

Utkal Keshari Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab

Utkal Keshari Harekrushna Mahtab, a versatile towering like personality of contemporary era, the architect of modern Utkal and pioneer of a new dawn of Odisha was highly inspired by the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Mahtab's name will be forever inscribed in golden letters in the annals of Odisha Politics for his contributions towards the development of Odia literature and culture. A born revolutionary leader, from his student career Dr. Mahtab was a dedicated Nationalist. His disciplined lifestyle, his sacrifices, patience and self confidence will forever inspire generations

Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab was born on 21st November, 1899 at Agarpada in undivided Balasore District. His Father's name was Krushan Chandra Das and His Mother's name was Tohfa Bibi who was the daughter of late Jagannath Mahtab. Since Jagannath Mahtab had no son he had adopted Harekrushna Mahtab. After completion of studies in the village school Harekrushna Mahtab had joined Bhadrak High School. While studying matriculation in 1917 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab got married to Subhadra Mahtab. He passed his matriculation exam in the 1st division in the year 1917. During his studies at Ravenshaw College Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab discussed politics with his colleague Nabakrushna Choudhury. In 1918 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab joined Utkal Sammilani at Cuttack as a volunteer. Mahtab was greatly inspired by the ideals of Bagha Jatin and got involuntarily indoctrinated to the life of evolution. He came in contact with monks of Ramakrushna Mission. In September 1920 when Mahatma Gandhi had been invited to discuss at the Congress Session held at Kolkata, Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab had been a spectator. He then left studies to join Congress. In 1921, before appearing BA final exams Dr. Mahtab left college and joined the non-cooperation movement and became the Secretary of Balasore District Congress Committee. In July 1922, he took the lead role in Kanika Praja Movement and was imprisoned. During this time, Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab wrote books "Ajab Dunia" novel in Odia, and "Free thinking" in English. In 1923

October he published 'Prajatantra' weekly from Cuttack Mukur Press. From 1942 to 1949 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab was the President of Balasore District Board. In 1925 he set up the hand press at Swaraj Ashram at Cuttack and Swarajya Samachar weekly was also published. In 1927 English weekly magazine 'Adventure' was published. In 1928 he formed the Odia society at Kolkata and became its President, in 1929 he took the lead role among non-resident Odias in the revolt against Simon Commission at Kolkata. He worked for the re-emergence of Khadi Andolan. In 1930 he was elected as the president of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee. He was imprisoned for 18 month for Inchudi salt Satyagrah. "Swarajya Sadhan" and "Dasa Barsara Odisha" was written by him. He was elected to the Bihar - Odisha Governor's council. Mahtab accompanied Mahatma Gandhiji during his 4 days whirlwind itinerary across length and breadth of Odisha and gave Gandhiji a glimpse of salt cottage industry and happenings in Kanika. On 17th April 1930 for his stewardship in the salt movement during his jail sojourn, Mahtab, translated Balmiki's Sanskrit 'Ramayan' into Odia and wrote the Odia version of the 'Gita' in simple prose style. Mahtab spent a month at Sabarmati Ashram after returning from attending the Congress convocation at Karachi. In 1931 he was set free from the prison through Gandhi-Irwin pact. In 1932 when Congress session was banned at Puri Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab was arrested at Balasore. During his 6 months imprisonment he wrote the Novel "Nutan Dharma". He was again arrested and imprisoned along with his wife Subhadra at Hazaribagh Jail on charges of sending secret message to Nikhil Bharat Congress Committee Office. He came in contact with Khan Abdul Gafar Khan there. In 1937 he was elected as the president of Odisha Pradesh Congress. In 1938 he took the leadership of Gadjat Praja Movement and was nominated as the advisor of Prajamandal and member of Nikhil Bharat Congress Karyakari Committee. On January 5th 1939 he got involved in the Ranpur Praja Movement and Bezelgate assassination and was acquitted free by Gandhiji's efforts. 1945 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab formed the Congress Seba Dal, from April 23rd 1946 till May 11th 1950 Dr. Mahtab became the Prime Minister of Odisha. On

September 30th the proposal for Bhubaneswar to become the Capital of Odisha was decided. Among his achievements, Machhkund Duduma hydro electric project pact, Odisha Olympic Association the foundation stone laying of Rice Research Centre at Bidyadharpur, Cuttack. On August 8th 1947 the daily 'Prajantra' from Cuttack was republished. 'Gaon Majlis', Column in the Prajantra reflected the difficulties of rural Odisha. On November 14th Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab assumed the power of the ruler of Nilagiri and on January 1947 the All India Radio, Cuttack was set up at Madhupur Kothi on April 13th 1947 the then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation stone of the new capital at Bhubaneswar. On July 26th Odisha High Court was inaugurated on November 9th 1947 Dr. Mahtab took over the ruling of Mayurbhanj State. In 1949 "Jhankar" and English daily "Eastern Times" was published. On April 13th 1950 Bisubh Milan for the first time was held from May 13th to May 15th 1952 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab assumed the post of the Central Commerce Minister. In 1951 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab was elected to the Parliament from Cuttack, Loksabha Constituency. In 1954 he became the Secretary of Congress Parliamentary party. From March 2nd 1955 to October 1st 1956 he became the Governor of undivided Mumbai. On January 13th 1957 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the then Prime Minister of India inaugurated the Hirakud Dam. On May 19th Construction work of Paradeep Port was announced, Foundation Stone was laid for State Museum at Bhubaneswar. On January 1st 1958 Foundation Stone for Utkal University at Bhubaneswar was laid down by the then President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Lalit Kala Academy and Kala Mandal, construction of Secretariat building, Rajbhawan and Assembly buildings were set up during Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab's regime. On May Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab became the Chief Minister of Congress Democratic Council Ministry. The land reformation bill initiated beg was another milestone. In 1967 he formed the Jana Congress Party and 1971 he got elected to the Bidhan Sabha from the Indira Followers Congress (J). In 1977 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab took retirement from Active Politics. In 1978 his wife Subhadra Mahtab passed away. In 1981 April 16th the daily 'Hirakhand' was

published from Sambalpur, 1983 'Gaon Majlis' received the Kendra Sahitya Academy Award. At the age of 88 years on January 2nd 1987 Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab breathed his last. Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab played the pivotal role in the onerous task of amalgamation of princely states with the Odisha province. The propagator of the new era in Odisha will remain immortal for generations.
