associates

The aforementioned factors contributed to the Raja of Khurda adopting a hostile stance toward the British in 1804. He expressed his reluctance to sign the treaty engagement with the Commissioners and did not hold back his emotions. In an attempt to reclaim the Mahals from British control. He even enlisted the assistance of the Marathas. He commissioned Sambhu Bharati, a mendicant, to canvass the Odia zamindars, persuading them to unite in

opposition to the foreign Government. Kujang and Kanika Rajas responded to the summons. In violation of the agreement governing the production and sale of salt, the Raja of Kanika seized British store houses and funds and refused to attend the Commissioners Cuttack as a tributary. For self-defense, he even raised a sizable army under the command of a Maratha commander.

British repressive measures against the resistance movement

Harcourt was naturally concerned that such disaffection would spread to other tributaries and requested permission from the Governor General to take stern exemplary action against the Raja of Khurda in order to deter others from becoming hostile to the British. Lord Wellesley, under pressure from the Home Government, refused to agree to escalate the conflict in Odisha. His conflict with the Maratha Confederacy was far from over. As a result, he suggested that Harcourt take conciliatory measures. Sambhu Bharati, the provocateur, was apprehended. An attempt to negotiate with the Raja of Khurda via Captain Blunt proved fruitless due to Jayi Rajguru's intervention. In Lembai, Rahang, and Puri, a contingent of 250 cavalry soldiers and 900 Barkandazes from Khurda entered. On 22 November 1804, Captain Hickland, stationed at Pipili, marched with an army of 120 Sepoys and defeated the Raja's force. Harcourt also pursued the Raja of Khurda from Cuttack. Capt. Storey besieged the Raja's fort. Harcourt hired Shaikh Waz Muhmmad, a Cuttack native, to reduce the fort of Banpur and captured the Raja's brothers and son through him. Subsequently, on 3 January 1805, the Raja was captured and taken to Cuttack. Following the conquest of Khurda, Harcourt dispatched a small contingent to Nayagarh in order to apprehend Antaji and Kannoji. Two Maratha agents from Nagpur sought assistance from the Raja of Khurda and proceeded to Kujang and Kanika via Gop.

Support of the people and the chiefs to the Raja of Khurda

The Zamindars of Marichpur and Harispur were sympathetic to Khurda's cause and were preparing to lend assistance. However, Harcourt's arrival with an army dissuaded them from taking such a course of action. Chandradhwaja Sendh, Raja of Kujang, fled upon hearing the Commissioner's approach. In May 1805, he was arrested. His brother Madhusudan Sendh was installed as Raja on the Guddi on the condition that the Raja account for all property derived from shipwrecks along the coast and remain loyal to the British.

Harcourt then made his way towards Kanika. Robert Ker, the Balasore Collector, was also requested to act with force and arrest the Raja on the basis of mere suspicion. Harcourt requested that he be given direct administration of the Kanika estate. Major Andrew and Captain Blunt were assigned to aid Ker in resolving the Kanika crisis. The Raja was apprehended and relocated to Balasore. He remained there until September 1805, when he was transferred to Midnapure.

The apparent arbitrariness with which the Raja of Kanika was deposed provoked the estate's inhabitants to revolt. The Diwan led the uprising. However, the British were able to put an end to it through Subadar Shib Prasad, who seized all of the rebels' weapons. Justifications for military action against Kanika are difficult to find. The Chief and his people were chastised for opposing the British, who regarded the Raja as notorious for his previous refusal to cooperate in trading activities and hostile antecedents. They suspected him of colluding with the Rajas of Kujang and Khurda and were unwilling to take any chances.

Results of the Khurda rising

- In December 1804, the British captured the fort of Khurdha.
- In January 1805, the fugitive king was apprehended through the treachery of one Fateh Muhammad.
- Balabhadra Bhanja, the Raja of Kanika, was imprisoned.
- The Raja of Kujang was deposed and his elder brother succeeded him.

- Jayakrisna Rajguru or Jayi Rajguru, the regent of the king of Khurda, was hanged.
- Khurdha was seized and placed under the British's direct (khas) management.
- The Raja was compensated for his administration of the Jagannath temple.
- His headquarters were established in Puri.
- He retained the title of Maharaja despite the fact that he lacked a kingdom.
- Khurda's resistance movement was a watershed moment in modern Odisha's history. This was the country's first resistance movement, and Jai Rajguru was the country's first martyr. Although the British Raj suppressed the movement, it served as a catalyst for subsequent movements in the country.

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