

Role of Newspaper in Protecting Language: A study of Contribution of Utkal Deepika in Odia Language Movement.

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Abstract: Growth of any civilization is primarily based upon a fruitful interdependence of Journalism, Literature and Society. Literature and Journalism have a symbiotic relationship. Literature has enriched the field of Journalism likewise the emergence of the field of Journalism has in turn promoted the development of Literature. Since time immemorial many newspapers and periodicals have immensely contributed to the growth and development of language and Literature. On many occasions newspapers have helped in protecting the essence of a language. The present study has explored the detail background of language movement in the state of Odisha and the contribution of 'Utkal Deepika' in it. The study analyses the role of Utkal Deepika in establishing odia as an independent language.

Keywords: Journalism, Odia Language movement, Literature, Odisha, Utkal Deepika, Newspaper.

Introduction to Odia Language movement

In the time of British rule the Odia speaking people were kept in different administrative units. There was lack of political unification among the Odia speaking people. The Odia speaking territories virtually became part of four provinces - Bengal, Madras, Central Provinces and Bihar. The Odias were linguistic minorities in these provinces. So for this reason, the linguistic majorities of these provinces had neglected and dominated the Odias. They also had taken many oppressive measures to abolish Odia language. After the spread of English education in Orissa in the second half of nineteenth century the Odia people became conscious regarding their mother language. During this period the Odias showed interest for Odia language and culture. Odia speaking people started political movement for formation of a separate province, in which they will able to preserve and develop their own language, culture, tradition, and heritage. The Odias struggled for many years to achieve the said goals. Henry Ricketts the Commissioner of Orissa Division proposed the merger of Sambalpur with the Orissa Division. In the year 1868 Sir Stafford Northcote the Secretary of the State for India also viewed that the Odia speaking areas should be clubbed into a single administrative unit. The Bengalis occupied many official positions in Orissa as they were educationally advanced people. Some Bengalis tried to abolish Odia language and gave opinion for re-placement of Odia by Bengali medium of instruction in the schools of Orissa. Uma Charan Halder, a Bengali Deputy Inspector of school advocated the replacement of Oriya by Bengali as the reason of the scarcity of text - books in Odia language. Another reputed Bengali official named Sibadas Bhattacharya also supported introduction of Bengali language in the schools of Odisha. In the year 1870 Kantilal Bhattacharya a

teacher of Balasore Zilla School published a book named "Odiya Ekta Swatantra Bhasanoy". He strongly described that Odia was a dialect of Bengali language. His view insulted all Odia speaking people. There after another notable scholar, Rajendralal Mitra of Bengal supported others view to replace Odia by Bengali. Against this anti Odia activities there were strong protests from Odia elites. Fortunately some Bengalis also strongly argued in favour of Odia language. Renowned person Bhudev Bandopadhyay supported the cause of Odia language. Gauri Shankar Roy, Pyari Mohan Acharya and Raja Baikuntha Nath Dey were the famous Bengalis who provided great support for the cause of Orissa language. W.T. Atk in son the Director of Public Instruction in Bengal during that period gave very bad remark and poor opinion regarding Odia language and literature. He proposed replacement of Odia by Bengali in the schools of Odisha Division. Prominent English Officials like T.E. Ravenshaw the Commissioner of Orissa Division and John beams the Collector of Balasore were very favourable towards the cause of Oriya language and showed their love and affection for Odia language. The Odias of Puri, Cuttack and Balasore were harassed by Bengalis and in Ganjam, Telugus tried to introduce their language in Odia schools. Telugus dominated in all spheres of Government service. They misbehaved Odias in areas and criticized the culture, literature and traditions of Odias. Some vernacular journals at that period fought bravely for the survival of Odia literature. Those are Utkal Dipika, Sambad Bahika, Utkal Darpan, Utkal Putra, Oriya Nava Sambad, and Sambalpur Hitaishini. Associations like Utkal Bhasa Uddipani Sabha, Utkal Ullasini Sabha, Utkal Sabha, etc. fought for the cause of Odias. Above vernacular journals and associations glorified our culture and tradition and appealed to people

participated in the mass movement. Another problem arised in Sambalpur when British Govt. tried to abolish Odia language from offices. In 1895 the Chief Commission of Central Provinces decided to introduce Hindi as the official language in the Sambalpur district. The authority of British Govt. realized that it was difficult for Hindi speaking officers to carry out their official work due to ignorance of Oriya language. It was a harmful decision of the Chief Commissioner of Central Province, as it was against the interest of the majority of the Odia speaking people. Hindi was introduced in the primary schools of Sambalpur and the Govt. Officials posted there were required to pass a Hindi test. Not only had the district of Sambalpur but also throughout Orissa this act raised a storm of Protest. The people of whole Odisha strongly protested against this decision. The Utkal Sabha sent memorial to the Viceroy Lord Elgin on 20th June 1895 against the faulty decision. All protests were in vain and by the end of 1895 Odia was abolished in the court of Sambalpur. The Sambalpur Hitaishini published under the editorship of Nilamani Vidyaratna from Bamanda, played an important role for the restoration for Odia language. A memorial against the imposition of Hindi on the Sambalpur people by the Central Provinces Government signed by three thousand people was sent to the Viceroy Lord Elgin in June 1895. Some important Odias of Sambalpur met Andrew Fraser, the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces regarding the restoration of Oriya language in Sambalpur. A deputation of prominent persons of Sambalpur consisting of Madan Mohan Mishra, Balabhadra Suar, Braja Mohan Pattanaik, Bihari Das Mahant, and Sripati Mishra also met the Governor General at Simla to apprise him about the language problem of Sambalpur. For this cause prominent poet of nature of Barapalli Gangadhar Meher fought bravely to achive the goal. After long struggle Odia language was restored in Sambalpur with effect from 1st January 1903. (Barik PM, April 2006, Odisha Review, P5-P6)

As a result of the relentless effort of odia people Odia language regained back its lost glory. Odisha became an independent state province on language basis on 1 April 1936. Utkal Deepika played a major role in odia language movement.

Utkal Deepika

Though a few periodicals and Journals had started their publication before Utkal Deepika. But Utkal Deepika is widely regarded as the first newspaper of Odisha in true sense. The glorious history of Odia Journalism unfolds with Utkal Deepika. Sri Gourishankar Ray started its publication on 4 August 1866 from Cuttack Printing Company Press. The Then Income Tax Commissioner of Cuttack and people like Sri Bichitrananda Das and Jagamohan Ray extended their cooperation. For its publication financial assistance was sought from

landlords and kings ruling across different areas of the state. Especially the rulers of Barambagarh, Narsinghpur, Athgarh, Talcher and Dhenkanal extended their help and cooperation. It continued its publication for almost seven decades from 1866 to 1936.

Utkal Deepika started its publication at a very crucial period. Odisha was suffering from a great famine (Na anka Durvikhya) during that time. People were dying at many places across the state. There was economic distress all around. At the same time many parts of the state was under foreign rule. So the state was reeling under suppression and autocracy. It had lost its independence. The State was disintegrated and merged subsequently with Bengal, Bihar, Central and Madras Province. Odias had lost their identity, pride and glory. In fact it was the most crucial period in the history of Odisha. So the sole aim of publishing Utkal Deepika was to fight for the rights and dignity of odia people, to strengthen the movement for independent language status to Odia and establishing an independent state province.

Objective of the Study

Objective of the study is to find out the role of Utkal Deepika, the first newspaper of Odisha in odia language movement. In the broad sense the study aims to find out the role of a newspaper in protecting the essence of a language and literature.

Methodology

The study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. The study is based on secondary data only. Old edition of Utkal Deepika newspaper, books, Journals and documents have been thoroughly studied and analysed to find out the role of Utkal Deepika in the Odia language movement. Data has been gathered from numerable sources and then selective data has been enlisted for the purpose. The main time frame for the study was 1866 to 1936 i.e the beginning of the publication of Utkal Deepika to the formal announcement of formation of independent odisha state province. The language movement also gained momentum in the second half of 19th century. Qualitative content analysis has been done on various articles, editorials, features and letters to editor published in Utkal Deepika of that period to establish the contribution of it in the Odia language movement.

Role of Utkal Deepika in Odia Language movement

Utkal Deepika played a significant role in odia language movement since its inception. The related content of Utkal Deepika has been analysed below.

- Number of vernacular Schools are very less in Odisha. The reason is not that people are not interested rather the lack of

- financial assistance to establish the schools is the main problem (Utkal Deepika-04/01/1868)
- Letters to Editors from Balasore
“My blood temperature flared seeing the heinous attack on my mother tongue. How can a son remain silent when his mother is in danger? We are forced to revolt against this discrimination through our Pen. Our so called intellectual Directors and Inspectors are saying ‘Odia’ is not an independent language. The language which is enriched with the writings of Dinakrushna and Upendrabhanja can’t be termed as a language? The beauty of whose infuses loads of enthusiasm in the minds of litterateurs is not a language? Efforts will be made to demean the importance of odia language, because it has varieties of scriptures, books and novels which are widely read and accepted. Brightness for blind is also equivalent to darkness. It has no meaning for him.” (Utkal Deepika -25/01/1868)
 - Meeting of Odia people to revolt against the oppression of Odia language
“The statements of employees of education department are not bound to be true. They may be posted in higher designations. But that doesn’t mean they have more intellect. It seems they can’t demit/leave the attraction of their language ‘Bangla’ and continue to teach Bangla, which is completely fruitless for Odia people.”(Utkal Deepika -1/2/1868)
 - On the context of unavailability of Odia text books
“Is it not a matter of concern that how much money Government has spent to facilitate printing of odia text books or establishing odia Govt. schools in comparison to Bengal? Had the School Book society extended its cooperation, the problem of unavailability of books would have been vanished. Otherwise Odias have never shown laziness in developing their language.”(Utkal Deepika -01/2/1868)
 - Odia language will live forever
“We are not bothered about the fact that if the Govt. Education department employees continue to teach in Bengal our language will die. When Muslims started ruling this land they were doing every official and non-formal communication in ‘Parsi’. They tried to impose restrictions on us. But the importance of our language never diminished. How it will be? Can you hide a dazzling diamond even in the darkness? It will still illuminate the surrounding with its brightness.”(Utkal Deepika -01/2/1868)
 - How the development of Odia language is possible?
Gourishankar, the founder of Utkal Deepika wrote a masterpiece in which he sighted his suggestions to Government for the development of Odia language
 1. Stop the use of Bangla language from both Govt. and other aided Schools.
 2. Government should extend all sorts of support to people who are interested to write Odia books.
 3. Decision regarding introduction of books in School curriculum should not be taken by the School Inspector, who in most cases are outsiders. It should be rather decided in consultation with two intellectual persons from the state.
 4. All the important orders and advertisements of education department should be published in odia language in odia publication to aware people. (Utkal Deepika - 4/4/1868)
 - An anti- odia movement also started during that period. Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya, a Bengali Pandit posted in Odisha took the leadership. He wrote a book “Odia Swatantra Bhasha Noe” (Odia is not an independent language). Deepika strongly revolted against it. Gourishankar wrote a satirical article on it-
“We are surprised to see some Bengalis distributing documents and moving around. They are collecting signatures of people to re-introduce ‘Bangla’ language in Schools of Odisha. Bengalis have failed in the battle of justice. So they have adopted such evil means. Odias should be well aware about all these anti-odia movements.” (Utkal Deepika -2/4/1870)
 - One incident of diluting Odia language took place in Sambalpur (Western Odisha). At that time Sambalpur was a part of Madhya Pradesh Province (Central province). In January 1869 an order to debar odia in Sambalpur was released. Sambalpur was shocked by this incident. The brave Sambalpuri people fought against this unwarranted change. But the Collector of Sambalpur, Assistant Commissioner of Chatisgarh and Chief Commissioner of Nagpur nobody listened to them. The Government became completely deaf to this issue. So It was decided to intimate about the issue to British Parliament. For this purpose a sum of Rs 20/30 was required. But after that over six months passed. No progress was marked in this regard. Utkal Deepika was deeply hurt by this incident and published a special article on 13 June 1869.

“It doesn’t seem that people of Utkal (Another name of the state Odisha) are not bothered about this incident. We are very sad to inform you that the April notification by British fails to win people’s attraction at large. After submitting repeated application to the Chief Commissioner and failing, the people of Sambalpur are feeling dejected. They are forced to break their resolution. It is very sad that people of Odisha are not united to fight for such a noble cause. If they devote themselves completely, then money will not be a major problem. Before a few months people collected around 3 to 4 thousand rupees for entertainment ceremonies in Jajpur-Cuttack. But people couldn’t be able to collect such a small amount to protect the glory of our mothertongue.” (Utkal Deepika – 13.06.1869)

- Another such incident happened in Sambalpur due to lack of awareness, and united effort of odia people. The Government announced the order that Hindi will be the official language in Sambalpur with effect from 01.1.1896. It was a great shock to the odia language movement. Utkal Deepika started its crusade against this oppressive order and published a letter of a pseudo named Justice in English.
“A panic wave has been spreading among the Odia race that Govt of Central provinces has adopted the short-sighted policy of supplementing Odia by Hindi as the court language in Sambalpur. Odia which has been in use from the time of British occupation of the Province...is opposed to the principles of the Govt. Justice and humanity. That owing to an oversight of Govt. Portions of Odia province viz. Ganjam and Sambalpur were separated from Orissa and amalgamated with Madras and Central Provinces under the respective Govt. While properly they should have been under one provincial Govt. according to a strict ethnological principle. But how unnatural and inhuman it is for the central province Govt. to rush with the sword to kill a living language by supplementing it by another language. The language of a nation is the most sacred right that one can ever think of. The Govt. of the Central Province will sanguinely hope, consider the serious circumstances and restore odia to its original status-Justice.” (Utkal Deepika -30/03/1895)
- In 1901 the new Chief Commissioner of Madhya Pradesh Frazer was about to tour Sambalpur. Utkal Deepika got the news and immediately sent its suggestion to the people of Sambalpur through an article.

“We all hope that the people of Sambalpur will intimate the concerns of odia people and persuade him to draw his attention to solve the problem of odia language. They will also let him know how a few foreign Govt. officials has played the gimmick for their own benefits. We also request the odia kings of Madhya Pradesh to intimate the actual facts and help us to restore our glory” (Utkal Deepika -28.09.1901)

- At that time Ganjam was a part of Madras province. Utkal Deepika published a number of articles on the oppressive measures in Ganjam to introduce Telugu language.
“The Director of education department of Madras Province Paol Saheb has written a letter to Governor requesting him to remove odia language from University examination. According to him if odias will be forced to speak Telugu then it will benefit all. The ancient literature of Telugu is very interesting. Whatever little available in odia literature is of no use. He is speaking in the same tune to the Director of Bengal Province, who was successful in introducing Bangla following the similar way” (Paolanka Pagalami, the madness of Paol- Utkal Deepika -23/11/1871)
- Subsequently Odia language was debarred from Ganjam. It led to mass protests and movements in Ganjam. Deepika led from the front. It created awareness among people and published many special articles.
“Our mother tongue is Odia. Even a small child is aware of this fact. We should work together for the betterment of our language. All the developed civilizations around the world are doing their best to enrich their language. But it is very sad that we are not doing our best to protect our mother tongue. Our mother tongue is not a new language. It is very ancient. The people who don’t believe in this fact should go back to history, read the ancient documents. Then only they can get a proof. The people who have read minutely the literature of Dinakrushna, Upendrabhanja and Abhimanyu etc know the richness of our language” (Utkal Deepika -30/05/1878)
- As a result of the relentless effort of Odia people finally the decision on introduction of Odia language in Ganjam came. Utkal Deepika was extremely happy and published another article intimating this great news to all odia people.
“We are extremely happy to inform our readers that after such a long period finally the Madras Government has ordered to introduce Odia in Government

offices by considering Ganjam as an integral part of Odisha. Prior to this the people of Ganjam were debarred from many opportunities as Telugu was the official language. We have time and again published articles on this issue. We are happy that finally their wish is fulfilled. It has also opened another gateway for the promotion of odia language.” (Utkal Deepika -3/8/1872)

- Yet the battle was half won in Ganjam. As the Government was trying to enforce a strange rule of writing odia in Telugu script. Utkal Deepika again revolted. “We have received a letter from Jeypore. He has written that we are surprised and very sad to know about the Gazette notification of last 24 January. It says there is no restriction on odia people for submitting court and official papers in odia language. But if they are written in odia script then the response will be delayed. If odia letters will be written in either Telugu or English script then the response will be fast. There is no doubt that the prime objective of this notification is to remove odia language. This notification makes a mockery of the existing Government order to introduce odia.” (Utkal Deepika -18/4/1874)

Findings and Conclusion

After closely analysing the number of articles published in Utkal Deepika it seems it has devoted a major portion of its space towards publishing articles related to odia language movement. It sincerely followed all the events related to language movement and reported it with ample vigour. In fact the movement gained momentum after the publication of Utkal Deepika. It was being published from Cuttack, but it is needless to mention that it covered all the events of Sambalpur belonging to western Odisha and Ganjam belonging to southern Odisha with the same devotion. It created a mass awareness among people to fight for the cause of Odisha and odia language. On many occasions it is seen that due to the reporting of Utkal Deepika, people awoke to mass protests and Government was forced to take action. Utkal Deepika was the soul agent behind many major decisions taken by the then Government to promote odia language and make it an independent language. From the above study it can be concluded that ‘Utkal Deepika’ played a major role in Odia language movement. Among many other factors, Utkal deepika was the prime agent for which Odisha became an independent state province based on language on 1st April 1936. It can also be said that newspapers play a significant role in promoting language and literature.

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