

CHAPTER 3

IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIO-CULTURAL MOVEMENTS.

3.1 BACKGROUND

In the course of the study in the last chapter I have made an elaborate discussion on the background of the Vernacular press of North Bengal. At the same time I have pointed out, how different type of associations or organizations (SABHA SAMITY), with different aims and objectives came into being. During the course of this study it is found that the publications and associations emerged from different places had initiated different issues which had certain impact on our society, culture and political activities. In this connection, I have mentioned that all of these issues are not relevant to our study. Therefore, I had to be selective and short out all of them keeping in mind the subject of our study.

Similarly, when we are to make a study about the role of the publications and associations in the contemporary socio-cultural and Political Movements, we must have to be selective due to several reasons. During the period of our study, a huge number of publications and associations from most of the districts of North Bengal came into being. Though it is found that the press-publication and formation of associations did not develop equally in every district of North Bengal. Among these Publications and Associations we would select a few number from different districts of North Bengal and at the same time we will examine their character in the light of our present study. It has already been mentioned in the last chapter that in North Bengal the Publications and Associations of Jalpaiguri and Malda played a significant role in the context of socio-cultural and political movements. Again, we will try to make some specific study with some important publications and Associations/organisations in this regard. Other than these two districts viz., Jalpaiguri and Malda, we must mention some references about other districts of

North Bengal (Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and West Dinajpur, Presently North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur). But so far we made our study, it has been found that West Dinajpur district had as such no important publication during that period of study the causes of which does not require to be studied here. But some important Associations or Organisations emerged there which had some relevance and played an active role viewed as general or specific attempts in the context of social movements and exhibited some political and nationalistic character.

The publications and Associations of Cooch Behar district (Princely state before 1950) and Darjeeling district of course had some positive role in the field of socio-cultural activities. But the real picture was that due to several factors press and Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) of these two districts could not concentrate on political events and at the same time they had rather some compulsion to avoid any political or controversial issues. As a result it is quite natural that the publications of this two districts had no direct or active role in the political movements of the contemporary period. But the Associations of these two districts were to some extent involved themselves in different type of social and cultural activities, though it was confined within the periphery of the local area.

It is quite natural that due to the "Deportation Law" prevailing in the Cooch Behar princely state (presently Cooch Behar district) any kind of seditious activities was not possible¹. During the Swadeshi period, it is found that the king of Cooch Behar Princely State had some soft corner with this movement. But the press and Associations as such had no right to do anything which will encourage the public opinion against the state power. For example, we can mention one incident which warned the supporters of nationalist movement, specially the students of 'Victoria College (Presently Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal College). During the course of Non-Cooperation movement some students of Victoria College were to some extent getting prepared to take part in this movement.² In this context, His Highness the

Maharaja of Cooch Behar Sir Jitendra Narayan Bhup-Bahadur K.C.S.I. delivered a speech to the students of Victoria College, Cooch Behar, on 24th of March, 1921.³ Some portions of this speech are mentioned here for our better understanding on the issue.

“It has been reported to me that there was some trouble among the students of my college here over the movement generally known as Non-Cooperation..... The Victoria College was established primarily and entirely for my subject and those who come and join this college from British India are only allowed to do so if there are vacancies in the classes after admitting my subjects..... I shall first address those students whose only connection with my state's the college. I have heard that most of the troubles which arose here, was at the instigation of these students. To them, I would say if you do not like the system of education which I have adopted for my college, there is nothing to prevent you from going else where to seek the system you want”⁴

From this statement of His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, it is quite clear that at Cooch Behar to do anything against the royal authority was almost impossible the reasons of which have already been mentioned earlier.

Similarly, in the case of Darjeeling district the press and the Associations had to go under some restrictions. As Darjeeling district was a Non-Regulation District, naturally some special Regulations were prevailing there due to what any question or challenge against the authority/administration was almost impossible. These circumstances may also be a condition for the press and Associations of Darjeeling district. Whatever may be the reasons, the fact is that due to a different ethnic, linguistic and cultural background (over all as it was a Non-Regulation area), which was not similar with the rest of North Bengal, the publications and Associations of this area, could not play any positive role as like as Jalpaiguri and Malda.

Apart from the publications of Darjeeling and Cooch Behar district. We find no major or minor press-publication from the district of West Dinajpur (presently North Dinajpur and South Dinajpur districts). Though Meherab Ali

in his book “Dinajpurer Sangbadikatar Satabarsha” have mentioned about some publications and other literary works but they were not so much related with the contemporary political activities. No doubt they had some contributions in the context of socio-cultural life but as our area of study is different, we would not discuss it which is beyond the jurisdiction of our area. In spite of all these we have some reference regarding publication in this region and it had definitely a political character. It is evident that we find some pamphlets/leaflets published from Balurghat of West Dinajpur district with some nationalist news against the colonial rulers.⁵ As a result we see that the British Government strictly warned the ‘Balurghat Trading and Publishing Company’ in 1930.⁶ Except this we don’t have any other definite information of press publication in this district. But during the course of ‘Quit India Movement’ the Dinajpur district had a significant contribution in the context of national movement. As we have no reference of contemporary publication or archival record, it is not possible to make any documentary study about this district. So our study in this regard will be confined mainly within two districts of North Bengal, viz., Jalpaiguri and Malda.

Let us now proceed with some important (major and minor) publications of North Bengal and their role in the contemporary socio-cultural and political movements.

3.2 IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS OF JALPAIGURI.

When we are to make our study about the Publications of Jalpaiguri, first of all we have to say that at the beginning of our study which starts from the year 1869, we don’t have any press publication from this district. But from the government records and administrative reports we get so many information about socio-cultural and political activities in this district. From the early decade of the twentieth century especially from 1905 (the year of the partition of Bengal) we get the references of political agitation in the district. At that time there was only one publication in the district and that was ‘TRISROTA’(a monthly newspaper). With the sincere co-operation of Sri Bhujangadhar Roy

Choudhury, Sri Sashi Kumar Neogi renowned advocates of Jalpaiguri edited and published this newspaper (TRISROTA) from Jalpaiguri in the year 1900. But unfortunately it was of very short duration. Due to the sudden death of Sashi Kumar Neogi the publication of Trisrota was temporarily stopped. So, as there was no press publication or print media in the district the news of the political agitation in the district was not reflected and created any impact on the common people. Later on, we see that the press publication, the most powerful and important instrument to expose public opinion came to be emerged at least a decade later on.

According to government records it is known that a good number of newspapers began to be published in the Jalpaiguri district from the 1920's. 'TRISROTA' a Bengali monthly which started its publication from 1900 and was temporarily stopped after some years again started its publication in the year 1926 as a Bengali weekly.⁷ At that time its editor was Suresh Chandra Paul. This time the government Registration No. of this paper was REG NO. C 1380. Another Bengali weekly named 'JANAMAT' was published from the district headquarters in the year 1924. Its editor was Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, M.A. LL.B, a reputed advocate and social worker of Jalpaiguri. Within a few years another Bengali weekly named 'MUKTIBANI' began its publication in 1928. Its editor was Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, a congress leader of the district. Mr. Bhabaranjan Ganguli another social worker of the district was very much attached with its publication. A fortnightly named 'DESHBHANDU' was published from the district headquarter for a year only and its editor was Pritinidhan Roy.⁸ When Jyotish Chandra Sanyal was publishing 'JANAMAT', along with this he edited and published an English weekly named 'BARENDRA' in the year 1925. This paper got at some credit for its contribution in the field of cultural activities.

Our study is concerned with both pre-independent and post-independent period, i.e., 1869 - 1969 so we have to mention about some publications of the later period.

After independence, a weekly named 'BARTA' began its publication in the year 1952. Its editor was Rabindra Nath Sikdar. Some Trade union organisations and Institutions also published some journals and periodicals as a spokesman of their own. For example it may be mentioned that the Jalpaiguri 'Cha Karmachari Samiti' began publication of its weekly named 'AHVAN'.⁹ It was edited by Bhabaranjan Ganguly. 'NISAN' was another Bengali weekly published from Jalpaiguri which continued its publication for a few years. Its editor was Kazi Abdul Khalek. 'DANPITEDER ASAR', a juvenile organisation published a weekly named 'DANPITEDER SAMACHAR'. It was published in the year 1958 with the editorship of Dr. Sarojit Bagchi. Another paper published from the district headquarter was 'AMADER KATHA' (weekly). We have references about some other papers like 'UTTARPATH' 1956, a monthly and 'NIRAPEKSHA', a weekly which were published from Jalpaiguri district headquarter. Other than district headquarters, some other papers were also published in course of times. It is found that from Alipurduar a few number of papers/ journals, were published from time to time and they were 'DUARBASI', 'UTTARBANGLA', 'HIMALAYA' and 'DABI' etc. Apart from these publications, some other journals were also published from the district of Jalpaiguri in the post-independence period, the details of which are not necessary for our purpose. But we will show a list of Journals and newspapers published from the district, which are registered with the Registrar of Newspapers, Government of India.¹⁰

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Periodicity</u>
1. Navorai	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Bi-weekly
2. Barta	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Weekly
3. Danpiteder Samacher	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Weekly
4. Janamat	Jalpaiguri	English & Bengali	Weekly
5. Trisrota	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Weekly
6. Jalpaiguri	Jalpaiguri	English & Bengali	fortnightly

7. Yatrik	Alipur Duar	Bengali	fortnightly
8. Uttarasa	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	fortnightly
9. Homoeo Darpan	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Monthly
10. Pabak	Maynaguri	Bengali	Monthly
11. Sambodhi	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Monthly
12. Simantik	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Monthly
13. Road Side	Alipurduar	Bengali, Hindi, English, Arabic and Sanskrit	Quarterly
14. Korak	Jalpaiguri	Bengali	Annually
15. Kachi Pata	Alipurduar	English & Bengali	bi-weekly

Apart from these publications of the district a good number of periodicals were published by some educational institutions of the district. Though these periodicals are not directly related with our study, but they (Periodicals) got the credit of achieving a cultural and literary practice among the students of different Academic Institutions. In this connection we will give a list showing the names of journals published from different educational Institutions of the district.¹¹

Name	Address
1. Fanindra Dev Vidyalaya Patrika	Fanindra Dev Institution, Jalpaiguri.
2. Mohan Singh Uchchha Vidyalaya Patrika	Mohan Singh Higher Secondary School, Jalpaiguri
3. Sonali	Sonali Girls' Higher Secondary School, Jalpaiguri.
4. Alipurduar Sandhya College Patrika	Alipur Duar College, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri
5. Ananda Chandra College Patrika	Ananda Chandra College, Jalpaiguri
6. Jalpaiguri Polytechnic Institute Patrika	Jalpaiguri Polytechnic Institute, Jalpaiguri

So long we have made a detailed study about the press-publications from Jalpaiguri district. In this connection we have mentioned a good number of publications some of which got some special interest and contribution in the field of socio-cultural and political activities. In a later chapter of our dissertation we have explained in details about the role of the press in nationalist perspective as well as the local situation (Chapter 5). Hence we need not mention that now. But one thing has to be mentioned that a good number of publications from Jalpaiguri created an atmosphere of cultural practice in Jalpaiguri since that time. As a result it was found in the subsequent period that a core group of social and cultural activities emerged in Jalpaiguri, which generated cultural elements in the making of social and intellectual perspective. In this context the Arya Natya Samaj, a cultural-dramatic organisation must be given some credit for its cultural activities. Not only this in 1911 two more dramatic organisations viz., Harendra Hall and Dramatic Club were established in Maynaguri in Jalpaiguri district. In 1924 another dramatic cum cultural organisation named 'BANDHAB NATYA SAMAJ' was established. The press published from Jalpaiguri were always closely linked with all these cultural organisations. So, it is found that the newspapers and the periodicals which had a close contact with some literate and cultured people of Jalpaiguri, with their sincere initiative were to some extent achieved some thing to generate an urban cultural atmosphere in the district.

3.3 IMPORTANT ASSOCIATIONS OF JALPAIGURI

The Associations or the organisations of different character have always got the credit of achieving some positive role in different field of activities either in socio-cultural or in the political. Very recently we see that along with the political organisations or the governmental institutions the Non-governmental organisations (NGO) are doing many welfare activities for the welfare of the State as well as rendering service for the weaker section of our society. In our present study, we will see that those Associations or the Organisations of different types having different programmes are doing so

many socio-cultural and political activities during the period of our study. In colonial India, when the government remained almost indifferent about the regional or local problems, these Associations and social Organisations came forward to restore the interest of their own society, community, caste, education, welfare and other essential services. In rural society it is also found that on several occasions village fairs (MELAS) were started for the cause of the entertainment of the rural people. In Jalpaiguri district, we also find so many types of Associations and Organisations among which some were socio-cultural and the others were political.

First of all we will mention about a cultural organisation of Jalpaiguri. In 1900 (other reference, 1904), a voluntary socio-cultural organisation named 'ARYA NATYA SAMAJ' was formed in the district headquarters with the initiative of some local gentlemen.¹² But about this organisation (ANS) we have some other reference and it differed with the year of establishment of this organisation. During the Swadeshi Movement in the year 1907 a national school was founded in Jalpaiguri town, and in the initial stage it was located at the ground of the 'Arya Natya Samaj' established in the year 1904.¹³ So, in the District Gazetteer of Jalpaiguri we find that the Arya Natya Samaj was established in the year 1900, and Ranjit Dasgupta in his book mentioned that this organisation was founded in the year 1904. What ever it may be, that is not the subject of our study. What we can say about this organisation (Arya Natya Samaj) is that, it was a drama-cum cultural organisation. In the cultural life of Jalpaiguri, this organisation must have to be given the credit of a high standard cultural platform, which had a significant contribution to the cultural life of Jalpaiguri. In this connection one thing may be mentioned that the auditorium of the Arya Natya Samaj have been used as the Venue of many nationalist activities. Available sources suggest that the Arya Natya Samaj had a close link with the nationalist activities. The prominent personalities of the district were attached with this social and cultural organization. Many cultural programme were arranged by this organization. More appropriately, it may be mentioned here that the Arya Natya Samaj with its cultural activities have patronized the

Swadeshi Movement and inspired nationalism and nationalist activities in Jalpaiguri district at large.

During the period from 1920 to 1946 a huge number of voluntary social organisations were founded in Jalpaiguri and they (organisations) did much with their best sincerity for community welfare. Some branches of political organisations were also formed within a very short period after the establishment of the Jalpaiguri District Congress Committee (See Chapter 5.9). In this connection we would like to mention that a “Congress Seva Dal” was formed in 1922 in the district to combat the ravages of flood in the area.¹⁴ This organisation continued up to 1927 doing voluntary service among the distressed. As the district was a flood prone area, flood relief committees were formed for several times and we will mention it later on.

We know that being a Tea plantation area, a good number of Adivasis were there in Jalpaiguri district. Due to flood, the conditions of the Adivasis were very much alarming. Considering their position, the Seva Dal a co-operative organization used to supply the daily necessities to the Adivasis of the area. Much more was also done as welfare work between 1935 and 1938 among the people by establishing rural libraries and by advocating the rural libraries and by advocating the upliftment of the Harijans.

Again in 1943, Jalpaiguri was affected by flood and the common people of their area suffered much. In 1943, the Jalpaiguri Relief Committee was formed to help the famine-stricken people of the district. Side by side a ‘Flood Committee’ was formed and functioned upto 1946.¹⁵

It has to be noted here that Jalpaiguri is the only district in present North Bengal, where a huge number of Associations/Organisations were formed and functioned on different issues. In this context it may be mentioned that a good number of Voluntary Organizations came into being and engaged themselves in welfare activities. Among these voluntary organisations we must mention the names of ‘GANA KALYAN SAMITI’, ‘INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY’, ‘MARWARI RELIEF SOCIETY’ etc. When in 1950 a devastating flood came

out and the public life in the district almost collapsed, these organisations came forward to rescue the suffering people of the district. The leading persons of these organisations committed much sacrifice for the relief of the flood-stricken people. Not only for the cause of flood, the organisations continued their welfare service to the community even after 1950.

Among the welfare organisations of the district some other platforms were formed specially for the welfare of the women and the child. For women, it is found that in the first decade of the twentieth century the first 'Congress Mahila Samiti' was organised in the district. The name of the organisation itself is self-explanatory and no doubt some literate women of the town came under the banner of this political organization. Another woman organisation named 'MAHILA ATMARAKSHA SAMITI' was formed in the year 1942. This organisation worked among the distressed during the flood of 1943. The Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti was to some extent interested with education and with this consideration this Samiti established two libraries. The Jalpaiguri Mahila Samiti arranged a conference of the women in Jalpaiguri. The Mahila Samiti as a branch of All India Mahila Samiti served the famine-stricken people in 1943-44. For women education, another organisation was formed in Jalpaiguri. In the District Gazetteers of Jalpaiguri we get the reference that during the post-independence period some other organisations had committed themselves for social welfare. In this context it may be mentioned that in 1955, the social welfare Board established welfare centres for women and children in different areas of the district. These centres took special initiative for imparting social education among women. In this connection it has to be mentioned that the welfare centres were no doubt aware about the spread of education among the women, which was very much necessary for the social upliftment of the women.

In 1937-38, child welfare activities were undertaken by some voluntary organisations. At that time 'SISUNIKETAN', a voluntary social service organisation of Jalpaiguri started some programme for child welfare. Moreover

special care was undertaken by this organisation and the children were learnt through games and sports. In 1944, a children education centre named 'SISUMAHAL' was started in the district town. In 1954, a Juvenile organisation named 'DANPITEDER ASAR' started working for the physical and mental growth of children. This organisation tried to develop the mind of the children through book bank, exhibition, nutrition programs etc. We get all these information from the contemporary government reports and the District Gazetteers of Jalpaiguri.

The Jalpaiguri youngmen's Association has also started a centre for physical and mental culture of the children named 'SISU-UDYAN'. Some other organisations also worked from time to time for child welfare namely, 'MILE-MISE' of Deshbondhu Para, the Juvenile section of the cultural Association at Deshbandhu Nagar etc.¹⁶ Apart from the above organisations and Associations, there were a series of other organisations or Associations the names of which are not necessary to mention here. But so far we have mentioned about the activities of these organisations, it is found that all of them were engaged in different type of socio-cultural activities. Some of them had some direct or indirect contacts with the political activities (Arya Natya Samaj, Congress Seva Dal, Jalapiguri Mahila Samiti etc.) How far these organisations were successful, that is not our concern. But the significance of these organisations cannot be denied. The patriotic activities of some organisations and on the other hand the socio-cultural practices no doubt have some significant contribution in the Socio-cultural and political life of Jalpaiguri.

As a socio-cultural Association/Organisation the contribution of Brahmo-Samaj a branch of all Bengal Organisation is noteworthy. We have so many references that in North Bengal, the activities of the Brahmo-Samaj got some importance in the field of socio-cultural reform movement. In such phases we find that the Branches of Brahmo-Samaj in Jalpaiguri, Soidpur and Siliguri came into prominence owing to the presence of Chandi Charan Sen, well known as a North Bengal worker. He devoted his entire spare time for the

cause of the Brahmo-Samaj at Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. But after his departure the Samaj had suffered decline and the work of the Samaj partly kept up at Jalpaiguri, by a number of Brahmo families who have temporally settled down there.¹⁷

In Jalpaiguri district, it is found that like other parts of our country some missionary organisation also came forward for some welfare activities to the weaker Sections of our society. In this connection it may be mentioned here that the 'Baptist Missionary Society' had a branch in Jalpaiguri town. The Church Missionary Society carried on work among the Santal Colony in the Alipurduar Sub-Division. Apart from this, the 'Scandinavian Alliance Mission also worked for community welfare among the Bhutias while the Free church of Scotland confined the work among the Tea-garden coolies.¹⁸

In our present study about the Associations or Organisations of Jalpaiguri we have mentioned about some Associations or Organisations which had an active role in the socio-cultural activities. In addition to these Associations, some other Associations were also formed (see Chapter 5.10). Here, we are to mention the names of a few associations like: -

- a) The Anjuman-I-Islamia, Jalpaiguri. This Association was established in the year 1892.
- b) The Indian Tea planters' Association, Jalpaiguri, established on 29th June, 1918.
- c) The Muhammadan Association, Jalpaiguri. It was an organisation, which was based on caste/religious factors, and got much importance in its activities.

It is quite clear to all of us that the Indian Tea Planters' Association was to some extent an association of Tea professionals and they were more interested with their own business than the social and cultural activities. But it has to be noted that this ITPA was an organisation of the indigenous Tea Planters'.

When we are to focus some light on these Associations, first of all we would say something about the 'INDIAN TEA PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION' (hereafter ITPA). Ranjit Dasgupta in his book has mentioned that the political, social and economic environment was highly unfavourable, if not hostile, for the growth of Indian entrepreneurship in the Jalpaiguri Plantation Enterprise. It was in such a situation that in 1915 at the initiation of Tarini Prasad Roy, Aminur Rahaman, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh and Several Other Indian Tea Planters' organised the 'INDIAN TEA PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION' (ITPA) with the aims of safeguarding their interests and ventilating their grievances to the government. However, it is also found that due to the fact of discrimination and existence of tension the Indian Planters as well as the ITPA refrained from entering into any open or total conflict with the planters. One major reason was their heavy dependence on British officials and British businessmen and planters in many respects.¹⁹ Quite naturally one thing is very much relevant that the Indian Planters were in trouble to some extent and they got some grievances. Tarini Prasad Roy and others (mentioned earlier) under the banner of ITPA raised some questions to preserve the interest of the Indian planters which ultimately went against the colonial rulers. Hence it is found that some sort of anti-colonial activities were started in Jalpaiguri by the 'ITPA'. But the other Associations like Anjuman-I-Islamia, Jalpaiguri, and the Mohammadan Association of Jalpaiguri came to be identified as a platform of sectional politics among the Muslim and infact, almost solely among the immigrant Bengali Muslims, like Noakhali Muslims. Rafiuddin Ahmed, in his book 'The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: A quest for identity, (OUP, Delhi, 1981) have pointed out that a Muslim religious-cum-social-cum semi-political association, "Anjuman-I-Islamia had been established in Jalpaiguri. As a result, it is found that a strong sectional attitudes and activities emerged in the early years of the Twentieth Century. At the same time it has to be mentioned that the stir of Swadeshi Movement came out in Jalpaiguri and the political atmosphere in Jalpaiguri town became stormed. In this stage, the manifestation of a sectional political attitude was to some extent related to the Swadeshi

Movement in Jalpaiguri. In Jalpaiguri's context another important thing was the activities in relation to plantation entrepreneurship. Regarding Tea entrepreneurship, two groups emerged (i.e. open Group and closed Group) and during the post-Swadeshi period this entrepreneurship came to be determined by community identity.²⁰ In this connection it may be mentioned that in 1910 Musharraff Hossain promoted three companies Naxalbari, Rahimabad and Diana- based on Community identity and with it began the phase of 'Closed Group' activity of the Muslim entrepreneurs.

This community identity was also exposed with the activities of Muhammadan Association of Jalpaiguri. Under the umbrella of this association the Muslims of Jalpaiguri became united and they started to make an evolution/assessment about their social, cultural and political position. This association met the Lt. Governor of Bengal and they beg the favour of the governor regarding their low social, political and cultural position. What was the background of their poor position that is a different issue. But we have to keep it in our mind that a separate organisation have come into light and raised a voice in favour of a particular community (Muslim Community). In this regard, it is clear that a community feeling and identity feeling have emerged. Another reference may be made in connection with this community identity. F. A. Rahman first Muslim Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University was invited to address a conference of the Jalpaiguri Muhammadan Association. In his address Mr. Rahman also mentioned about the low social, political and cultural position of the Muslim community of Jalpaiguri district. So it has to be admitted that gradually a separate identity question of the Muslim community was coming into light.

During the early years of the twentieth century the Muslim Society in Jalpaiguri district was a fragmented one, and the social, cultural and political integration of the migrated Muslim, specially the Noakhali Muslims with the Muslim of autochthonous origin remained weak.²¹ This situation got some importance among the activities of the Muhammadan Association and the

Anjuman-I-Islamia of Jalpaiguri. In this regard the role of the Associations of the Muslims in Jalpaiguri was noteworthy. This found reflection in the manifestation of divergent political attitudes and tendencies during the subsequent decades.

In the course of our present study we are not to justify the identity question of any particular group or community. This identity problem will be discussed in detail in the course of our study in the Eighth Chapter keeping in view about the different minor or major communities of North Bengal. In our present study we will discuss about the contribution of the press and Association of North Bengal particularly of Jalpaiguri and Malda district, which we have already mentioned earlier. Regarding Publications and Association of Jalpaiguri district, we have already mentioned. Now we are to deal about Malda district.

3.4 IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS OF MALDA

In our present discussion, now we would attempt to mention about the important publications of Malda district and at the same time we would discuss about their involvement and contributions in the contemporary socio-cultural and political situations. In our discussion on the background of press and publications of North Bengal (see Chapter 2) we have explained the growth and development of press publication in the Malda district. However, for our present study we would have to mention some important publications of Malda. From the last decade of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, when the Western educated middle class intelligentsia of North Bengal began to publish newspapers and periodicals in their respective districts, Malda also shared and took a pioneering role. The person who initiated the process of publication from Malda was Radhesh Chandra Seth. 'KUSUM', the first monthly periodical Published from Malda was edited by Radhesh Chandra Seth, a front ranking intellectual of Malda district. The exact date of its publication is not known, but it is assumed by some other references that KUSUM was first Published probably in 1890.²² Apart from this Radhesh Chandra Seth had the

credit to publish a few number of papers from Malda. In this connection we can mention here that during the year 1896, he began to publish two weekly newspapers namely 'GOURBARTA' and 'GOURDOOT'.²³ But unfortunately we don't have any evidence about Gourbarta.

After some years we get the information about some other Publications from Malda. In 1897, 'MALDA SAMACHAR' edited by Kaliprasanna Chakraborty began to be published. It was an important publication of Malda and in the course of intellectual exercise and political activities of the district it had a significant contribution. In the year 1914, another paper namely 'MALDA AKBAR' was published by Maulabi Abdul Gani. Nothing details are known about this paper. In the same year, the most illustrated periodical 'GAMBHIRA' was published from Malda and it was edited by Krishna Chandra Sarkar.²⁴ In the socio-cultural history of Malda district as a whole, the contribution of this periodical (Gambhira) was praiseworthy. Apart from these publications, some other papers were also published from Malda. Among them we can mention the names of 'DAMRU, ADINA, and MINAR'. Incidentally these three papers were published in the same year, i.e. 1941. The editors of these three papers were Nanda Gopal Choudhury, Akbar Munsii and Abdul Rahman respectively.²⁵ Though details are not known about all these publications, but from other contemporary records it is assumed that due to this intellectual exercise a literary and cultural atmosphere have been emerged. For this development in the field of literary activities some sort of social reform movement started and it produced a multifaceted intellectual expression of the social and cultural transformations. It is also true in the cases of many other places that no other coherent body of thought so sensitively and profoundly exposed the mental processes of people as they formulated the ideas underlying the structure of their modern society as did the literature on social reform. However, this intellectual expressions and cultural transformations will be more exposed in Malda district when we will see the follow up of this process with the publication of another paper namely 'GOURDOOT'.

An overall study about the publications of Malda is not the purpose of our present study. The present study attempts to look into the contribution of some publications in the socio-cultural and political life of Malda. In this regard now we will mention something about the most important and reputed newspaper of Malda. This newspaper was 'GOURDOOT' edited by Radhesh Chandra Seth, and it started its publication from 1896.²⁶ Though it started its publication from 1896, but within a short period the publication of this newspaper came to an end temporarily due to some severe financial stringency of its editor (Radhesh Chandra Seth), which is already mentioned in our discussion of Chapter 5. Now we will try to have an analysis on 'GOURDOOT' regarding its intellectual social, cultural and political involvement in the district of Malda.

3.5 GOURDOOT AND SOME SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES

It has already been mentioned that Gourdoot was first published in 1896 by Radhesh Chandra Seth and within a very short period its publication was temporarily stopped. But in the year 1912, Gourdoot again started its publication with the care and editorship of Lalbehari Majumdar. Regarding his academic career and family background we have mentioned in Chapter 5 (See Chapter 5.9) From Barisal (presently Bangladesh) he came to Malda in 1907 and permanently settled there. He was very much interested with literary activities and his literary sense was appreciated by, Radhesh Chandra Seth and Benoy Kumar Sarkar, the most illustrious son of Malda.²⁷ Being inspired by this two strong personalities of Malda, Lalbehari Majumdar decided and determined to Publish a newspaper from Malda to expose the views of the local intellectuals on social, economic, cultural and political issues. As he had a strong political background (Cousin of Ambika Charan Majumdar, president of the Lucknow Congress, 1916) he had some special interest on political matters. With his publication he also tried to strengthen the nationalist movement of Malda, which was getting shape at that time.²⁸ So ultimately it is found that with the sincere initiative of Lalbihari Majumdar and the co-operation extended

by Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radhesh Chandra Seth, the Publication of 'GOURDOOT' began for the second time in 1912. Moreover, for this literary and intellectual exercise, the editor of this newspaper (Gourdoot) was very much encouraged and got financial support from Sarat Chandra Roy Choudhury, the Maharaja of Chanchal Malda.²⁹

3.5.1 SOCIAL ISSUES

If we make a comprehensive study on some of the socio-political issues of different years occurred in Malda, we will get huge number of information on political, social and economic matters which were reflected on the pages of Gourdoot. Due to some political background of the editor of Gourdoot which is already mentioned political issues got much importance in this publication. Regarding Social issues, Gourdoot highlighted some problems like immigration, Silk Production problem of the 'Bansis', problem of the poor peoples in rural areas particularly about the women. In Malda, immigration has been a large scale for the last three decades, chiefly from Santal Parganas, into the high lands of the Barind and to some extent of Biharis, who have come for service and settled down to cultivation very largely into the west of Ratua and Tulsihata, though they are to be found in every thana.³⁰

Another problem of the poor people of Malda was the enormous Price-hike of the essential commodities. This unnatural price-hike, which resulted a constant suffering of the people, was reported by Gourdoot, dated August 17, 1944. The Gourdoot strongly protested against these dishonest motives of the businessmen of Malda. According to the editor of Gourdoot, some dishonest merchants were responsible for this sudden price-hike. To stop this ill motives of the merchants and to stop the financial stringency of the common people, this newspaper (Gourdoot) made an appeal to use district administration to take drastic action against them. The editor of this paper expressed the opinion that the situation about the price of the essential commodities were as grave as it was in 1943.³¹ Regarding this issue it can be said that as a newspaper/media

Gourdoot has performed a social responsibility for the benefit of the common people of Malda.

Not only this, in the context of Bengal Famine of 1943 in Malda district, Gourdoot performed a very significant role. The editor of Gourdoot was very much aware about the situation due to the occurrence of acute food crisis owing to this famine. The Gourdoot reported in details about the sufferings of the common people at the time of famine. From the report of this newspaper, it is evident that mainly the rural areas of Malda district were affected by this Famine. Gourdoot, in its different issues reported that the condition of agricultural labours, the malos (fishermen), and workers engaged in Silk-weaving and overall the poor people of the rural areas were beyond description. These reporting of Gourdoot had no doubt some impact and indirectly it created some pressure on the district administration. As a result we see that the district administration arranged some relief camps for these distressed people. Side by side some other voluntary organisations also came forward for the relief of these sufferers. The Ramkrishna Mission and the Hindu Mahasabha extended their relief and other possible co-operations to these people. The Ramkrishna Mission started five relief camps in different parts of the district.³² Regarding food crisis and price-hike, Gourdoot accused the government and it made strong criticism of the administration for its inability to maintain equality of price of the commodities in different adjoining districts. At the same time Gourdoot made an appeal to the government to import food crops from the adjacent district to cope with the situation.³³

The above discussion about some social issues of Malda are only a few. Apart from this, there are so many, cases of social problem which were dealt by Gourdoot. But to explain all of them are not the purpose of our study. For better understanding about the social responsibility of this newspaper we just mentioned some cases only. But from this brief discussion it is clear that the primary area of creative intellectual endeavour of Gourdoot must be given some special credit. During the mid-Twentieth Century. Gourdoot, a weekly

newspaper published from Malda did not care to criticize the government ignoring all of the warnings of press ordinances. So as a Mirror of the Society Gourdoot as a media performed all possible social responsibilities.

3.5.2 POLITICAL ISSUES

During the early phase of our study, we don't find any political agitation in Malda. But at the beginning of the 'Wahabi Movement' some men were prosecuted in 1866 for waging war against the Queen. Otherwise no political movement appears to have affected the district during the British rule till the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905. This was strongest amongst the educated sections of the urban areas, but made its appeal on the protectionist side to the producers of cotton cloths and silks.³⁴ During that period, it is found that some vernacular newspapers began to be published and took the issue seriously as a subject of their circulation and to some extent influenced the common people in mobilizing public opinion in favour of protest movement. This greatly increased circulation of vernacular newspapers characteristic of the agitation had some effect amongst the masses in fomenting sedition and anti-government feelings, but served to quicken interest in secular education and to stir up the secular antipathy between Hindu and Mahamedan.³⁵

We have already mentioned that from 1912, 'GOURDOOT' began to be published as a regular Weekly newspaper from Malda and it has established itself as a 'JATIO SAPTAHIK PATRIKA'. (Nationalist Weekly Newspaper). We have so many references about this newspaper specially its involvements in political activities. The District Gazetteers of Malda gives the information that,

"The GOURDOOT, which is one of the periodicals now being published in the district, is an old publication". The District Gazetteer also gives the information that in the phase of the nationalist movement during the Non-Co-Operation Movement, Gourdoot, a regional Vernacular newspaper published from Malda covered most of the important political incidents. In the 1920's some of the comments made in this paper found a place in the government reports on the Indian newspaper-periodicals in Bengal.³⁶

According to this comment made in the District Gazetteer it is clear that as a newspaper it (GD) had a distinct political character. This will be more clear in our later discussion on different political issues highlighted by this paper (Gourdoot). In our discussion in Chapter 5, we have made an elaborate study about Gourdoot and its involvement in different political activities (See Chapter 5). Here we will refer some cases of contemporary political situation in Malda so that they can assess its political character.

So far we know about the political outlook of 'GOURDOOT' it is found that the newspaper was pro-Congress in character. Apart from the part of editing, Lalbehari Majumdar was a political activist of the Congress party in Malda District and he took a pioneering role in organizing the Congress Movement at Malda. His political position was so important that for a long time he had been the Vice-President of Malda District Congress Committee.³⁷ From his political position it can be assumed that Lalbehari Majumdar, the editor of 'GOURDOOT' was a front ranking political leader of Malda district and as a result this was directly or indirectly reflected on the publication of Gourdoot. In Gourdoot (November, 1945) we see that Lalbehari Majumdar, the editor of Gourdoot criticized the Gandhian political ideology. As he himself was a strong supporter of Subhas Chandra Bose (This group Politics between the followers of Gandhi and Subhash has been discussed in Chapter 5) and personally differed from Gandhian ideology, this political view was exposed in his newspaper. The Gourdoot in one of its editorials (November, 1945), while praising Subhash Chandra Bose for his remarkable vigour expressed hope that 'Some day' which is not far away when the Indian succeeding generation would feel the necessity of making a comparative study between the contributions of Subhash Chandra Bose and Gandhiji to the Indian freedom struggle.³⁸

Another important phase of the political life of Malda was the time of 'Quit India Movement'. During this time (1942 and onwards) the common people of Malda both from urban and rural areas spontaneously participated in

this movement. At that time Subodh Kumar Mishra was the president of District Congress Committee and he played a vital role in mobilizing the people under the congress banner.³⁹ In the whole district the areas, which were mostly stormed with this movement, was 'BHALUKA, HARISCHANDRAPUR and SINGABAD'.⁴⁰ The adjacent areas were also stirred with the political agitation, which was reported by Gourdoot.

Another important political phenomenon of Malda was the emergence of communal politics. Due to so many reasons it was found that communalism spread out and an acute communal tension raised in the district. In this stage of communal politics the local branch of Hindu Mahasabha took a leading part. This communal politics of Hindu Mahasabha was led by Sibendu Sekhar Roy and Asutosh Choudhury.⁴¹ In this grave situation of communal tensions when the Hindu Mahasabha capitalized a portion of the Hindu community for their political interest, the local Muslims of Malda also did not remain salient. Quite naturally the local Muslims under the banner of 'MUSLIM LEAGUE' became united and engaged in countering propaganda of the Hindu Mahasabha.⁴² In this regard now we will mention some specific cases of communal tension in Malda district.

During 1944, an untoward incident took place in Bamangola of Malda between the *santals* and the Muslims. The Hindu Mahasabha made it an issue and tried to capitalize it for their communal politics.⁴³ In the District Gazetteer of Malda we also find another reference about this communal politics and it was initiated by Kashiswar Chakraborty, a pleader of Dinajpur. According to this reference it was found that in late 1920's he initiated a movement amongst the Santals of barind with a view to assimilate them inside the Hindu fold.⁴⁴ This initiative of Kashiswar Chakraborty, was ultimately taken up by Hindu Mahasabha and in course of some incidents like almost a communal riot occurred in this area. In an issue of Gourdoot, 1944, it was reported that the Santals and the Muslim communities made a clash at Bamangola (in Malda) over the issue of the immersion of the image of Goddess Kali (a religious

function of the Hindus). Though the matter was not so serious in the initial stage, ultimately it turned to be a sensitive factor to the Muslims. The Muslim people who usually assemble there for their daily 'NAMAJ' (Prayer) at the local Masjid got disturb and they asked the Santal procession not to beat drums. (A high sounding musical instrument). But the Santals either emotionally or intentionally did not response to this appeal. As a result a violent situation broke out which ultimately resulted to be a riot. It resulted to the killing of two persons; one of them belonged to Santal Community and the other from Muslim Community. Some people of the both community got seriously injured. Getting this information, the police rushed to the spot and arrested some twenty people.⁴⁵ As a result of this incident the total area was very much sensitized and the local people got very much tensed. This entire situation was reported by Gourdoot and it had a serious impact on public life.

Regarding the situation mentioned above we have further information, which describes the situation more tensed. It is unfortunate that both the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim league fully utilized the situation for their own interest as well as the interest of their community. In this context 'Gourdoot' reported that the local Hindu Mahasabha tried their best to capitalize this incident between the Santals and the Muslims. Similarly the Muslim league for their own interest and for the interest of the Muslim community came forward to support the role of the local Muslim. Quite naturally both the community (Santal and Muslim) became hostile to each other and a communal tension spread out in the district.⁴⁶

In this context of communal hostility in Malda, we can refer another example over the issue of the establishment of 'Malda College' in 1944. The leading personalities who took the initiative for the establishment of Malda College were mainly Ashutosh Choudhury and Jadunandan Choudhury and they were the prominent leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha. But it was not any issue and for this high profile Socio-Cultural work no body opposed to Ashutosh Choudhury and Jadunandan Choudhury, though they belonged to

Hindu Mahasabha. Some problem to some extent communal was going to be created when the organisers were trying to accumulate fund for the college. In this regard Maulavi Jahur Ahmed Choudhury who was a leader of the local Muslim League, contributed a significant donation for this purpose. No doubt it was appreciated by all. But when in return he demanded reservation of seats for the local Muslim students, the situation has been changed. The demand for reservation of seats for Muslim students was strongly opposed by Asutosh Choudhury.⁴⁷ Due to this situation the issue of college establishment got some controversy and reservation of seats for the students of a particular community became quite impossible. To have an amicable solution a meeting was convened and detailed discussion was made over the issue. All these proceeding were categorically reported by Gourdoot. The Gourdoot reported that in this meeting Jiauddin Ahmed, the Chairman of the English bazaar municipality, requested the leaders of both the communities to look at the college affairs as a social responsibility and with secular out look.⁴⁸ He categorically pointed out that the Hindus donated Rs. 33,000/- and the Muslim Rs. 10,000/- in spite of that the students of both the communities should get equal scope of education in the college, which is going to be established. His proposal got due response. In such a situation Mr. Ahmed further stated that, if the Hindus retained a slight majority in the collage organising committee, the matter should not be taken exception and the local Muslims ought not to express resentment.⁴⁹ In this regard it is found that the outlook of Mr. Ahmed was very much rational and his proposal played a significant role to make the situation normal. The Gourdoot however informed that this narrow attitude of a particular section was condemned by the responsible and sensible Muslims of Malda and the College would be opened shortly for the benefit of the local students.⁵⁰

According to different issues of Gourdoot we have a series of political incidents, which was categorically reported in this newspaper. All of them cannot be motioned here as this is not the purpose of our study. For better understanding about the role of Gourdoot in social cultural and political

context, we just refer some cases occurred in Malda during the pre-independent period. So far we have discussed on different issues and the role of Gourdoot as a newspaper, it reveals that the issues performed a social responsibility as a newspaper and hence this newspaper directly or indirectly created the public opinion against injustice and improper activities. Now we would like to refer another political case particularly about the role of communists.

3.5.3 ROLE OF THE COMMUNISTS

During 1943, the Bengal Silk control order was passed by which the 'BANSIS' (producer of Silk-Worm) and 'GHAIWALAS' (hand reelars) were asked to sell all their cocoons to the government. But in return the price they will get could not satisfy them. The government was very much eager to purchase the total cocoons because silk thread was essential for manufacturing of parachutes.⁵¹ In this circumstances the opposition of the basis and the ghaiwalas against the Bengal silk control order created a grave situation, which made a scope for the communists to take up the issue. Taking advantage of this situation the leaders of the District communist party came forward to support the problem of the bansis and the ghaiwalas (producers of silk worm and hand reelars respectively) and tried to utilize them for their political interest. The contemporary newspaper of the district Gourdoot reported all these developments as a result of which the problem began to be cemented. The newspaper reported that the communists took it as a serious matter and held meetings at Sujapur, Milki and Kaliachak (the centres of silk production) with the reelars and the weavers. After a long discussion the communist leader to some extent convinced the bansis and the ghaiwalas and they told the reelars and weavers that they would sincerely try to pursue the issue of price of silk with the government. The communist leaders at the same time advised the bansis and the ghaiwalas to show obedience to the Act of Bengal silk control.⁵²

When the situation was gradually developing and the discontent of the reelars and weavers becoming more acute, the local leaders of the communist party held a meeting at Sujapur between the 'BANSIS' and the representatives

of the District Administration. In this meeting, the local leaders of the Communist party took an active role and with their initiative it was decided to look after the interest of the reelars and the weavers. Sri Sudhendu Jha, a local communist leader and member of the District Board, was selected the chairperson of the meeting. Gourdoot (May 18, 1944) reported that the local 'BANSIS' gracefully accepted this selection. On behalf of the administration, the Deputy Controller of silk at first explained the urgency of the issue and the situation was explained elaborately. For the interest of the bansis and the ghaiwalas and at the same time for their party interest Sri Sudhendu Jha in his speech categorically explained his party's sympathy to the reelars and weavers. But due to the shortcomings of the communists they could not satisfy the bansis and within a very short time the role of the communists were questioned by the bansis. The promise given by the communists were not fulfilled and their commitment became a total failure. They could not negotiate the matter with the government properly and as a result the understandings drawn in the Tripartite meeting (Bansis, Communists and the Administration) got no follow up. Quite naturally the demand of the bansis did not get any benefit and the price of cocoons did not increase.

Regarding this incident the communist party which could make a solid base lost the support of the poor people. The bansis who relied upon the communist yet frustrated and they got the impression that these urban communists were acting as the agent of the government.⁵³ It is informed by the Gourdoot as well as by S. Guha Ray in his book 'A Handbook of Malda District' that the bansis totally declined the communists and asked not to interfere on their own affair. In this circumstances when a conference was held by the bansis at Malda and the Communists tried to interfere, it was resented by the bansis. All these developments in the context of the problem of the bansis and the ghaiwalas and the role of the Communist leaders were reported by Gourdoot. Moreover we are informed by the editor of this newspaper that this sudden change of situation was a serious matter on the part of the communist politics in the district, which has to be investigated by the party leadership.⁵⁴

So long we have discussed about some important publications of Malda district and we have specially highlighted the involvement of 'GOURDOOT' a weekly newspaper published from Malda. Some socio-cultural and specially political issues dealt by Gourdoot are mentioned in a brief manner. As details of these incidents are not the purpose of our study we have just tried to give a few information which are some how connected with our study. But it is fact that in the course of social and cultural activities the media had a positive role to play. Apart from this, we have a glorious history of our indigenous press, which are already mentioned in chapter 2. Along with the all India leading dailies and periodicals the Rural Vernacular Press also constitutes one of the most important print media for reaching out to the hundreds of million people in all parts of our country. For all concern of our society, it can be said that the rural press is being increasingly recognized as a viable means for the promotion of social awareness in all respect.⁵⁵

3.6 IMPORTANT ASSOCIATIONS OF MALDA

In our discussion about the Associations/Organisations of Jalpaiguri district, we have tried to focus on some important rather major and minor Associations which got some significance in the context of our society, specially on cultural and political activities both in the colonial and post-colonial period. Now in our present context we will mention about some Organisations/Associations of Malda and at the same time we will try to show what part they were plying for the cause of society, culture and national issues. The subject, which is undertaken for our study, have some basic characteristics. The common thing is that the modern Indian intelligentsia are generally shaped by their experience of colonial rule and exposure to Western thought and feeling. However, in this circumstances, we see that a series of Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) were founded in different places with different views and sometimes achieved an outstanding role for our social and cultural awareness in the sub-regional levels. This sub-regional awareness is now needed to be added in the main stream of history.

Among the Association/Organisations (SABHA-SAMITI) of the district of Malda we would like to mention the names and subsequently discussion will be made about them and their contribution for our purpose.

1. Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan
2. Branch of Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha (Rajshahi)
3. Malda National Council of Education
4. Hindu Mahasabha
5. Muslim League
6. Malda Muhammadan Association
7. The Malda Association etc.

In addition to these Association/Organisations, some other organisations (samities) were founded by Acharya Benoy Kumar Sarkar, which was related with socio-cultural activities. The growth of public Organisations and Associations in Malda no doubt had a significant contribution in creating a general awareness among the people of Malda. However, in our brief discussion on these Associations we will try to show some example regarding the role of the Associations/Organisations (SABHA-SAMITI) in the field of Socio-Cultural activities as well as in the Political field. Though it is a micro level study, but in the context of our national life these sub-regional awareness have got some importance:

So far we have the references, we don't find any government Institution that were engaged in welfare activities for the welfare of society or rendering service for the weaker section of Malda. The socio-cultural activities, which developed in Malda, were due to the initiative of some voluntary organisations and personal interest of some intellectuals. Hence, our discussion will be confined within a few numbers of organisations, because archival documents are not preserved to make a comprehensive study about all of them.

In the case of Malda district we see that when the government remained almost indifferent about the cultural life of the people and any social development, some sort of cultural organisations were formed by the local intellectuals and social activists for the interest of their own society, caste, community, education and other essential necessities. In these circumstances, first of all we would mention about one socio-religious organisation i.e. 'RAMAPUR BOALIA DHARMA SABHA'. Actually it was an organisation of Rajshahi district in present Bangladesh. About the press publication in Malda we get the reference that Radhesh Chandra Seth published a paper namely 'KUSUM' in 1885.⁵⁶ But as it was of very short duration, Radhesh Chandra started to publish one paper, which was a mouthpiece of 'RAMPUR BOALIA DHARMA SABHA'.⁵⁷ (See the background of the publication of Malda in this chapter). In this connection it may be assumed that a branch of Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha was established in Malda. Nothing details are known about this organisation. But it is assumed that it was an organisation/association to perform the socio-religious practices.

In the cultural life of Malda, the Association/Organisation, which got an outstanding credit, was 'MALDA ZELA SAHITYA SAMMELAN'. So far it is known that this is the oldest and seems to be the first district-wise organisation in North Bengal. Among the organisers of this Sahitya Sammelan (MZSS), the key person was Radhesh Chandra Seth. Along with his press Publication, i.e., Gourbarta, Gourdoot, (see important Publications of Malda, in this chapter) Radhesh Chandra published at least five books (in Bengali) and these were –

- 1) Maldaha Ratna Mala.
- 2) Maldaher Silpa Itihaser Upadan.
- 3) Geeta Koumudi.
- 4) Aitihashik Prabandha.
- 5) Subhadya (edited book).⁵⁸

Apart from these publications, he started to write one book on the geography of Malda. But unfortunately before completing this book he departed from this world in the year 1911.⁵⁹ Radhesh Chandra with such literary knowledge and intellectual qualities took the initiative to arrange a Sahitya Sammelan at Malda as a mark of Cultural development. To make it a success he personally made a contact with the renowned historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar who happens to be a son of Rajshahi a district of undivided North Bengal and invited him to kindly be present in the Sahitya Sammelan to be held at Malda. During 1910, a person (Radhesh Chandra Seth) from Malda was taking this type of initiative really claims some special credit. Ultimately it is found that a 'SAHITYA SAMMELAN OF NORTH BENGAL' was held at Malda on 25th day of PAUSH, 1317B.S.⁶⁰ A good number of intellectuals and literarily interested persons attended this Sahitya Sammelan and as a result the total cultural lift of Malda district was very much encouraged. Subsequently it is found that in Malda, some literate persons got interest in literary and cultural activities which may be marked as a development in the cultural life of Malda. So in this brief discussion it may be assumed that the 'Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan', within its limited scope achieved much for the cultural regeneration in the district. In this regard one thing is clear that a Swadeshi spirit was created in sub-regional level. We can refer his book's Malda her Itihaser Upadan, which is very much symbolic in the context of Swadeshi spirit.

Now, we will focus some light on another Association of Malda. The name of this Association was 'THE MALDA ASSOCIATION', established in the year 1887. Its objects was to improve the condition of the people of the district in every, direction (See Chapter 5). From the objectives of these Associations it is quite evident that this association was a platform to look after the general interest of the district. But one significance of this Association has to be noted. While all the members of the 'Malda Mohammedan Association' were the educated Mohammedans of the district, membership of the 'Malda Association' was open to any adult educated residents of the district. All the

office-bearers are Hindus. Its total members were 55 only. Name of the president and secretary of the Association were Babu Jadu Nandan Choudhury and Radhika Lal Satiar. B. L. Particular question in which the Association was interested and upon which it would be in a position to offer an opinion of value- may be consulted on questions of general interest.⁶¹ So from the aims and objectives of this Association it may generally be assumed that the association was very much aware about the general interest of the district.

For the study about the Association of Malda, now we will confine our discussion on a particular Association, which was more or less trying for the betterment of Mohammedans community. This Association was Malda Mohammedans Association (Established in 1890.) Its object was to improve the social, political and educational condition of the Mohammedans community of the district⁶² (for details see chapter 5). In the district, according to government reports it is found, the Mohammedans were the second largest community. According to W. W. Hunter (SAB, Vol. VII) in Malda, the population is almost evenly divided into Hindus and Mohammedans. More specifically, it can be said that the proportion of Hindus is greatest in the North and West of the district and of Mohammedan's in the South.⁶³ So, it is not unlikely that being a major community of the district the Mohammedans will try to develop their community at large. The membership of this Association was open to all educated Mohammedans and its official business was transacted by an elected committee of 30 members, mostly resident of English Bazar. A general meeting was held once in a year. In the year 1890, total number of its member was 130. Name of the president and secretary of the Association were respectively, Maulavi Muhammad Ismail Chaudhury and Khan Sahil Abdul Aziz Khan B.L. The Association was mainly concerned on the questions affecting Mohammedans interest.⁶⁴

Along with these associations in Malda we find two other associations, which were more or less concerned with community based politics and to some extent related with communal activities. This two community based

associations were a) Hindu Mahasabha and b) Muslim League. About the activities of these two associations we have already mentioned some incidents of communal activities both of Hindus and the Muslims in this chapter, section 3.5. As these two Associations were fully concerned with the community interest and had a political character, they could not play any active role in socio-cultural field. Moreover our study is not concerned with the role of any political party in the district. So, the role of Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League in Malda district are not required to be discussed here.

So long we have discussed about different type of Associations/Organisations in the district of Malda. But the most important and noteworthy Association / Organisation which had a long drawn impact on the socio-cultural and political life of Malda was the branch of 'National Council of Education (N.C.E.). Before we discuss about the National Council of Education in Malda, let us mention its background first.

It is well known to us that the reactionary regime of Lord Curzon is a landmark and ushered a new era in the history of the freedom movement in India. When Lord Curzon planned a scheme of partition of Bengal, it was vehemently opposed at every stage at public meeting, in the newspapers in Calcutta and all over Bengal. Krishna Kumar Mitra, the editor of 'SANJIVANI' in its issue of 13th July 1905, suggested that in view of the attitude of the government, people should boycott all British goods, observe mourning, and shun all contacts with officials and official bodies.⁶⁵ This suggestion was accepted in a public meeting held at Bagerhat on 16 July, 1905 in which some resolutions were adopted. From this resolution and overall as a reaction against the partition of Bengal, the Boycott Movement started. The entire Bengali press vigorously supported the Boycott movement. But the great problem of the leaders was how to make the Boycott movement successful. A large number of SAMITIS (Societies) the majority of the members of which were students were formed in Calcutta and all over Bengal for pushing on the

Boycott Movement. Quite naturally repressive measures were taken against the students.

When the boycott movement reached to the extreme and the British government adopted repressive measures, a new situation emerged due to which 'SWADESHI MOVEMENT' became a component of the boycott movement. Another important factor of this movement was that the students proved to be the chief props and pillars of the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement from the very beginning. Their youthful enthusiasm was fired by the speeches of the leaders, and they jumped into the fight with alacrity, not being restrained by fear of consequences and careful calculation of pros and cons, which would have chilled the ardour of older and more experienced man.⁶⁶ As a result it is found that the government adopted strong repressive measures, which resulted the expulsion of a large number of students from schools and colleges. The question of providing for their education naturally agitated the minds of the leaders and National Schools were started in some localities. This brought into prominence one Institution of Bengal which played a prominent role in the history of the Swadeshi movement and that was the 'DAWN SOCIETY'. Some branches of this society were also established in some mofussoil area.⁶⁷

During the first decade of the twentieth century when the flow of the Swadeshi movement reached at peak, some important Associations/Organisations were formed in Bengal to initiate the cause of patriotic and national activities. Among them 'DAWN SOCIETY' of Satish Chandra Mukherji was perhaps the most important. Moreover, for the cause of Swadeshi Education, the leaders of Bengal felt it urgent to organise an association, which will formulate some policy for national education (Swadeshi Siksha). Satish Chandra's activity in this line is all the more important because his various activities for the cause of Swadeshi were undertaken long before the formal beginning of the Swadeshi Movement. In fact, the ideologies of the Swadeshi Movement were laid substantially on the ideas and activities of the 'DAWN

SOCIETY'. It created a Swadeshi temper and spirit among a large number of men of our country and paved the path to a large extent for the advent of the Swadeshi Movement as well as in promoting the Swadeshi spirit in education.

It was with this view a historic conference was held on November 16, 1905. Never before had so many eminent sons of Bengal met on a common platform. For, it was attended among other, by Gurudas Banarji, Satish Chandra Mukherji, Hirendra Nath Dutta, Ashutosh Choudhury, Rashbehari Ghosh, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Tarak Nath Palit, Byomkesh Chakraborty, Chitta Ranjan Das, Abdul Rasul, Nilratan Sarkar, Brajendra Nath Seal, Lal Mohan Ghosh, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Bipin Chandra Paul, Matilal Ghosh and Subodh Mallik.⁶⁸

After several hours' animated discussion the conference adopted two main resolutions, the substantial part of which was:

“That in the opinion of this conference it is desirable and necessary that a National Council of Education should be at once established to organise a system of Education Literary, Scientific and Technical- on National lines and under National Control”. Under this process of action at last on 11th March; 1906, the “National Council of Education”(N.C.E.) was established. So, in short this is the history and background of the formation of N.C.E. Now let us draw our attention of the Malda Branch of N.C.E.

From the very inception of these Organisation/Association, Bengal Kumar Sarkar, the most illustrious son of Malda (district) was attached with it. By this time he completed his higher education and was awarded Government Scholarship to continue further study in abroad. He was also offered the post of Deputy Magistrate by the government. But due to his national background, patriotic feelings and overall his devotion to his motherland he declined to except anything and voluntarily joined the “Bengal National College” established on 14th Aug. 1906 as a teacher of history and economics.

This Bengal National College was very much attached with the ‘National Council of Education (JATIO SHIKSHA PARISHAD). At that time

Arobinda Ghosh was the principal of that Bengal National College. When Benoy Kumar Sarkar came under the direct influence of Sri Arobinda Ghosh, it became a turning point in the life of Benoy Kumar Sarkar and also a landmark in the Cultural and Political life of Malda.

From the above discussion it is very much clear to us that Benoy Kumar Sarkar was a dedicated person for the cause of Indian Nation. He was very much influenced by the contemporary political stirrings and as a result he committed so sacrifice for the national cause. His nationalist feelings (Swadeshi Spirit) encouraged him so much as a result of which he decided to do something for the cause of national education. To popularise the national education among the students of Bengal, a campaign was started during 1905-06 by Radha Kumud Mukhopadhaya, Rabindra Narayan Ghosh, Nripendra Chandra Banerjee and some others. Benoy Kumar Sarkar was also one of them.⁶⁹ In this context one thing is important that after the establishment of N.C.E. (11th June, 1906) Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar tried in all possible means to popularise the issue of national education. He wrote two articles, one in Bengali and the other in English making an appeal to the students of Bengal seeking their support and co-operation. The Bengali article was published in a paper of Malda (Malda Samachar, June 1906) and the English in the Amrita Bazar Patrika July-August, 1906. In addition to that he also made an appeal to the common people of Bengal in favour of the national education.

After joining the Bengal National College in Calcutta, Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar decided to open a branch of it at his birthplace, Malda. With this intention he had been at Malda for sometime. When he was busy with the programme of national education, he realized the urgency to provide proper national education to the poor, illiterate and ignorant people of his birthplace (Malda). After reaching Malda, Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar within a very short time made all necessary arrangements with the help of some of his associates and with a very enthusiastic Swadeshi spirit he established the 'MALDA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION' on 6th June, 1907.⁷⁰

Though this National Council of Education (Malda Branch) was affiliated to the National council of Education of Calcutta, but in practice it was running almost independently under the direct guideline of Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar. One more thing has to be mention here that in the District Gazetteer of Malda we get the reference that at the beginning of agitation against the partition of Bengal, a National School upto the standard of the high English School was started in English Bazar and various subsidiary village schools were also started.⁷¹ In this connection it has to be noted that apart from Malda, National Schools were started in other districts of North Bengal like Jalpaiguri, Rangpur etc. But the exception was that the branch of 'National Council of Education' was established only in Malda district in North Bengal.

Apart from the establishment of Malda National Council of Education (MNCE), Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar initiated some other programme for the cause or national education (Swadeshi education). During 1913, it is found that at least 11(eleven) schools were established in different places of Malda under the supervision of Malda National Council of Education. Among these schools, two were Night Schools, two were girl's schools, two were Fifth Standard (Matric) schools. To encourage the students, Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar announced different type of prizes and scholarship. These Schools were to follow the curriculum of the National council of Education, Calcutta. Each and every school had a library and a workshop for vocational teaching. The Malda National council of Education used to visit these schools frequently. In this context the renowned historian and former teacher of Bengal National College stated that, 'It was due to Benoy Sarkar that Malda became a place of interest, some of us used to visit Malda to see Benoy's field of operation'.⁷² It is also found that Radha Kumud Mukherji, Shibaprasad Gupta of Kashi and Iswar Smaran, a Congress worker of Lucknow visited Malda to see the activities of Benoy Sarkar related to national education.⁷³ However, in this context it is found that Benoy Kumar Sarkar with his best efforts tried to convince the people of Malda about the necessity of national education.

In the context of Folk culture of Malda, which is known as 'GAMBHIRA', Benoy Sarkar had a great contribution. To encourage the people of Malda associated with Gambhira he announced a prize of Rupees 25/- (Twenty five) for collection and compilation of the history of Gambhira. This announcement of prize for Gambhira was published in 'Malda Samachar' (1907). Getting inspired by this, Haridas Palit published an article on "Adyer Gambhira" which was published by 'BANGIYA SAHITYA PARISHAD' in 1909.⁷⁴ On the basis of this article, Benoy Sarkar, when he was in London, wrote and published one of his famous book, 'The Folk Element in Hindu Culture' in 1917.

Now, if we make a review on the associations of Malda, it will reveal that along with the other associations/organisations (SABHA-SAMITI) the National council of Education of Malda had a great contribution for the development of cultural activities as well as political. To be more specific, the Malda National Council of education did something significant for the spread of Swadeshi spirit in the district. However, in our present chapter we have tried to make a study on the role and contribution of the Press and Associations of Malda as well as North Bengal on the basis of available sources. Due to the non-availability of sufficient sources all the aspects may not be explored and it requires further research to understand the problem properly. In spite of that it may be said the press and publications of some districts of present North Bengal played a significant role for the cultural development and political awareness of this region.

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