

Chapter II

Sectarian Politics and the Minor Political Parties: Early 1920s to 1932

The twenties of 20th century Bengal was provided with a self-consciousness of communal identities. The construction of communal identities was to be viewed in the context of a search for nationhood or a special place within the nation by a group of people for the protection of their community interests. The development and consolidation of Hindu Block in the 1920s in Bengal had received its essential spirit from the so-called ideas of a demographic decline of the Hindus. This idea of demographic decline was first brought before public attention in a series of articles published in the '*Bengali*' in 1909 by Colonel U.N Mukherjee. Later a pamphlet was published on this subject called, '*Hindus—A Dying Race*.'¹ Afterwards the communal common sense of a 'Dying Hindu' emerged as one of the recurrent themes of Hindu political discourse and the so-called anxiety of being outnumbered by the 'growing' Muslims became one of the useful instruments for mobilizing a distinct Hindu electorate. In case of the Muslims the matter was different. The construction of a separate block for the Muslims was to be located on the back ground of the democratizing project taken by the colonial government from late 19th century. Right from the early 20th century a series of efforts had been taken to establish the distinctiveness as well as the exclusiveness of the Muslim community. The basic theme of these efforts was to defend separate electorate for the Muslims that their

representation of the communal groups would be continued with a claim for a separate status within the new political set up. Even after the Lucknow accord of 1916² a section of the Bengali Muslims endeavored to focus on the theory of Hindu dominance in the proposed legislative share for the Muslims in the Bengal council.³ it was the colonial government which totally overlooked or wanted the diversities and of a communal identity. By simply providing equal status to multiplicities different religious communities it underlined the importance of religion as a powerful force to construct a political community, homogeneous in character but divorced from the historical complexities of other primordial identities. Side by side the task of consolidating different community identities other than religion was carried on through the census operations from the later half of 19th century. In the context of this interplay of identity and the politics of democracy Hindu and Muslim identities were constructed in the light of their past, however, the process was not the same. It was different in the scene that the issues of religion, caste and language in both of the cases were handled differently at the time of making experiments with democratic rights in a colonial situation. One can see an underlying similarity between the projects of identity formation adopted by the Hindus and the Muslims respectively. In opposition to the idea of a homogeneous universal nationalism the Muslim League propagated the ideal of communitarian nationalism and the best fitted partner of this theory from the Hindu side the Hindu Mahasabha also utilized the same logic of separate Hindu identity in terms of race, religion , language and territory. The last item i.e. territory made the ideal of Hindu communitarian nationalism more vibrant and less vulnerable than the religious nationalism of the Muslims.

Hinduism means the 'ism' of the Hindus' and the word Hindu has been derived from the word Sindhu, the Indus, meaning primarily all the people who reside in the land that extends from Sindhu to Hindu, Hinduism must necessarily mean the religion or the religions that are peculiar and native to this land and these people' ⁴

This concept of Hindutva had two directions. On the one side it had an appeal of a uniform religion specific to a particular group of people and codified by a single set of collective identity. On the other it had a sheer tendency of dominating other affiliated identities within the category of caste, gender, class or even region. In the changed political circumstances of 20s in Bengal there were enough chances of capturing the contemporary Hindu opinion within the language of sectarian politics . It is to be mentioned here that sectarianism in Bengal politics appeared as the most intense form of communitarian communalism. Unlike the communitarian nationalism this ideology laced the strength and scopes to connect itself with the others, if not in a political way. However, this type of connecting spirit could only be found in the essence of universal nationalism and the absence of such spirit in the ideal of communitarian communalism gave it the negative assertion of sectarianism. Even if the argument that the Hindu Mahasabha ⁵ was born as a supplement of the Congress for not representing the Hindu cause properly by the later, the Mahasabha failed to alleviate the bondage of being seen as sectarian. The 20s of 20th century Bengal witnessed the early developments of a sectarian political language shared equally by the Bengal branch of Hindu Mahasabha, minor Muslim parties and the Swaraj Party after a particular period of time. In the spheres of electoral politics this trend

was too much evident not necessarily in a form of violence but diplomatic maneuvering were done in a fashion that the essence of a sectarian power culture evolved subtly in the arena of organized politics.

I

In 1920s a variety of ideologies emerged on the arena of politics within the confines of colonial public space. The political language of the Indian nationalists now acquired some new expressions in a variety of context. The previous strategies adopted by the nationalists were proved to be inadequate in assimilating all the conflicting interests and the Gandhian leadership, according to Ranajit Guha failed to 'assimilate the class interests of peasants and workers effectively into a bourgeoisie hegemony'.⁶ The use of nationalist volunteers and the ideal of *Satyagraha*-the two most important elements of Gandhian politics became institutionalized in the development of a new discourse of organization, less focused on the colonial-nationalist symposium.⁷ Now the term 'Hindu nationalism' had appeared as a unique combination of different 'Hindu' interests in Bengal with some secular and communal variants of one Hindu interest and both the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha contributed in its development. The Congress brand of nationalism did not fit well with the judicious version of 'Hindu nationalism' promoted by Gandhi and the juxtaposition of the communal variant of Hindu nationalism with that one espoused by Gandhi put the secular brand of Congress nationalism in severe crisis. It was even misconceived and misinterpreted. Although the concept of communalism do constitutes a threat to the idea of Indian nationalism in general (the overarching concept of Indian nationalism encompassed the universal

nationalist spirit of the freedom movement with a concept of nation state), the term Hindu nationalism has always been equated with the idea of communalism. Further more 'Hindu nationalism' often becomes 'Hindu Communalism' by simply nullifying the fact that 'communalism' and 'nationalism' are not comparable at all because communalism does not necessarily produce its own ideology rather it is more likely to appropriate other ideological forces towards their respective objectives while nationalism itself is an ideology not a mere historical condition.⁸ Hindu nationalism got benefited from the Congress brand of nationalism because the latter's challenge to state hegemony indirectly encouraged the development of one alternative to the Congress (a self sufficient representative of the Hindus) by the colonial state. But when these ideologies of Hindu nationalism and Congress brand of Indian nationalism went on to be a sole claimant of the vast Hindu community it put the later into another terrain of political oscillation. However, in case of Bengal it was a late affair.

From 1923 onwards the idea of horizontal restructuring of society began to dominate the mindset of politically aware Hindus who had found it obvious to articulate their '*Hindutva*' through the organizational discourse of Hindu nationalism. Hindu communalism very often was perceived as a kind of extreme form of Hindu nationalism but the former should be taken as a historical process cemented by a kind of antagonism towards the 'others' particularly the Indian Muslims. In this background the sectarian political maneuvering went unchallenged in Bengal from late 20s. The ideal of Hindu nationalism emerged as an ideology to shape up a nation (Hindu) on the basis of a common criterion –Hinduism. In the

1920s this ideology entered into the level of political mobilization and the Hindus as a community began to get organized as a political force with the very idea of *Sangathan* as the supreme creed of the Hindu nation.⁹ Unlike the other ideologies Hindu nationalism remained subject to different set of challenges and its institutional expression the Hindu Mahasabha faced a stiff journey at least in the initial phase in some of the crucial centers of politics. Bengal was one such centre. It did not have a vibrant Hindu Mahasabha instead a marginal and ambivalent one till the mid thirties. Afterwards this organization was appeared to be one of the important political forces—an active partner of the political decision making process in late colonial Bengal. It is worth mentioning that at the initial phase the Bengali Hindus who took almost a cold attitude towards the *Mahasabha*, were brought eventually within the fold of the 'community' politics—an affordable means of nullifying some age old socio political problems both within the levels of ideology and practice.

The question of organizing Hindu identity and the idea of institutionalizing Hindu consciousness had a 19th century legacy of 'Resurgent Hinduism' and in Bengal these ideas by no means were directed against other religious communities.¹⁰ As soon as the notions of responsible government put a hold over the Hindu mind the increasing numerical strength of the Muslims as revealed by the Census Reports since 1891 persuaded Hindu endeavors to reinforce their community interests in face of the Muslim claim of 'protection' and 'weightage'.¹¹ These Census operations had a definite role to play in producing intense communal animosity because in it the 'Religions became communities mapped, counted and above all compared with other religious

communities'.¹² In spite of the so-called threats to the interests of the Hindu community, Hindu consciousness in Bengal did not take a concrete character in early 20s because of the vacillation of Hindu mind between idealism and exigencies of the existing realities. The Bengali Hindus had their own grievances definitely but for a considerable period of time they were in a dilemma of how to sustain the syncretistic appeal of Indian nationalism in face of a mounting cry for protecting the 'dying race' from complete extinction.¹³ Nevertheless, in the post Non Cooperation-Khilafat (1921-22) period the factors like demographic common sense and the bankruptcy of pact politics necessitated the urgencies of unifying at least the nationalist Hindus into a single collective body. In fact the question of the imminent extinction of the Hindus was embedded as a force leading to Hindu consciousness from the late 19th century onwards. Besides the popular enigma of a 'Dying Race' a number of publications by U. N Mukherjee like the '*Hinduism and the Coming Census; Christianity and Hinduism*' came out as a direct response to the Gait Circular of 1911¹⁴. Here the author had focused on the horizontal mobilization of the Hindu society in order to be more congruent with the issues of 'number' in politics--- the most important signifier of power. These publications set the background for the future publications like '*Hindu Sanghathan; Savior of the Dying Race*' by Swami Shraddhananda in 1926 and '*They Count Their Gains --We Count Our Losses*' by a Hindu Mahasabhaite Indra Prakash in 1979.¹⁵ The idea of competitive demography intensified antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims and the inner frustration lying within the phrase 'dying' offered the essential impetus to constitute the Hindus on a sectarian model. Two Muslim majority provinces Punjab and Bengal responded

differently to this call for unification. As early as in 1907 the Punjab Provincial Hindu Sabha emerged on the scene but in Bengal the provincial branch of the Hindu Mahasabha came up in 1924.¹⁶

It was beyond doubt that the nationalist imagination, developed at the time of the Swadesi Movement in Bengal, had an impression of being and becoming Hindu in nature and outlook but this situation was totally different from the notion of Hinduism of the 20s because a numbers of new developments had already altered the popular rhetoric of Hindu Muslim unity in Bengal. With the expansion of the electorates from early 20s the identity consciousness of a section of the Bengali Hindus specially drawn from upper caste bhadraloks with landed and professional interests , had to face a open confrontation with some new social groups and individuals hailing from different socio economic background. In his momentous study J.H Broomfield had had shown that these group of people popularly known as the 'bhadraloks' remained more or less a uniform group because of their exclusive socio economic background.¹⁷ From the third decade of the 20th century the so called homogeneity of the bhadraloks was appeared to be fake and void because after the emergence of Gandhi a good number of socio political changes introduced a new dimension to the overall structure of identity and a new set of political actors emerged in both the realm of 'organized' and 'unorganized' politics. In the heyday of Gandhian politics, the Hindu bhadraloks domination of the nationalist politics seemed to have been constricted and irregular in terms of the anti colonial movement of the masses.¹⁸ It seemed difficult for the bhadraloks Bengali Hindus to make a direct entry into the realm of institutional party politics unless

articulating the aspirations of these new political contenders.¹⁹ One such strong political aspirants were the Muslim middle class professionals specially with a rural belonging. Most of them were brought to the constructional politics on virtue of the Act of 1919 which had assured constitutional protection for large minorities.²⁰ It must be noted in this regard that in the Bengal Legislative Council formed under the Act of 1919 was the actual balancing force between the Hindus (57) the Muslims (39) the Europeans, the commercial organs, nominated members from the Indian Christians, British official and the Anglo Indians. These people in the long run were proved to be the most crucial political force in Bengal politics.

No one can deny the fact that as long as the system of separate electorate had remained the contractual political endeavors by both of the communities would not bring anything positive. The Non Co-operation Khilafat accord in a form of a pact did the same mistakes done at the Lucknow conference.²¹ in absence of mutual understanding and a faith on the goodwill of the other, any attempt of unity would have been a failure. Side by side the use of external religious idioms like Khilafat was to hurt at the core of this unity.²² Unless and otherwise, one Bengali newspaper pointed out, rational education and a equal degree of socio economic prosperity was not achieved, mutual understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims could not be achieved in a real sense. Indeed it would be a lengthy process. It required a complete renunciation of every sectarian prejudice from heart.²³ As soon as the political aspirations of the Muslims went out on its path on the background of 1919 power structure, the undercurrent of sheer annoyance and anxiety seemed to become apparent

from the Hindu side. Employment was one such issue which attracted the attention of the leaders in the new representative system. Both of the communities were now in the threshold of a new politics where the game of number was to become the sole indicators of the political destiny of Bengal. During the debate on the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1923 the future trends of politics was reflected properly.²⁴

At a time when religious affiliation acted as a mask over the actual structure of class power in rural Bengal, the Congress failure to step beyond the arena of *bhadraloks* politics indeed amplified sectarian resentments among the majority of the Muslims by simply 'othering' the Hindus in the high politics of late colonial Bengal. It is to be mentioned here that the idea of political mobilization for an exclusive Hindu constituency was influenced largely from the Hindu fear of being outnumbered by the Muslims and no wonder that the Hindu blocks in the 1920s were drawn closer upon a sense of insecurity and political impotency as a whole.²⁵ In the 1920s the common sense of a 'dying Hindu' incorporated in itself a similar anxiety for the conversion of the lower castes in a fearful extent. Even after the establishment of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha by Piyush Gosh in 1924, breath taking news were coming from different parts of east Bengal about the conversion of the lower castes by an external 'other' be it a Christian.²⁶ However, a general antagonism towards the Muslims did not simply integrate the Hindus. These were something catalytic forces. Hindu society had its own reasons and urge of unification. The system of separate electorate had already received official recognition in the Morley Minto Report and in the Montagu Chelmsford Act of 1919, even though

Montagu himself condemned the system of separate electorate 'fatal to the democratization of institutions'.²⁷ By 1920s Bengal was already on the way to become a communal volcano. The camouflaging unity of the Hindus and the Muslims during the Khilafat –Non Cooperation period could not bring anything positive for a healthy operation of the electoral politics in the near future. It could be taken as the starting point of the new political dimensions, sectarian in outlook, but a bit camouflaging in character.

II

The withdrawal of the Non Cooperation movement set new possibilities of political action in Bengal. Apart from the debates on the issues of representation and appointments, the tensions of agrarian Bengal came to the forefront on the political milieu as an unavoidable force of action. Set on the binary interests of the Hindu zamindars –mahajans and the bulk of the peasantry comprising of the Muslims and the lower caste Hindus , the undercurrent of agrarian tensions were ready to toss the exiting pattern of legislative politics . Unless these undercurrents of agrarian Bengal were taken into account, no mechanism of representative politics would have been a success in the representative organs like the legislature or different public bodies. The Swaraj Party was the first minor party to appear in the constitutional political arena. The programmes on the basis of which the Swaraj Party had formulated its election manifesto had little to do either of the underlying tensions of rural Bengal or the question of communal representation in Bengal legislature.²⁸ But its programme of council entry required a solid base of support from the Muslims because the party itself was born on this issue.

No other party or group had proposed it earlier in clear cut terms and C R Das first realized the importance of winning over the Muslims to the Swaraj Party. Muslim support was necessary for the party to create a constitutional deadlock in the legislature –the fundamental objective of the Swaraj Party. But what he had done in the actual place was a bit confusing. Instead of paying greater attention on the issue of legislative non cooperation he proposed one of the most controversial settlements with the Muslims, which in turn put a large section of the Bengali Hindus into complete disarray. The proposed Bengal Pact²⁹ not only heightened the range of Hindu susceptibilities but it was apprehended that this pact had set the Hindu community of Bengal ‘a blaze with indignation’.³⁰ A group of up country Hindus and Marwari’s lent their voice in support of the anti pact campaigns.³¹ In most of the protest meeting the twin controversial issues of cow killing and playing music before the mosques were unnecessarily highlighted. In a whole these issues were drawn into the public arena as a part and parcel of a question dealing specially with the issues of reservation subject to the establishment of self government in the province. The inclusion of these twin issues into the Resolution of the pact indeed demoralized its appeal before the Hindus and afterwards they frequently used these sensitive stereotypes as a favorite subject of discussion, if not in a secular way. . The following debates on the pact both in and outside the legislature marked the constraints of party politics where the novelties of the proposed pact, if any, was bound to be appear as a mere bargaining factors with its target at the underdeveloped majority as a tool to be used in favour of the Swaraj party within the legislature. The annulment of the proposed pact further fueled the sectarian antagonisms in Bengal. One may see here the quandary of the

Bengali Hindus at large. Keeping in view the popular Hindu support behind the Swaraj Party it was quite interesting to note that why the Bengali Hindus were too much anxious on the issues of proposed seat reservation for the Muslims at a time when the Swaraj Party itself was emerged on the issue of non cooperation with the legislature. Logically it meant that either the Hindu support base of the party was not a real one or even the mass appeal of C R Das did not have a solid base to cater the needs of his constituencies. Idealistically it indicated the existing obsession of the educated Hindus to government services and this type of endeavors of the educated Hindus were sufficiently reflected by the contemporary Hindu press. By 1923-1924 the leaders of the political parties failed to realize the simple truth that no unity could be achieved by making pacts rather it was the prevailing unity which headed pacts. **The entire drama around the Bengal Pact question, however, exposed the urgencies of identity formation for the Hindus and made almost a necessity to consolidate the Muslim interests in and out side the legislature.**³²

It was a matter of irony that in the year 1923 when C R Das was to move his ambitious venture on Hindu Muslim unity, a meeting of the leading Hindu citizens of Calcutta took place. At this meeting one of the most important decisions was taken by the leading personalities from different political persuasions.³³ One similarity among these leaders was lying in their anti Swarajist attitude. Most of them were upper and middleclass professionals with a urban belonging and a good number of Hindu landed and business interests assembled there to start a Bengal branch of the *Hindu Mahasabha*.³⁴ Piyush Kanti Ghosh of the *Amrita Bazaar Partika*

took the primary initiative here to activate the Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha and with the active participation of the Bengal Hindu Sabha, the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha emerged to the scene.³⁵ Soon after the establishment of the *Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha* in 1924 some of its leaders tried to project some of the key issues of the Sabha from a Swarajist point of view. It seemed very much natural that a growing political organization would seek for some settlements, if not visibly, with the party in power. It did not mean that the Hindu Sabha reached in a settlement with the Swaraj Party or it had a tacit acceptance on each and every political action of the Swarajists. It was proved from the rigid attitude of the Sabha towards the proposed Hindu Muslim Pact as 'detrimental to the interests of the Hindu Society.'³⁶ However, at the first *Hindu Sammelan* at Patna in 1924 the Hindu Sabhaites failed to reach an agreement on the fate of the Bengal Pact and it became quite obvious from the conference that it was not still possible for the Hindu Sabha to change the Swarajists.³⁷

The proposed pact had created a unique pulsation in Bengal and the controversies aroused from the pact indicated too some extent in which course the politics of Bengal was going to be moved. This proposed pact received support from a greater section of the Bengali Muslim leaders including a host of renowned *Ulemas* like Maulana Shah Sufi, Abu Baqr, Maulana Afsaruddin Ahmed and others.³⁸ But the attitude of the orthodox *ulemas* had never been free of conflicts. The example of Abu Baqr might be taken here. The charismatic *Pir* was associated with many local organizations like *Anjuman Islamia* (Faridpur), *Anjuman Tablighe Islam* (Rangpur). He never overtly challenged the Bengal Pact but tried his best

to protect Muslim exclusiveness by issuing *fatwa* on the question of music before mosque and declared cow killing as a matter of racial pride for the Muslims³⁹ The ultimate result of these was an arousal of Hindu communal sentiments, best captured in the twin discourses of '*dying Hindu*' and abduction of Hindu Women by Muslim '*goondas*'. The well circulated pamphlets like the '*Bangla Hindu Jatir Khoy o Pratikar*' by Tangail Hindu Samaj (1924) and Saileshnth Sharma Bisi's '*Hindu Samajer Bartaman Samasya*' had played an important role in mobilizing the educated Hindus of Bengal.⁴⁰ The mobilization process included several social problems issues like widow remarriage and women abduction. The sectarian rhetoric of 1920s marked the creation of a new public force around the issues of molestation of Hindu women by Muslim hooligans in the predominately Muslim majority areas of eastern Bengal. The metaphor of Hindu women abduction by Muslims now provided a new dimension to Hindu communal discourse with a call for legitimate action against it.⁴¹ The Hindu Mahasabha leaders now stressed on the necessity of a 'physical culture' as the only remedy to save the Hindus—a physically and numerically degenerated race.

The disaster of C R Das's scheme of pact politics resulted in a steady decline of the Muslims from the side of the Swarajists. The critics of Das fanned the assumptions that 'extravagant concessions' had been provided to a 'inefficient undeserving community' and such reservation formula would bring nothing but petty inter communal bickering.⁴² In this regard Hindu Mahasabha leaders like Lala Lajpat Ray and Madan Mohan Malviya had organized protest meeting in criticizing Das's hasty attempt to solve a question of national importance. Malviya's shifting political

stands was very evident at this juncture. Upto the end of 1923 he was more or less a firm believer of Hindu Muslim unity.⁴³ In case of Bengal he was essentially a sinner on the fence. While reacting to the Bengal Pact he asserted that the pact which 'though was evidently meant for Bengal alone', must affect the relation of Hindu and Muslims in other parts of India.⁴⁴ Infact the non Bengali Hindu leaders in every possible manner had tried to draw the Bengal question on the all India platform by swiftly jeopardizing the Bengali priorities. The tendency of mixing up the cause of Hindu with that of Hindu interest remained as a chief feature of the Hindu Mahasabha movement in mid 20s⁴⁵ and the Bengali Hindus could not identify themselves neither with this type of non Bengali issues or with the rigid militant ideology of the Arya Samaj with which the All India Hindu Mahasabha was attached strongly.⁴⁶ Even on the background of the *Suddhi* and *Saghathan* propagandas, the Muslim press itself expressed its hope that the Bengali Hindus would remain aloof from the Mahasabha movement organized by the non Bengali Aryans.⁴⁷ It was true to some extent. Hindus from north India had rallied together with the middle class Bengali Hindus against the Bengal Pact, but they had missed one significant point that the disproportionate economic development of the Hindus and Muslims and the heterogeneous demographic composition in Bengal produced some exclusive political conditions in Bengal. Side by side two types of undercurrents were active there to influence the Mahasabha movement in Bengal in a different path. A section of the upper caste Hindu Bengali took the Mahasabha movement particularly the Samnghthan movement as a social reform movement like that of the Brahmos⁴⁸, one group of western educated Bengalis found themselves almost in a helpless position because their universal

nationalist spirits was not at all sanctioning a direct involvement with a Hindu organization like the Mahasabha. The consciousness of a threatened Hindu identity simultaneously pervaded the Hindu mind at that time. This type of condition was an exception for Bengal only.

The growing desire of the educated Muslims for a share in government jobs required at least an agreement at the elite level. For a section of the Bengali Hindus counted it as an unfair penalty on them. Basically they had no answers to justify their position. They were opposing to an agreement where the Muslims were to get some seats in the legislature and percentage in jobs in keeping with the ratio of population.⁴⁹ The reaction of the Congress was not at all satisfactory to the Bengal Pact. Many Congressmen including the Moderates, the Extremists and the no-changers opposed it vehemently on the very argument that 'Das had trampled under the Lucknow compromise without waiting to see the finding of the Indian National Pact committee.'⁵⁰ Some accused the pact for being a pact between the Hindu and the Muslim members of the Swaraj Party of Bengal, not between the Hindus and the Muslims in general. Surprisingly the Congress leaders in general wanted to apply the draft national pact in Bengal even if it was prepared in the context of the north Indian communal problems by simply overlooking the grievances of the Bengali Muslims.

After the sudden death of Das in 1925 the Bengal Congress leaders who once at least paid lip support to the pact, stood against it in the Bengal Congress meeting at Calcutta in 1926. They did not even pay little heed to the warning given by Sarojini Naidu that 'by opposing this (Bengal Pact),

you are in fact reenacting a greater partition of in Bengal.’⁵¹ Already the Swarajist Muslims accused the pro Congress Swarajists for breach of trust. Already in 1924 the District Muslim Conference at Sirajganj under Maulana Hussain Siraji had scored a grand success vis a vis the Bengal Provincial Congress Conference under C R Das held at the same time and in the same place.⁵² The result was evident in the legislature that within two years the number of the Muslim Swarajists declined into two in 1926 from twenty one in 1924.⁵³

The political language of militant sectarianism grew faster when Lala Lajpat Rai laid down certain points in a meeting at Calcutta on 11th April 1925 for organizing the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal.⁵⁴ Two issues were incorporated into the political agendas with greater importance than others. These were the question of providing physical training to the Hindus and the question of re-conversion of those Hindus forcibly converted to Islam.⁵⁵ This twin issues were brought from the Arya Samaj scheme of work. However, one very interesting letter from some Ananda Mohan Chaudhury, editor of the *Jasodhar Patrika*, Jessore to the Secretary of Bengal Mahasabha Seth Padmaraj Jain must be mentioned here. In this letter Ananda Mohan Choudhury sought the permission of Padmaraj Jain to convert some Syed Naser Hassim into Hinduism. Hassim was of a view that if the Hindu Mahasabha agreed to provide him financial support then he would be converted to Hinduism along with some other members of his family. He even mentioned about Dr. Abdul Gafur Khan, the brother of Akram Khan (editor of the *Muhammadi*) being converted to Hinduism as Sashi Bhusan Gangului. It was his love for Gita, he mentioned, that wanted to get into the Hindu fold and

requested to make the monetary assistance matter a secret one.⁵⁶ This type of documents indeed focused on the another side of the *Suddhi* programme where a kind of foul play might have been at work, if not in a frequent manner.

Nevertheless, the reluctance of the Mahasabha on the question of a vertical restructuring of society brought the impression that it was to take Sanghathan as a process of horizontal unification focused mainly on composite catholicity and mutual tolerance.⁵⁷ The Hindu Mission-one of the non official partner of the Mahasabha in Bengal helped to project this sense of brotherhood along with a sense of revivalism in the Hindu society at large.⁵⁸ However, it could not be denied that the issues like untouchability, castism, depressed class problems were not handled properly by the so-called Sanghathan movement. Numbers of anomalies within the movement itself spoiled its practicability before the public in a greater extent. In fact in the twenties the Mahasabha failed to acquire a position from where it could claim to be acknowledged as the sole representative of the Hindus Throughout the twenties it remained more or less ineffective to impress a large number of Bengali Hindus. Being played by an up country image the Mahasabha performed badly among a section of the Hindu bhadraloks who were seen to stick desperately to the nationalist ideology of the Congress. Hindu Mahasabha did not take a backdoor entry in Bengal like the Muslim League⁴⁶ but stayed open for Hindus from all political persuasions. Nevertheless, it failed to shake off its image of being seen as a subsidiary of the Congress till the 30s, although the Mahasabha's conception of being a 'Hindu' differed sharply from that of the Congress.⁵⁹ Although the Indian National Congress had

'refused to abandon its secular and pluralistic principles' ⁶⁰ in every occasion, the 'Hindu tinge' present in a form of 'cultural internationality' failed to check the unfortunate distortion of nationalist politics in the coming years. Its failure to repudiate the 'communal nationalists' from the rank and file of the party was equally responsible for this predicament. ⁶¹

III

When Khan Bahadur Musaraff Hossain, MLC of Malda as well as the supporter of the Anglo Muslim friendship, moved a resolution in the council for immediate effect of the proposed employment opportunities to the Muslims as per the Bengal Pact of 1923 the situation once again turned into one of the mutual suspicion between the Hindus and the Muslims. ⁶² C R Das remained very much firm on the question that the provisions of the pact would be fulfilled only upon the attainment of Swaraj. ⁶³ At this stage the Muslim press found the most awaited opportunity to demoralize the Swarajists by simply calling their politics as just 'worthless bluffs, fraud and trickery' ⁶⁴. It was the beginning of the end of C R Das's spell in Bengal not only among the Muslims but also among the Hindus.. The reformed council of 1919 pushed the Hindu bhadraloks at a point of no return. They were to work either among the masses for electoral achievements or resort to sectarian political action. .None of these was acceptable to the Hindu bhadraloks because in both of the cases the overall ascendancy of the bhadraloks might be at a risk. Unfortunately the fear of a possible social upheaval could not be checked for a long. The evidence of increasing impatience among the lower caste Hindus and among the Muslims in general arrested the necessitated the

need to organize the peasants. IN the absence of a proper legislative strategy applicable to both the *bhadraloks* and the masses, the Swaraj Party itself went for a partial subjection to Hindu communal influences. In the succession struggle in the Bengal Congress between J M Sengupta, S C Bose and B N Sasmal,⁶⁵ Hindu communal and terrorist groups made direct entry that in the long run the sectarian forces at least got an obvious boost inside the party. The militant rank and file of the Swaraj Party organized their own platform after C.R Das's death. They were opposed to the concept of Dominion Status or to any demand other than Purna Swaraj⁶⁶. The Muslim side was not at all free of squabbles in mid 20s. The political leadership of the Muslim side was far from united either in its goal or specific interests. A section of the Muslim leadership was on the way of organizing Praja conferences for the Muslim tenants while some popular religious leaders and peasant activists were engaged in mobilizing Muslim support around specific symbols of religious identity and linked these identities with land reform issues.⁶⁷ It was of no wonder that the divisions with the level of leadership as well in the Muslim society at large determined the essential steps to be taken for constructing a political identity for the Muslims. Unlike the Hindus different rival groups claimed to represent the Bengali Muslim interest solely and at the time of the 1926 election the real picture of Muslim solidarity became visible too some extent. Apart from sharing a general suspicion against the Hindus no concrete political steps were not taken by these groups even the Tabligh and Tanzeem organizations performed badly in comparison to the Mahasabha movemet.⁶⁸

It was from the time of the Non cooperation - Khilafat movement, a good number of praja leaders had stepped into the forefront of politics. The peasants in general believed in enjoying the advantages what ever the Government was offering them in the spheres of tenancy laws, local self government or cooperative societies, however the situation changed specially when anti zamindar, anti mahajan propogandas were rising up in the government sponsored peasant associations.⁶⁹ The post war slump in the jute market adversely affected the peasants and a large number of peasants supported the jute boycott campaigns. The mechanism of these boycott campaigns opened the scopes for agitation on agrarian issues. Even the cultivators became aware, one government source informed, of the alternative methods in which he might improve his position and prepare the way for the no tax and no rent campaigns.⁷⁰ In this period the ulemas and the mullahs appeared to be as one of the most potent forces competent of mobilizing rural masses, if not like the politicians.⁷¹ However, until the establishment of a peasant political party, the agrarian issues did not get an actual priority rather the series of experiments in the field of tenancy legislation only stirred up the agrarian condition up to a point of sectarian antagonism . The high politics on the agrarian issues actually rose up in the early thirties with the emergence of the Praja Samity⁷² and different peasant organizations. It is to be noted here that the Hindu zamindars, Muslim jotdars, and the Mahajns protested the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment Bill of 1923 for their own class interests against the underrayats and bargadars who were provided with occupancy rights in the bill. According to a section of the Muslim press it was ' an undisguised scheme of class legislation for the benefit off the propertied class'⁷³. It destroyed the status quo o far had been maintained

in the agrarian Bengal. The observation of the Hindu press was that 'the demand for Swaraj has become so acute and unavoidable that it was necessary to divert the mind of the people from politics to something else'.⁷⁴ The Muslim rent receivers unlike the Hindus were considered to be a part of the peasantry by the Muslim peasants particularly in the region of east Bengal.⁷⁵ Here lies the crux of the situation that under the influence of growing communal propagandas the peasant politics failed to move in a proper direction. Hindu opposition to the Bill and the Muslim support for tenant interests unfortunately simplified the sectarian question over class question.

The increase in illegal extractions by the zamindars from the tenants and mass ejection of non occupancy tenants and share croppers by the land lords, was introduced by the Bengal Tenancy Act (Amendment 1925)⁷⁶, and the subsequent controversies regarding the 'pernicious zamindari system' concentrated the growing anti zamindar feeling particularly under the influence of some Muslim ashraf leaders like Maulana Ismail Siraji, Masaraff Hossain, Abdul Jabbar Palwan, Ibrahim Hossain and others. A section of these leaders had tried to maintain a secret understanding with the pro zamindar Hindu leaders of the Swaraj Party for narrow class interests and a few of these leaders took the essential initiative to make the Sirajganj Muslim Conference a success.⁷⁷ According to Abdul Mansur Ahmed, one of the contemporary observer, described it as a 'grand success'⁷⁸ but did not refer to the actual paradox of the situation. It is to be mentioned here that the leadership of all the major parties came primarily from the land holding and urban professional families. So each of the leading parties be it the Congress or

Muslim League took part in the land reform debates in a restrictive way so that the support of their immediate constituency could remain intact.

Taking the view of the election of 1926 in front, Muslim leaders of Bengal had shown immense enthusiasm from their part to form political platforms for the Muslims so that non Muslims leaders and the government could realize the strength of their community.⁷⁹ But confusion and fragmentation remained as the most important feature of Muslim politics in Bengal during this period. Leaders like H. S. Suhrawardy, Sir Abdur Rahim, A K Gaznavi, Akram Khan and Fazlul Huq were divided among themselves. While Abdur Rahim and Gaznavi advocated Anglo Muslim cooperation for protecting Muslim interests, Suhrawardy took an anti government stand. Fazlul Huq was in favour of safe guarding the peasant interests. Abdur Rahim in a speech at Aligarh session of the Muslim League expressed the Muslim desire to stand for the British if their demands were conceded.⁸⁰ He described the Hindus as a menace to both the British and the Muslims.⁸¹ In view of the forthcoming election of 1926 a Muslim party on the way to be organized as a counterpoise to the Swaraj Party. Subsequently the leaders like Maulana Asrafuddin , Ahmed Chaudhury, Muzibar Rahman, and Abdur Rashid Khan appealed to the Bengali Muslims of different opinions to form a United Muslim Council party⁸² which was to secure Muslim interest in the next election. In the meantime Sir Abdur Rahim formed the Bengal Muslim Party on March 26 1926 with an objective to remove ‘ disabilities and difficulties’ of the Bengali Muslims so that they could attain power in proportion to their numerical strength.⁸³ The political objects of this party included securing a constitution for India framed on

the basis of a federation for autonomous provinces with the central government controlled the subjects like defense, foreign and inter provincial relations, currency, trade, and communication. Side by side the party wanted to introduce such a political system where the Muslims was to gain 56% representation in the legislative council, local bodies, public services, universities an in other professions.⁸⁴ Abdur Rahim as the Executive Councilor retired in 1925 and he was free to play the communal cards now. He was determined to make the Muslims stand independent out of the nationalist politics. Entering the legislative council at a by election in January 1926 from a Calcutta constituency, he went unopposed. because the Swaraj Party could not even put up a Swarajist candidate against him. ⁸⁵What Abdur Rahim had initiated in the realm of electoral politics was to be on applied on the popular field now.

Side by side in cooperation with ex Swarajists Muslims like H. S Suhrawardy, Muzabur Rahman and others, Akram Khan and Fazlul Huq started on The Bengal Muslim Council Party. This party wanted to use its platform in the coming election independent of Congress, yet it failed to stand for a long period. The Bengal Muslim Council Party received the blessing from different Muslim political leaders including some former Khilafists, non cooperators and some Swarajists also.⁸⁶ Very soon factional squabbles injured the solidarity of the party. Infact Fazlul Huq who had an east Bengal connection hardly shared a cordial relation with the Calcutta based politicians like Suhrawardy and others. As a result, shortly the Suhrawardy had announced the formation of Independence Muslim party. Unfortunately the self seeking elements within the party used it for their personal political gain. The declaration that ‘ We have after all realized that the Congress is a Hindu organization and Muslims

have no chance of holding its leading strings', indicated the extent of frustration and disappointments, the Muslim political parties were passing through at that time.⁸⁷ Unlike the Bengal Muslim Party of Abdur Rahim the Independent Muslim Party was anti British in tone and like the former it remained communally vocal. At the same time this party announced its desire to be with the British bureaucracy than with the Congress if they were put in a condition to choose between the two, however, they had assured to change their policy if the attitude of the 'Hindu' Congress towards the Muslims would take a new turn.⁸⁸ Fazlul Huq's Bengal Muslim Council Party soon vanished from the scene and his followers coalesced with the Independent Muslim Party. Abdur Rahim believed that this party was formed solely on personal ground. It would have no relevance in future because egoism and personal sentiments were very much active there as political under currents.⁸⁹ This party paid sufficient attention towards the problems of the masses that it declared its aim to work for the introduction of free primary education, an useful irrigation system, proper sanitary arrangements, reorganization of the villages, and to defend the rights of the tenants, agricultural and laboring classes.⁹⁰ At the end of the party manifesto it was appealed that We therefore, appeal to our countrymen to join us in their thousand as members of this party and strengthen our hands, and make it possible for us, with their help, to work for the grate cause. We want members, we want workers, we want support, we want sympathy and cooperation and we trust our appeal will not be in vein.⁹¹

Among the 42 renowned Muslim members of this party most of the members were from legal profession and retired government officials like Khan Bahadur Ajjuil Huq, A F M Abdur Rahman, Maulavi Abdul

Karim, Maulavi Abdul Mansur Ahmed, Maulavi Arafuddin Chaudhury and others. Muslim journalists like Maulavi Rafiqur Rahman (the *Khadem*), Khairula Anam Khan (*Mahammadi*), Maulavi Muzibar Rahman (*The Mussalman*) were included into the party besides the members of the local boards, few zamindari and members of the legislative council.⁹² This party attracted the educated Muslims from both the metropolitan and mufosil areas. But it was not a very normal development in accordance to the degree of Muslim political consciousness in both of the rural and urban areas. ‘ Beware of the Muslim Swarajists’, ‘ Be ware of the prodigies of the government’⁹³ and ‘ Cooperate neither with the Hindus nor with the bureaucracy’⁹⁴-----these were the most popular slogans of this party used before the election. It was also true that this party had never make itself free from Swarajist leanings, as it was suspected to bear.⁹⁵ The Independent Muslim Party, emerged out of the influence of the Bengal Muslim Council Party of Fazlul Huq, did not have any ideological bearings rather personal preferences and regional ties had acted as a cementing force in case of the Independent Muslim Party.⁹⁶

These political parties might have been described as mere election time opportunist groups without any practical appeal in the modern sense. But the importance of the minor parties could hardly be underestimated in understanding the mode of Muslim politics in Bengal. It was a fact that under a system of an inadequate franchise, it was not possible for the Muslim leaders to make some extensive experiments in the level of legislative politics. Workers and fund were not readily available at that time. Due to a numbers of difficulties these parties were ceased to exist

within a short while. These minor parties at least indicated the course of future politics in which the Muslim Bengal was going to be directed. Lack of trust on the Swarajist mode of politics remained as the core reason for the consolidation these parties based on Muslim interests in Bengal. The Central Mohammedan Party, the central wing of the Mohammedan Association was formed just before the election in 1926 with a similar approach like the Independent Muslim Party.⁹⁷ The culmination of Muslim political thinking did not identify itself with the liberal ideas and rational thinking of the *Muslim Sahitya Samaj*⁹⁸, established at Dacca in 1926. The ideas and values of these group (popularly known as the Shikka group) were opposed by the orthodox Muslim politicians who had hardly any connection with '*Buddhir Mutki*' (emancipation of intellect) movement initiated by this group⁹⁹ It was not only a literary organization. The political consciousness of the Samaj was reflected in the discussion of the Samaj on a particular essay read by some scholar. The following questioners on the topic proved Bengali Muslim's intellectual endeavors to judge any specific idea or any political propaganda. Abul Hossain, in an essay '*Satkara Paitallish*' (Forty Five Percent) strongly opposed Abdur rahim's demand of forty-five percent reservation of government jobs for the Muslims on the ground that it would not help the Muslims to become competent and expressed that there was no such real cause for the apprehension that the Muslims would not compete with the others.¹⁰⁰ The subsequent discussions on his essay indicated the individual thinking of a section of the Bengali Muslims on the fate of their community interests in a fashion not very common with the so called guardians of the Muslim society. It is to be mentioned here a communist connection could be seen with Muslim

Sahitya Samaj in several occasions,¹⁰¹ however their influence was very limited in that sense that their liberal views attracted a small minority of urban Muslims and vast population of the Muslim masses remained outside the arena of this intellectual movement. Capitalizing on the illiteracy and poverty of the Muslim masses the sectarian ideologues continuously tried to demoralize the intellectual rational spirit of the Muslims and with the turn of the decade the Muslim League successfully silenced the voices of those who advocated for Hindu Muslim unity on the basis of democratic and liberal principles.¹⁰² In the 20s the three main Muslim parties—Bengal Muslim Party of Abdur Rahim, Central Muslim Council Party of A K Gaznavi and the Independent Muslim Party By S. H Suhrawardy maintained their independent existence in terms of their political maneuverings, the support of the low caste Hindus, Europeans, Anglo Indians and a few 'responsivist' Hindu bhadraloks changed some of the previous calculations that the election of 1926 marked the end of an era. What Abdur Rahim had apprehended in his presidential address to the Muslim League in 1925 became quite meaningful that the Muslims might form a coalition with other political parties, they could not merge their political identities with other political parties particularly with the Swaraj Party which they had considered to be futile in the Bengal legislative council. From 1927 onwards a different situation had developed in Bengal with some major changes in the realm of constitutional politics.

One ominous cycle of the Hindu communalists with the conservatives within the Bengal Congress became active under the influence of the revolutionaries turned communalists from mid 1920s. After the death of

Das the *Karmi Sangha*¹⁰³ appeared with a new strength of uncompromising anti Muslim spirit and they threw their weight in favour of Jaiendra Mohan Sengupta in his battle over the 'Triple Crown'.¹⁰⁴ From 1925 onward the course of Congress politics faced two types of evil consequences. The first was a growing isolation of the city politicians from the politics of mass movement in the country-side and the second was a rift between the Congress and the Muslims at least in the arena of council politics. Side by side the tripartite struggle for supremacy between J M Sengupta, B N Sasmal and Subhas Chandra Bose within the Congress¹⁰⁵ and in the Calcutta Corporation was proved to be fatal for the unity of the Congress. At least for the time Sengupta won the battle and was elected as the new Mayor of Calcutta Corporation. The Calcutta politicians did not welcome the candidature of J M Sengupta being a candidate with no charisma to be a representative citizen of Calcutta.¹⁰⁶ Sengupta had his own political skills of handling the Muslim councilors who happened to be the integral element of the Swaraj Party but his growing involvement with the Corporation affairs in Calcutta made him detached from his base in *muffosil*. It was a common problem for the Swarajists –a party which had come into the power with the mass political wave during the non Cooperation movement. Its isolation from the *muffosil* politics became one of the major causes of its decline. In the latter years the Swaraj Party and its parent body the Bengal Congress had neither hopped nor attempted to build a solid support base in the *muffosil*. It was only the Swaraj Party which could provide the basic link between the city and the *muffosil* but after the death of Das all the hopes had gone.

Definitely the adjustment made by J M Sengupta with the ex revolutionaries facilitated his election as the Mayor in Calcutta in 1927,¹⁰⁷ the ex-revolutionaries organized themselves as a powerful pressure group within the Congress but among Das's recruits Sengupta remained as the last man to win Muslim support after the departure of B N Sasmal from Bengal Congress.¹⁰⁸ The Karmi Sangha was supposed to have role in the overthrow of Sasmal.¹⁰⁹ Sasmal had the guts to challenge those who championed the cause of revolutionary terrorism without a sufficient lineage to patriotism. If both Sasmal and Sengupta could jointly stand by the nationalist cause in Bengal, the sectarian forces might be at a check. Sengupta was one such leader who even tried his best to keep a balance between the Hindus and the Muslims in a post riot situation in 1926. He did not dare to take H S Suhrawardy as his deputy Mayor of Calcutta Corporation. It was indeed a tuff decision for Sengupta to choose a Muslim whom the Hindus accused of instigation the rioters in Calcutta.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately Sengupta's attraction for the mayoral chair made him more and more attached with the Big Five clique and the backing he had received from the *Karmi Sangha* turned the situation forever. The re entry of Subhas Bose in the Congress after a short interval further polarized the political situation in Bengal¹¹¹ and the Karmi Sangha now turned their attention to this new militant radical leader.¹¹² The subsequent fight between Sengupta and Subhas Bose for the control of the Bengal Congress¹¹³ not only agencified some outer forces like the revolutionary terrorists into the political mainstream but also alienated the pro Swarajist rural Muslim leaders from the urban centric politics of the Congress. The Swaraj Party in the assembly was now left in a position of not more than a hopeless minority.

From 1927 onwards a different situation arose in Bengal. Now the differences over separate electorate and representation led to the strengthening of Muslim political opinions into another type of groupings. The Muslim leadership now took the issues of the province more seriously regardless of the attitude of the All India leadership. The cooperation of the Muslim leaders with the Simon Commission was the first instance of this sentiment though M a Jinnah organized a session at Calcutta to boycott the commission.¹¹⁴ It was a kind of desperate attempt from the part of a section of the Bengali Muslims. Supporting the importance of separate electorate the Simon commission pointed out that communal representation could not be regarded as the sole cause for communal disturbances¹¹⁵ and the Muslim leadership from Bengal firmly supported the cause of separate electorate for the sustenance of Muslim identity.¹¹⁶ However, the shifting allegiance of the Muslim members of the council and their conflicting claims on their strength in the House make it too much problematic to estimate the actual strength of the Muslim parties in the legislature.¹¹⁷ One official source informed that after the election of 1926, Bengal Muslim Party had 16 members, 8 members were belonged to the Independent Muslim Party and 13 members had no definite party affiliation.¹¹⁸ However, a majority of this section soon joined the Central Muslim Council Party, ~~under~~ the leadership of A K Gaznavi.¹¹⁹ It was true that all of these Muslim members of the House were determined to protect their community interests but in absence of a concrete programme no strong political unity could have been achieved among them. Most of these people were guided more by their personal preferences than anything else. It was quite

e evident from the bitter struggle between Abdur Rahim and A K Gaznavi in early 1927 over the question of ministership.¹²⁰ Getting rejected by the Hindu members of the assembly Abdur Rahim's plea for the ministerial chair went in vein and now he put a counter pressure on the government that the Muslim support base of the government would no longer at work unless the demands of the Muslims were fulfilled.¹²¹ It was a tactics of hitting the birds with one stone. On the one hand he had projected the image of his Bengal Muslim party independent of any backing from the government and also improved his image as the most trusted leader of the Muslims in Bengal. His statements before the press on the stand of the Bengal Muslim Party clearly indicated his intentions.¹²² Meanwhile Fazlul Huq, Muzibur Rahman in cooperation of some Swarajists got engaged in ministry wrecking tactics in 1927 while another party namely the United Council Party came into existence by the supporters of Gaznavi and Chakraborty.¹²³ This party ironically was dubbed as the party of the landlords and in-laws. Among its leading members K.G.M Farouqui and Razaur Rahman Khan was the son in law of Gaznavi and H S Suhrawardy was the son in law of Abdur Rahim.¹²⁴ It indicated the failure of the Muslim members to work an organized block. There was no well extended party rather some council parties in a form of provisional alignments mainly based on kinship priorities or regional priorities.

With a limited strength of working capacity the Bengal Muslim Party perhaps took a firm position on constitutional reforms for the Muslims. In deferent occasions this party moved some proposals of adequate representation, due share for the Muslims in public services and

others.¹²⁵ They had the primary support from the Swarajists but failed to convince the entire Muslim opinion. A section of the radical peasant leaders were still in a position to voice their protest against the 'useless fight' over communal electorate in spite of paying sufficient attention to the practical issues like literacy, diseases, poverty, famine, rural indebtedness and establishment of self government.¹²⁶ Swarajist position on these issues was more or less obscurant. For the sake of the so-called unity against the British, they had tried to avoid those issues which were to create communal animosities in the province like the question of separate electorate at least within the legislature.¹²⁷ But once again the so called non communal leaders from both the communities were seen to speak the language of sectarian politics when the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill was placed in the house in late 1928. This proposed bill was intended to strengthen the hands of the zamindars by simply overlooking the cause of the bargadars and the underriots.¹²⁸ The United Council party, the Bengal Muslim Party took almost a common pro zamindar stand including the Swarajists. The leader of the United Council Party even went to the extent of identifying the interests of the zamindars with that of the tenants.¹²⁹ The voting pattern in the Legislative Council on the Tenancy Amendment Bill of 1928 put forward once again the class character of the leaders on the occasion of various amendment debates on the bill.¹³⁰ The prolonged debates on the bill sharply divided the political opinion along class line not on party line.¹³¹ However, the most shameful among the debates was the one brought by Ashimuddin Ahmed in favour of abolishing the irrational system of *Salami*.¹³² All the *Zamindari* interests including the Hindus and the Muslims stood against the amendment and the so called Hindu

nationalists emerged in favour of the zamindars. The pro peasant Muslim leaders found their voice choked before the covering presence of the leaders like Subhas Bose, J M Sengupta , Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and Bidhan Roy in favour of the *zamindari* interests. ¹³³The Amendment was lost by fifty three votes. ¹³⁴The entire drama on the Tenancy Amendment Bill underlined one very important point that the equation of party politics in the Bengal assembly was not tenable enough to challenge the class collaboration of mutually conflicting forces and this sort of class cohesion based on the interests of the propertied elites could become more articulate than the so-called class consciousness of the others.

At a time when the Hindu political opinion in the legislature was seen to busy in protecting their class interests, it seemed essential to take a glance over the electoral role of the Mahasabha in late 20s. The question of Mahasabha's participation in the election of 1926, sharp controversies arose in the Hindu political arena. ¹³⁵The main problem of the Mahasabha was that it did not have any economic or strong political agenda other than the defense of the Hindus , a issue which the Congress could not take up. Most of the Bengali Hindus were not prepared to put a candidate against the Congress or the Swarajists in the system of separate electorate. ¹³⁶Some local Hindu Shabhas in Bengal considered the Mahasabha's contesting election fatal to the interest of the party as well thought that it would hamper the Sanghathan work in the province. ¹³⁷However, according to a section of the Bengali Hindus it was also necessary to contest the election to protect the Hindu interest with the realm of legislative politics. ¹³⁸But participation in the elections by a party like the Mahasabha was full of other connotations. It was to make

the Mahasabha a separate political party opposed both to the Congress and the Muslim League. Till now the Mahasabha in Bengal was designed more or less as a socio cultural movement aimed at the unification and strengthening of the Hindu society. Politicization of the Mahasabha complicated the situation to an extent that the Hindu press itself got involved into warm discussions on the issue.¹³⁹ Surprisingly the pro election Bengal *Mahasabha* leaders took recourse to some other new parties to contest the election on behalf of the Hindus.¹⁴⁰ the Responsive Cooperation Party ¹⁴¹ Changed its name into Nationalist Party with some members of the Congress Independent group in 1926 at a meeting at Calcutta.¹⁴²

If in the Muslim side there was at least some minor council parties, in the Hindu side there was no stable political party to take up the cause of the Hindus. The Hindu Sabha was still in a formative phase. The position of the Mahasabha was very much ambiguous in case of contesting the election. No body on the Hindu side was sure of what should be position of the Mahasabha in the realm of electoral politics.¹⁴⁴ A section of the Hindu press hold the opinion that there was no need of forming a Hindu party like the different Muslim Party inside the council rather it would be better for the Mahasabha it make its influence felt in the council through the Hindu members if situation required.¹⁴⁵ But they had hardly any answer to the question that how it would be possible especially at a time when both the Hindu members of the Congress and the Swarajists were fell in short to stand for the Hindu cause. But in a communally charged situation after the murder of Swami Shraddhananda in 1926 the Mahasabha could not remain idol for long.¹⁴⁶ The unity resolutions

passed by the Congress in Calcutta in 1927 imbued a kind of independent approach into the Mahasabha movement in Bengal.¹⁴⁷ Unanimous opposition came from the entire Hindu block independent of the pro Congress faction against the Muslim demand of statutory majority in Bengal. The following years saw the ultimate exhibition of mutual hatred and suspicions from the part of the Mahasabha and the Muslim parties in every occasion they met. The All Parties Conference of 1928 faced the same fate of complete disappointment just like the Nehru Report and the Fourteen Points of Jinnah in 1929.¹⁴⁸ Provincial Hindu Sabha and the Hindu members of the council came in full accord at the time of tenancy legislation debates that in no situation the defender of Hinduism as well as the protectors of their economic interests should not face any danger from the Muslim masses in general.¹⁴⁹

The fourteen points of Jinnah were the excellent formulation of what A K Gaznavi had placed in his memorandum to the Simon Commission¹⁵⁰ in 1927. The Muslim leaders of Bengal were convinced enough that although in the District Board elections of 1927-1928 the Muslims swept the poll in Chittagong and Mymansingh---the two Muslim majority areas, this trend would not be able to replace the Hindus because the right to franchise was still based on 'property qualifications.'¹⁵¹ As long as this was the system, the Muslims could not get anything from joint electorate. The impact of communal riots of the previous years already had spoiled the chance of reconciliation the claims of different parties and the Hindu Mahasabha within a last few years had scored noticeable success in establishing its branch through out Bengal. Even from the hilly regions of remote Darjeeling the Mahasabha collected its workers from the local

non Bengali businessmen.¹⁵² In a letter to letter to the Special Superintendent of Police, I. B, Bengal it had been informed that some Swami Sachidananda, connected with both the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha, published a long article in a Hindi paper of Calcutta. It was very much under observation. A portion of the article continued that,

Hindus! It is a great shame to you, in front of you so many country and religious brothers are being converted. Have you no power to save your own brothers. Can you make necessary educational arrangements, where your proper religion can be taught and thus save them from further conversion.¹⁵³

Surprisingly one Hastalal Giri, the Vice President of the Gurkha League was also attached with the Mahasabha activists in Darjeeling. If there were the Gurkhas on one side, lower caste peasantry now became another target of political mobization in Bengal. Right from its first provincial meeting in Serajganj, the anti untouchability programmes of the Sanghathan movement had some appeal among the Rajbanshi peasants of that regions.¹⁵⁴ In The Savarkarian notion of Hindutva each and every religion born in India had a definite claim and they were to be brought under the umbrella of the Sanghathan project because the Hindus were getting outnumbered day by day.¹⁵⁵ The Sanghathan project carried a resemblance with the Sanskritising claims of the Rajbanshis for a Kshatriya status. However the open politicization of the concept of Sanghathan was not free of complexities and inner tensions. Although the Modern Review in an article described suddhi and Sanghathan as a matter of self defense,¹⁵⁶ it did not liquidate the controversies on the subject. In this respect one may ask the question than to what extent the

programme of Sanghathan was employed for the removal of untouchability or other social malice. Extracting from a letter written to Padmaraj Jain, the secretary of the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha, by some Nritrya gopal Bhattacharjee , the I B official reported on 2.4.28 that,

....the Namasudras and the Mohammedans of Narail have combined together against the high caste Hindus. The Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha has taken up the causes of the latter. The Hindu Sabha trying to bring disaffection between the two classes, Namasudras and the Mohammedans. Some Nritya Gopal Bhattacharjee was sent to the affected area of the Narail circle. He also attempted to excite the Namasudras against the Mohammedans by expressing in his speeches that the Mohammedans kidnapped the Hindu women, and abducted the Hindu women and got them Nikka marriage to Muhamedans. His attempts in Narail circle have not been successful.¹⁵⁷

One may see here the actual dichotomy of Mahasabha's politics in Bengal. It was the same time when at the fourth Provincial Hindu Conference at Mymansing an ardent appeal was made to remove the curse of untouchability¹⁵⁸ and to purify the existing untouchables for better habits and customs. The Narail incident was very much economic in nature. It was a common feature of east Bengal countryside that the lower caste Hindu peasantry joined with the Muslim peasants against the propertied Hindus. Instead of redressing the grievances of their lower caste brothers, the Hindu Sabha had tried to instigate the Namasudras against their immediate class friends i.e. the Muslims by simply using the stereotypes of women abduction or forceful conversion of the Hindu women into Islam. They went a step further by openly taking the side of the high caste Hindus against the lower castes. It was not known that to what extent the allegations of the Hindu Sabha was true in case of Narail

but their general political mechanism was not at all favorable for the situation there. The bankruptcy of the policy of the Mahasabha in terms of the lower caste came to the forefront within the last few years of the twenties when a large section of the lower castes joined the organized depressed class's movement with a new dalit identity. Now they we claim the same amount of status and facilities from the government as had been provided to the Muslims.

The general configuration of rural interests in Bengal was such that the exploiters could be easily identified with Hindus. The Muslims in general remained aloof from money lending business due to some religious taboos. On the other most of the tenurial interests were under Hindu control and it was defended by lawyers who happened to be Hindus. Therefore the class conflict in the Bengal countryside was caught into the sectarian divisions and the aspiring Muslim peasants had several reasons to think the Swarajist politics as mere pretensions to curb their rights for the benefit of the Hindu landlords. The Hindu *bhadralok's* failure to maintain their majority over the local bodies and district councils especially in a Muslim majority area led to the decline in the position and role of the Hindu *bhadraloks*. The Hindu fear of defeat in the elections held in joint electorates seemed very genuine that in the local board elections in Mymansingh in 1927 'not a Hindu had been elected' in one constituency.¹⁵⁹ The mobilization of the Bengal peasantry on non communal issues like the abolition of all intermediaries between the state and the cultivators by the Krisak Samities did not bring any significant development because the propagandas made by the communal organizations ready spoiled the hope of peasant mobilization of pure

class line. The peasants could not even connect themselves with the anti Jotdar, anti zamindar and anti government pronouncements of the Labour Swaraj Party later renamed as the Workers and peasant party in 1926.¹⁶⁰ This non communal class party wanted to make the workers and the peasants 'more consciousness of their political rights so that they will be able to snatch freedom out of the hands of a few aggressive and selfish individuals'. Unfortunately neither the high caste Hindu zamindar nor the rural Muslimeletes became sympathetic with the causes this party was fighting for. In a general manner the Muslim Jotdar came forward to lead the peasants in collaboration with the ulemas, rural elites and low caste Namasudra leaders against their Hindu oppressors.¹⁶¹

It is to be mentioned here that the actual objective of the Hindu Sanghathan movement was not at all achieved in Bengal. Apart from a few constructive programmes mostly taken by some socio religious organizations like the Bharat Sevashram Sangha or the Hindu Mission in favour of Hindu Sanghathan,¹⁶² A great numbers of issues affecting Hindu society at large remained untouched. The complexities of agrarian class structure and the correlated socio economic issues had never been included into the list of Mahasabha programmes in Bengal rather superficial commitments were made to the Marginal Hindus—the worse affected victim of agrarian class structure in rural Bengal. Side by side the intimacy of a section of the Hindu leaders with the so called conservatives further led to a kind of lackadaisical attitude towards the caste question. It remained undecided where the Mahasabha would launch a movement against the entire system of caste or it would take interest only in the issues of untouchability or the social abuses related to

it. Perhaps it was due this quandary of the Mahasabha that they failed to tackle the untouchability issue from a pure social point of view. They politicized this subject in their own style only to cater the political needs of their party and practically no attention had ever been paid towards the economic, social and educational underdevelopment of the vast rank of people falling into the category of 'untouchable'. This type of situation had a definite role to play in the development of a new type of caste structure subject to colonial intervention. The Depressed Class movement came as the most awaited package for a larger section of the low caste Hindus in Bengal. In fact from 1930s some of the caste leaders went in search for an alternative of the Mahasabha and some of the lower caste masses remained active in the popular fronts of struggle for rights. The first section got directly involved in constitutional politics from early thirties and it was this section which grasped almost all the institutional concessions granted to them in the Communal Award of 1932.¹⁶³ However, on the question of a separate electorate, the Depressed Class movement itself got divided. Mukunda Behari Mallik of Bengal Namasudra Association stood behind the demand of a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes along with Dr B R Ambedkar in 1932.¹⁶⁴ M C Rajah, the president of the All India Depressed Class conference, however, went for an understanding with Hindu Mahasabha leaders B S Munje accepting joint electorate with reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes.¹⁶⁵ From the part of the Mahasabha it was proved to be the most excellent tactics which was to check the further division on of the electorate on one hand and keep its lower caste base in control. However, it was too late. Ambedkar sharply criticized the Hindu Mahasabha as a political group intended to use the Depressed Classes for

combating Muslim influence in politics.¹⁶⁶ However, the Muslim opinion on the nature of the electorate showed a mixed response in late twenties. A section of the nationalist Muslims involved in the Congress now found adequate expression in manifesting the nationalist aspiration of the Muslims. The term 'nationalist Muslims' has been used here to describe the politics of the Muslims who were associated with the national movement and to make a difference between them and the Muslim communalists in general.¹⁶⁷ However, all of these terms should be taken as mere imageries because the term 'nationalist Hindu' has never been used to separate the politics of C. R Das or Subhas Chandra Bose from that of the activities of Malviya, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee or Lala Lajpat Rai. Right from 1919 and after the phase of Khilafat Non Cooperation was over the nationalist endeavors of the Congress Muslims remained more or less quiescent and in the late twenties first these people realized the need for a party of their own. The existing state of Muslim politics in fact necessitated the urgency for a Muslim party to promote the spirit the national spirit among the Muslims. Thus in 1929 the All India Nationalist Muslim party came into existence at Allahabad.¹⁶⁸ In a conference held at 27 July 1929 at Allahabad the central body of the party was organized. A good number of Muslims from Bengal were present at this conference.¹⁶⁹ Mr. Aftabuddin Choudhury, Mr Ghulam Jhilani, Mr Jalaluddin Hashmi, Mr Safaruddin Ahmed and Momed Kashim were the representatives of Bengal along with other Muslim leaders from different parts of India.¹⁷⁰ Twenty eight members were elected From Bengal into the central body of the party. Muzibur Rahman, Shamsuddin and Akram Khan were given the responsibility to organize the party in Bengal.¹⁷¹ Soon some local committees were organized in

different parts of Bengal mainly in the east Bengal region. Akram Khan and Mujibar Rahman and two Calcutta Corporation councilors Abdur Razzak and K Nuruddin were at the charge of the Calcutta committee and Samsul Huda and Ghulam Qadri were placed in charge of the Dacca committee.¹⁷² In the regions of Faridpur and Bogra, the Nationalist Muslim Party found a strong foothold.¹⁷³

Right from its inception his party strongly condemned the system of separate electorate. One of the chief architects of this party M An Ansari declared that unless the system of separate electorate was eradicated, no communal harmony would be established in India.¹⁷⁴ Surprisingly the sharpest reaction came against the party from the Hindu Mahasabha, not from any Muslim political Party. They were scared that some Muslims, in the name of nationalism were trying to pressurize the Congress. Just like the Muslim political forces the Mahasabha strongly rejected the proposals of joint electorate, adult suffrage and reservation for the minorities of less than twenty five percent---recommended by a committee consisting of Ansari, Malviya and Sardar Sardul Singh in 1931.¹⁷⁵ The Hindu Mahasabha was convinced that some disguised Muslims in the name of the Nationalist Party was trying to get inside the Congress in order to take a hold of the party from within.¹⁷⁶ Hindu Mahasabha believed that the proposals and the programmes of the Nationalist Party were sanctioned by Jinnah in fourteen points. They did not find any difference between the Muslim communalists and the so called Muslim nationalists.¹⁷⁷ It is worth mentioning here that earlier in 1926 Malviya joined the New Independent Congress party---a coalition between the Responsivists and the Independent Congressmen.¹⁷⁸ This

party worked closely with the Responsive Cooperation Party which was established in early 1926 within the Congress under the leaders like Malviya, B. S Moonje and others like Byomkesh Chakrabourty in Bengal.¹⁷⁹ this party was not opposed to the Hindu Mahasabha Saghathan movement in Bengal. It declared,

In Bengal it would be a deliberate and pretended blindness now to ignore altogether the Hindu Muslim question. The Responsive Co operation Party of Bengal is a political Party of Bengal is a political party of the Congress, but it is not opposed to the Hindu *Sangathan* or the *Tanzeem* movement, so long as they are kept within very strict limits. The party will not countenance communalism, but it will encourage the growth of the Hindu organization and of the Muslim organization on a national, as distinguished from a communal bias.¹⁸⁰

The politically ambitious *Hindu Mahasabha* leaders in Bengal saw in this party a chance of fulfilling their political desires. The party declared that it was a party only within the Congress, none but members of the Indian National Congress were eligible to become its members.¹⁸¹ However, the members joining this group were mostly *Hindu Mahasabha* members and the actual objects and policies of the party had never been defined clearly. The idea of responsive cooperation did not work, in Bengal because neither its *Hindu Mahasabha* members were eager to fight the government nor its Congress members were ready to do any sacrifice like the Swaraj Party. The Muslims did not see anything attractive in this party and they chose to rally behind the Muslim council parties. These minor Muslim parties were attacked by the All India Nationalist Muslim Party on the ground that these parties were involved more in winning political power as their main objective without any anti British nationalist aspirations.¹⁸² In the resolution adopted for the All India Nationalist

Muslim Party in 1929, it was declared to promote among Muslims a spirit of nationalism and to develop a mentality above communalism.¹⁸³ Unfortunately the Hindu Mahasabha did not bent a little in favour of this party. If the Hindu Mahasabha at least could make an attempt for accommodating the voice of the nationalist Muslims for the cause of Indian nationalism, the communal Muslim organizations might have been checked at least in level.

In fact at that time the minor political parties from both the sides of the Hindus and the Muslims remained in water tight compartments, the Congress had acted as a common link among the entire minor parties specially those formed by the Hindu leaders. The Congress mania in several occasion restricted these parties to take a firm independent stand. Discarding the attitudes of a large section of the leaders, the Communal Award was declared in 28 July 1932. Apart from subjugating the position of the Bengali Hindus in the legislature (Hindus were given 80 seats out of 250 seats while comprising 44.8% of the total population and the Muslims were given 119 seats while comprising 54.8%¹⁸⁴ of the total population), this Award recognized the Hindu Depressed Classes a minority, provided with a separate electorate. The Hindu nationalist now became too much consciousness about the dangerous consequences that might follow if the provision of separate electorate for the Depressed Classes should remain in the Award. Surprisingly, the Bengal Nationalist Muslim Party while condemning the Award and supporting the system of separate electorate took the resolution, informed Liberty, that,

All those nationalist Hindu news papers that have taken up an anti national attitude regarding the Communal Award....are seriously prejudicial to the cause of nationalism in India.¹⁸⁵

Equal impressive was the view of the Europeans on the Award. Edward Benthall, representatives of the Europeans in Bengal was anxious that the proposed Award would reduce the Europeans to a 'non entity' in the Bengal legislature (Europeans who constituted only 0.01% of the total total populations were given 25 seats).¹⁸⁶ The main criticism of the Muslim leaders in Bengal was that the peculiar pattern of distributing seats in the legislature would force the Muslims –the so called majority, to enter into coalition for the purpose of forming a ministry because it would not be possible for them to run the ministry of its own. The Congress was placed in a dilemma that it could neither accept the Award not reject it. It took more or less an ambivalent or non committed stand. This position of the Congress did not fit well with all the sections of the Congress and on July 31 1934 Malviya and M.S any formed a new party called the Congress Nationalist Party.¹⁸⁷ A large number of Calcutta bhadraloks lend their support to this party. A good number of Congressmen in Bengal, disappointed with the decision of the All India Congress, now moved in support of the party irrespective of their factional divisions. This shift of allegiance of some noted Congressmen in Bengal brought an internal division on within the party after a short phase of mutual conformity on the anti Award sentiments. Chapala Bhattacharjee, Dinesh Chakrabarty, Indra Narayan Sen form the Bengal congress joined te new party and Indra Narayan Sen had become the Secretary of the Nationalist Party in Bengal.¹⁸⁸ The *Hindu Mahasabha*

also appreciated the formation of this party to launch a widespread anti Award campaign in Bengal. Their tacit approval of the Nationalist Party also painted the failure of the Congress to organize the Hindus against the Communal Award. ¹⁸⁹

It is to be mentioned that one Hindu Nationalist Party also emerged on the scene in early 30s with an object to fight the Communal Award. It had been stated that the programmes of this party would be based on a more intimate and cordial relationship between the landlords and the tenants to 'tackle the problem of unemployment and to reorganize the educational system of the province.'¹⁹⁰ It seemed that this party had an unofficial recognition of the Hindu Sabha behind it and for the purpose of fighting the coming election some nationalist leaders of some associations like the Indian Association, Bangui Jan Sangha and the British Indian Association had assembled in this party known as the Hindu Nationalist Party.¹⁹¹ This party was not opposed to the Congress ,however, Hindu Sabha connection of the party would not make it possible to run its candidates in the name of the congress. Therefore it was formed as a coalition party with all other important groups to safeguard the Hindu interest in the coming election.¹⁹² these types of parties indicated the development of sectarian but confrontationist politics in 1930s. After a series of constitutional changes, legislative politics slowly passed under Muslim domination and with the installment of successive Muslim ministries from 1927 new political groupings could be noticed within the legislature. The gradual domination of the Muslim politicians received combined support from the European and Scheduled Caste members of the assembly that at the time of the Anti Communal

Award agitation the Muslim leaders in no way looked anxious or threatened from any corner. Despite all the party political divisions the Muslim leaders had shown an unique sense of agreement on the Award and at the Howrah session of the Muslim League in 1933 the Praja Samity, the United Muslim Party and other leaders of different Muslim groups joined together.¹⁹³ It must be noted that the minor Hindu parties those who were against the Award could not move on the same accord with the major party while the minor Muslim parties found Muslim League on their side at the time the debates on the Award. However, the Bengali commonsense of the leaders from both the communities could again be identified at this juncture of history when A K Guznavi in a letter to B C Mahatab, President of the anti Communal Award Committee, asked for opening a dialogue with the Hindu leaders for the communal settlement on the Communal Award.¹⁹⁴ It was a step taken by a Bengali Muslim leader for the settlement of the issue at the provincial level. The proposal of Guznavi did not get sanction from the Bengal Congress on a very useless ground that since Mahatab himself belonged to a anti Congress organization, the Congress National Party, then no adjustment would be possible between the Congress and the Congress Nationalist Party on a simple opportunistic issue.¹⁹⁵ Guznavi's proposal was seen nothing more than a well conceived plan to weak the anti Award agitation of the Congress Nationalist Party and to ensure an equal share in the government services after the provincial election of 1937.¹⁹⁶ Guznavi might have some intentions to pose a challenge before the United Muslim Party to make a balance in the Muslim poetical structure in Bengal.¹⁹⁷

The Award put forward several questions. The failure of the talks between the Congress and the League not only created a division in the Congress but the Hindu Mahasabha also received a chance to make a common cause with the new Nationalist Party. The Nationalist Party for the time consolidated the Bengali Hindu bhadraloks on a real political issue. Moral support from the leading Bengalis like Rabindranath Tagore further strengthened the movement of the Nationalist Party against the Award. He stated that,

It is not that we wish to deny our Muslim countrymen the benefit of their numbers, nor that we suspect them of dangerous designs. It is only that we refuse to accept the fate of all future prospect of mutual cooperation blighted by a scheme which puts a premium upon communal allegiance at the expense of national interest—a scheme which endangers suspicion where there should be trusts and corrupts both the communities by encouraging fanatics to make political profit out of communal passion.¹⁹⁸

The movement of the anti Award organizations did not resolve the question of self government of the Hindus rather the sense of deprivation destructed the Bengali Hindus from their actual political objectives. The Hindu claim of weitage on the basis of their advanced position and their share in the revenue seemed quite unusual. The demand for revisioning the Poona Pact further put the Hindus into equal quandary. It was assumed that the reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes¹⁹⁹ would preserve untouchability and encourage some castes to sustain the Depressed Class status in order to secure privileges in the changed circumstances. The anxieties might have some real ground but it could not be emerged if sufficient measures were taken in this regard. The Hindu Mahasabha and the other Hindu organizations had paid little

importance to the economic and educational backwardness of the so called Depressed Classes and no attempt had ever been made for sharing administrative positions with these people since the introduction of the Diarchy in Bengal. During the Communal Award and Poona Pact debates the Hindu Mahasabha failed to provide any satisfactory reaction to the colonial maneuverings. Its anti Award movement was characterized by a sense of deprivation born out of retention of being denied a dominant position in the province. Not only the Mahasabha but the Congress Nationalist Party also fell into the same ambush of adjusting with the nationalist spirit with that of the threatened self interests of the Bengali Hindus. On the wake of the Poona Pact the Hindu nationalist forces raised their voices to the dangerous consequences that might follow if the provision of the separate electorate for the Depressed Classes should stay in the Award. In spite of resolving the socio economic abuses of the Hindu society like poverty, literacy, untouchability and others, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Nationalist party clamored for the undoing of the separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. One may see here the impatience of the Hindu upper castes to sustain their privileges and the growing aspiration of an emerging Muslim middle class for a share in the privileges it had denied so long. As far as the Muslim Nationalist Party was concerned, it could hardly make any effective impact on the common Muslim masses and remained confined more or less within the confines of elitist political structure. Its too much attachment with the Congress crippled its possibilities of being and becoming of a mass party. Side by side the Congress connection of this party also prevented the Congress from coming into a negotiation with the Muslim League or the non Congress Muslims in an extent.

The Hindu Mahasabha conference of Malda in 1932²⁰⁰ asked for conceding representation to the Depressed Classes in the joint electorate and urged them not to demand for any separate system of electorate. Already Gandhi's stand against the grant of separate electorate to the Depressed Classes infused a new spirit among the Bengali Hindus, but the system of double election accepting the separate political entity of the Depressed Classes forty-three provided the Hindu Mahasabha a new task of consolidating the Sanghathan movement in Bengal, however, the partial response it had made to the caste question not only paved the way for low caste alienation but also dig out the imminent dangers of sectional politics in the near future. In this present study it is not possible to take notice of the different trends of Depressed class politics in Bengal although in a numbers of ways special attention has been made on the mode of this type of politics in the next chapter dealing with the language of popular politics in late colonial Bengal.

Notes and Reference:

1. By 1909 a section of the Hindus realized the importance of number and organizational unity of the Hindu society. Constitutional reforms, census reports and the development of separatist politics imparted a sense of unity among the Hindu society and the urge for strengthening the Hindu society appeared as a vital for building up national harmony also. The book *Hindus –A Dying Race* first consolidated the idea of demographic decline and inquired the causes of discrepancy in the rate of growth of the Hindus and the Muslims. The Census reports had played a definite role in it. The main propositions of Mukherjee were serialized in the *Bengali* in 1909. In 1910 it was published as a book. In this publication deep concern had been paid for the future of the Hindu race threatened by the proselytizing ventures of the other religious communities. Equal amount of concern had been paid the lack of physical attributes of the Hindus. For a detailed analysis see Pradip Dutta, *Carving Blocks; Communal Ideology in Early 20th Century Bengal*, Delhi, 1999, pp.26-47.

2. At Lucknow in 1916, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League accepted separate electorates for Muslims and provided safeguards for the minorities in the provincial legislatures. Hindus were provided with a greater representation in the provinces where they were in minority like Bengal and Punjab while the Muslims were given better representations where they were in a minority. It was the beginning of Hindu Muslim unity in Bengal. Abdullah Rasul of Bengal moved the resolution and it was seconded by Fazlul Huq. The Lucknow scheme of

reforms demanded self government by granting the reforms formulated in the scheme. For details of the resolutions see, GI, Home Poll (B), November, 1916, Nos.452-53. Also see *Report of the Reform Committee* appointed by the Muslim League by Syed Wazir Hasan in the *Proceedings of the Ninth Session of the All India Muslim League*, published by the All India Muslim League, Lucknow, 1917.

3. A section of the pro British conservative Muslim leaders advocated the theory that in the Lucknow Pact the Muslims were deprived of their actual share in the Bengal council. They also asserted that the interest of the Bengali Muslims would only be protected by cooperating with the British for the protection of their rights. Syed Nawab Ali Choudhury (Mymansingh) a *zamindar* and one of the allies of Nawab Salimullah headed this group including a few Muslim aristocrats like Nawab Sirajul Islam and others. Most of these people were non Bengali in origin and most of them were alienated culturally and socially from the rest of the Bengali Muslims. (For a detail of their origin see N. K Jain, *Muslims in India-A Biographical Dictionary*, vol.1, New Delhi, 1979) . Nawab Ali Chowdhury (he was 10th President was the president of the League for a year but had to resign after the Lucknow Pact) and the old guards of the League feared that the so-called unity with the Congress would make their existence critical and they even questioned the right of the young leaders of the Bengal League to speak on behalf of the entire community. For the activities of these leaders see the issues of the *Moslem Hitaishi* of early 1917. Also see, the pamphlet, *Nawab Ali Choudhuri, 'Views on the Present Political Situation in India'*, published in the *Englishman*, 18 October, 1920, p.10

4. V. D Savarkar, *Who is a Hindu*, Hindutva, S. P Gokhle, Poona, 1949.
5. At the Ambala Session of the Punjab Hindu Sabha, 1913, one resolution was taken p that the interests of the Hindu community through out India should be safeguarded on an organizational basis. Accordingly the first session of the All India Hindu Sabha was held at Haridwar in 1915. In 1917 the organization was registered and in 1921 the name was changed into the All India Hindu Mahasabha at Haridwar. See Indra Prakash, *Hindu Mahasabha—Its Contribution to Indian Politics*, New Delhi, 1966, p.VI.
7. During the communal tension in mid twenties, the issue of music before mosque emerged as the most persistent themes around which the language of satyagraha was used in a local context that a group of volunteers remained active in support of the cause. Here Gandhian Strategy assumed an independent character and got institutionalized for the sake of practical politics. See John Zavos, *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, Delhi, 2000, pp.138-42
8. *Ibid.*
9. The word *Sanghathan* is translated as organization. The urge to unite and organize the Hindus had always been the central to the plea of Hindu nationalism, the origin of the *Sanghathan* movement is yet to be located. Swami Shadraddhananda helped in its promotion by making it as an attribute of the Aryan Golden Age. See Thurby G.R, *Hindu Muslim Reactions in British India; A study of Controversy, Conflict and Communal Movements in Northern India, 1923-1928*, Brill, Leide, 1975,p.164. This idea was also propogated by M N Malviya during the riots in Multan in 1922. See Indra Prakash, *Review of the History and Work of Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Sanghathan Movement*, Delhi,

1938, p.25. The articulation of the *Sanghathan* movement had shifted time to time. In 1938 V. D Savarkar defined it as a movement in included several organizations for a common goal of molding the Hindu race 'into a free and mighty Hindu nation'. (See Indra Prakash, *Ibid*, pp.xv-xvi). *Hindu Mahasabha* came to be considered as the most important part of this movement while in the 1920s the entire *Sanghathan* movement was consolidated and performed in the name of the *Mahasabha* only. See, Zavos, *op.cit*, p.215

10. For details see. Pradip Kumar Dutta, , *op.cit*, pp.1-26

11. *Ibid*.

12. Kenneth Jones, 'Religious Identity and the Indian Census' in N.G Barrier (ed) *The Census in British India; New Perspective*, New Delhi, 1981, p.81

13 On the basis of the census reports U.N Mukherjee worked out that the Muslim population of Bengal had increased by over 33% while the Hindus by 17% in thirty years. (U.N Mukherjee, *A Dying Race*, Calcutta 1909). He referred to the report of the Census Commissioner, O' Donnell of 1891 where the possible extinction of the Hindus had been predicted. (*Census of India 1891*, Vol III, *Bengal*, C.A O Donnell (ed) Calcutta, 1893).

14. U N Mukherjee, *Hinduism and The Coming Census; Christianity and Hinduism*, Calcutta, 1911. This book criticized the provisions made in the circular prepared by E. A Gait, the Census Commissioner. The report was entitled, 'The Census Returns of Hindus' 1910. It proposed 'tests' to identify a Hindu hat according to Mukherjee would encourage the isolation of the low castes from the Hindu category. This threat to Hindu society suddenly moved Mukherjee towards a major shift in his approach

by simply presenting Hinduism as idealized popularism where untouchability was even recognized in a relationship with hygiene.

15. See, J.F.T. Jordens, *Swami Shraddhananda*, Delhi, 1981, p.134.

16. The Punjab Provincial Hindu Sabha was born in 1907 as a partial reaction to the Muslim League of 1906. However, the need to defend the interest of the Bengali Hindus was roused also in the first decade of the 19th century on the background of the Anti Partition movement, and it did not take a concrete shape until 1924. In 1907 a United Bengal Conference was organized to investigate the present state of the Hindus specially the declining condition of the Hindu population in general. Publication of the '*Dying Race*' indeed created a sensation in Bengal but the Bengali Hindus in general were anxious to promote a Hindu organization like *Mahasabha*. From any angle they were not at all ready to spare their liberal ideologies derived from their tradition and culture. It was only after 1919 that the requirements of electoral politics too some extent convinced them to form a Hindu organization of their own. It was to be noted here that this Hindu Sabha for a considerable period of time tried to sustain its Bengali priorities but went in vein. A kind of anti Swaraj Party sentiment also moved a section of the Bengali Hindus towards the path of the Hindu *Mahasabha* in Bengal. These situations were quite distinct from the situation of Punjabi Hindus. *ABP*, 12 August, 1923, Editorial See also Indra Prakash, *A Review of the History and Work of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Sanghathan Movement*, New Delhi, 1938, p.271

17. For details see, Jaya Chatterjee, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-1947*, Cambridge, 1994, pp.5-8.

18. *Ibid*, pp.55-102.

19. *Ibid*.

20. *Ibid*

21. *ABP*, 30 December, 1916, Calcutta

22. *Ibid*

23. Ramananda Chatterjee the editor of *Modern Review* expressed that the Non Cooperation –Khilafat unity was a mere camouflage Equal development of the Hindus and the Muslims in the spheres of education, wealth and perfection only could establish mutual understanding between these communities. *Modern Review*, November, 1921, pp.628-631

24. The Calcutta Municipal Amendment Bill was introduced in the Bengal council in 1921. The primary objective of the Bill was to put a check over the official control in the corporation by extending the franchise. There was no provision for the system of separate electorate because Surendranath Banerjee, the minister of Local Self Government had never approved this system to be introduced in the local bodies because in the corporation Hindu Muslim interest should never been divergent at all. But under the pressure from the communalist Muslims and the European block, he had to agree on the question of separate electorate. In 1923 the Bill was passed with a new addition of the provision of separate electorate. Nirod Bihari Mullick, a nominated member of the Depressed Class category even favored the idea of communal electorate. The entire question exposed the existing realities of Hindu Muslim relation in Bengal as well as the other pressure points within the legislature. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 1923, Vol XI, No.5, p.14. *ibid*, Vol 5, No1, p.516. *Ibid*, pp.127-128, *Ibid*, 1921, Vol. V, No.1, p.483.

25. See the *Census Report* of 1931.p.188.

26. It was reported in the *ABP*, 3rd May, 1925 that in Faridpur a great numbers of Namasudras were assembled at a meeting to decide to get convened into Christianity. Surprisingly a Hindu Sabha conference was going on near the meeting. It seemed that the Namasudras were either indifferent or opposed to the Hindu Sabha conference. The Hindu Sabha leaders were not welcomed into the meeting at all. *ABP*, 3 May, 1925

27. Montagu knew it well that special arrangements for a backward minor was suicidal for the community itself .It would encourage them for further advantages and make them cripple to stand on their own feet. But already the system was recognized by the Act of 1909 and was sanctioned by the major political parties. E.S Montego, *An Indian Diary*, London 1930, p.100

28. The Manifesto of the Swaraj Party was adopted at Allahabad on 23 February, 1923. It described that ‘ The immediate object if the party is the speedy attainment of Dominion Status.....The party will set up nationalist candidates throughout the country to contest and secure seats in the Legislative Councils and the Assembly.... They will, when they are elected, present on the behalf of the country, its legitimate demands as formulated by the party.’ AICC File No 13/1923. However, it was in December 1923 the resolution on the Hindu Muslim Pact was adopted. The proposed Bengal Pact was the result of the realization of C R Das that without the support of the Muslims no constitutional deadlock would be possible in Bengal. For a detail of the resolution see, *AICC* File No 1/1924.

29. The provisions of the proposed Bengal Pact (published in 18 December, 1923) enunciated that the representation in the Bengal legislature be on population basis with separate electorates , representation to the local bodies to be in the proportion of 60 to 40 in every district, 60 percent seats to the community which is in the majority in the district and 40 percent to the minority, 55% of the government posts should go to the Muslims .*Ibid*, 1/1924 , *Indian Annual Registrar*, 1924, Vol.1, pp.63-64

30. In a number of public meetings some leading nationalists denounced the Bengal Pact as a disregard to the nationalist spirit. Surendranath Banerjee took a firm position on this issue and condemned the Swarajists for such a suicidal stand. *ABP*, 23 December, 1923. The Indian association also charged the pact as detrimental to the goal of self government in India. *Ibid*, 30 December, 1923

31. *Ibid*

32. For an extensive picture of the situation see various issues of the *ABP*, January- February, 1924.

33. Byomkesh Chakrabourty, Bipin Chandra Pal, Bhupendanath Basu, Shyamsundar Chakrabourty, Piyush Kanti Ghosh, Padmaraj Jain, and Prafulla Kumar Sarkar took an initiative to organize a meeting of the Hindu citizens of Calcutta in 14 August, 1923. Some big zamindars like Khithsh Chandra Ray of Natore was also involved with them. Mainly the journalists took the lead here except few politicians. *ABP*, 8th June, 1924; *ABP*, 8 April, 1926

35. *Ibid*.

36. *ABP*, 10 June, 1924

37. *Ibid*

38. The *Mussalman*, February, 209, 1924, p.3 The *Jamial-ul- Ulema-I Bengal* at its annual gathering at Tippera on February 20-21, 1924 and the *Anjuman-i-wazir-I Bangla* at its Pabna session on February 1924 supported the pact. *Islam Darsan*, Assar, 1330, H.S June July, 1924, cited in Chandi Prasad Sarkar, *The Bengali Muslims; A Study in their Politicization 1912-1929*, pp.404-405

39. He issued fatwa to prohibit the playing of music before mosque and seized upon the first conflict that broke out in Faridpur. GI (Question of music before mosque) *Fortnightly Reports*, No 24, 1924, May

40. *Bangla Hindu Jatir Khoy O Pratikar* (The Decay of Hindu Society and its Remedy) was written by *Tangail Hindu Samaj Sanrakshani* (preserver of Hindu society in Tangail) in 1924 and *Hindu Samajer Bartaman Samasya* (The Contemporary Problems of Hindu Society) Address of the Reception committee at Sirajganj Provincial Hindu Maha Sammilani, presented by Saileshnath Sharma Bisi.

41. See, Pradip Dutta, *op.cit*, pp.3-50

42. Maulavi Abdul Karim, *Letters on Hindu Muslim Pact*, Calcutta, 1924, p.39 cited in Chandi Prasad Sarkar, *op.cit*. p. 158

43. GI, Home Poll, File No, 187-26-P, *Note on the Activities of Madan Mohan Malviya*, Enclosure to letters to Bengal Government, No.1263-2, 13th August, 1926,

44. *New India*, December, 25, 1923, cited in S. L Guota, *Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya-A Social Political Survey*, Allahabad, 1978, p.293

45. A section of the Bengali Hindus, however, preferred the use of Hindi in lieu of any foreign language in the all India sessions of the Mahasabha. The Hindi language was identified more with non- Bengali cultures rather than the Bengalis and the *Modern Review* feared of mixing up the

cause of Hindi with Bengali Hindu interests would hurt the feeling of the Bengali Hindus. *Modern Review*, May 1929, pp.645.

46. See Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh; A Biography of an Indian Political Party*. India, 1971. p.8

47. *Moslem Hitaishi*, 20 July, 1923 expressed that the large section of the backward Muslims, who had opted the Hindu culture after staying long with each other, might be influenced easily by the Suddhi propagandas... It relied on the good will of the Bengali Hindus that they would not encourage such activities of the non Bengali Hindus. *Ibid*, 7 September, 1923

48. *ABP*, 6 March, 1926

49. For details see, Goutam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle 1862-1947*, New Delhi, 1984, p.75

50. *ABP*, 26 January, and 3 February. 1924. In the special Congress session held at Delhi, in September, 1923, a committee was formed with Lala Lajpat Rai and M.A Ansari as two important members to draft a 'National Pact'. Provinces were made for joint electorates with reservation of seats for the minorities in proportion according to the theory population in the constituencies. It was proposed that that Muslims grew up cow slaughter except on the occasion of Baqr Id, that music in front of public worship would be forbidden and the route and time of religious precession be determined by local mixed boards... Apart from the legislature, Das proposed communal representation in the local boards and government survives while the proposed National Pact proposed only communal reservation only of the legislature. *AICC Papers*, File No.25, 1925

51. *Indian Annual Registrar*, Vol I, 1926, pp.85-86
52. GB, Bengal Administrative Report, 1923-1924, p.6
53. GB, Bengal Administrative Report, 1928-1929, p.16
54. *ABP*, 12 April, 1925
55. *Ibid*
56. GB, I.B, File No.279c/1925.
57. *The Modern Review*, March, 1929,pp.339-341.
58. *Ibid*, April, 1929, p.519
59. The Indian national Congress divided the Indians into 'Muslims 'and Non Muslims'. It did not demarcate between the 'Hindus' and the 'non Hindus' within the greater category of 'non Muslims. Unlike Congress, the *Hindu Mahasabha* considered only two divisions—'Hindus' and the 'Muslims' and any person performing any religion of 'Bhartiya origin' fell into the broader category of the former. See '*The Hindu Mahasabha Constitution*', New Delhi, 1940, p.4. For details Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, '*Struggle for Hegemony and Power*', Vol III, New Delhi, 1994, pp.297-298
60. B.D Graham, '*Congress and Hindu Nationalism*' in D.A Low (ed.) *The Indian National Congress, Centenary Hindsight's*, 1988, pp.183-184
61. For details see Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh, *op.cit*, pp.33-301; Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism In Modern India*, New Delhi, 1979,p.269
- 62.Khan Bahadur Musharraf Hussain moved a resolution that 'out of the total umber of appointments 80% be given to the Mohammedans of Bengal till the number of Mohammedans officials in each class in the employment of the government of Bengal became 55% of the whole'. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, Vol, xiv, No.4, 1924, p.55

63. In the preamble of the pact it was resolved that 'in order to establish a real foundation of self government in this province, it is necessary to bring about a pact between the Hindus and Mohammedans of Bengal dealing with the eight of each community when the foundation of self government is secured.', *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, Vol 4, 1924, p.85

64. *Islam Darshan*, Shraavan, 1330, (B.S), p.413

65. See Goutam Chattopadhyay, *Bengal Electoral Politics and Freedom Struggle, 1862-1947*, New Delhi, 1984, pp.95-116.

66. *Ibid*, pp.90-91

67. *Ibid*, pp.95-116

68. GI, Home Poll, File No.10/11/25-Pol, *Report on the Tanzim Conferences*, 1925.

69. *Proceedings of the Home Department Government of Bengal*, 8 A6, B 36-44, 1924

70. GB, Home Poll, 'History of Non Cooperation Movement and Khilafat Movement in Bengal', 3C.395/24, p.5

71. See for a detailed picture Patricia A Grossman, *Violence and the Construction of communal identity Among Bengali Muslims*, 1990, pp.65-66

72. For details see Humaira Momen, *Muslim Politics in Bengal ; A Study of Krisak Praja Party and the Election of 1937*, Dacca, 1972, p.76.

73. *The Mussalman*, December, Shraavan, 1330 (B S).p.413

74. Cited in the Report on Administration of Bengal, 1925-26, pp.xxvii-viii

75. Partha Chatterjee, *Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal 1926-1935* in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. I *Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi, 1982, p.11
76. *Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council*, 3 December, 1925, p.82
77. Abul Mansur Ahmed, *Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchs Bachhar*, Dhaka, 2006, p.39
78. *Ibid.*
79. *The Mussalman*, February, 18, 1926, p.4
80. H.N Mira (ed.) *The Indian Quarterly Registrar*, 1925, Vol, II, pp.355-57
81. *Ibid*
82. *Ibid*
83. H N Mitra, *op.cit*, 1926, Vol I, pp.65-66
84. Sir Abdur Rahim's Manifesto, *The Statesman*, 1926, p.7
85. H, N Mitra, *op.cit*, p.97
86. *The Mussalman*, June 19, 1926, p.4
87. *Molem Cronicle*, 20 August, 1926
88. *Ibid*, September, 16, p.4
89. *The Englishman*, 7 October, 1926, p.16
90. *The Mussalman*, September 16, 1926, p.4
91. Cited in Gholam Kibria, Bhuiyan, 'Independent Muslim Party' in the *Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies*, Vol XVII, 1994, p153.
92. *Ibid.*
93. *The Mussalman*, *op.cit*, p.4
94. *Saptahik Muhammadi*, October 15, 1926, p.2
95. *The Mussalman*, 22 October, 1926, p.5

96. Gholam Kibria, *op.cit.* p.153

97. See Bazlur Rahman Khan, *op.cit.*, p.20

98. *Muslim Sahitya Samaj* was established in Dacca in 1926. Professor Mohammad Shadidullah presided over the first meeting of the Samaj. Most of the Dacca university professors and students were associated with this Samaj. Kazi Abdul Waud, Kazi Najrul Islam, Lutfar Rahman and other Muslim intellectuals were involved in the organization. The sole purpose of this Samaj was to free Muslim mind from every type of bondages and influence the Muslim mind with humanistic rational ideas. See Niranjn Haldar, '*Buddhir Mukti Andolan O Kazi Abdul Wadud*' in Kali P Kalam, Calcutta, Magh, 1380, BS ,pp.589-591 cited in Amalendu De, *The Muslim Sahitya Samaj of Dacca (1926-1936)*, in the *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, Institute of Historical Studies*, Vol. xxi, 1981-82, Nos.2 & 3 ,p.10

99. The term *Buddhir Mukti* was the catch line of this movement. The mouth piece of this group was the *Shiksha*, and the people around this group were called the '*Shikha group*'. It was styled in the manner of the Young Bengal group of Derozio. Kazi Abdul Wadud and Abul Hossain remained as the guiding spirit of the Muslim Sahitya Samaj and the '*Shiksha Group*'. See Kazi Abdul Wadud, *Creative Bengal*, Calcutta, 1950, pp.13-14

100. Adhul Hossain, *Satkara Paitaliish*, Sankalpa, 1372, B S, pp.36-37, cited in Amalendu De, *op.cit.*, p.14

101. Kazi Nazrul Islam, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar, Muzaffar Ahmed, were associated with the Samaj. See Amalendu De, *op.cit.* p.14

102. *Sankalpa*, 1372 B Sp.40, cited in Amalendu De, *op.cit.*, p.21

103. The Karmi Sangha was active as the militant wing of the Swaraj Part. They had never accepted the Hindu Muslim pact of Chittaranjan Das but were kept under control by the leadership of Das. They had no sympathy for the elite circle of Calcutta leadership, popularly known as the Big Five. This group was composed of the Jugantar revolutionaries and they had a Hindu communal bias for ever. After the death of Das they had tried to tock the leadership of the Swaraj Party under their control. See Goutam Chattapadhyay, *op.cit*, pp.90-91; Hemendranath Dasgupta, *Subhas Chandra*, Calcutta, 1946, p.90

104. Mahatma Gandhi had a direct influence on the selection of J M Sengupta as the new leader of the Swaraj Party. He was a loyal supporter of Gandhi and after Chittaranjan Das; Sengupta was appeared to be the most suitable person to keep Bengal politics under the control of Gandhi. Sengupta at a time became the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, the leader of the Swaraj Party and the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation--- popularly known as the 'tripple Crown'.

105. For details see Rajat and Ratna Ray, *Zamindars and Jotdars ; A Study of Rural Politics in Bengal*, *Modern Asian Studies*,9,1,1975, pp.88-102

106. J M Sengupta was from Chittagong Congress .According to the standard of the Calcutta politicians he had a low profile background. They considered Sengupta a '*bangal*' (East Bengali) with no lobby in Calcutta. At that time Sengupta practiced in the High Court of Calcutta while living in a rental apartment. See Hemendranath Dasgupta, *op.cit*, p.90

107. Goutam Chattopahyay, *op.cit*, pp.90-91; Jadugopal Mukherjee, *Biplbi Jibaner Smriti*, Calcutta, 1982, p.454

108. Birendranath Sasmal, a leader of the Midnapur Congress was thrown out the political scenario from the Krishnanagar Conference of the Bengal Congress Here he voted for the Bengal Pact and took an anti terrorist stand. However, J Gallagher's opinion on Sasmal's departure had created one stereotypes of political behavior in the 20s that the low caste and mufossil background of Sasmal was responsive for his overthrow from Bengal Congress by the upper caste *bhadralok* leadership of Calcutta. See J H Gallagher, 'Congress in Decline, Bengal; 1930-39', in *Modern Asian Studies* 7.3, 1973, p.597

109. It was due to the preponderance of the numerically stable Karmi Sangha that anti terrorist and non communal B N Sasmal had to accept defect in the Bengal Congress especially on the issue of the Bengal Pact at the Krishnanagar Conference in 1926. See the oral transcript of Bhupati Mazumdar, NMML, p.119; J H Broomfield, *op.cit*, p.279; *ABP*, 28 May, 1926

110. Sengupta was asked for the justification of choosing Suhrawardy as the deputy Mayor of Calcutta Corporation. See *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 15 May, 1926

111. When Subhas Chandra Bose released fro jail and entered into the Bengal politics again the Jugantar group and the Big Five gave their support to Bose against the authority of J M Sengupta. The Karmi Sangha, most of the members of which were affiliated to the Jugantar group, now turned their attention towards Subhas Bose. They preferred Subhas Bose than Sengupta because the militant radical image of Subhas Bose had left an impact on the revolutionaries. Hemendranath Dasgupta, *op.cit*, p.90, Padmini Sengupta, *Deshapriya Jatindramohan Sengupta*, Delhi, 1968, pp.74-76.

112. *Ibid*; Jadugopal Mulherjee, *op.cit*.p.454

113. Dasgupta, *op.cit*, pp.95-96

114. See A K Gaznavi's press statement; *The Statesman*, November 27, 1927 cited in Bazlur Rahman Khan, *op.cit*, p.36

115 The Commission remarked that 'under existing condition in Bengal separate communal electorates must be retained for election to the legislature , and should be extended to all local self governing bodies as well where adequate representation should be provided fir all communities.' Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol III, Calcutta, 1930, p.171 and see Gwyer and Appadorai, *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution 1921-47*, Vol I, pp.247-248.

116. The Muslim leadership supporting the separate electorate said that the introduction of joint electorate with adult franchise would not help the Muslims because Muslim women's (equal in number with the male folk of the community) reluctance to go to the polling booth would doom the possibilities of the victory of a Muslim candidate. Therefore separate electorate was a necessary to maintain the Muslim identity in Bengal. Fazlul Huq, K M Faruoki, Abdur Rahim and some others were in favour of constitutional reforms. *Indian Quarterly Register*, Vol II, July - December, 1926, p.98

117. Bazlul Rahman Khan, *op.cit*, p.20

118. *Ibid*.

119. *Ibid*.

120.The third Reformed council started function from 1927 and continued to 1929.After being elected in the election of 1926, Abdur Rahim , the leader of the Bengal Muslim Party, entered the assembly

with a large number of followers. But he could not be appointed as a minister because no Hindu member agreed to work with him. Thus A K Gaznavi and Byomkesh Chakrabourty were selected as ministers. After that in cooperation with the Swaraj Party, the Bengal Muslim Party brought a no confidence motion against the ministry and special attract was made on Gaznavi as a misfit for ministerial power. The ministers were accused of for depending on official votes to save their existence. See *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 25 August, 1927, p.261;

Indian Quarterly Register, Vol II, July December, 1927, p.261

121. See the speech of Abdur Rahim on 8 May, 1927 in *The Statesman*, 9 May, 1927

122. In a statement he had declared that the if the Representatives of the Muslims of Bengal could take a decision that they would no longer be the dependents of any Hindu organizations, they should equally imply that resolution in case of the British government also. *Indian Quarterly Register*, Vol II, July December, 1926, p.98

123. *The Statesman*, 18 March, 1928, cited in Bazlur Rahman Khan, *op.cit*, p.20

124. *Ibid*

125. See *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, Vol xxx, No.1, 31 July, 1928, p.45

126. See the speech by peasant leader Asimuddin of Commilla, *Ibid*, pp.71-72

127. Bengal legislative Council Proceedings, 1st August, 1928, p.100

128. For a detail account of the Bill see Goutam Chattopadhyay, *op.cit*, pp.

129. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 7 August, 1928, p.397

130. One example may be put to clarify the matter. On the issue defining the actual an actual character of a tenant most of the *Swarajists* and Congress leaders voted in a manner that the *bargadars* would never be in a position to prove that he was a tenant. The original amendment was brought by Jogendra Chandra Chakraborty, a Congress member of the House. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 13 August, 1928, pp.45-47; *Ibid*, p.121.

131. The pro peasant Muslim nationalists in every occasion voted against the amendments which were anti peasant in character. On the question of identifying the *Bargadaes*, *Adhiars* or *Bhagidars*, one Muslim member Abdul Momin strongly protested against bringing these people into the category of 'Servant and labourers'. The original amendment was brought by one Congress MLC. All the *zamindars*, *Swarajists* leaders and the Congress leaders voted in favour of the amendment. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 14 August, 1928, p.163

132. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings*, 3 September, 1928, pp.823-24

133. *Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings* 4th September, 1928,pp.927-928

134.*Ibid*.

135.For details see Richard Gordon, ' *The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress* ', in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.9, No.1-4, 1975, pp.183-200; For the controversies within the Mahasabha on that issue see *ABP*, 2 March, 1926.

136.The *Mahasabha* did not give any clear socio economic programmes different from the Congress. Therefore putting candidate in the election

meant that Mahasabha had to fight on a pure communal term and simply as a Hindu body. A good number of Hindu leaders were not yet prepared to fight the election independent of the Congress on a Mahasabha ticket. See *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1926. I.p.398; Indra Pakash, *op.cit*, pp.28-58

137. In the Provincial Hindu Conference of Mymansingh in 1928, the speakers expressed their anxiety on turning a socio religious organization into a political party or a Hindu party in specific. They were of a view that a political Mahasabha would not take interest in Hindu Sanghathan or Suddhi movement. The Dacca Hindu Sabha also protested against Mahasabha's political role as harmful to its own objectives and national interests. *Modern Review*, May 1928, p.728; *Ibid*, May 1926, pp.608-609; See the views of Lala Lajpat Rai in *ABP*, 14 March, 1926

138. For a detail see Mayukh Ranjan Sarbadhikari, *Hindu Mahasabhar Ashi Batsar*, Calcutta, 1936, p.15-20; Interview with Sree Binoy Kr Garg, Member, *All India Hindu Mahasabha*, New Delhi, (dt.10.12.2007)

139. See, *ABP*, 17 March 1926, *Modern Review*, *op.cit*; *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 26 April, 1928

140. A section of the Bengali Hindus mostly belonging to the Swaraj Party formed the Indian National Party in 1926 to contest the election independent of the Congress under the leadership of M M Malviya. Lala Lajpat Rai and others. Byomkesh Chakrabarty in Bengal joined the party., see the letter of Lala Lajpat Rai to Motilal Nehru on 24 August 1926. *Indian Quarterly Register*, Vol II, July December, Calcutta, 1926. p.31

141. The object of the Responsive Cooperation Party was ' the attainment of *Swaraj* by peaceful legitimate means.' It was to organize resistance at

the local level, however, they party took a responsive cooperative method for an easy working of the council. They thought it to be essential for the establishment of full responsible government. For details see J S Sharma, *India's Struggle for Freedom; Selected Documents and Sources*, Vol III, New Delhi, 1965, p.1108

142. *Indian Quarterly Register*, Vol II 1926, pp.34-36

143. *Ibid*, p.34.

144. The ambiguity was further increased with a statement of Lala Lajpat Rai in the Calcutta session that the Hindu Mahasabha had no definite political role to play except to define the position of the Hindus in relation to other communities. ABP, 12 April, 1925.

145. *Ibid*.

146. GB, Fortnightly Report, 1927 First half of January.

147. See AICC Papers G64/1926-28.

148. At the All Parties Conference, 1928, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League could not come to an agreement on the reservation of seats for the majority in Bengal and Punjab. see *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1928, I, pp.13.; The Nehru Report proposed joint electorate for the majority in Bengal and Punjab. However, a section of the Bengali Hindus asked for reservation of seats for the Bengali Hindus on population basis at the all parties' conference in Calcutta. The Hindu Mahasabha's stand on the report was one of rigid and categorical. *Ibid*, 1928 II, pp.419-420; GB, Home Poll, File No.165/1929. *Ibid*, 1929, Vol I, p.365

149. A K Gaznavi press statement, *The Statesman*, November 27, 1927, cited in Bazlur Rahman, op.cit, p.36; Gwyer and Appadorai, *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution 1921-47*, Vol I, pp.247-48.

- 150, Goutam Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.*p.102.
151. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol I ,p,122
- 152.GB IB,326/29(a)
- 153.*Ibid*
- 154.*ABP*,5 June.1924.
- 155.V D Savarkar,*op.cit.*p.4
- 156.GB IB 326/29,(a)
157. *Ibid*
- 158.*Ibid*
- 159.For the results see All Parties Congference,1928,Report of the Committee Appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution of India,pp.154-5, cited in Budyut Chakrabourty, *The Communal Award of 1932 and its Implications in Bengal*, in *Modern Asian Studies*,vol-23,3,1989.p.497.
- 160.G Adhikari, *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol II, New Delhi,1978,p.676.; ‘Genesis of Workers and Peasant Party of India’ in Adhikari, *ibid*, Vol,II,p.98.
- 161.For the details on Bharat Sevashram Sangha, see Swami Nrmalananda, *Satabdir Nabajagaran,Acharya Swami Pranavananda*, Bharat Sevashram Sangha, 1391,B.S, pp.2-10.;for Hindu Mission see the *Modern Review*, April 1929,p.519.
163. On 16th August 1932 Ramsay Macdonald, the Prime Minister of Great Britain published the Communal Award for India. It was stipulated that Muslims would get 48.4 percent of seats, Hindus 39.2 and Europeans 10 percent. There was also a provision for separate electorates

and reservation of seats for the so-called Depressed classes among the Hindus.

General Seats—80

Muslim -----119

Anglo Indians and Christens---6

Europeans—11

Commerce, industry, mining and plantation—19

Labour—8

Others—7

Total---250

See *Indian Annual Register*, Vol.II,1932,p.54.Bidyut Chakraborty,*op.cit*,p.502.

164.*Ibid*,1932,I,p.332.

165.*Ibid*,pp.333-334-Rajah-Moonje Pact.

166. B R Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, Bombay, 1946,p.22.

167. See Mushirul Hasan, *A Nationalist Conscience*; M A Ansari, *the Congress and the Raj*, New Delhi, 1987, pp.175-181.

168.*Ibid*,p.188.

169. See *Mussalman*, 21 March, 1931.

170.*Ibid*.

171.*Ibid*.

172.*Ibid*,

173.*Ibid*.

174.*ABP*, 11 August, 1932.

175. In 1931, a committee consisting of Ansari, Malviya and Sardar Sardul Singh proposed a plan for adult suffrage and joint electorate with reservation for minorities of less than twenty five percent. The Hindu Mahasabha at its annual conference of Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha in Bengal expressed the view that the plan of the above mentioned committee was to benefit the minority at the expense of the majority community. *Indian Annual Register*, July, December, 1931,p.254.

176. See B S Moonje Diaries, cited in Mushirul Hasan,*op.cit*,p.198.

177.*Indian Annual Register*, July December 1931,pp.260-1.

178. *Indian Quarterly Register*,1926, Vol II,p.64.

179.*Ibid*, 1926, Vol.II,p.34.

180.*Ibid*,pp.36-37.

181.*Ibid*.

182.*Ibid*, Vol I, July December,1929,p.350.

183.*Ibid*.

184. David Page, *Prelude to Partition, The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-32*, Delhi, 1982,p.34 cited in Bidyut Chakraborty, *op.cit*,p.499.

185.*Liberty*, August 24,1932.

186. Bidyut Chakraborty,*op.cit*,p.502.

187.*Ibid*,pp.512-513.

188.*Ibid*.

189. Hindu Mahasabha Paper,C/8,N N Das to Indra Narayan Sen,General Secretary, Congress Nationalist Party,Bengal,24/8/1935.

190.*Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, Vol.I,11,No 4,p.360.

191.*Ibid*,p.367.

192. *Ibid.*

193. See Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan; All India Muslim League Document*, Vol II, Karachi, 1969, p.194

194. It was proposed that the Award could cease even earlier than ten years provided there was a mutual agreement between the two communities to the effect. A .K Gaznavi to B C Mahatab, 18 December, 1936. cited in 109 n, Bidyut Chakrabourty, *op.cit.* p.515.

195. NMML, B C Roy Papers, Mahatab to Roy, 18 December, 1936..

196. Bidyut Chakrabourty, *op.cit.* , pp116-117.

197. *Ibid.*

198. See Report of the Bengal Anti Communal Award Movement, published by the Secretaries, Bengal Communal Award Committee, Calcutta, 1939.

199. *Ibid.*

200. *Indian Annual Register*, 1932, II, pp.328 (b), 328.