

Conclusion

The Partition of Bengal in 1947 and the subsequent socio economic and political turmoil have ever been a matter of great concern. The depth and complexities of Bengal partition can not be fully understood through a general analysis of the high politics of the major political parties only. Right from the introduction of Diarchy in 1919, the minor political parties appeared on the political scene of Bengal and elsewhere of India with specific programmes and objectives different from the major political parties. From this time these parties responded in different ways on various occasions considered to be crucial for the history of Indian national movement. The overarching presence of the major political parties, however, created problems time to time for these minor political parties to balance their transnational Bengali identity with the political decisions taken by the former for the purpose of all India political problems. India was partitioned in spite of having two major parties with similar backgrounds and structures mainly because of the prejudice on the part of the parties towards one another. The Indian National Congress was not ready to accept Muslim League as the representative of the Muslims and claimed itself to be the representative of all communities. On the other hand the leaders of the Muslim League were not interested in conceding their position as being the spokesmen of the Muslims to any other political party. Therefore the sentiment that the Congress was a Hindu body, and that in spite of the presence of a few Muslims in the Congress, it did not represent the Muslims, gained a ground in Bengal. As soon as the Muslims entered politics formally and acquired a separate constitutional identity, a number of Muslim political

parties emerged to safeguard the interests of their community. These parties were not more than in a form of electoral adjustment , however, they signified the dilemmas and confusions of the non Muslim political parties in adopting the Muslim cause openly. The Swarajist failure to implement the Bengal Pact of 1923 further consolidated the Muslim block in the assembly. There were a few in the Bengal Congress who took serious concern on the very fate of the pact. A large section of the Congress including the militant revolutionaries was overly anti Muslim while others only paid a lip support to the pact. If after the untimely death of Chittaranjan Das in 1925 the Congress and the Swarajists had then taken anti zamindar stand inside and outside the legislature , the peasant masses of Bengal could perhaps remain out of the sectarian influences. If it could happen, the peasant masses might have been involved in anti colonial struggle under the leadership of the nationalist parties. However, the very unwanted development took place in Bengal politics. It is noteworthy in this respect that the Swarajists equally failed in sustaining its Hindu support base intact in Bengal. At a time when attempts were made to whip up sectional and communal divisions in Bengal from early 20th century, the Bengali Hindus remained in general cold to the movement of the All India Hindu Sabha. The communal commonsense of 'dying Hindus' did not evoke considerable response from the large section of the Bengali Hindus. As soon as the politics of reservation and communal electorates received a boost under the new system of representative government in the 1920s, a considerable section of the Bengali Hindus felt an urgent necessity to institutionalise Hindu community consciousness if not a manner the minor Muslim parties had done. The political vacillation of the Swarajists perpetuated the position of the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal, however, the Bengali Hindus in general never took the Suddhi and

Sanghathan propagandas seriously rather took an ambivalent position on the electoral role of the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal. For a certain period of time Hindu Mahasabha movement remained as a socio-cultural movement in Bengal and the Bengali Hindus opted for some other minor parties like the Nationalist Party to stand by their cause inside the legislature. The *Hindu Mahasabha* like the minor Muslim parties did not take any wide scale programme against social abuses and especially against poverty and illiteracy. Neither the Sangathan movement addressed the basic reasons of low caste alienation in Bengal nor did it take the cause of removing untouchability forever. It was basically concerned with the politics of number and chooses those issues which would cater the needs of organizing the Hindus from a pure political view point. The economic aspects of Depressed Class problem had never been taken seriously by this party and it left the fate of this class in the hands of some over exposed city politicians who occasionally traveled in the rural areas of Bengal either for electoral meeting or for providing lectures on the issue of strengthening the consciousness of the Hindu community.

At the time of the Communal Award and the Poona Pact uproar in the province, the so called leaders of the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha failed to respond adequately to the Depressed Class problem because the Depressed Class people were seen to have been lacking their confidence on the Hindu Mahasabha and even the anti Award Congress Nationalist Party did not take up their causes seriously. In their efforts to balance a spontaneous protest against the anti nationalist spirit of the Communal Award with the justifications of safe guarding Hindu upper caste interests, the Bengali Hindus of either or the other minor parties lost themselves before the

mischievous designs of the colonial government and the sectarian forces. In the meantime an attempt to resolve the communal and caste question on provincial basis by some leaders from both the communities failed to get matured without the official sanction of the high command of the Congress and the Muslim League. From this point the roles of the Congress and the Muslim League became conspicuously diverse. With the passing of the Government of India Act in 1935, the imminent danger of communal and sectional rivalries took a visible turn towards constitutional politics. Nevertheless, the legislature under the new constitutional framework looked like an imposed one and the so called popular parties accepted it as an opportunity to satisfy their aspirations as well as to make a test of their ideologies before the newly franchised electorate. Since the Muslim League had not yet attained the status of a solid political party in Bengal, the Krisak Praja Party fully utilized the privileges and possibilities of separate electorate in Bengal. Unfortunately the popular political programmes and objectives of this party did not reach up to the mark of expectation because of the situational obligations to make an adjustment with the Muslim League. Suffering from some ideological uncertainties, the Congress did not come to a coalition with the Krisak Praja Party in Bengal after the election of 1937. Had the Congress high command thought in favour of Bengal, the course of future politics might have been different.

It was not the first time that Bengal had suffered from the manipulative impact of all Indian politics rather it happened to be a regular feature of Bengal politics ever since the question of Bengali exclusiveness had emerged on the political scene. The most important instance of this exclusiveness was that here in Bengal most of the peasant masses were

Muslims and most of the zamindars and moneylenders were Hindus. Till the vivisection of the province none of the minor political parties satisfactorily handled this crucial trend of Bengal politics and fell within the same quandary of separating religion from economic language of politics. Those who could achieve some success in this regard were the minor communist parties and the Krisak Praja Party. But the ground realities of colonial compulsions did never make it an easy task for those popular parties. It is a fact that the same degree of success was not attended in case of coalescing the anti feudal ideas of the peasants as had been achieved in carrying to the peasants the ideology of anti colonialism. The response of the peasants seems to have been weak to the call of anti imperialism and the call of anti feudal violent revolution. The minor communist parties failed to realize that unless the anti feudal programmes of their parties were sanctioned by the historical consciousness of the peasants themselves, the movements against the rural exploiters would neither be dynamic nor be justified from a peasant point of view. Most of the minor parties who were active in the peasant front of politics in late colonial Bengal had totally surpassed this fact that the revolutionary ideologies and radical programmes would not be successful in mobilizing the peasantry unless the mindset of the peasantry was ready to accept an overall transformation of their pre existing consciousness. The Young Comrade League made a direct entry into the realm of peasant politics with some revolutionary programmes but could not realize the necessity of carrying on those programmes into a wider direction to transform the political consciousness of the poor peasants. A sheer sense of economism always prevailed in the consciousness of the leaders although it was not enough to change the existing norms of socio economic imbalance in rural Bengal. In the 1930s almost all the minor communist parties were

passing through a phase of political vulnerability when practical difficulties like financial or organizational weakness limited the possibilities of wide scale movement in Bengal. It is not to deny that in this situation also the minor communist parties attempted to make a separate place for themselves in popular politics. Had the higher leadership of these parties been a little serious about educating its workers on the actual objectives of Socialist Revolution, they might have created conditions for the transformation of peasant consciousness towards the goal of revolution. In that case the actual objectives of socialist revolution in a colonial situation would have been near the reality. Each of the minor communist parties claimed to be the real communist party. This sense of communism was visible in case of party discipline and in a sense of leftist sectarianism. However, factional disputes and ideological rigidity of the leaders retarded the growth of communist movement to a greater extent. It was the lack of understanding of waging an ideological struggle from the part of the communists that after a certain level of politics sectarian forces took a hold over the popular movements and the same peasants, who were mobilized on class line early, then joined hands with the sectarian forces. It was seen that once the economic grievances of the peasants were addressed to an extent, the existing consciousness of the peasants fell to get jeopardized within the communal or sectional whirlpool of vested interests. In fact it was very much true in case of the Krisak Praja Party. The radical agrarian programmes of this party fell short to mobilize the poorest section of the peasantry because of the growing communalization of the agrarian class structure from early 1930s when the immediate patron of the lower peasantry easily came within the influence of the communal vested interests due to their growing insecurity in face of the new socio economic challenges in the post Depression period. If the Krisak

Praja Party could wage a real fight against the existing system of socio economic structure in rural Bengal, the majority of Muslim peasants might have some opportunities to foster their political consciousness with economic struggle and larger transformation of the society by simply legitimizing the spirit of radicalism. However, the dramatic rise and the gradual fall of this party can be viewed within the circumstantial compulsions equally generated by the major political parties and to some extent by the political dualism of its leader.

The minor political parties who were mostly active in the labour front were not free from the anxieties of the time. Apart from dueling with the inner tensions of labour consciousness, these parties exercised much more of their energy into trade union disputes and made tactical strategies of labour control. One may not deny that official restrictions and a continuous tussle with the right wing leaders of the Congress over labour issues endangered the prospects of radical labour reforms from the part of these parties. All the more in their bid to take a Comintern line of experience, they often neglected the actual issues of labour discontent germane to a colonial situation. Neither they had come to an understanding on how to lessen the difference between them and specially the non Bengali workers nor did they address labour issues from a nationalist perspective. The utter insecurity and helplessness of these parties could have been seen in face of state sponsored communalization of the labour issues in the last years of 1930s. At this time practically the labour representatives of different parties remained more or less busy with a kind of economism lacking the spirit of wide scale transformation of labour consciousness towards anti imperial nationalist perception. The Bengal Labour Party, the Samyraj Party, Workers' Party

and the others after a period of cavernous labour activities even ceased to exist while the Workers and Peasants Party, the Congress Socialist Party and the official Communist Party fell short of keeping the workers immune from the forthcoming challenges of the critical time ahead. In this study the minor student organizations have been given a special place in order to make a proper realization of the popular language of politics although these organizations did not work in a form of a political party or a mere pressure group. They indeed helped to extend the constituencies of popular politics in Bengal but at a time exposed the conflicts and dissensions of the minor parties over the issues of student discontent in particular and popular movements in general.

After Britain entered the Second World War in 1939, the minor political parties responded differently to this most obvious incident of the century. The stand and policies taken by the minor political parties during the war and the Quit India movement not only revealed the self-seeking attitudes of a few but also emphasized the need to understand the political mechanism of these parties for a better understanding of the situation. If the rise of Forward Block and the Revolutionary Socialist Party could have made the leftist forces more stable and organized than the previous period, it was the changing role of the communists on the character of the war, which totally revised the existing language of politics in Bengal. The Peoples' War line of the communists changed the outlook of the minor parties on the very character of the communists and until the partition of the province, the communists could not come out of the criticisms of betraying the national causes at the hour of need. In this study it has been discussed that how the changing political viewpoint of the minor political parties gradually became invalid in face of the growing

political activities of the Congress and the Muslim League in Bengal. Neither they realized the potentialities of Bengali identity nor did they make any attempt to raise the voice of Bengal before the Indian public opinion. Keeping in view these issues it may be pointed out that most of the minor political parties who had directed the course of Bengal politics from 1920s failed to play a decisive role on the question of Bengal at the time of partition. Apart from the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Communist Party of India, most of the minor political parties were historically non-existent at that moment. But other minor political parties also remained as silent spectators when the whole nation was on the trial for its destiny. It is likely that had there been any positive response from the minor political parties, the future of Bengal as well as the identity of Bengalis would have been different and the history of Bengal might have been written otherwise.