

From Freedom Struggle to State-Building:The Role of Harekrushna Mahatab in Shaping Modern Odisha

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Abstract: Harekrushna Mahatab, a prominent leader of the Indian National Congress, played a decisive part in India's struggle for independence and the political, artificial, and artistic metamorphosis of Odisha. Serving as Chief Minister(1946 – 1950; 1956 – 1961), Mahatab popularly known as Utkal Keshari was deeply inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and combined political vision with social reform. His multifaceted benefactions, including the admixture of kingly countries, the establishment of Bhubaneswar as the state capital, large scale structure similar as the Hirakud Dam, and creation of literature and journalism, deposited him as the foremost mastermind of ultramodern Odisha. His influence extended beyond India, engaging with world leaders and representing Odisha on global platforms. He's truly the first Odia to be extensively honored on a National and International forum.

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Introduction

Harekrushna Mahatab was the leader of the Indian National Congress, a notable figure in the Indian independence movement, and the Chief Minister of Odisha from 1946 to 1950 and again from 1956 to 1961. Utkal Keshari Harekrushna Mahatab, a protean, towering personality of the contemporary period, the mastermind of ultramodern Utkal and the colonist of a new dawn of Odisha, was largely inspired by the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Mahatab's name will be ever inscribed in golden letters in the annals of Odisha Politics for his benefactions towards the development of Odia literature and culture. He who rises over all odds time and again to take through the transition of the post-independence period is undisputable. His donation to Modern Odisha from social, Industrial, profitable, erudite, and political spheres is unequaled. He's truly the first Odia to be extensively honored on National and International forums. His man marshal's capability pre and post-Independence in Odisha history is unmatched. In his life, he not only left a niche of his own among the top leaders in India, be it Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, to Simanta Gandhi or be Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Netaji Subas Chandra Bose. He also left an in depth print of his own among the top personalities of the world, like Albert Einstein, Lord Mountbatten, and from Queen Elizabeth to Dr. J.F.Keneddy. Dr. Mahtab delivered two lecture sessions at Princeton University in the U.S.A. in the presence of Albert Einstein, the only Odia to achieve this feat. He also came the first person to be broadcast on the BBC, London, when he attended the Commonwealth Supply Ministers' conference in October 1951. He was the only Odia to date whose snap was displayed at the BBC, London. He was the glowing luminary in the azure firmament of politics for about 40 times. Words fail to picture the connotations of the multi-dimensional personalities who towered phoenix- suchlike in the contemporary period. His benefactions are myriad to awaken, amp, and enlighten dying Odisha. From 1936 until his demise in 1987, Harekrushna Mahatab remained a central figure in Odisha's political and socio-artistic geography. A freedom fighter, canny politician, fat pen, eloquent lecturer, intelligencer, annalist, and visionary statesman, Mahatab told an entire generation of political leaders, including Biju Patnaik, Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, Nilamani Routray, and Nandini Satpathy(Patnaik & Hussain, 2013). Indeed after formally withdrawing from active politics in

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the early 1960s, Mahatab maintained a strong connection with the public through journalism, erudite hobbies, and public converse. His diurnal column Gaan Majilis in The Prajatantra review came a ménage name, ultimately earning him the Kendriya Sahitya Akademi Award (Das, 2001). His statesmanship, combined with grassroots engagement, distinguished him as a leader whose influence outlasted his term in office. Right from 1936 till his demise in 1987, he prevailed and transfused the Odishan time and lives as a statesman, colonist of a new dawn, leader par excellence. He was in a line of outstanding freedom fighters, an canny politician, a fat pen, an eloquent speaker, a social scientist, a popular leader, an mastermind of Modern Odisha, a reputed intelligencer, a famed annalist, a nation builder, and over all, a statesman in the true sense of the term. Introducing in multidimensional fields, he'd come an institution. He was the architect behind the political career of Shri Biju Patnaik, to Shri Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, and half a dozen Chief Ministers of Odisha. He encouraged youths of the countries like Shri Biju Patnaik, Shri Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, Shri Nilamani Routray, and Smt. Nandini Satapathy and numerous further to join active politics, and hence, by making them contribute to the overall progression of the state. Without his gallant trouble, these fabulous numbers of the state would not be who they're moment. He was indeed the Godfather of Odisha politics. His supremacy as Prime Minister and Chief Minister of Odisha will be elevated in the Golden Letters in the History of Odisha. Indeed if he renounced active politics in the early 60s, he still managed to be the most fat and important personality of the state; the whole state ministry revolves around him. Through colorful extra-curricular conditioning like Journalism, Literature pursuit, and meeting people from all walks of life daily at his Prajatantra Parishad, he set an illustration for the rest of the politicians not only in the State but also in the Country on how to conduct himself when not in power and yet in touch with the common masses. This extraordinary quality sets him apart from the rest of the politicians in the State. He continuously devoted himself till his last breath in resolving the various problems faced by the people of the state by writing personally handwritten postcards full of encouraging words, which helped them to overcome their difficult situation. On many occasions, he also lent financial help to the downtrodden. His daily column titled "Gaan Majilis" in the Prajatantra daily newspaper creates mass history from urban to rural parts of the state. "Gaan Majilis" column became an overnight sensation not only in the state but also in the

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Country, for which he was awarded Kendriya Sahitya Academy Award, the highest honor in the field of literature.

Today when state Government is fighting it out for Mahanadi Water dispute with neighboring state Chhatisgarh, one can feel the paramount importance of Hirakud Dam without which our state wouldn't find sufficient amount of water for drinking, irrigation and hydro electricity generation, thus clearly signifies the mastermind behind the Hirakud Dam, the longest Dam in the World at that time, Utkal Keshari Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, no other Chief Minister after him were able to build another Dam like Hirakud till date. His contributions from all the spheres of life, from Industrial to political fields, will remain to be surpassed for generations to come. His Prajatantra office at Biharibag, Cuttack, is often credited as the Chief Minister's Production center of Odisha. Dr Mahatab occupies a glorious and unforgettable place in the history of Odisha for his work for the independence and progress of the nation in multifarious fields. Speaking highly of Dr. H.K. Mahatab, Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel said, "a true patriot in that he loves Odisha but loves India more. A practical and a born leader, Dr. Mahatab has carved out for himself a name which will live in Odisha's history forever." In the words of Legendary Nelson Mandela, "I met Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab recently from India; I was overwhelmed by his behavior and his personality. I got a deep insight into the Indian Freedom Movement from him."

Integration of Princely States

One of Mahatab's most significant achievements as Chief Minister was overseeing the integration of Odisha's princely states into the Indian Union in the immediate aftermath of independence in 1947. At that time, Odisha comprised not only the coastal districts under direct British administration but also 26 princely states, many of which were semi-autonomous and governed by hereditary rulers. The political landscape was thus fragmented, with varying administrative systems, revenue arrangements, and legal frameworks (Chandra, 1999).

Mahatab recognised that without political unification, Odisha's economic development and administrative efficiency would be severely hindered. Working in close coordination with the Government of India, particularly Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and V. P. Menon of the States Department, Mahatab used a blend of persuasion, negotiation, and strategic pressure to bring the reluctant rulers into the national framework.

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He toured the princely states, meeting rulers and their councils to assure them of safeguards for their titles, privileges, and certain allowances under the Instrument of Accession. Simultaneously, he appealed to their sense of Odia identity, emphasising that political unification was essential for the cultural and economic resurgence of the region (Mohapatra, 2012).

The integration process was not without challenges some rulers feared loss of authority, while others resisted due to concerns over land reforms and taxation. Mahatab's political acumen was evident in his ability to address these concerns through phased administrative adjustments and assurances of representation in the new legislative framework. By late 1948, most princely states had formally merged, culminating in the creation of a unified Odisha province with Bhubaneswar as its planned administrative center (Pati, 2000).

This achievement not only strengthened Odisha's political stability but also served as a model for state integration across India. National leaders, including Patel, acknowledged Mahatab's role in smoothing the process, which otherwise might have led to prolonged unrest or fragmented governance in the eastern region (Das, 2001).

Relocation of the State Capital

Under the leadership of Harekrushna Mahatab, the capital of Odisha was relocated from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar, a decision grounded in both administrative pragmatism and long-term urban planning vision. Cuttack, although historically significant as the state's administrative centre, faced chronic challenges congestion, susceptibility to flooding due to its location between the Mahanadi and Kathajodi rivers and limited scope for expansion (Pati, 2000). These constraints posed significant barriers to accommodating the administrative, infrastructural, and demographic growth expected in the post-independence period.

Mahatab envisioned Bhubaneswar as a modern, planned city that would symbolize Odisha's transition into a new era of governance and development. Drawing inspiration from contemporary examples of planned capitals such as Chandigarh in Punjab he sought to create an administrative hub that combined functionality with cultural heritage. Bhubaneswar, with its central location, better connectivity to all regions of the state, and rich architectural legacy of ancient temples, was strategically chosen to represent both modernity and tradition (Mohanty, 2014). The city's master plan was prepared with input from German architect Otto Königsberger,

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who designed wide roads, zoned administrative sectors, and green belts to accommodate future urban growth (Patnaik, 2009). The decision to shift the capital was met with some resistance, particularly from residents and political figures in Cuttack, who argued that the historical city's importance would diminish. However, Mahatab's political resolve ensured that the relocation process was implemented without major administrative disruptions.

By officially shifting key government departments and the legislative assembly to Bhubaneswar in the early 1950s, Mahatab laid the foundation for the city's transformation into Odisha's political nerve center. Today, Bhubaneswar stands as a testament to his foresight, functioning as a vibrant metropolis that successfully blends heritage with urban modernity.

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Industrial and Infrastructural Development

Harekrushna Mahatab's term as Chief Minister was marked by an ambitious drive toward industrialisation and infrastructural modernisation, aimed at transubstantiating Odisha from a primarily agricultural frugality into a diversified artificial state. Recognizing the state's rich mineral coffers particularly iron ore, manganese, bauxite, and chromite Mahatab prioritised the establishment of diligence that could work these natural advantages. Among his notable enterprise were the Kalinga Iron Works at Barbil, Ferro- manganese shops at Joda and Rayagada, multiple refractory units, a cement plant, a sword tube shop, and aluminum product installations (Das, 1978). To insure that artificial growth was n't solely dependent on external capital, Mahatab also established the Odisha Mining Corporation and the State Financial Corporation, the ultimate furnishing vital fiscal support to original entrepreneurs and small- scale diligence. Inversely transformative were Mahatab's infrastructural systems, particularly in water resource operation. His most iconic achievement in this sphere was the Hirakud Dam, constructed across the Mahanadi River. Upon completion, it was the longest levee in the world and remains one of India's largest multipurpose swash vale systems (Mohapatra, 2012). The levee revolutionized Odisha's agrarian capacity by furnishing time- round irrigation, generated significant hydroelectric power for artificial and domestic use, and played a pivotal part in flood tide control — a patient problem in the Mahanadi delta region. Completing the Hirakud design were

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other significant irrigation and flood tide operation schemes, including the Mahanadi Delta irrigation system, the Salandi irrigation design, and multitudinous medium- scale irrigation works. This enterprise not only bettered agrarian productivity but also created the infrastructural backbone necessary for sustained artificial growth. Mahatab's integrated approach combining artificial development with strategic structure investment helped lay the foundations for Odisha's long- term profitable advancement. His programs reflected an experimental gospel in which industrialisation, resource operation, and pastoral upliftment were seen as mutually buttressing factors of state- structure. Influence at the public and transnational situations Harekrushna Mahatab's political elevation and intellectual benefactions extended far beyond the boundaries of Odisha, earning him recognition on both the public and transnational stage. His elevation as a statesman was reflected in a range of distinguished engagements that showcased his politic chops and scholarly wit. In 1951, Mahatab delivered two lectures at Princeton University in the United States, an event notable for being attended by Albert Einstein, making Mahatab the only Odia leader to partake such a platform. These lectures addressed post-independence India's political and profitable challenges, situating Mahatab as an eloquent voice in global academic converse (Routray, 1986). The same time, he represented India at the Commonwealth Supply Ministers' Conference in London, where his address was broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). This marked a major moment, as Mahatab was the first Odia leader to be featured in a BBC broadcast, with his snap prominently displayed at the pot's headquarters. Mahatab also interacted with several world leaders and influential numbers, including Queen Elizabeth II, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and U.S. President John F. Kennedy. His meeting with Nelson Mandela was particularly noteworthy; Mandela reportedly expressed admiration for Mahatab's nuanced understanding of India's freedom struggle and its counteraccusations for anti-colonial movements in Africa. These engagements not only reflected Mahatab's elevation but also contributed to enhancing India's and Odisha's visibility in the transnational arena during the constructive decades of the democracy.

Political Strategy, Mentorship, and battles

The political reconstruction during the post-Independence period greatly depended on the style of leadership as well as the political perception of Harekrushna Mahatab himself. His programs and

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politics in Odisha during that phase came more or less simple. Mahatab had really surfaced as the unchallenged leader of the Congress Party following the junction of ex-princely countries, of which he'd remained the star mastermind. That achievement not only enhanced his popular image but also increased his political weight with the Congress High Command. Indeed though Mahatab was known as a great leader, he'd vastly impressed Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during his term as Chief Minister from 1946 to 1950. It was in this delicate period of transition that Mahatab not only tried his stylish to consolidate the Congress rule, but also espoused a experimental perspective to make a strong and prosperous ultramodern Odisha. The noteworthy experimental conditioning which were accepted during this period were the Hirakud Dam, the new Capital at Bhubaneswar, the Kalinga Iron Works at Barbil, Ferro- Manganese shops at Joda and Rayagada, four refractories, one cement plant, one sword tube shop, one aluminum factory, and one aluminum string factory. Odisha Mining Corporation, a many artificial estates, and the establishment of the State Financial Corporation along with Hirakud, two other major irrigation systems, similar as the Mahanadi Delta and the Salandi, and seven other medium irrigation systems were taken up for prosecution. The transport network, as well as attempts to exploit the vast mineral coffers of the State and expand the compass of specialized education, was inversely given precedence. Still, around 1949, Mahatab was allowing in terms of joining Nehru's press at the Centre following the latter's suggestion in this regard. For him, it was a important sought- after occasion because joining the Central Cabinet meant he could duly represent Odisha at the Centre and also inversely make room for others to take up party leadership in the state. In the event of joining the central press, Mahatab favored the idea that Nabakrushna Choudhury should succeed him rather of Biswanath Das, who was also an implicit descendant to the post of principal Ministership by his senility. Mahatab's choice of Choudhury as his successor radiated from the former's close fellowship with the ultimate. N. K. Choudhury was forcefully close to Nehru. Mahatap's sense was that by supporting him, he could inversely satisfy Nehru. And more importantly, Choudhury's race meant that Mahatab's political interest in Odisha remained complete as Choudhury could be a Mahatab-friendly Chief Minister rather than Biswanath Das. Therefore, Choudhury was prevailed upon to head the Congress Ministry in 1950. It's noteworthy that Mahatab was suitable to successfully retain his hold over the Congress Party during this phase of Odisha's politics by following the tactics of fixing up quite a

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many youthful politically overhead- looking professionals, similar as Dinabandhu Sahu, Biren Mitra, Nilamani Routray, and Bijayananda Patnaik, popularly known as Biju Patnaik. For quite a long time, these 'Young Turks' acted as trusted apprentices of Mahatab; also, Mahatab's strong, positive equation with these youths enabled him to retain his unchallenged image with the youth and public at large in the State. These youthful leaders had tremendous fashion ability and political influence with the people in general. In 1950, as the Cabinet Minister of Industry and Supply at the Centre, Mahatab extended precious support to Biju Pattanaik to set up diligence in Odisha. He also wielded his influence on some other Ministries to help Biju. In the process, still, he earned the displeasure of Nehru. It was one of the reasons why Mahatab was not included in Nehru's Cabinet after 1952. Patel also advised Mahatab not to feel anxious about a Cabinet position in Delhi. Since Odisha's tyrannizer could not be kept out of politics for too long, he was appointed as the Governor. Mahatab grew fairly alive of Chief Minister Choudhury for the latter's perception regarding land reforms, his conception of Anchal (original) administration, and his policy of Kendu Leaf and several other issues. It was in this environment that the area of difference between the two quondam close musketeers widened, leading to the parting of company. That Mahatab wanted to politically fight back came loud and clear when he started criticizing the Choudhury Ministry through his columns published in his Odia Daily 'The Prajatantra.' also, he could also win over the support of youths like Dinabandhu Sahu, Biren Mitra, and Banamali Patnaik, who backed Mahatab in his anti-Choudhury Ministry positioning. Therefore, while remaining at Bombay as Governor, Mahatab did his utmost to see that Choudhury was removed from the Chief Ministership and himself returned to Odisha as Chief Minister. Mahatab was also getting slightly restless to get down from the humdrum and the kind of political exile associated with the position of Guardianship. In the meantime, Nabakrushna Choudhury's Ministry came under severe review because of its failure on several fronts. Indeed the Secretary of PCC, impelled by popular pressure, had to issue a statement criticizing the Government plaintively. At this point, the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Committee were made public, denying Odisha- Sareikala and Kharaswan the two Oriya-speaking tracts which had been converted to Bihar during the Mahatab Ministry of 1946- 47, and public opinion in Odisha had always demanded the addition of these tracts in Odisha. The SRC report shattered the popular prospects. The State Government eventually had to use force to fight

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the agitation and to take care of the law and order situation, which was really in veritably bad shape. In such a disturbing script, Congress President U.N. Dhebar visited Odisha to survey the goings-on in the State. Taking advantage of this, a section of lawmakers- allegedly Mahatab's men contended before Dhebar that unless leadership was changed, the possibility of winning choices in 1957 was remote. They further demanded that Mahatab be installed as the leader to head the Congress Party in Odisha. But Dhebar turned a deaf observance to similar allegations, as he sounded to have taken it for granted that Mahatab was necessary in engineering this kind of anti-Choudhury vitriol. Also, the anti-Mahatab body in the Odisha Congress inversely complained to Nehru that Mahatab was promoting body in the State Congress Party and thereby weakening the cohesion and discipline in the organisation. Nehru, too, was relatively unhappy with Mahatab when the ultimate, being the Governor of Bombay, kept him involved in the politics of manoeuvre to oust N. Choudhury. Therefore, in a particular letter to Mahatab (13 04.1956), Nehru explosively appertained to the contended complaint against the 'Mahatab Party' and asked the ultimate to 'tolerate' the Choudhury Ministry for a many months more. Mahatab, in his reply to Nehru, on 15th April, 1956, vehemently denied all the allegations against him. While stating that there was "cohesion and unity" in the party, he refocused out that Congress moment is veritably unpopular and it's getting more and more unpopular every day. Talking about Choudhury Mahatab wrote "It was pure Trivedi, working as Governor, said," It was in this environment that the Congress High Command had to seriously considered over the change of leadership. From among the three probable indispensable campaigners for the Chief Ministership videlicet Biswanath Das, Nityananda Kanungo, and Mahatab. Mahatab's name was cleared by the High Command. This was because Biswanath Das's candidature was not approved by Nehru. Kanungo decided out of the leadership contest in favor of Mahatab. It was in this situation that Azad pressed Mahatab to take up the responsibility. still, Mahatab originally showing his disinclination for the offer wrote back to Azad that indeed though fifty congress houses and other assembly women were pressurizing him to abdicate and get back to Odisha, he wanted to "keep frosty from Odisha politics" and rather argued for the duty of chairman's rule and claimed that Mahatab should unhesitant take up the responsibility. But doubtful of Nehru's station towards him, Mahatab gave an intelligent reply to Azad on April 26th, 1956. He said, "I've no desire work for him. " On October 18th, 1956, Choudhury abnegated both from his office as well as the

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Congress and left for his Vihara at Angul on bottom, accompanied by his woman Malati Choudhury, both carrying their particular things on their shoulders to join the Sarvodaya Movement and no way to return to politics." Mahatab eventually came back from Bombay to assume leadership on October 19, 1956. Returning to power, Mahatab handed leadership to the Odisha Congress for the alternate General choices in 1957. In this election, Congress could secure only 56 seats with 38 of the total votes, whereas Ganatantra Parishad, as a redoubtable political party, had the support of the independents. He was the chairman of

Academy and Sangit Natak Academy for a couple of terms... He received an honorary Doctorate from Andhra University, an honorary D.Litt. from Utkal University, and an honorary Doctorate of Law from Sagar University. The Odisha State Central Library, the apex library of the state public library system of Odisha, is named after him as Harekrushna Mahatab State Library. It was established in 1959 with 33-acre campus at the State Capital, Bhubaneswar.

Grooming Future Leaders

A defining aspect of Harekrushna Mahatab's political strategy was his emphasis on leadership cultivation as a means of ensuring continuity in governance and policy direction. Recognising that sustainable political progress required capable successors, Mahatab actively identified, mentored, and promoted emerging leaders within the Odisha Congress framework. Among those who benefited from his guidance were Biju Patnaik, Biren Mitra, and Nilamani Routray figures that would later occupy prominent positions in state politics and contribute significantly to Odisha's developmental trajectory (Bhuyan, 2010).

Mahatab's mentorship extended beyond political sponsorship; he instilled in his protégés an appreciation for pragmatic governance, grassroots political engagement, and the balancing of regional priorities with national policy imperatives. His approach combined opportunities for administrative responsibility with political exposure, allowing these leaders to develop both bureaucratic competence and mass appeal.

This systematic cultivation of political talent ensured that Mahatab's vision centered on state integration, industrial growth, and social reform—continued to shape Odisha's governance even after his formal tenure. By fostering a generation of capable administrators and politicians,

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Mahatab demonstrated an understanding of political leadership not merely as a personal role but as an institution to be sustained across decades.

Conflict with Nabakrushna Choudhury

Although Harekrushna Mahatab and Nabakrushna Choudhury initially shared a cooperative political relationship within the Odisha Congress, their alliance gradually fractured over substantive ideological and policy disagreements. Central to their divergence were conflicting approaches to land reform, the management of the lucrative Kendu leaf trade, and differing visions for the state's administrative structures (Das, 2001). Mahatab's pragmatic, industry-oriented developmental strategy often contrasted with Choudhury's more socialist and agrarian-focused policy orientation, creating persistent tensions within the party's leadership.

The rivalry extended beyond policy debates into the public political arena, with both leaders engaging in pointed criticism and strategic manoeuvres to consolidate influence. This contest became one of the defining political rivalries of post-independence Odisha, shaping intra-party dynamics and influencing state policy directions during the 1950s.

Following Choudhury's resignation as Chief Minister in 1956, Mahatab returned to the position, steering the Congress through the 1957 state elections. Although he succeeded in retaining power, the Congress's reduced electoral margin reflected both the lingering effects of internal divisions and the changing political landscape of the state.

Cultural and Literary Contributions

Beyond his political career, Harekrushna Mahatab distinguished himself as a historian, journalist, and cultural leader, contributing significantly to the intellectual and artistic life of Odisha. His leadership extended to the literary and performing arts, serving multiple terms as president of both the Odisha Sahitya Akademi and the Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi. In these roles, Mahatab championed the preservation of the Odia language, literature, and traditional performing arts, while also encouraging contemporary cultural expression.

As a writer, Mahatab demonstrated remarkable versatility, producing works that resonated with both rural and urban audiences. His *Gaan Majilis*, a collection of essays blending

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historical insight with cultural commentary, reflected his ability to engage with the lived experiences of common people while addressing broader social themes. His literary output combined narrative flair with a historian's attention to context, making him an influential voice in shaping modern Odia cultural consciousness. In recognition of his contributions to scholarship and public life, Mahatab was awarded honorary doctorates by Andhra University, Utkal University, and Sagar University. Further cementing his cultural legacy, the Harekrushna Mahatab State Library was established in 1959 in Bhubaneswar, a landmark institution in Odisha's public library system and a testament to his commitment to public education and access to knowledge. Through his literary works, institutional leadership, and cultural advocacy, Mahatab played a pivotal role in strengthening Odisha's cultural identity during a period of rapid political and social transformation.

Legacy and Recognition

Harekrushna Mahatab's leadership fundamentally reshaped the political, economic, and cultural trajectory of Odisha in the decades following independence. His integrated vision encompassing state unification, modern infrastructural development, industrialization, women's empowerment, and educational reform earned him the enduring honorific Utkal Keshari ("Lion of Odisha"), a title that reflects both his political stature and his symbolic role in shaping the state's identity. Mahatab's contributions extended beyond his tenure in public office, as the institutions and projects he championed continued to influence policy and development in subsequent decades. Among these, the Hirakud Dam remains a cornerstone of Odisha's agricultural productivity, industrial expansion, and hydroelectric capacity, underscoring the lasting relevance of his developmental policies (Pati, 2000). In recognition of his national significance, a statue of Mahatab was installed in the Central Hall of the Indian Parliament in 1989—a rare honor that situates him among India's most influential post-independence leaders. This symbolic placement underscores his dual legacy as both a regional architect of Odisha's modernisation and a figure of national political consequence.

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Today, Mahatab's career is remembered not only for its tangible achievements but also for the political foresight and cultural commitment that underpinned his approach to governance. His enduring influence remains visible in Odisha's political institutions, developmental strategies, and cultural self-perception.

Conclusion

Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab was a multifaceted leader whose contributions transcended politics. He laid the foundations of a modern Odisha by integrating princely states, relocating the state capital, initiating industrial and infrastructural projects, and promoting cultural and literary excellence. His influence was acknowledged nationally and internationally. His life's work reflects the vision of a statesman committed to the holistic development of his people, making him rightly remembered as the architect of modern Odisha. He pioneered the amalgamation of the princely states of Odisha with the Indian Union. He had shown the path to Valla Bhai Patel, the Iron Man of India, on how to integrate the princely states into the Indian Union. The capital of Odisha was shifted from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar at his case. Major irrigation systems were accepted by him, and the Hirakud levee came into reality because of his sincere and devoted sweats. He was a hot advocate of women's commission and education. His determination and fidelity to upping the poor and backward classes made people of Odisha see him as their supreme leader. Dr Mahatab was a multifaceted personality and a protean genius who was considered the Maker of Great Odisha. The statue of this great leader was installed in the Central Hall of the Parliament in 1989. His vibrant nature and intrepid station for the cause of Odisha made the people call him 'Utkal Keshari' or the captain of Odisha.

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