

# Bhanja Dynasty of Mayurbhanj: Exploring the Contribution of Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo (1890-1912)

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## Abstract

The role of Kings in Princely states of India generally and Orissa particularly was an important aspect during the British rule. Their policy towards people and the policy with British government are very interesting in historical context. In this context, Mayurbhanj played a vital role in terms of number of tribes, prajamanda movement, expansion of railways and forest resources. Here, the paper tries to explore the origin of Bhanja dynasty in Mayurbhanj through critical analysis of different sources and most importantly to define the role and contribution of Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanja Deo.

**Keywords:** Bhanja Dynasty, Princely States, Mayurbhanj

## Introduction:

Mayurbhanj was one of the twenty four Princely States which were merged with the Province of Orissa after independence. In size, population and natural resources Mayurbhanj was the first among the equals and its ruling Chief had a dynastic history of one thousand years prior to the British conquest. The district is geographically located between 22° 33' 45" and 21° 17' 0" north latitude and between 85° 42' 30" and 87° 17' 15" east longitude. It was a powerful native state of eastern India before its integration with Orissa in 1949. It is bounded in the north by Midnapur district of West Bengal and Singhbhum district of Bihar, in the South by Keonjhar and Balasore district of the same states, in the West by Singhbhum and Keonjhar districts and in the east by Balasore districts. Its area and geographical location provided certain advantages for which the British regarded Mayurbhanj as the "most valuable of Orissa Tributary States". The district is divided into four subdivisions that are Sadar, Bamanghaty, Panchpir and Kaptipada with their respective headquarters at Baripada, Rairangpur, Karanjia and Udala. Baripada is the district headquarters of Mayurbhanj.

## History:

The ancient history of Mayurbhanj is shrouded in mystery. Undoubtedly, the territory was a constituent portion of Utkal, which, according to the puranic legend, was an extremely ancient land. Ila-Sydyumna, one of Manu's ten sons, was a Kimpurusha, and he had three sons named Utkal, Vinitasva and Gaya. Three sons successively governed three distinct territories that were named in their honour. The area of Utkal was named after Utkala, the son of Sudyumna. According to Pargiter, it consisted of the southern part of current Chhota-Nagpur. However, Utkal extended beyond the Chhotanagpur region and encompassed the present day Mayurbhanj district. Mayurbhanj was a constituent of Utkala in the 6<sup>th</sup>

century B.C., as evidenced in the Vinayapitaka. The Vinayapitaka and Jatakas record that Tapassu and Bhallika, prominent merchants from Utkal Janapada, saw the Buddha in the Urubela forest while on a trading expedition to the middle country. They had the honor of offering him the first meal after his enlightenment. During the pre-Christian time, very little is known about the history of the Utkal region and the Mayurbhanj tracts, which were part of the Kalinga kingdom under rulers such as Asoka and Kharavela.

During the post-Gupta era, the Mana family gained popularity and expanded their control over this region. The Soro and Patiakella copper plate inscription documents the reign of Maharaja Sambhuyasa, a formidable ruler, over the region of Tosala. Tosala was separated into two halves, namely Dakshina and Uttara Tosalas. The Mayurbhanj region was once a part of Uttara Tosala and was governed by the Mana dynasty for a period of time. An inscription in 1137 A.D. found at Govindpur, located in the Gaya area, makes reference to the Mana ruler Virnamana and his successor Rudramana. The Mana rule probably gave place to the rule of the Bhanjas in Mayurbhanja tract.

### Origin of Bhanja Dynasty

There are several stories regarding the origin of Bhanja dynasty. Generally, it is believed that Adibhanja Birabhadra was born from an egg of peahen and he grew up in an Ashrama.<sup>1</sup> There he established a kingdom of eighty-eight thousand villages. He was a very discerning ruler. He knew the art of destroying enemies. He was the representative of Saraswati and was a skilled administrator. The peacock was considered a sacred bird in the tribe of which Adibhanja Birabhadra was the hero. The tradition of worshipping animals, birds, and trees by the primitive inhabitants is still there. Birabhadra's upbringing centre was an Arya-Sanskrit place. Vasistha as a Guru of the Ashrama, took the invitation to provide the responsibilities of Arya dharma and culture to Birabhadra. Muni Vasistha established Birabhadra in a high and noble position in the society. After attaining the throne, Birabhadra was honoured by the Brahmins as 'chakravarti samma'. It is natural that Kotashram was later named as Khijinkot. Because the administrative centre of the new state was Khijinkot. His mother goddess was Khijingeswari. There is a lot of debate to say how Khijingeswari was worshipped at first. According to the tradition of Brahminical religion, it was only fair that after the new king ascended the throne, he would seek the approval of the followers of the religion. So Khijingeswari gave the blessed approval as the Istadevi of the clan for establishment of Bhanja dynasty. With the support of the Brahmins, Khijingeswari adopted the shakti clan as his patron. Khijingeswari followed the tradition of worship among the tribes. Brahmins succeeded in popularising shakti worship among the scheduled forest dwellers based on Sanskrit hymn and scriptures. Khijingimandala and the capital Khijingakota became famous as a centre of Aryan culture.<sup>2</sup>

Even, Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja also mentioned in his poem 'Lavanyavati' that he was born from those family, which was born from egg of pea-hen. According to a Purana, thirteen hundred years ago, the Suryavamsi Raja of Rajputna was ruled here. They belong to the Mewar dynasty. During that time, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar was a single state. The story was that the Suryavamsi King Jaisingh of Jaipur visited to Puri to see the Jagannath temple. He was very curious and could not be able to leave the Jagannath Dhama Puri. So he meets the Gajapati Raja of Puri and became his guest. Gajapati Raja of Puri was very happy and quite interested to marry his daughter to King Jaisingh. Jaisingh also interested to

<sup>1</sup> B. P. Lenka, *Mayurbhanj Itihasa: Eka Anudhyana*, Cuttack, Sangeeta Printers, 1993, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> P. K. Mishra, *Mayurbhanj Itihasa O Sanskrutira Mukhyadhara*, Cuttack, Vidyapuri, 2018, pp.12-13.

marry the daughter of Gajapati Raja of Puri. So with the mutual consent both were married and Jaisingh got the Hariharpur as a dowry. It was a fact that, a ruler namely Mayuradhwaja was ruled in Bamanghaty which was the boarder of Hariharpur. Mayuradhwaja was a very proudly king. So a battle was happened between Jaisingh and Mayuradhwaja in which Mayuradhwaja was defeated and left his reign. Jaisingh is able to destroy the ego and arrogance of Mayuradhwaja. So he accepted the title of Bhanja and known as Jaibhanja. There is an image of a peacock in the crown of Jaipur's King. Due to the peacock image in the crown and the epithet of Jaisingh was 'Bhanja', so the new name of state known as Mayurbhanja.<sup>3</sup> Even, L.E. B. Cobden Ramsay also discussed the same story in his book 'Feudatory States of Orissa'. He said Jaisingh was the King of Jaipur visited to Puri to see the Jagannath temple and marry the daughter of Gajapati Raja of Puri and received Khijingimandala as a dowry. Jaisingh have two sons namely Adibhanja and Jyotibhanja. Those area taken by Adibhanja is known as Mayurabhanja and those area ruled by Jyotibhanja is known as Keonjhar.<sup>4</sup>

There were several Bhanja rulers ruled in Mayurbhanj. The Bhanja Rajavamsavali in ancient period mentioned the name of rulers such as Maharaja Jaisingh/Jai Bhanja, Maharaja Adibhanja Deb I, Maharaja Nilambara Bhanja Deb, Maharaja Laxman Raj Bhanja Deb, Maharaja Bisweswara Bhanja Deb, Maharaja Bharat Bhanja Deb, Maharaja Bamdev Bhanja Deb, Maharaja Basudeb Bhanja Deb, Maharaja Kesari Bhanja Deb, Maharaja Narayana Bhanja Deb I and Maharaja Birakishore Bhanja Deb. During the early medieval period there were number of rulers of Bhanja dynasty who ruled at Mayurbhanja. They were Ganadanda Birabhadra, Kota Bhanja, Durjaya Bhanja, Narendra Bhanja I, Rana Bhanja, Raja Bhanja, Prithvi Bhanja, Mahada Bhanja, Satru Bhanja and Yuvraj Narendra Bhanja III.

During the medieval period the name of the Bhanja rulers of Mayurbhanj are Maharaja Adi Bhanja, Maharaja Santal Bhanja, Maharaja Keshari Bhanja, Maharaja Chhaki Bhanja, Maharaja Laxman Bhanja, Maharaja Kalapi Bhanja, Maharaja Surya Bhanja, Maharaja Ramachandra Bhanja, Maharaja Basuli Bhanja, Maharaja Jagannath Bhanja, Maharaja Biswanath Bhanja, Maharaja Nilakantha Bhanja, Maharaja Baidyanath Bhanja, Maharaja Harihara Bhanja, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanja, Maharaja Trivikrama Bhanja, Maharaja Sarbeswara Bhanja, Maharaja Vikramaditya Bhanja, Raghunath Bhanja, Maharaja Chakradhara Bhanja, Maharaja Damodara Bhanja and Maharaja Rajeswari Sumitra Debi Bhanja.

### **Bhanja's in Mughal Period (1592-1751)**

There were 12 zamindars and 42 killas in Mughal period. According to Raja man Singh's account of 1592, which was published by Sterling in 1822, there were a total of 18 forts. These forts included Bhanjabhum, Mantri, Hariharpur, Dewaliia, Purunia, Karkachua, Bamanghaty, Sargonda and 10 more important forts that were part of the estate belonging to the Zamindar of Mayurbhanj. All of these locations, with the exception of Bhanjabhum, are located in Mayurbhanj. The pargana of Bhanjabhum is located north of the town of Midnapur. According to history, the Midnapur Rajas acquired this area as subordinate tenures from Mayurbhanj. Additionally, it is stated that there were 10 subordinate leaders who were under the authority of Mayurbhanj during the initial phase of Mughal governance. The Zamindar each of Nilgiri, Singhbhum, Barabhum, Patharhai, Narasinghpur, Deba Tychand, Jamarpal,

<sup>3</sup> K. C. Panigrahi, *History of Orissa*, Cuttack, Kitab Mahal, 1981, p.138.

<sup>4</sup> L. E. B. Cobden Ramsay, *Feudatory States of Orissa*, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1910, p.239.  
<https://archive.org/details/dli.ministry.07439>

Jamacunda, Chargarh and Talmunda were owned by these chiefs. According to the Ranchi District Gazetteer, Tamar was a part of Mayurbhanj. Similarly, the Midnapore District Gazetteer stated that Birkul, located on the sea shore, was also under the jurisdiction of Mayurbhanj. The dominion of Mayurbhanj encompassed the region of Tamar, Barabhum and Midnapore town in the northern direction, extending to the river Baitarani in the southern direction. Furthermore, it stretched from the eastern coastline to the western most point of Singhbhum.

Whenever an opportunity arose, the Bhanja kings would not hesitate to enhance their own power and status at the expense of the Mughal emperor. According to Muraqat-i-Hassan, during the period of political uncertainty that occurred after emperor Shahjahan fell seriously ill in 1657, Krushna Bhanja of Hariharpur, the prominent landowner, extended his influence across the region from Midnapur to Bhadrak. His 'offences' are thus summed up in Muraqat, "He kept 1000 horses and 10 or 12 thousand foot soldiers, and was obeyed and helped by all the Zamindars of the country. He had plundered the tract from Bhadrak to Midnapore, carried off the ryots to his own territory, increased their cultivation and ruined the imperial dominion."<sup>5</sup>

Khan-i-Dauran was appointed as Governor of Orissa in 1660 by the emperor Aurangzeb. Upon the arrival of the new Governor in Jaleswar, Krushna Bhanja, feeling extremely frustrated by the taunts of the Subahdar, engaged in physical aggression towards him but was ultimately killed along with his group. Contemporary records of the Dutch factories in India provide an alternative account of this episode, referring to Krushna Bhanja as the 'Great Raja' "Den grooten Radja Kristna Bens". Khan-i-Dauran departed from Jaleswar and headed for Hariharpur. Trivikram Bhanja, accompanied by his uncle Jaya Bhanja, presented himself to the ruler on his journey to Remuna and was granted the title of Rajaship and Zamindari.

In 1740-41, Alivardi Khan seized control of the Subadari of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa and subsequently launched an invasion of Orissa. At Rajghat, situated on the Subarnarekha River, he encountered the Raja of Mayurbhanj who was prepared with his Chuars and Khandayats to resist him. Alivardi Khan advanced and decisively defeated Murshid Quli Kham, quickly removed Saulat from power. Upon learning of the catastrophe, Alivardi Khan promptly returned to Orissa and took action to reprimand the Raja of Mayurbhanj, who had provided assistance to Baqir Khan. Alivardi Khan successfully conquered the Mayurbhanj region, showing no mercy and ruthlessly using force to assert his control. The Raja of Mayurbhanj took refuge in the Similipal hills near his capital Hariharpur. Prior to advancing on his military expedition against Mayurbhanj, Alivardi Khan was summoned back to Bengal to control the Maratha force dispatched by Raja Raghuji Bhonsle of Nagpur. In 1751, Alivardi Khan ultimately relinquished control of Orissa (except Chakla Midnapore) to Bhonsala of Nagpur.

### **Bhanja's in Maratha Period**

During the period when the Marathas were in control of Orissa, the rulers of Mayurbhanj made efforts to preserve their autonomy. Frequently, they engaged in conflicts with the Marathas, who made aggressive attempts to impose a tribute through military means. In 1761, the East India Company acquired Midnapore and shortly thereafter, Maharaja Damodar Bhanja, the successor of Chakradhar Bhanja, initiated amicable discussions with the British authorities. In a letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 1761, Vansittart acknowledges the receipt of the letter and expresses his friendship towards him. The Survey map created

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<sup>5</sup> N. Senapati and N. K. Sahu, *Orissa District Gazetteers, Mayurbhanj*, cuttack, 1969, pp.68-69.  
<https://archive.org/details/dli.ministry.08558>

by Rennell, a notable accomplishment of the early British Government in Bengal, was meticulously crafted with the enthusiastic collaboration of the Monarch of the Mayurbhanj. Due to the Marathas' danger to the Bengal from the Orissa side, the East India Company was eager to establish a good alliance with Mayurbhanj. Mayurbhanj served as a buffer state between Maratha territory and Bengal. In 1768, Vansittart noted that Mayurbhanja's strategic location allows it to effectively hinder the Marathas' access to Bengal from the South even without much support from us. Verelst requested Vansittart to obtain information from the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj and closely monitor the actions of the Marathas. In 1770, the Zamindar of Kuchang launched an attack against British territory, capturing a group of the Company's Sepoys. In response, a punitive expedition was organised to seize control of Kuchang. However, the notion of annexing Kuchang was abandoned due to concerns that it would infringe upon the rights of the autonomous Raja of Mayurbhanj, who had nominated the Zamindars for both Kuchang and Bamanghaty. He was compelled to remove the former and hand over Kuchang to the Zamindar of Bamanghaty, while the corporation resolved to disassociate themselves from Kuchang. The amicable relationship between the East India Company and Mayurbhanj was leveraged by Marquis of Wellesley during the Orissa expedition in 1803. Trivikram Bhanja, the effective monarch of Mayurbhanj at that time, ensured the State's autonomy, while his adoptive mother, Rani Sumitra Devi, who also had a claim to the throne, resided in British territory. The British authorities endeavoured to facilitate a resolution between the two factions ultimately acknowledging the Rani made as the sovereign of Mayurbhanj. The Rani made significant efforts to assist the British forces during their Orissa campaign, and the Collector of Midnapore in 1804 attested to her exceptional enthusiasm and eagerness in supporting the Company's military efforts. In addition, she was bestowed with a Khilat by the British Government as an acknowledgement of her commendable contributions on this occasion.

### **Bhanja's in British Period**

During the British period, Mayurbhanj state was ruled by Feudatory Chiefs belonging to the Bhanja dynasty with the occasional Court of Wards administration whenever the successor to the Gadi is minor. The list of rulers is mentioned below:-

1. Rani Sumitra Bhanja (1796-1810)
2. T-rivikram Bhanja (1811-1828)
3. Jadunath Bhanja (1828-1863)
4. Srinath Bhanja (1863-1867)
5. Krushna Chandra Bhanja (1867-1882)
6. Sri Ram Chandra Bhanja Deo (1890-1912)
7. Purna Chandra Bhanja (1920-1928)
8. Pratap Chandra Bhanja Deo (1928-1947)

The above mentioned rulers were ruled from 1796 to 1947 except the period from 1882-1890 and 1912-1920. During this period the ruler of Mayurbhanj State was minor, so the State responsibility remained under the Court of Wards.

### **Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo (1890-1912)**

While a minor the education of Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo was entrusted to H. B. Kiddel and Govind Chandra Mohapatra. They stayed together at Cuttack till he completed B. A. course with Science and Mathematics. Kiddel exercised profound influence upon the impressionable mind of Sri Ram Chandra



and aroused in him the tender qualities of love, truthfulness, simplicity of life and tolerance. When he was called upon to take over the state in 1890 a new era of liberation and progress was ushered in the history of Mayurbhanj.

He assumed the responsibility on August 15, 1892. In 1896, the auspicious occasion was completed with Lakshmi Kumari, the granddaughter of Maharaja Nilamani Singh of Panchkot. She died on March 6, 1902 after giving birth to two sons namely Pratapchandra and Purnachandra and a daughter Shripad Manjari. Princes Shripad Manjari also died at a very young age. Besides that, under the administration of Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo the status of Mayurbhanj was raised to that of one of the best governed feudatory state of India. On the same year he assumed the control of administration, the Maharaja established the Mayurbhanj State Council and the Judicial Committee with himself as the president. The later functioned as the High Court and was one of the earliest of its kind in the Indian States. His administrative adviser was Mohini Mohan Dhar. He was appointed as Dewan. Mohini Mohan Dhar was the private teacher of Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj during his studies at Ravenshaw College. For that reason, they have the mutual understanding. On the advice of Mohini Mohan Dhar, multiparty governance reforms were introduced in the state. For the good governance of the state, the state of Mayurbhanj was divided into four sub-divisions namely Sadar, Panchpir, Bamanghaty and Kaptipada. The administrative burden of each was entrusted to a Sub-Divisional Officer with magisterial powers. The state government appointed competent officers who were highly educated and noble in nature. Among them, two persons are law graduate from Calcutta University. They were Kamakshya Prasad Bose and Yatindra Mohan Dhar. During that time, a suitable person with university education was not found in Orissa. Therefore, there were several Doctors, Magistrates, Teachers and Lawyers come from Calcutta to Mayurbhanj. Gopabandhu Das, an Odia lawyer was employed by the state government for a few years.

Kamakshya Prasad Bose made tremendous progress during the reign of Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj. He was born in Dhamrai in East Bengal (modern day Bangladesh). He was the son of the landlord Kasinath Bose. After obtaining his law degree in 1900, he practiced law in Dhaka. First, he was appointed as Deputy Collector in Baripada. Within two years, he was promoted to the position of Assistant Sub-divisional Officer and later Sub-divisional Officer. He was successfully posted as a sub-divisional officer at Panchpir, Bamanghaty, and Kaptipada. As he knew the responsibilities of Maharaja towards the development of Mayurbhanj State, he was diligent in facilitating the economic development of the sub-division under his charge. His main goal was the use of natural resources of Mayurbhanj and development of handicraft industries. He was probably influenced by the ideas of Swadeshi movement in India during that time. Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra gave a Presidential speech in the first session of the Utkal Conference regarding the development of agriculture and industry and the spread of education for the economic progress of the people of Orissa. Therefore, he must have thought of making Mayurbhanj that stone passenger and provided inspiration to the high-ranking officials of the state. As a result, Kamakshya Prasad implemented many plans for the better utilization of the natural resources of Mayurbhanj. As Bamanghaty was useful for Tassar cultivation, he brought some Tantabaya families from Dhaka area and settled them in Bahalda. From the ancient time, the muslin at Dhaka and Murshidabad was famous all over the world. They spread the art of weaving muslin cloth in Mayurbhanj. Kamakshya Prasad proposed to use of the Lacs collected from Similipal and surrounding forests for commercial purpose. Two Lac factories were started in Bamanghaty sub-division under his initiative. A vocational training centre was established at Baripada in the framework of the Polytechnic Training Centre.

Every year, agricultural and industrial exhibition was organised at Baripada. The motto was to sensitize the people of the state about the progress of scientific knowledge in agriculture and industry. The Tassar product of Mayurbhanj was highly praised by an exhibition organised at Calcutta in 1906. Simultaneously, the Tassar product also highly praised at Jaipur in 1910 and at Balasore in 1911. Kamakshya Prasad was popularized with his efficiency to solve the border issue between Mayurbhanj and Kaptipada. Another daring and admirable achievement of his was to carry out detention in the impenetrable Durgadiha of Similipal and the deep forest of Godabihar. For this, the Maharaja gave him special magistrate power.

He made many reforms in the jail department at Panchpir, Bamanghaty and Kaptipada. Due to his efficiency, he was promoted to the post of Special Judicial Magistrate, Special Revenue Officer and Deputy Collector. Serving the people in times of crisis shows his human virtue. As a judge, he earned a reputation for speedy justice. During his tenure as the chief sub-divisional officer at Panchpir, he organised the Annual Siv Chaturdashi mela at Khiching for the purpose of entertainment of the local people. The Scheduled Tribes are very happy to buy various products in mela. Monarchy became popular because the administration was always in favour of the people.

He discovered the art and culture of ancient Mayurbhanj at Khiching. The King was impressed by the collection of numerous copperplates, stone age weapons, coins, seals, and art and architecture. The Department of Archaeology was created in favour of the king to access the dignity and importance of the cultural contribution of the Bhanja family. The famous philosopher Nagendra Nath Basu was invited to Khiching. He visited the historical places of Mayurbhanj and wrote an invaluable authentic book called Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanj which was published in 1911. Mayurbhanj State was advanced among princely states and Garjat States of Orissa in the context of setting up the Department of Archaeology.

To enhance the revenue of the state, the Maharaja started Forest and Excise Departments through which forest wealth was exploited, sale of liquor and narcotics conducted to earn revenue. Irrigation projects were undertaken at a cost of six lakhs of rupees to increase agricultural production. Model agricultural farms were established to introduce new varieties of seeds and technique of cultivation. Mayurbhanj is rich with mineral resources like iron ore at Gurumohisani and Badampahar. The deposit was surveyed by Pramath Nath Bose, an eminent Geologist and leased out to the Tata Iron and Steel Company. A broad gauge railway line joined Tata with the interior tribal belts of Bamanghaty and Panchpir throwing open the prospects of industrial employment and the amenities of urban life for the backward people.

The Government of Sri Ram Chandra implemented series of agrarian reforms. In 1892 all tenants were granted with the right of occupancy in their holdings. The right of occupancy gave adequate social security to the tenant. By enforcing the ancient law of Dandapat the state ensured that no creditor would realise from the debtor interest to an amount higher than the principal of the original loan. Granaries, locally known as Hamars were stocked with paddy at various parts of Mayurbhanj to grant paddy-loans to the ryots at a very low rate of interest. Through co-operative credit societies and agricultural loans granted by the state administration the ryots availed an opportunity to improve their lands without being harassed by rural money-lenders. Introduction methods of farming, new seeds and new crops formed an important part of the Maharaja's policy. Since Mayurbhanj was famous for the Tassar production, the Maharaja took special interest in mulberry plantation and scientific rearing of silkworms. He also made an experiment in cotton cultivation through the expertise of Dr. Daniel Hamilton which proved unsuccessful due to the unfavourable climatic condition.

The Aided Primary Schools were opened throughout the state with Middle Schools at sub-divisional headquarters under a Superintendent of Education. During his time the number of different categories of schools in the state increased from 44 to 431 with corresponding increase of students from 2376 to 9594 and the state budget incurred an expenditure of Rs. 54,958 in 1910 in place of Rs. 7,899 in 1882.

To take care of public health and sanitation the medical department was reorganised and Baripada municipality was set up in 1905. The dispensary at Baripada was placed under a sub-assistant Surgeon and it was remodelled and named King Edward VII charitable dispensary. Vaccination was made compulsory. The first phase of the Mayurbhanj Light Railway connected Rupsa with Baripada in 1905 whose initial planning was done by Arnold Mortin, the State Engineer. This line gave Baripada access to Howrah-Madras main line. Its inauguration was done on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1904 by Sir Andrew Fraser. The distance was about 50 kilometres. The entire cost of approximately Rs. 600,0000 was borne by the State. It gave opportunity to traders of Calcutta to take advantage who rushed in to the virgin market of Mayurbhanj. Large number of Marwaris and Gujarati traders arrived at Baripada as contractors and traders.<sup>6</sup> The Baripada Municipality came into being in the year 1905, and a regular constitution was drawn up in the lines the Municipal Act in force in British India.<sup>7</sup>

The revenue of state greatly increased to nearly 3 times of what was during the time of accession of Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo. The forest revenue alone rose from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 1, 50,000 per year. Introduction of Telegraphs was another notable contribution of the Maharaja which connected Baripada with Calcutta and Cuttack.

Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra was an avowed champion on Oriya nationalism and the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking tracts under Bengal. In 1903, he presided over the inaugural session of the Utkal Union Conference at Cuttack. In his address he emphasised the (i) amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts, (ii) development of Industry, (iii) development in language, literature, female education and social reforms.<sup>8</sup> He was a guest of the government at the Imperial Durbar held at Delhi on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1903 when the title of Maharaja was conferred on him at personal distinction. This title was made hereditary in June 1910. He also attended the Imperial Durbar in Delhi in 1911. In 1910, he made a trip to England via Japan and America and was honoured by an audience granted by His Majesty the King-Emperor.<sup>9</sup>

The Durbar administration earned a high reputation for imparting fair justice in judicial matters. Since the Maharaja espoused the rule of law principle and run his judiciary through competent and qualified judges like Mohini Mohan Dhar etc. the government gradually allowed higher powers up to the extent of awarding capital punishment to the state judiciary. Such privileges were not granted to any other chief of Orissa Feudatory States. The Judicial Committee of the State Council with the Maharaja as the president functioning as the High Court or the Highest Court of Appeal. In transacting judicial business the State Judicial Committee followed British Civil and Criminal Laws.

There are several architectural development took place under the supervision of chief architect Martilon Arnol. These are 400 primary schools, 5002 miles road, and court office of judges, district magistrate's office, jubilee library and, many bridges and buildings. Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj was conferred with the title of Maharaja in 1903. He was granted a Khilat in March 1903 on the occasion at the coronation ceremony of the King Emperor Edward VII and Sanad was invested upon him by Sir James A.

<sup>6</sup> Chhatish Chandra Dhal, *Tribal Peasant Unrest: A Paradox in Welfare Administration*, New Delhi, Kaveri Books, 2012, p.45.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammad Laeequddin, *Census of Mayurbhanj State, 1931, Vol.1, Report*, Calcutta, p.24.

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.116045>

<sup>8</sup> Debendra Kumar Das, *Utkal Sammilani, 1903-1936, Vol.1*, Rourkela, Pragati Utkal Sangha, 2005, p.65.

<sup>9</sup> M. Laeequddin, p.25.



Bourdillon, the officiating Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. The citation of the Governor mentioned- “I am glad to know that you worthily play the role of the leading chief in the Garjat States of Orissa, and not only in public but in private life you set an admirable example which your fellow chiefs would do well to follow. The government are proud to have had during your minority so apt and satisfactory a pupil under their charge. Since you have assumed the control of the Mayurbhanj state you have ruled it wisely and well, while the liberality, which you have shown beyond its borders, has been generous and enlightened. Your Father was created Maharaja at the Delhi Assemblage of 1873 and it is a sincere gratification to me and to your many well wishers, that the same title was bestowed upon you upon a similar but more splendid occasion. May you have live long to enjoy it.”<sup>10</sup> During shikar expedition with some of his relations on 31<sup>st</sup> January, sustained injury from the splinters of a bullet and he was died on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1912.<sup>11</sup>

After the death of Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj, Mayurbhanj again remained under the direct supervision of the British government for 8 years as his eldest son Purnachandra was a minor. The State responsibility remained under the Court of Wards till 1920 A. D. At that time, Mr. Philip, Mr. Scott and Mr. Peck were appointed as the administrators on behalf of the British government.

## **Conclusion**

Though there were several rulers of Mayurbhanj but Maharaja Sri Ram Chandra Bhanj Deo played a very important role in terms of development of the Mayurbhanj State. He was an able administrator. During his period, there were several development took place such as functions of High Court, reforms in multi-party governing system, use of natural resources and development of handicraft industries especially Tussar and lac industries, established Polytechnic Training Centre, reforms in Jail department, development in art and architecture, introduced Forest and Excise department, other agrarian reforms, development in School education, Public Health and sanitation, and expansion of Railway. So, for his contribution to all round development, he has placed a special place in the history of Mayurbhanj, Odisha.

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<sup>10</sup> Srinibas Pradhan, *Subarna Jugara Itibutta O Mayurbhanj*, Baripada, Royal Publication, 2014, p.48.

<sup>11</sup> Godabaris Mohapatra, *Amar Charita*, Cuttack, New Students Stores, 1953, p.32.