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## 7. Maharaja Sri Ramchandra Bhanja Deo: The Benevolent Ruler Of Mayurbanj

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### **Abstract**

*The God's son "Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo" was not only the greatest king of Mayurbhanj but pronounced as a benevolent king in the history of Odisha for his phenomenal contribution. The extraordinary contribution in the field of socio-economic development made by Sriramachandra termed his ruling age as the golden age in the history of both Mayurbhanj and Orissa.*

*The remarkable contributions of Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo were many. The formation of the Mayurbhanj as a separate province and reform in administrative procedure and judicial system for public welfare and social development were the major contributions for Mayurbhanj. The other noble contributions like establishment of forest department, P.W.D. department, formation of trade and commerce, leasing of mine for mineral excavation and processing for industrial development, promotion of handicraft, stone work, cottage industry, digging of canal/dam for irrigation and water supply etc. indicate the generosity of the king. Initiative for health care, education and research like establishment of school for general/technical education, survey, etc. justify the visionary idea of the king for social development and justify the term Golden era in the history of Odisha. The effort of the king for liberating the peasant from Mahajan and initiation of modern land settlement policy shows the democratic principle and inclination of the king for agricultural development and peasant's welfare.*

*In this context, an initiative has been made to explore the historical evidence about the contribution of Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo for the welfare and development of Mayurbhanj and Odisha. The data were collected from various sources connected to the ruling of Maharaja Sriramachandra*

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*Bhanja Deo. We concluded with the findings from the research that Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo is truly a benevolent king and extraordinary people's leader of Odisha for his extraordinary contribution for Mayurbhanj and Odisha. His ruling era is also counted as the Golden era in the history of Odisha for the phenomenal contribution in the field of social, economic and cultural development.*

**Key Words:** *Mayurbhanj, Odisha, Rular, Maharaja Sri Ramchandra Bhanja Deo*

## **1. Introduction**

The genesis of the name Mayurbhanj indicates that the state was named after the two medieval ruling families Mayuras and Bhanjas. The Mayuras as known from their records were ruling over Bonai Mandal and at that period Bhanjas were ruling over Khijjinga Mandal. There were close social and cultural relations between two ruling families. An inscription at Khiching has revealed that one Dharani Baraha, a prince of Mayur family together with his wife Kirti installed an image of Avalokiteswara, at Khijjinga Kotta during the rule of Raya Bhanja, a Bhanja king. The headquarters Khijjinga Kotta was destroyed by Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq in 1361 A.D and the capital was transformed from Khijjinga Kotta to Haripur about 1400 A.D. By that time the Bhanjas appeared to have been culturally influenced by the Mayuras. They had substituted their own royal emblem, the bull, by peacock, which was the royal insignia of the Mayuras. After shifting the capital to Mayurbhanj, in commemoration of the traditional relation of the two ruling families.

According to another tradition recorded by Cobden - Ramsay, the Mayurbhanj state was founded some 1300 years ago by one Jai Singh. He was a relative of the Raja of Jaipur in Rajputna. Jai Singh came on a visit to the shrine of Jagannath at Puri and married a daughter of the Gajapati Raja of Orissa and received Haripur as a dowry, of his two sons the eldest; Adi Singh got the throne of Mayurbhanj state. The annals of the Mayurbhanj Raj family, however say that Jai Singh came to Puri with his two sons, Adi Singh and Jai Singh. The eldest son was married to a daughter of the Puri Raja.

### **1.1 Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja**

In the golden history of Mayurbhanj, the year 1870 the God's son Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo was

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burnt. There is a story "MORNING SHOWS THE DAY" that really happened in the case of Sriramachandra. From his child days his good characters inspire everybody to be a good human being.

At the age of 11 there was a painful incident that happened in Sriramachandra's life. Sriramachandra's father Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanja Deo died of smallpox on the 29th May 1882 when he was only 34 years old. At that time, Sriramachandra was only 11 years old and hence the state, came under the administration of court of words with P. Wylly as its manager.

After his father's death his state came under the administration of court of words with Mr. P. Wylly as its manager. 10 years later i.e in the year 1892 a new game of time changed Srirama's life. In 15th August 1892 Sriramachandra was titled by "MAHARAJA". Before 2 years from the ceremony Sriramachandra trained how to maintain his kingdom. And in future he did it. In his period of ruling the state Mayurbhanj was the top kingdom in all over Orissa. Seeing this all the foreign officers gave him the title of "MAHARAJA".

It was the year of 1896 when Sriramachandra was only 25 years old, he was married with Princess Laxmi Kumari, the granddaughter of Chotonagapur Maharaja Sri Nilamani Sing Maharaja and Maharani has three children one daughter named as Sripadamanjari and two sons named as Tikayat Pumachandra and Chotray Sri Pratapchandra. In 1902 Maharani Laxmi Kumari died of smallpox.

In the memory of Maharani Laxmi Kumari, he made a guest house named as "Laxmi Kumari Guest House". He also made a nice garden named as "Ranibag". In 9th April 1906 a bad incident was held in the Baripada palace. The princess Sripadamanjari was died. This loss was very painful for Maharaja. He made a leprosy home in the memory of his loving daughter Sripadamanjari at Murgabadi. Nowadays this leprosy home is there.

## **2. Reforms of Sri Ramchandra**

### **2.1 Administrative Reforms**

Sriramachandra Bhanja was a ruler of practical wisdom. During his regime the state witnessed many-fold development. He was a truly enlightened ruler and established a council for the state to meet the requirements of democratic Government. The state council had powers to hear appeal even against the

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orders of the Maharaja with the Maharaja exercising his casting vote as president of the council. Criminal, civil and revenue laws and regulations including land revenue settlement, forest, excise and land acquisition laws and rules were enacted by the Maharaja in council.

The state was divided into subdivisions and courts were set up to administer the laws as in British India. A regular system of Thanas and Out-post was introduced as well as a chowkidari system for the interior parts of the state with assessment of chowkidari tax by the village panchayats.

## **2.2 Judicial System of Maharaja Sriramachandra**

During the rule of Maharaja Sriramachandra, the revenue of the state greatly increased, and it was nearly thrice of what it was during the rule of his predecessor. The forest revenue alone rose from Rs.30000 to Rs.150000 per annum. Although there was nothing in the treaty to restrict the judicial power of the Maharaja when Maharaja Sriramachandra assumed charge of his state, the state could only exercise the powers of a third-class magistrate and all criminal cases falling beyond those restricted powers were tried by the district magistrate of Balasore or the district judge of Cuttack. Exercise of higher powers was gradually allowed but death sentences were objected to by the Lieutenant Governor on the ground that there was no precedent.

## **3. The Benevolent Work of Sri Ram Chandra**

### **3.1 Establishment of Trade and Commerce**

The administrative reforms and ability of ruling of Sriramachandra lead Mayurbhanj towards a developing state. Once upon a time the traders of Utkal glorified the state. Maharaja Sriramachandra tried to continue the trade and commerce of Utkal. For this trade and commerce, the Mayurbhanj state was very useful. Mayurbhanj state was full of metals and forest raw materials. So, the Maharaja allowed the traders to use these raw materials for their trade and commerce with other states. For this Maharaja established a small railway track in the state. The Bengal Nagpur railway was induced to cooperate in building the Mayurbhanj light railway to connect Baripada with the main B.N.R line at Rupsa station. This helped further to develop the trade and commerce of the state and added to the welfare of the subjects. This railway was inaugurated by Frazer Shaheb who was the Chotlat of Bengal.

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### 3.2 Establishment of Forest Department

Maharaja started many projects for forest reservation. Before him there was no importance of forest wood. The people used the expensive forest wood for their cooking purpose. Beside this they burn the forest and use it for cultivation purposes. In that way miles of forest were destroyed. Expensive woods burn into ash. So, at that time the forest property was not helping to improve the financial condition of the state. In 1894 Maharaja created a new department named "forest department" for the reservation and creation of new forests. He appointed many officers for the new department. This department is like the British district forest department. The cutting of the forest was stopped. Then it became reserved and controlled the forest. To make the house holding and cultivated materials, Maharaja gave permission to cut the particular quantity of forest wood to the people of his state. At first 88 sq. ft of forest was taken for examination of the new project. But later its area was increased.

### 3.3 Geological Survey

Before Maharaja there were no one can estimate where the mineral resources were presence and what were there cost, how much collection were from them. Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja was the person who can estimate these. Maharaja was appointed geologist Mr. P.N. Bose to survey what kind of ore is present and what quantity is present and their market rate. Before finishing, the survey, the report shows there were many good qualities of iron stones were in the state. There was good revenue collected to the state to export these iron stones to the foreign countries.

### 3.4 Giving Lease of Iron Mines to Tata Company

Many good qualities of iron stones are found at Gorumahisani and the hillside of Sulai part. In 1906 Maharaja gave lease to the one of the most popular rich Tata Company of Bombay. In 1908 Tata Company clean the forest of these two places and built houses and factories for import the iron. The company-built railway tracks from Gorumahisani to Kalimati.

In 1911 the work was ended and the mines worked their way. The iron Company in Sakachi import iron at Mayurbhanj for its working. These iron ore were become the finest ore of India. Because of the iron mine the economics of Mayurbhanj become increased. The people of Mayurbhanj appointed at

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mines and their financial condition became good. They live happily. The Problem of Poverty became gradually decreased in the state.

### **3.5 The Making of Stone Utensils**

Maharaja gave Permission to some stone utensils makers of Calcutta to export stone utensils to foreign countries. He engaged the local utensils maker in this work after they are all trained by the best workers. So, a lot of stone utensils were made and sold at Calcutta. In this way Mayurbhanj become so popular. The people of Mayurbhanj became rich and the revenue was also increased.

### **3.6 Hydro-Electric Project**

Maharaja Sriramachandra also had the Barhaipani Waterfalls investigated with a view to having a hydro Electric Project. An officer of the Engineering Department camped at the sources of the Burhabalanga for two seasons and measured the flow of water in the leanest months of the year. A British firm was invited to advice. Mr. C.H. Doglas was survey the quantity of hydroelectricity for the whole state in 1907. A bond was sign in 1908 by the British company named British wasting house and electric manufacturing company for Provide hydro-electricity to Calcutta and other places. Unfortunately, the Maharaja died before anything came of it.

### **3.7 Establishment of P.W.D (Public Work Department)**

Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja was an ideal maker at his time. He established a new department called P.W.D. making for roads, pools, offices, guest houses, police station, court, Hospital Library and School etc. All the works of P.W.D was held by the supervision of state Eng. Mr. K.N. Martine.

### **3.8 Establishment of Cottage Industry**

The Tasar was made their Cell in the trees like Asana and Tut in the forest of Mayurbhanj. The threads of Tasar were import from the cells of the Tasar. At the time of Maharaja, the weavers were made beautiful saris, bandle clothes, mattha from the thread of Tasar. The weaving of Mattha was known one of the most leading weaving industry in Mayurbhanj. Maharaja Provide modern weaving equipment from foreign countries to the weavers for the modernized and developed the weaving industries.

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### 3.9. Water Supply, Dug of Dam and Canal

A systematic geological survey of selected areas was later carried out to develop the rivers wealth of the state and to facilitate irrigation and water supply projects, Maharaja dug well, Ponds and dams. He also arranged dams and bridges for the water supply. He made dams at Baldhica, Haladia and Olmora by the paid of above 6 lakhs. He arranged water Supply to the cultivation land by the small canals from those Dams. The diameters of the main canal of Baldhica dam was 8 and half miles and for this canal the water supply to 2360 acres of lands. As for like Baldhica Dam, the canal of Haldia Dam was above Six miles in length. From these canals water supply to 2243 acres of land. Many developments of cultivation occur from these projects.

### 3.10. The Spread of Education

Maharaja firstly paid his attraction for the development of education, health care and economic development of his state. Without education everyone is like an animal. At first the Maharaja Krishna Chandra high school was an M.E school at Baripada. This school was established by Maharaja Krishna Chandra, the father of Maharaja Sriramachandra. When Sriramachandra became the king. He established this school as high school in 1892 after this high school name as Krishna Chandra high school for the memory of his father. Then it became district school of Mayurbhanj. In 1910 the number of schools became 410. At his father time the numbers of student were 2376 but at his time it became increased to 7899. There was a teacher training school and two number of Sanskrit tole in his time. The S.T, S.C, and OBC students were read in these institutions. Maharaja was careful about the education of S.T, and S.C. students. Maharaja sent many S.T. and S.C students to Foreign for their higher education. There was no individual school for S.T and S.C Girl students. But in 1901 the girl student's numbers were 221 in all school of Mayurbhanj. In 1911 it increased to 337.

### 3.11. Establishment of Technical School

Maharaja thought to teach the carpenters and blacksmith for making modernized equipment. For this he established a technical school at Baripada. Here makers were teaching best quality of wooden works from the teachers. In this way the workers were made of different kinds of equipment and sold in the market to get money.

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### 3.12. Development of Agriculture and increase of Cultivated Land

Maharaja was careful about the development of agriculture and increase of cultivation land. The agriculture depends on rain water. The farmers depend on rain water for the cultivation of his land. But when the rain was not good that year the cultivation goes decreased. So that the famine was held. Beside that the farmer depends on one type of cultivation. Because of the shortage of water, the Rabi cultivation was not held. For this problem the water supply to the cultivation land is very necessary for every season. So that the farmers get good cultivation and they are free from famine.

### 3.13. Health and Health Care

Health is wealth, healthy people are more expensive than diamonds and gold. So, Maharaja was very careful about the health care of their people of his state. For this he was accepted many development works. Maharaja was very careful about the health care when he ruled at Mayurbhanj. Because of Maharaja there were eight numbers of hospitals were established in Mayurbhanj. For the hospitals there were suitable houses and equipment were made. In 1910 there were spend Rs. 17032 only for the health department. In that time the smallpox was spread as epidemic in all over Baripada. Many peoples were died in pre-mature death. The cholera disease also spread. The vaccines were given to people for cured of epidemic disease. So that the smallpox and epidemic disease were not increasing. In 1905 the municipality office was established at Baripada. In that there were 15 commissioners were appointed. From them one Person was appointed as chairman and other as vice-chairman. The health department of the state was given to them. The municipality saw the cleanness and repairing of roads, the electricity of the town and water supply. The extra tax of the municipality was given to the treasury of the state. When Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das was vice chairman of municipality of Baripada there were many changes occur. The goods, vegetables and food materials were sold at two side of the road of Baripada town. The old jail was repaired, and this building as marked of Baripada town. There was ordered not to sells unhealthy foods and food materials were examined by the municipality office every day. So that no vassal food materials were sold at the market. In the survey of Mr. Wally, he stated Baripada as a dirty and unhealthy town but the tried and beautiful sense of Maharaja the Baripada town became a healthy and beautiful town in the state.



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### 3.14. The Economic Development of The Peasant

After the development of education and health of the state, Maharaja wanted to develop the economics of the peasant.

According to old traditions the peasants were not the owner of the land. They have no power to hand over of their land. When the king wanted the peasants to hand over their lands to others. To see the problem of his peasant, Maharaja wanted to change the tradition. Then he ordered to put some law to change the custom. In 1892 the peasants were the owner of the land. Because these laws the people of the state were very happy. According to requirements of the peasants one can sell his land or also used for loan purpose. The Maharaja only takes the revenue, beside this he has no power of lands.

### 3.15. The Modernized Survey of Land Settlement

Before Maharaja Krishna Chandra Bhanja there was no settlement department in the state. At the time of Maharaja Krishna Chandra Bhanja, the lands were corrected by Bhaunira settlement of Mayurbhanj. Here the measurement of padica and area should be written in the register, but it was not perfectly done by Bhaunira settlement. To know the controversy in the feature Maharaja modernizes the survey of lands. So that the correct form of lands was made.

Before there was no Particular law about the collection of land revenue. It was depending upon the collection employers. They collect revenue haphazardly. In many matters they collect many taxes except the land revenues from the peasants. The peasants were very much poor by giving many other taxes. To see the bad situation of the peasants Maharaja partition the land according to their fertilized quality and to fix the tax per annum. This law was fixed to see the product materials. There was an order that the revenue collectors were not collected extra taxes except the land revenues. The forest land and the un-useable lands were given to the peasants by low tax.

### 3.16. The Peasants Were Free from the Mahajana

The peasants got profit from these facilities. But Maharaja saw many of the peasants were very poor. They were takes loan from the Mahajans. It was not easier for the peasants to free from the Mahajans to

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free from the Mahajans. In that time the Mahajans were take sixana for the interest from the peasants. When the peasants were not able to give interest then the rent was increased days by days. The pressure of the rent getting the peasant poorer day by day. The became land less. see the problems of the peasants Maharaja wanted to free from them from the Sahukar by established a law named "Damodopatta". According to this law the Mahajana does not take more interest from the peasants. That means the interest was not increased than the basic rent. Maharaja established storage houses and store grain for the peasant in his state. Maharaja gave low interest to the peasants according to their requirements. Beside this they get money with low interest from the royal treasury. In this way Maharaja free their peasants from the Mahajanas. When no one could listen to the consultancy committee in the time of Maugal bandi of Orissa Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja wanted to establish that committee.

### **3.17. The Contribution of Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Towards Arts and Oriya Literature**

Many historians say that in the past Mayurbhanj was known for its literature, arts and culture. Many years ago, the holy pith Mayurbhanj was living place of the monks like Kanhupa and Luepa. Kanhupa and Luepa were created "TARJYAPADA GITIKA" when they were lived in the Raja hill of Mayurbhani. This Gitika was one of the greatest and oldest creations of Oriya literature which was created in the 10th or in the 10th or 11th Century. The Bhanjabansa Malika century. The Bhanjabansa Rajakula Bansanu and Tentaposi war song was the oldest Creation of Mayurbhanj.

In the field of Orissa's art and literature Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanj's contribution is highly commendable. Two most famous monthly magazines i.e. Manorama and Utkalprava were his contributions. In 1891 the magazine Utkalprava was published at Baripada in the month of April. The most famous Oriya dictionary Purnachandra Bhasakosha (Encyclopedia) was published because of his financial assistance. So, he will always be remembered for his contributions towards Orissa's literature. This popular medical college was established at Cuttack by the donation of Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja and this college was named Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Medical college. "Utkal Sahitya Samay Gruha", "Sriramachandra Bhaban", "Balasore Ramachandra tole", Laxmi Narayana temple was established by the donation of Sriramachandra Bhanja. So, in this way

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Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo's contributions in Orissa's art and literature were in a very high position.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Maharaja Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo was a ruler of practical wisdom. During his regime the state witnessed many developments. He was a truly enlightened ruler and established a council for the state to meet the requirements of democratic Government. Criminal, civil and revenue law and regulations including land revenue settlement, forest excise and land acquisition laws and rules were enacted by the Maharaja in council. He also introduced the chowkidari system for the interior part of the state. Forest and excise were started to develop the forest wealth of the state and to control the manufacture sales of distilled liquors and narcotics and bring in revenue.

A systematic geological survey of selected areas was later carried out to develop the mineral, Wealth of the state and to facilitate irrigation and water supply projects. In the field of education, he also helped many institutions economically. The Cuttack Medical College, Ravenshaw College, Utkal University, Banaras Hindu University and the Utkal Samilani during his regime he has carried on many projects of public interest like the Bripada to Rupsa railway track, Baripada municipality, Jubli library of Baripada, Orphanage and Leprosy home etc.

He has helped the co-operative movement of India by providing land to the founder of India co-operative movement. He has started the publication of two monthly magazines with the name "Utkalprava and Manorama". The Purnachandra encyclopedia was also published by him. Maharaja died on 22nd Feb 1912 at the age of 40. By his death Mayurbhanj lost its brilliant ruler Orissa lost its brightest jewel and India one of the worthy sons.

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