

## Role of jayi rajaguru in khurda rising

**Dr. Pratima Mohanty**

Lecturer in History, Department of History  
Surajmal Saha Mahavidyalaya, Puri, Odisha, India  
Email- tukulimohanty.17@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Jayakrushna Mahapatra popularly known as Jayi Rajaguru a renowned Diplomat and freedom fighter of Odisha. He was a man of distinguished scholar. During the period of Mukunda Deva II he was appointed as the Rajaguru of the king. Specially he was acting as a guardian of the king of Khurda. He exercised enough power and influence in the state of affairs. He was the adviser on all religious matters. His position was like that of the prime minister of the kingdom. He planned and performed all the ceremonies and sacrifices on behalf of the king. The reign of Mukunda Deva II was synchronised with the fall of the Maratha power and rise on the political horizon of a new power – the British. So the annexation of Odisha was found necessary for the British. Odisha constituted one of the fronts in the Second Maratha war that was ultimately waged by the British against the Maratha confederates. Under Colonel Harcourt the British forces occupied Puri in September 1803. As per the terms of the agreement the Raja of Khurda did not oppose the British through his territory. The Britishers interfered in the internal affairs of the Jagannath temple, which cause a great shock to Jayi Rajaguru. He well understood the ill intentions of the company and confirmed that the Britishers were not keen for carrying out business but to establish their rule in Odisha. As a Rajaguru of the king he controls everybody and everything at Khurda. He organised two thousand soldiers and started a revolution against the Britishers. The British targeted Jayi Rajaguru at first instance to suppress the rising. In the mind of the British Jayi Rajaguru was root of the troubles. So they demanded to remove him from the office. Whatever he did for the sake of the kingdom and for the prestige of the Gajapati dynasty of Khurda. He did it at all risks to his life. He sacrifice his life for the cause of mother land.

**Key Words:** Rajaguru, sarkar, mahal, dalabehera, khandaits, paikas.

Jayi Rajaguru, a renowned diplomat and freedom fighter of Odisha, belonged to a great pandit Kausika, Bajapeyi Brahmin family<sup>1</sup> of Bira Harekrushnapur in the district of Puri. He was well- versed in Sastras and literature. He belonged to a family noted for learning, erudition and culture. After the death of Divyasingha Deva II in 1789 A. D. His son Mukunda Deva II became the king of Khurda, but he was minor. In that period Jayi Rajaguru was appointed as the *Rajaguru* of the king. Actually he was acting as the regent or guardian of the king of Khurda.

The main position of honour among the officials went to the *Rajaguru* or the royal preceptor. He occupied an exalted position and exercised enough power and influence in the state of affairs. It was his hereditary rights. He was the adviser on all religious matters. His position was like that of the prime minister of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> He planned and performed all the ceremonies and sacrifices on behalf of the king. He also acquired knowledge and skill in diplomacy. He had vast knowledge in military affairs. The seed of the kingdom was under Rajaguru's bridle. He was very much powerful. He dominated the court and the country in a way that was never equalled before.

The reign of Mukunda Deva II was synchronised with the fall of the Maratha power and rise on the political horizon of a new power – the British. In 1760 A.D. Midnapur and Burdwan came under the British rule. They took possession on northern *sarkars* in 1766 A.D. So, with the establishment of the British power in northern *sarkars* and Bengal, Odisha assumed much strategically importance. It was like a wedge into the British possessions along with the eastern coast of India. Movement of British troops between the northern and southern dominions was not possible with Odisha remaining under the Maratha rule. So both for military and administrative purposes, the necessity of the acquisition of Odisha was actually felt.<sup>3</sup>

Arthur Wellesley who became the Governor General in 1789 A.D. followed an aggressive policy with a view to establishing the British supremacy in India. The East India Company was facing great crisis for its existence in India. There was a threat of action on it from every corner of the country. He therefore wanted to crush the Maratha power in the land. So the annexation of Odisha was found necessary. Odisha constituted one of the fronts in the Second Maratha war that was ultimately waged by the British against the Maratha confederates led by the Raghuj and Daulat Rao Sindhia.<sup>4</sup>

The Raja of Khurda was in disputed the greatest chieftain in this party of the country. So the British authorities were naturally anxious to come to term with him, the reason is that, there was the problem of transportations of stores and provisions by land. It was found that four fifth of the road through within the British detachment would have to pass belong to the Raja of Khurda.

The Raja of Khurda had a secret alliance with the Maratha Government. The British interest was clearly to detach him from the Maratha camp. With the discussion between Harcourt and J.Melville, they decided that the Raja of Khurda should be requested to offer every assistance to the British to expedite the advance of the stores, baggages and artillery and to send fighting men to cooperate with them to expel the Marathas. In return he would be given one lakh of rupees. The wakil of the Raja agreed to the proposal and vehemently represented for the restoration of the four '*mahals*' which should be treated as an essential condition for the fulfilment of the agreement. The British in their anxiety to gain his support agreed not only to restore those *praganas* to him, but also to pay one lakh of rupees in cash in addition to it.<sup>5</sup>

Under Colonel Harcourt the British forces occupied Puri in September 1803. As per the terms of the agreement the Raja of Khurda did not oppose the British through his territory. On the other hand, he remained a passive spectator during the campaign resulting in the British occupation of Puri without any opposition. Subsequently the Barabati fort was also captured on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1803 A.D. The four *praganas* i. e. Lembei, Rahanga, *Sirei*, and Chabiskuda etc were released and taken over by the Britishers, instead of delivering to the king of Khurda. The payment of one lakh was also not fulfilled by the Britishers. The king was greatly disappointed. The Britishers interfered in the internal affairs of the Jagannath temple, which cause a great shock to Jayi Rajaguru.

The Britishers asked the kings of Khurda to sign an agreement for payment of a fixed *peskus* to the British vide their letter dt. 29<sup>th</sup> November 1803 A.D. Further they had to provide military assistance to the company for its existence for collection of revenue from Odisha. Jayi Rajaguru could realise very clearly the motive of the British and the danger it pretended for the kingdom.

Jayi Rajaguru was not a man to be reconciled to it. He well understood the ill intentions of the company and confirmed that the Britishers were not keen for carrying out business but to establish their rule in Odisha. As a Rajaguru of the king he controls everybody and everything at Khurda. He organised two thousand soldiers and started a revolution against the Britishers. He proceeded to Cuttack there he met Lt. Col. Harcourt and submitted a petition to him requesting for the restoration of the *praganas* and for payment of the balance of the stipulated amount. He further desired the reduction of the annual *peskus* to the British.<sup>6</sup>

The company refused to return these four *praganas*. Lt. Col. Harcourt simple told Jayi Rajaguru that these *praganas* were belonged to him by right of conquest. "Not a span of land could be given up" was his emphatic reply. He also rejected the request for a further reduction in the *peskus*.<sup>7</sup> The British agreed to pay a further sum of forty thousand rupees. It was paid to Jayi Rajaguru there. Jayi Rajaguru distributed the received amount of money among the soldiers and returned to Khurda.

Jayi Rajaguru got extremely angry and annoyed with the British and prepared himself to take possession of the territories by use of force from the British.<sup>8</sup> As a part of his strategy, the Khurda *paikas* attacked Pipli in October, 1804.<sup>9</sup> Earlier the Raja of Khurda had sent his agents to these four *praganas* to collect his royal taxes. Such hostile attitude of the Raja, the Britishers perturbed and thus feared a major rebellion by him against them in future. This attitude of Raja compelled the British authorities to take stern action. In the mean time a rumour spread about an impending Maratha attack on the British Odisha by the Bhonsle Raja of Nagpur in support of Khurda Raja. Harcourt tried to bring the Raja to his senses by conciliatory measures but without success. Harcourt lamented "our policy of moderation has been construed into weakness, our silence into ignorance and our endeavours to conciliate into apprehension and fear". Again he wrote, "I do think the Raja of Khurda must be exterminated".<sup>10</sup>

The British targeted Jayi Rajaguru at first instance to suppress the rising. In the mind of the British Jayi Rajaguru was root of the troubles. So they demanded to remove him from the office. The Raja of Khurda did not pay any attention to this demand. The British decided to nip the rebellion in its bud at the earliest possible time.

As a subsequent action, Sambhu Bharati was arrested. The *Dalbeheras* of Rameswar and Panchagarh, the *Khandaits* of Mendhasala, the *Khandaits* and the *Zamidaras* of garh Haladia and the rebels of Dandimahal were forgetting to help the Raja of Khurda. The British authorities also took prompt steps to prevent the Raja from getting help from any quarter. All the *Zamidars* and *Khandaits* owing allegiance to the Raja were asked not to extend any help or cooperation to the Raja of Khurda.<sup>11</sup>

In 1804, military operations were undertaken against the Raja. They decided to bring *Sepoyes* from Ganjam and Cuttack and to use them in storming and demolishing the khurda fort at Barunai Hill, so that the military backbone of the Raja would be destroyed, as a first measure. They declared the Raja a rebel and ordered him to abandon the throne of Khurda. To achieve the end, the British then arranged a garrison of 7,000 troops at the village of Mukunda Prasad, which was few distance from the Raja's fort.<sup>12</sup>

The British troops, which proceeded to occupy Khurda, were resisted at several places by the *paikas* under Jayi Rajaguru, but the superior arms of the British easily overcome the resistance. Jayi Rajaguru made elaborate preparations for it. Restrictions were imposed on communications into the territory of Khurda by placing a guard on the bank of the river Mahanadi. The King ordered that nothing belonging to the British would pass through it.<sup>13</sup> British military action was taken forthwith. Harcourt and Hunter with some other British officers marched to break the Raja's defence and destroy the enemy.

A severe fight took place. The Raja's force fought with courage and determination, but because of superior skill, artillery warfare, fresh reinforcement from Bengal and better coordination of troops, the British ultimately succeeded in shattering the opposition at different places. Major Fletcher occupied the fort with much difficulty which was under the position of the King of Khurda. The Raja fled to the deep jungle nearby. He sent his Vakil to Harcourt for negotiation, but this was not granted. Then Jayi Rajaguru came to negotiate, was also arrested. At last on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1805 A.D. the king was captured and was sent as a prisoner to Cuttack.<sup>14</sup>

Jayi Rajaguru was regarded as the arch-enemy of the British and as such he was awarded condign punishment. After his captured he was brought before Col. Harcourt. Harcourt asked him if he caused the disturbance himself or at the instigation of the Raja. Jayi Rajaguru declared "he had caused the disturbances, that the Raja was a child and what had been done, had been done by himself,<sup>15</sup> from this bold answer it could be well known that Jayi Rajaguru was the real leader of the rebellion. This clearly shows that Jayi Rajaguru was the man who really fought with the British. It also gives an insight into his character.<sup>16</sup> He had no personal interest or selfish motive. Whatever he did for the sake of the kingdom and for the prestige of the Gajapati dynasty of Khurda. He did it at all risks to his life.<sup>17</sup>

The British, no wonder took drastic action against Jayi Rajaguru. When they knew that the king was involved in the battle on the advice of Jayi Rajaguru they hanged him to death.<sup>18</sup> He was removed to far off Midnapur where the trial for his alleged offence commenced. This was a place called Baghitota in Midnapur.<sup>19</sup> Thus the great Jayi Rajaguru fell a martyr to freedom, leaving behind the grand example of one's inordinate dedication and uncommon sacrifice to the cause of the freedom of his mother land. He was the proud son of Odisha and the earliest Martyr to freedom.

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