

CHAPTER 5

CONTRIBUTION OF THE REGIONAL VERNACULAR PRESS AND THE ASSOCIATIONS IN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters we have discussed in detail on the growth and development of regional vernacular press and some association, which had a significant role in the process of national awakening and the growth of public opinion in North Bengal in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In all Bengal perspective, it is an established fact that the Vernacular press and organizations or Associations were closely related with the socio-cultural and political developments. Again, the growth of public organizations and Associations were closely related to the growth and development of Vernacular press. In this connection one example may be mention that, though the foundation of the 'Asiatic Society' by William Jones and thirty other gentlemen representing the elite of the European community on January 15, 1784, was for various reasons a landmark in the cultural history of the nation, yet Raja Rammohan Roy's 'ATMIYA SABHA' founded much later may rightly be regarded as the pioneer of truly Indian public Associations of the nineteenth century.¹ It is note worthy that during the period of our study a good number of journals and periodicals were published from the districts of present North Bengal. The impact of these publications on society, economy, polity and cultural life of the people are definitely important for our study. Similarly, the regional socio-cultural and political Associations/organizations also emerged in different places of present North Bengal, which reflected its mission and trends on social reform and on cultural and political situation. This is true not only in the case of Bengal or North Bengal (the area of our study) but almost all over the country. Other than Bengal we can mention the example of Maharashtra. The vernacular press in the Maharashtra region of western India

grew at an impressive rate. It reflected the trends, sometimes conflicting of social reform and of patriotism.² In Bengal also we see a large number of newspapers, journals and association were very much active starting from the great Indian Renaissance period to the final phase of national movement and even during the post independent period. In our present chapter we will try to give priority mainly on the role of the press and Associations of our area in the freedom movement of our country.

5.2 CONTRIBUTION OF THE REGIONAL VERNACULAR PRESS IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

It is known to all of us that the Indian press had a significant role on the freedom struggle of our country. But so long we know the role of the press was mainly the leading daily newspapers, weekly, fortnightly or monthly papers and the journals or periodicals of different type. No doubt, these publications did a lot for the political cause of our country. But at the same time some other publications from different remote corners of our country were published and they also played a significant role. These papers generally highlighted the local news and local issues. But it is unfortunate that the contribution of these publications in regard of socio-cultural and political affairs are not categorically studied. It may be mentioned here that in recent times a growing interest is noticed among a number of Scholars as well as the common people to search about the regional/local vernacular press. It is felt that a detail study on the regional vernacular press will be helpful in bringing to light many untouched corners of the history of our recent past.

While discussing on the contribution of the regional vernacular press, one thing has to be kept in mind that during the period of our study press publications did not develop equally in all the districts of North Bengal. The nature and character of the publications of all the districts of North Bengal were also different. It is quite natural, because the socio-political situation in different districts was not always, similar to each other. Whatever it may be the interesting thing is that the role or the contribution of this vernacular

regional press in the freedom movement is yet to be studied. On the other hand it is also true that due to different Socio-cultural and political atmosphere prevailing in the different districts of North Bengal, the publication of all the districts could not play its role equally. Let us now try to discuss the role of the publications of all the districts of North Bengal.

It is already stated that the press publications did not develop equally in all the district of North Bengal. Naturally among the publications from the five (presently Six) districts of North Bengal all were not so important. First of all we should mention about the publications of Cooch Behar District. Though at present Cooch Behar is simply a district within the geographical boundary of West Bengal, as well as North Bengal, but it should be taken into account that from the starting point of our study (1869) up to 1949 it was a princely state. This princely state (Cooch Behar) was tied in friendly relations with the British colonial rulers since last one century. So there were definitely certain terms and conditions between the two (Cooch Behar princely state and the British Colonial rulers) as a memorandum of their good understanding. It is expected that a native friendly state should not do anything, which is against the interest of the British colonial rulers. Due to the friendly relation, this native state was always very much careful to maintain a healthy foreign relation.

Among the publications from the five districts of North Bengal within the period of our study it is found that the publications from Cooch Behar and Darjeeling District played no significant role in the context of the Nationalist Movement of our country. It has already been studied in the previous chapter that the Non-Bengali vernacular publications from Darjeeling District had a different character and had no important contribution to the freedom movement of India at large. If we remember the study of the previous chapter i.e., growth and development of the Non-Bengali. Vernacular press in the district of Darjeeling, it could be found that the publications from Darjeeling district had a different character. At the same time, it is found that a very few publications patronized the spirit of nationalist movement and actively participated for the

course of the freedom movement of India. Considering all this, it is an established fact on the role of the publications from the district of Darjeeling that they (publications from the district of Darjeeling) had a different character and had not contributed so important role for the freedom movement of India. Considering all these views, it may be stated that the publications from the district of Darjeeling had a regional/ local character. But another important character of the publications from the Darjeeling District is highly admirable. In the context of social reform, social upliftment of the hill people, eradication of poverty, spread of education among the people of hill region, the vernacular press played a very significant role. Moreover, with the help of press publications, both in vernacular and English languages a strong cultural atmosphere were created and as a result a strong base for social consciousness were created and in course of time a group of educated people devoted themselves in different type of social and cultural activities which made the path for renaissance in the hill region. So it has to be mentioned that, though the publications from Darjeeling had a regional, local character, but its spirit did a lot for social reforms and cultural regeneration. Apart from the publications of Darjeeling District, the publications from Cooch Behar (princely state) were pro-British in character. So it cannot be expected that the publications of Cooch Behar should focus anything on any anti-British thought. Quite naturally the publications of these two districts (Darjeeling and Cooch Behar) remained almost silent about the nationalist movement.

Apart from the publications of Darjeeling and Cooch Behar district, there were no important publication from the district of West Dinajpur (presently North and South Dinajpur) within the period of our study. But it does not mean that this area of North Bengal was indifferent about press publication. It is known to all that before the partition of 1947, the geographical position of this area was confined within the jurisdiction of undivided Dinajpur district. This undivided Dinajpur district had the credit of press publication and other cultural activities. But after 1947 the publications of undivided Dinajpur district don't belong to the present West Dinajpur district. As a result we find

that the centre-pot of cultural practice of this region was located outside the area of present West Dinajpur district. Though the centre pot of cultural activities has been placed outside the geographical boundary of present West Dinajpur district, (North & South Dinajpur) in spite of this we have some reference regarding publication in this region and it had definitely a nationalist character. It is evident that within the area of present West Dinajpur (North and South Dinajpur) we find some pamphlets/leaflets published from Balurghat, the head quarter of West Dinajpur district, with some nationalist news against the colonial rulers.³ The colonial rulers always had a special attention on these vernacular presses. They had given a bird's eye on every issue of the native newspapers. Quite naturally we see that, for some objectionable information/news published in these pamphlets/ leaflets the 'Balurghat publishing and Trading company' was strictly warned by the British Indian government in 1930.⁴ Except this we don't have any other definite information of press publication in the district. But during the course of 'Quit India Movement' the West Dinajpur district had a significant contribution in the context of national movement. At that time the role of leaders and workers of the nationalist movement had been published in the regional vernacular press. Except these instances, we have no other definite evidence of the publication of west Dinajpur district, contributing to the cause of the nationalist movement. As a result, it is found that the district of Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and West Dinajpur (N. S. Dinajpur) had no significant role in the field of press publication. So, in our present discussion, we will confine our attention mainly on two districts viz., Malda and Jalpaiguri. The publications of this two districts were always very much conscious about the contemporary political situation. Now, we are to examine the role of the press of Malda and Jalpaiguri district and their contributions in the freedom movement of India.

5.3 THE PRESS PUBLISHED FROM MALDA AND THEIR ROLE IN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

When we are to make an estimate about the contribution of the publications of Malda district and their role in the anti-British movement, we must keep it in our mind that within very limited references we have to make a study on the subject. Because of the paucity of evidences which are not systematically preserved in any archives or in any library or personal collection of any researcher the scope of our study is very limited. Within this limited scope let us now make a study on the press of Malda district and their role in the freedom movement on the basis of a few numbers of papers which are available to us. In the previous chapter we have mentioned about the publications from Malda. Now we are to mention about the contribution of a selected number of papers to our freedom movement.

On the issue of the publications from Malda, the main force behind this was Radhesh Chandra Seth. In the history of press publication from Malda, he had a distinction in this regard. Radhesh Chandra Seth edited and published a few number of papers from Malda. In the year 1896, he began to publish a bi-weekly paper from Malda named as 'GOURBARTA'. But unfortunately we don't have any evidence about it. In the same year (1896) Radhesh Chandra Published another paper named 'GOURDOOT'. After some year, during 1897 another publication from Malda started and that was 'MALDA SAMACHAR'. It was also an important publication in the history of press of Malda. Its editor was Kali Prasanna Chakraborty. These are all the facts regarding the publication from Malda. But when we will estimate the contribution of these publications on the freedom movement of our country we must specially regard the role of the weekly vernacular paper 'GOURDOOT'. I am fortunate enough to get the chance to go through some of the issues of 'GOURDOOT' of different years, starting from 1944 to 1947. About the role of Gourdoot, so far I have gone through, it is surprising that how a regional vernacular press like 'Gourdoot' can play a vigorous role against the colonial rulers. Without

dedication, commitment and sacrifice to the extreme, it cannot be expected from any regional vernacular press. About its role in the early stage, we have no definite evidence, due to non-availability of its issue. But from 1944 to 1947 on the eve of our independence, the character of this paper was praiseworthy and took the shape of spokesman of the national movement of the district.

5.4 BACKGROUND OF GOURDOOT

It is already mentioned that 'GOURDOOT' was first published in 1896 by Radhesh Chandra Seth. But due to acute financial problem faced by the editor, the publication of this newspaper came to an end within a short time.

During that time finance was the most impinging factor upon the publications. It is well known that newspapers proprietors of the period were amateur entrepreneurs and plenty of enthusiasm. Individual ownership was the rule and partnership an exception. Another phenomenon of the publications of the period was that no weekly could count upon more than a couple of hundred subscribers as the readership was confined to a limited literate people. All these characteristics were also prevailing in the publication of 'Gourdoot' as a result of which its (GD) publication has been stopped temporarily.

The 'GOURDOOT' again began to be published from 1912 under the editorship of Lalbehari Majumdar, Lalbehari Majumdar had a strong family background and he was born in a prominent vaidya family at the village of 'Sendia' of Faridpur district in East Bengal presently in Bangladesh.⁵ Lalbehari had obtained his F. A. degree from the Braja Mahan College of BARISAL. He came to Malda and settled there in the year 1907. As the chief editor of this paper he proved his excellence in every sphere of editing. His literary sense was appreciated by Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radhesh Chandra Seth. They also encouraged him to publish a newspaper from Malda to express views of the local intelligentsia on social, economic and political matters and to strengthen the nationalist movement of Malda, which was then gradually coming to be highlighted.⁶ With their sincere efforts the publication of Gourdoot began for the second time in 1912 after a long interval. In this endeavour Lalbehari

Majumdar, the editor of this paper was greatly encouraged and at the same time it got the financial support from Sarat Chandra Ray Choudhury, the Maharaja of Chanchal, Malda.⁷

5.5 A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT GOURDOOT

From 1912, Gourdoot began to be published as a regular weekly newspaper from Malda. It was published on Thursday of every week. 'Gourdoot' in its every issue contained six pages as volume and its price was one anna in the year 1944. To expose its nationalist character, the words 'JATIO SAPTHAHIK PATRIKA' (Nationalist Weekly newspaper) were written on its front page. The editor of this nationalist newspaper, Lalbehari Majumdar had some distinction in press publication and some of his near relatives were known as famous nationalist leader. On of the uncles of him was Ambika Charan Majumdar who was the president of the Lucknow Congress of 1916. His another uncle was Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, the famous nationalist historian.⁸ From these references, it may be assessed that the editor of this paper (Gourdoot) had inherited a strong nationalist heritage, we also get some other references about Gourdoot which reflects its character.

The District Gazetteer of Malda gives the information that 'The Gourdoot', which is one of the periodicals now being published in the district, is an old publication. 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 1920s some of the comments made in this paper found a place in the Government Report on the Indian newspaper periodicals in Bengal.⁹

5.6 ROLE OF GOURDOOT AS A NATIONALIST PRESS

It is already mentioned that 'GOURDOOT' was a very important newspaper and it had some special character in respect of the freedom movement of our country. About its role on social and political activities in the early stage; we cannot say anything due to non-availability of evidences. But during the subsequent years specially during the extreme stage of our national

movement before 1947. Gourdoot played a very important role in the political activities of Malda district.¹⁰ It is evident that in the year 1947, before our independence, Gourdoot played a significant role in regards to the national movement in Malda. If we examine some of the issues of this newspaper (Gourdoot), it can be said that it (Gourdoot) was a strong propagator of the nationalist movement in Malda district. Publications of Gourdoot during the year 1947, shows that in every issue of it, the picture of the Flag of the Indian National Congress was printed on the front page.¹¹ No doubt, it signifies some special features, and it had a significant impact on the minds of the common people. Another symbol of nationalism are also found very distinctly on the paper. "BANDEMATARAM", the spirit of nationalism during the period was also printed on the top of the editorial column of this publication.¹² This symbol of nationalism as a common feature of the paper have influenced the general people of the district and regenerated the public opinion for the cause of national movement. When I went through some of the issues of Gourdoot of 1947, it is found that Gourdoot was in favour of the propagation of the nationalist movement in the district and it created a strong public opinion in favour of national movement. Regarding the news items published in Gourdoot, it is found that the publication focused and highlighted on the current political incidents. For example, it can be mentioned here that in the news bulletin of 22nd May 1947, Gourdoot published an article entitled, "The freedom of the press".¹³ The article was very much related with the political atmosphere at large. It was a common habit of the British government to exercise power as and when necessary to suppress any kind of protest movement. Print media was the best weapon on the part of the Indians to raise a voice of protest against the repressive and unjustified measures of the government. So, to stop any kind of protest movement and to stop the process of mobilization of public opinion against government, repressive measures were executed against the Bengali vernacular press. To explain this unhealthy and unjustified attitude of the government such type of articles like "Freedom of the press" was published. (For example it can be mentioned here that even

Raja Rammohan Roy wrote a good number of articles to restore the freedom of the press).

To compare the role of Gourdoot we can mention here the Bengali literature (including vernacular press). It is well known to us and at the same time well established that the 'Swadeshi movement' ushered a new era in Bengali literature. At that time the Bengali Vernacular press became the spokesman of the people of Bengal and altogether a new spirit emerged which inspired the revolution arise of Bengal against the British Raj. In this particular situation, a series of Bengali vernacular press were very much active to propagate in favour of national movement and their appeal were very much sensitive to the common people which ultimately created a patriotic sense among the common people. No doubt it was a great achievement on the part of the Bengali vernacular press.

When we made comprehensive study on some of the issues of 'Gourdoot' of different years specially between 1944 and 1947 for the purpose of our present discussion, it became evident that they (Gourdoot) throw a flood of light on the contemporary significant political, economic and social developments of the district. Regarding political developments it is found that during the Quit India Movement in 1942 a good number of people of Malda district have spontaneously participated. In the whole district, the storm centres involved in the Quit India Movement were HARISCHANDRAPUR, BHALUKA and SINGNABAD.¹⁴ In this context it can be mentioned that Subodh Kumar Misra, a veteran politician and the then president of the Malda district Congress Committee played a vital role in mobilizing the people under the Congress banner.¹⁵ We find the various issues of Gourdoot covered and highlighted on the political sceneries, and at the same time a national sentiment of the people emerged in the district.¹⁶

Not only the affairs of national politics, the paper 'Gourdoot', had also a keen look on the incidents of the internal affairs of the Congress politics. It is well known that there were some groups and divisions within the Congress

party politics. Same features were also evident in the Malda district Congress party. Factional schism became a regular feature of the district Congress party. During 1938 a new phenomenon arose in Congress politics with the election of president of all India Congress party. Subsequently two groups or divisions were exposed among the members of the Congress party. In micro level also this exposition took place in different shape. In Malda also, we see that at the end of 1938 the District Congress was sharply divided into two factions, namely Subhasites and Gandhites.¹⁷ Both this two groups were very much active with the political activities of the district. The first group was led by Atul Chandra Kumar, Debendra Nath Jha, Narendra Nath Chakraborty and some others. On the other hand the other groups were led by Subodh Mohan Misra, Surendra Bale Ray, Ram Hari Roy, Sourindra Mohan Misra and Nikunjabehari Gupta. They belonged to Gandhilian Camp.¹⁸ But within a short time the total political situation has been changed due to sudden absence of Subhash Chandra Bose in Indian Politics. Due to the absence of Subhash Chandra Bose for his journey to abroad, the Subhasites began to lose importance in the local Congress politics gradually. In this circumstances and getting this advantage Subodh Kumar Misra and Sourindra Mohan Misra emerged as the most powerful and undisputed leaders of the Malda Congress.¹⁹ As a local newspaper and as it had some political background, the Gourdoot in its different issues presented all the details about the group politics within the district Congress party.²⁰ No doubt, these internal troubles within the Congress to some extent has weakened the Congress and for a certain period it created some undesirable impact upon the minds of Congress supporters.

We have a series of example regarding the group politics within the Congress party in Bengal as well as India. It is also evident that the outcome of this groupism generally creates the organization undisciplined and weak. In the case of Malda district Congress we also find the reflection of same thing, which gave birth of worse situation. At the time of bi-election of the Bengal legislative Assembly in the scheduled seat in 1945, this group politics among the leaders of district Congress party were nakedly exposed. With the issue of

this election the leaders of the Gandhites were again divided into two groups and within a very short time a tussle for leadership of the district Congress between Subodh Misra and Sourindra Mohan Misra started. As a result an unhealthy and embarrassing situation came into existence within the district Congress. This factional politics subsequently took the shape of political rivalry among the Congress leaders and expressed itself in different ways at the time of the bi-election of the Bengal legislative Assembly of 1945 in the scheduled seats. The GD (May 17, 1945) have clearly reported all the political developments occurred during the course of this election. The Gourdoot reported that 'BIRSA DHANGAR' was nominated as the candidate of the Congress party in this bi-election of 1945. Birsa Dhangar was very much popular among the tribal community of Malda. But as he was a follower of Sourindra Mohan Misra, and was close to him, the faction Congress party led by Subodh Misra resented the nomination of Birsa.²¹ Against the candidature of Birsa Dhangar, they pointed out some arguments. Subodh Misra and his group pointed out that Birsa belonged to untouchable caste and as his education was minimum, he could not be a suitable candidate of the Congress party. It can be said that all these arguments were lame excuse and being the follower of Mahatma Gandhi a Congress leader should not raise the question of untouchable caste. It was a total ideological contradiction. Gandhiji in his political career committed himself to eradicate untouchability and sacrifice a lot for the cause of untouchability. All these questions or arguments rose only due to factional politics between Subodh Misra and Sourindra Mohan Misra.

On the other hand Sourindra Mohan Misra and his group strongly supported Birsa's nomination as Congress candidate on three grounds

- i) Birsa belong to oppressed class.
- ii) He was a sincere and devoted Congress worker and was imprisoned on several occasions.
- iii) He was an honest man.

The arguments of Sourindra Mohan Misra and his group were strong enough in favour of the candidature of Birsa. On this issue both the groups were uncompromising and desperate enough and as a result a bitter quarrel continued in the Congress party, which affected the Congress rank. However, in spite of the opposition of Subodh Misra, Birsa won the bi-election of 1945, which marked the victory of the group of Sourindra Mohan Misra. In our present discussion we don't require to present a detail picture of this group politics. But it is fact that this schism in the local Congress leaders continued and it hampered the unity of the local Congress party.²² On every political Agenda Gourdoot as a newspaper performed a responsible role. It has to be mentioned that though this scene of factional politics does not give any special credit to it, but it indicate that the paper had some special interest on political agenda. Bireswar Bandopadhyaya in his book 'Swadhinata Andolone Bangla Patra-Patrika also expressed his view' that among the publications of Malda, 'Gourdoot' had an anti-government outlook and it had maintained a national character. The opinion of Bireswar Bandopadhyaya cannot be denied. From the above discussion we have also got an idea about the role and character of Gourdoot. As a newspaper, it was a strong supporter of national movement and in so many cases it is found that Gourdoot got a significant contribution in our freedom movement in the district level. In the political life of Malda especially between 1932 and 1947, this Gourdoot was always very much active with the political propaganda, which directly or indirectly created a strong public opinion in favour of our national movement. In our previous discussion when we have mentioned the background of this paper and its editor Lalbehari Majumdar, it have become clear to us that Gourdoot as a newspaper and Lalbehari Majumdar as its editor had a strong political as well as a national character. In course of its publications for a long time and in different stage of political situation in the district Gourdoot must be given a special credit for its significant contribution to our freedom movement.

So long we have discussed about the importance of the publication of Gourdoot and its contribution in the national movement of our country. But at the same time in our previous discussion we have already mentioned that along with the publication of Gourdoot, some other publications were also in circulation in the district of Malda. Their role was also important. But due to non-availability of these publications we are not definite about their role in respect of political movement in the district. When we are to give information about the publications from Malda district, we must mention about some other publications.

It has already been mentioned that from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century the newly educated middle class intelligentsia of North Bengal began to publish newspapers and periodicals in their respective districts and in this regard Malda took a pioneering role. In the process of publication from Malda, the person who was the main force behind this was Radhesh Chandra Seth. It is not definitely known when the first publication from Malda came out. So far we know, Radhesh Chandra Seth edited and published the first monthly periodical from Malda. The name of this periodical was 'KUSUM'. The exact date of its first publication is not known. But from informed sources it is assumed that 'KUSUM' was first published probably in 1890.²³ After few years in 1896 Radhesh Chandra published two weekly newspapers 'Gourbarta' and 'Gourdoot'.²⁴ In our discussion we have made a detailed study on 'Gourdoot' and its contribution on freedom movement. But about 'Gourbarta' it is difficult to say anything. So far we know from the informed sources, Gourbarta was in circulation for a short period. Its editor Radhesh Chandra was more interested with the publication of 'Gourdoot'. As a result 'Gourbarta' could not survive for long.

From Malda, we have the reference of some other publications. We find another important paper namely 'MALDAHA SAMACHAR' that began to be published from 1897 and it was edited by Kaliprasanna Chakraborty.

After some years Maulavi Abdul Gani Khan published another paper. The name of this paper was 'MALDA AKHBAR' and it was published in the year 1914. In the same year (1914) a periodical namely 'GAMBHIRA' edited by Krishna Charan Sarkar was published. We will try to make a detailed study about GAMBHIRA later on. Not only this, we also find the reference of more three weekly newspapers in the year 1914. They were 'DAMRU' edited by Nanda Gopal Chowdhury, 'ADINA' edited by Akbar Munsif and 'MINAR' edited by Abdur Rahman.²⁵ In the year 1930 we find another paper published from Malda. The name of the paper was 'Anami' and it was edited by Bidhu Maitrea, unfortunately we don't know anything in detail about this paper.

During this period, the most illustrated paper/periodical published from Malda was 'GAMBHIRA'. This periodical (in Bengali) was published from Kaligram near Chanchole (in Malda district). Its editor and publisher was Krishna Charan Sarkar, which is already mentioned. It was a bi-monthly journal. Though this paper did not reflect any political or national character, but it played a significant role in the welfare work of different backward classes.²⁶ Not only welfare works, Gambhira as a periodical had a strong cultural background. In the cultural practices in the district specially on Folk cultural, Gambhira had a significant contribution.²⁷ Due to this background: the publication of 'GARBHIRA' influenced the educated people and the intellectual class of Malda. As a result of which so many renowned persons became interested with the publication of GAMBHIRA and they engaged themselves with the publication. As an example of cultural practice organized by GAMBHIRA we can mention here that the persons associated with the publication, arranged 'MALDA JELA SAHITYA SAMMELAN' in 1320 B.S. This was probably the first kind of it in North Bengal. Like wise, we can refer so many cultural activities performed by GAMBHIRA' in different times. But we should not elaborate our discussion about cultural activities of this paper because our present chapter intends to study on the role of the publications in our freedom movement. Considering this view one thing we can mention that though this publication did not have any active role in the political situation or

any kind of national movement, in spite of that it can be said that a social consciousness emerged in the district due to the initiative taken by GAMBHIRA; in the field of cultural practices. It is also found that Gambhira as a periodical prepared an intellectual background which had an outcome on social progress. Gambhira in its cultural programme have staged so many lyrical drama or folk drama on open stage, the theme of which was very popular among the common people. Sometimes the theme was on local political issues, social injustice, appeal/ prayer of the lower class people to God (Siva or Maheswar) explaining their sufferings, protest against different type of social evils etc. With this initiative taken by 'GAMBHIRA' transformation of society or social change were taking place. For our present purpose, though we don't find any active role performed by 'GAMBHIRA' in the field of political activities, but indirectly it had a significant contribution to mobilize the minds of the common people to protest against any kind of injustice or evils. So, ultimately the cultural practices initiated by GAMBHIRA gave birth of a political consciousness of the common people in the district.

Regarding the publication from Malda we have mentioned the name of so many papers and their role on the political life of Malda. Apart from these, we have the reference of some other publications. Among them, we can mention the name of 'MALDA HATAISHI', and it was published by Ramaprasad Singha. But no details are available about this paper. In the year 1930 another publication from Malda was 'ANAMI' and it was edited by Bidhu Maitrea. We don't know anything in detail about this paper.²⁸

During this phase, specially after 1930 a different type of political phenomenon emerged in the district of Malda. So many factors were responsible for this type of political development. Without any detail, it can simply be explained that two separate political organization/Association based on opposite ideology emerged in the district and their political ideology was very much sensitive on two major community of Malda (Hindus and the Muslim). These two political Associations were the 'HINDU MAHASABHA'

and the 'MUSLIM LEAGUE'. As spokesman of their organization both of them (HM & ML) published newspapers, 'DAMRU' was published by HINDU MAHASABHA and 'MINAR' by the Muslim league.²⁹ Though we don't have sufficient evidences about this two publications, but on the basis of their ideology, we can easily assume about the character of 'DAMRU' and 'MINAR'. But one thing must be admitted that this two publication had a special political character. However, for the purpose of our discussion we don't find any significant contribution of these two papers for the cause of freedom movement of our country.

5.7 THE PRESS PUBLISHED FROM JALPAIGURI AND THEIR ROLE IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

The present discussion intends to take a note on the papers published from the district of Jalpaiguri and to trace their role in the freedom movement of our country. In our previous discussion we have already discussed about the prominent publications from North Bengal, specially the publications from Malda district. When we are to study on the different aspects of the publications from Jalpaiguri we see that Jalpaiguri is the only district in North Bengal, which had a strong national political background. In the connection of the freedom movement, we see that the publications of Jalpaiguri have focused the revolutionary activities of the area. Moreover, among the five districts (presently six) of North Bengal, Jalpaiguri had a glorious revolutionary character and it has already been reflected on the regional vernacular press published from Jalpaiguri. In our present study we will mention some important publications of the district, some important political issues and the role of the press.

5.8 IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS

According to Brajendra Nath Bandopadhyaya, the first newspaper published from Jalpaiguri was 'VIKSHUK'.³⁰ But recently some other view are found regarding the publication of 'VIKSHUK'. Muntasir Mamun, a renowned scholar of Bangladesh has also differed from this view and he has pointed out

that 'VIKSHUK' was published from Rangpur having the editor ship of Sarada Kanta Maitra and it was published in 1899.³¹

Regarding the publication it is mentioned in the District Gazetteer of Jalpaiguri that, a number of newspapers began to be published in the district from the 1920s. A Bengali weekly named 'TRISROTA' was published from Jalpaiguri in 1926. Another Bengali weekly named 'JANAMAT' was published from the district head quarter and a Bengali weekly named 'MUKTIBANI' began publication in 1928. A fortnightly named 'DESHBANDHU' was published from the district headquarter for a year.³²

Considering the above statement regarding publication from Jalpaiguri, it can definitely be said that the early newspaper from Jalpaiguri was 'TRISROTA'. It was a monthly publication and its editor was Sashi Kumar Neogi and Bhujangadhar Roy Chowdhury. The first issue of 'TRISROTA' was published in the year 1307 B.S. But for sometime due to some unavoidable circumstances, mainly for its patriotic/nationalist character the publication was temporarily stopped. Moreover, the attitude of the British government did not allow this publication. As a result its publications remained stopped. Other than Trisrota there is no reference of any other paper published from Jalpaiguri in the early phase. But it is said that Zamindar khan Bahadur Rahim Box of Jalpaiguri took the initiative to publish one paper named as 'SUDHAKAR MIHIR' from Dacca (modern Bangladesh).

After an interim stopgap or interval TRISROTA again began its publication as monthly paper from the year 1901. After certain years, from the year 1925 it became a weekly paper. From that time TRISROTA' is being published from Jalpaiguri and still it is regular circulation.

Apart from this, Jalpaiguri had a good number of publications and most of them played an important role in mobilizing the public opinion in favour of the national movement. In this connection the publications like 'JANAMAT', 'TRISROTA', 'MUKTIBANI' and 'BARENDRA' must be mentioned. In the initial stage, both JANAMAT and TRISROTA started its publication as

monthly journal. But later on due to their popularity both of them were published from Jalpaiguri as weekly journal. More specifically it can be said that JANAMAT became a weekly paper from 14th January 1924.³³ In the next year i.e., 1925 TRISROTA became a weekly. Regarding the publication of JANAMAT, Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal mentioned that, for the cause of 'SWARAJYA PARTY' JANAMAT was published by Mr. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal in the year 1924 (14th January) and 'BARENDRA' an English paper in 1925.³⁴ From this standpoint it is quite evident that this two papers were originated from national feeling and focused primarily on the idea of nationalism, the principle of 'Indian National Congress'. The editor of both the papers JANAMAT and BARENDRA, Mr. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal had a strong academic background. He was M.A.B.L. and a strong political worker. Not only this, he was also the Secretary of the Indian National Congress, Jalpaiguri district Branch. Quite naturally, his political ideology and activities were reflected on both the papers. As the British government was not pleased with him, 'BARENDRA' could not survive for long. But in spite of all this oppositions Jyotish Chandra Sanyal with his best effort continued his fight against the British government through JANAMAT.

Another paper published from Jalpaiguri was 'FORWARD', and it was also a strong supporter of the national movement. From the very beginning of its publication, it got a national background. When Deshbandhu C. R. Das visited Jalpaiguri in the month of May, 1924, Mr. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal invited him to have dinner at his residence. Deshbandhu Das had an intention to start a branch of his Swarjya party in the district to propagate the political activities. At the same time Mr. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal as a political worker was equally interested with the purpose. During this course of activities, Deshbandhu Das made a detailed discussion with Mr. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal regarding the publication of 'FORWARD' the organ of the Swarayya party. Considering all this view and getting inspired by Deshbandhu Das, Mr. Sanyal finally decided to publish a paper as spokesman of his political mission.³⁵

During this period, another paper published from Jalpaiguri was 'MUKTIBANI'. It started its publication from 1928 and its editor was Khagendra Nath Dasgupta. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, the editor of Muktibani, was a young energetic and active worker of Jalpaiguri district Congress. Regarding the publication of Muktibani, Mr. Dasgupta wrote, "this paper is published mainly to give inspiration to the people about Indian nationalism during the period of our struggle for freedom."³⁶ With the publication of Muktibani, the political character of Jalpaiguri district took a new shape. Due to the National Political character of its editor, Muktibani as a paper got a direct involvement in the national politics. Regarding the role of Muktibani, it can be mentioned that the editor of this paper always gave inspiration of the Indian National movement. Quite naturally it (MUKTIBANI) was not in the good book of the British government. As a result, we see that the British government warned and banned this publication for the time being and its editor Mr. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta was imprisoned for one year.³⁷

Another paper with Swadeshi spirit was published by Robindra Mohan Ray from Jalpaiguri in the year 1929.³⁸ Its duration was very short. As we don't have any reference we can't say anything in detail about this publication. One more contemporary paper published from Jalpaiguri was 'NISHAN'. This publication had a different political character. Some literate and interested Muslims of Jalpaiguri got some interest about this paper and with their initiative 'NISHAN' began to be published. At that time the district politics got a turning point and a Branch of the 'Muslim League', has been started. By this time this publication got some interest with the activities of the Muslim League. As a result, in the subsequent period it became the organ of the District Muslim league. The editor of this paper was Md. Abdul Khalek. This paper survived for a long time.

The last important paper published from the district of Jalpaiguri during the pre-independent period was 'DESHBANDHU'. It was a bi-monthly journal. Its editor was lawyer Pritinidhan Ray. He had also a strong political

background. Like Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, the editor of JANAMAT, Pritinidhan Ray was also the Secretary of the Jalpaiguri District Congress committee. It is understood from different issues of 'DESHBANDHU' that the purpose of the publication was to make aware the common people about the national movement and the activities of the Indian National Congress.³⁹

So long we have mentioned that publications of the district, which have originated from the district headquarter. Apart from these, we have the reference of some other papers, which were published, from other places within the jurisdiction of Jalpaiguri district. During this period it is found that a few number of papers were published from Alipurduar, a Sub-divisional town of Jalpaiguri. Among them the most important paper was 'HIMALAYA' edited by Bijoy Gopal Ghosh in the year 1926. In addition to this Bijoy Babu published one English paper named as 'BENGALI TIMES'. It can further be mentioned that in the year 1928 another paper 'DUARBASI' was published from Alipurduar under the editorship of Bijoy Gopal Ghosh.⁴⁰ Due to the lack of evidences, nothing detail can be said about few papers published from Alipurduar.

So long we have mentioned about the publications of the district. Now we are to study about the involvements of these publications in our National Movement. Though it is not possible to make a chronological study about them, but on the basis of available evidences we will examine the character of these publications and the impact of these newspapers and journals upon the minds of the common people. It can be said that, at that time the number of literate people who can get interest about the newspaper were very few. Quite naturally the reader and subscriber of the papers were very negligible. In spite of that the importance of these papers was remarkable. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, the famous historian had added much importance on the impact of the papers upon the common people.⁴¹ On the reverse, it is also important that the newly educated middle class people of the Mofussil town like Jalpaiguri got the opportunity to ventilate their opinion and national feelings through these

publications. Due to this exercise the publications from Jalpaiguri gradually taking the shape of national character. If we make an over all assessment on the publications of Jalpaiguri, it will be evident that these papers were to some extent connected with the idea of nationalism, socio-cultural and economic reforms and the spread of western education.⁴² Not only this, from the contemporary papers it is evident that during 1921 and early 1922 new possibilities for truly significant development in national politics in Jalpaiguri district came into being. At the same time it is also noticed that in the years 1921 to 1929 the political life and trends came to be marked by many complex and contradictory developments.

5.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE PRESS OF JALPAIGURI IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Considering the political developments in Bengal particularly after the partition of Bengal in 1905, it is found that a nationalist feeling was somehow expressed. In fact, this was the basic pattern of political development all over the country. But there were different problems and issues in respect of significant regional and sub-regional variations. Similarly, in Jalpaiguri district also nationalist stirrings emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century, Lord Curzon's policy of 'divide and rule' exposed his imperialist policy. It was initiated mainly to downgrade Bengali pre-dominance on national politics. As a reaction of this imperialist policy of the British government, the Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims raised the voice of protest against the imperial policy and developed the ideology of Swadeshi nationalism.⁴³ In this nationalist perspective Jalpaiguri district also played an important role in mobilizing the public opinion against the British government. But at that time Jalpaiguri had not any concrete base in the content of the mainstream of the national movement.⁴⁴ However, the Swadeshi and anti-partition movement got a good response in the district of Jalpaiguri town in particular. In Jalpaiguri town the anti-partition movement started as an urban middle class movement in which leadership and initiative were taken by legal practitioner, teachers and Bengali

planters. Students and young men from these families were active participants in this movement.⁴⁵

When the final decision of partition of Bengal was officially executed from 16th October, 1905, the entire Bengali Community promptly reacted against it and the attitude of the Bengalis towards Europeans became insolent and aggressive. Thousands of meetings and rallies were held to protest against this imperialist policy of divide and rule. It was generally felt that the day should be observed with some special ceremonies, particularly with a view to emphasize the unity of Bengal. On this occasion, at the beginning of October 1905, the great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore issued a letter to public written in Bengali of which the following is an English translation.

“On the 30th of ASWIN, Bengal will be partitioned by legislation. To prove, however, that God did not ordain the severance of the race, it is proposed that the day should be commemorated by an observance of ‘RAKHI BANDHAN’ to indicate the indelible unity of the Bengali race”.⁴⁶

It has already mentioned that the partition of Bengal was to take effect from 16 October, 1905. On that day ‘RAKHI BANDHAN’ was observed by all Bengalis as a symbol of brotherhood and unity of the people of Bengal. In Jalpaiguri town also, the day was observed with appropriate importance.⁴⁷

A large procession took place in Jalpaiguri town led by Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, a leading Tea Planter, walked barefoot (the traditional Hindu sign of mourning) through the town. As a token of support to boycott movement, a campaign was launched to boycott foreign goods in Jalpaiguri. For instance, it can be mentioned that at Dinbazar, the market place of the town, propaganda was made in favour of boycott, which embarrassed the British police at large. As a result, the British police arrested three young men participated in the procession and they were Durgadas Chakraborty, Adyanath Misra and Ananda Biswas. Two of them were imprisoned for two weeks.⁴⁸

These are not all about the nationalist activities of Jalpaiguri during this phase of partition of Bengal. Some individual actions also exposed the

nationalist feeling by assaulting two Europeans. Durga Charan Sanyal, a Sixty-year-old pleader was forcibly obstructed by two European passengers from boarding a train compartment at Hili station in Dinajpur district; though he had valid railway ticket. Due to this illegal and unjustified treatment by the European passengers Mr. Sanyal got insulted and this provoked him to assault the European passengers. This incident led to four years imprisonment of Mr. Durga Charan Sanyal.⁴⁹

Due to this incident, the nationalist feeling of Jalpaiguri dramatically turned which led to some significant developments in nationalist feeling. A large number of students in Jalpaiguri town boycotted schools and some of them were punished for this adamant attitude.⁵⁰ Among them the most renowned was Birendra Nath Dasgupta who in his later life became famous for his revolutionary terrorist activities. In 1905 he boycotted the final examination at the Jalpaiguri Zilla School and joined the Rangpur National School.⁵¹ The boycott movement in the district added a new mark in the national movement of Jalpaiguri. Specially the school boycott of the students gave birth of a new problem for the education of the youths. To meet this requirement of education the prominent personalities of Jalpaiguri town, as well as the supporter of the nationalist movement felt the necessity to build up a school of their own. Due to sincere initiative of some prominent persons of Jalpaiguri town, a National Schools was founded in Jalpaiguri town in 1907 and it was located at the ground of the 'ARYA NATYA SAMAJ', a Drama cum Cultural organization established in 1904. The persons attached with the initiative in setting up the National School at Jalpaiguri were Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, Tarini Prasad Roy a lawyer and later on a Tea-planter, Sushil Kumar Neogi, a leading lawyer, and well known for his social work, Taraprasad Biswas, Umagati Roy, Trailokya Nath Moulik, (all of them were lawyer) and some other interested persons.⁵² Bipin Chandra Paul, the famous extremist leader came to Jalpaiguri to inaugurate the School. A large number of boys who in later years turned out as prominent persons of Jalpaiguri town joined the School.⁵³ Among the Swadeshi Institutions in Jalpaiguri, as well as in North Bengal this National School was

to some extent a landmark and it remained in existence for a long time.⁵⁴ So many examples of Swadeshi and boycott movement can be mentioned in the district of Jalpaiguri. But our discussions are not concerned with this. It has to be mentioned that as soon as the scheme of partition in its final form was announced, the Bengali-owned newspapers both in English and Bengali made a tearing and raging campaign against it. The entire Bengali press vigorously supported the Boycott movement. The 'HITABANHU' of 24-07-1905 wrote : "We know that England is governed by merchants... If we can but once move the weavers of Manchester, they will perform a mass feat. All we have to do is to take a firm resolution not to use Manchester piece goods and carry our resolution to effect... We will unite divided Bengal".⁵⁵

Krishna Kumar Mitra, the editor of the 'SANJIBANI' 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 official and official bodies. This suggestion was accepted in a public meeting held at Bagerhat (Khulna District) on 16th July 1905, in which some resolutions were passed in favour of boycott.⁵⁶ Likewise, so many Bengali newspapers and journals expressed their writing. But it is important that though nationalist feelings were exposed in Jalpaiguri with different type of activities, which have mentioned above, no newspaper or journal has reacted against the imperial rulers. As such in Jalpaiguri role of the press was yet to develop. During the next phase of our national movement, more specifically at the time of Non-co-operation movement we see that the press in Jalpaiguri district took the role actively to mobilize public opinion against the British rule.

It is evident from our previous discussion that the press of Jalpaiguri did not come into existence up to 1920. But during the year 1921 onwards, when the political life and trends in Jalpaiguri took a serious shape, the press of Jalapiguri came forward and involved themselves significantly in the nationalist activities. It is found that till early 1921, nationalist organization in the district as well as the town was haphazard and virtually non-existent. It was

only in the years 1921 and 1922 that nationalist organizations sprang up in several parts of the district. Nationalist movement in the Jalpaiguri district actually emerged with the Non-co-operation movement. It is found that during the period of Non-co-operation Khilaphat movement of the years 1921-1922, Jalpaiguri came to be involved with it and a large number of people from a variety of social background became involved in it.⁵⁷ In this connection, one thing has to be mentioned that the special Calcutta Congress session held in September, 1920, adopted the resolution of Non-Co-operation movement. In this Congress session, among others a young man from Jalpaiguri had participated. This young man was Khagendra Nath Dasgupta (1895-1985) one of the brothers of Birendra Nath Dasgupta, a well-known revolutionary of Bengal. Before his attachment with the INC, Khagendra Nath Dasgupta was associated with secret revolutionary societies. But by early 1920, he along with many revolutionary terrorists made himself detached with the extremist activities and was searching a new way of National Movement. At that time by the Calcutta Congress, which he attended, Khagendra Nath became very much impressed and attracted by Gandhi's speech and the call for Non-co-operation movement.⁵⁸ No doubt, this experience of Khagendra Nath Dasgupta had a great impact on the political life of Jalpaiguri. When Mr. Dasgupta went back to Jalpaiguri during November 1920, some of his former revolutionary associates like Purna Chandra Bagchi and Sitanath Pramanik extended their support to him.⁵⁹ Bipin Bihari Ganguly, the famous revolutionary leader, and two leaders of the North Bengal revolutionary group like Surendra Mohan Ghosh and Jatindra Mohan Roy also encouraged him to continue his national activities. Getting inspired by all of these developments Khagendra Nath took the initiative to set up a branch of Indian National Congress in Jalpaiguri.⁶⁰ At that time like most of the districts of North Bengal Jalpaiguri had no branch of Congress organization. By mid-April, 1921, a district Congress Committee was formed with Jagadindra Dev Raikat as the president, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal (later on the editor of 'JANAMAT') a Muktear and well known for his public spirit was chosen as the secretary.⁶¹ Another political distinction of Jyotish

Chandra Sanyal was that he was elected as a member to the Bengal provincial Congress Committee (B.P.C.C.). Among the other prominent persons attached with the Jalpaiguri district Congress Committee were Kiran Chandra Sikdar, Charu Charan Sanyal (1897-1980), a talented young Doctor who gave up his research work at the Calcutta Medical Collage, Sreenath Hore and Pritinidhan Roy (the editor of DESHBANDHU) both lawyers and Tarapada Sanyal, a Doctor.⁶²

They newly formed district Congress Committee was very much influenced by the Gandhian ideas. After Gandhiji's advent in the Indian political scene there was an awareness of the necessity to work for the support of the peasant masses. Quite naturally the leaders of the Jalpaiguri district Congress Committee felt it necessary to go to villages and plantation to enlist the support of the peasants workers and the Muslim. As a political agenda and to strengthen the district Congress, Khagendra Nath Dasgupta and a good number of dedicated young Congress workers like Byomkesh Majumdar and Makhan Sanyal devoted themselves into political works in the rural area. The rural people of Jalpaiguri were not as such so aware with the national movement and at the same time with the political developments in Jalpaiguri. But Khagendra Nath Dasgupta with his associates involved themselves in propagating the message of 'SWARAJ' within a year and in building up a network of Congress organization in the district. To popularise the national political feeling and to set up branches of Congress organization the political workers of Jalpaiguri town used to visit different remote places to make a mass contact. As a result we see that a sub-divisional Congress committees was formed in Alipurduar sub-division. Rashiklal Ganguly, a muktear and respectable old man of the town became its first president and Sibdayal Pal was its secretary.⁶³ Not only this, to get the support of the rural masses, the Congress workers began to contact different remote villages, bandars (distributing center), like Boda, Patgram, Falakata, Madarihat and Mainaguri. To contact all these rural masses they had to get much troubles due to bad communication system and lack of vehicles.

With this special initiative by the Congress leaders of Jalpaiguri town the total political situation of the district got some alarm. By this time the weekly newspapers of Jalpaiguri have come out and got some involvement with the political activities and they were very much active to make a political propaganda in favour of the Congress. In the meantime two Nationalist Bengali weeklies had started to come out from Jalpaiguri town (MUKTIBANI and JANAMAT). Khagendra Nath Dasgupta was editing 'MUKTIBANI' – upholding the Congress viewpoint and Jyotish Chandra Sanyal was editing 'JANAMAT', upholding the Swarajya party's viewpoint. Due to the reactionary attitude of the British Government towards the vernacular press none of this papers could carry on its publication for long. But Janamat had a longer life than Muktibani.⁶⁴ In this stage, when the Satyagraha movement of 1921 commenced the publications of Jalapiguri became more vocal and through the newspapers the nationalist of the district prepared a concrete base in mobilizing the common people in favour of the Congress party as well as the national movement.

In the districts political atmosphere, a new development took place during this stage. When the district Congress initiated different steps to strengthen their organization, a district Khilaphat Committee was also formed with Md. Sonallah, a large hearted rich Muslim Jotedar of the local origin residing in Jalpaiguri town, as a leading figure of the said committee.⁶⁵ But nothing details are known about the composition and subsequent activity of the District Khilaphat Committee. But one national daily newspaper reported that branches of Khilaphat Committee were formed in local level in different places of the Jalapiguri district.⁶⁶ However, it is known that the Khilaphat committee participated with the local Muslims in co-operation with the district Congress took active part during the course of non co-operation movement.

When the programme of non-co-operation movement was in progress all over the country. Some Bengal districts also properly responded to this programme. Jalpaiguri, though it was a small town of North Bengal received

the message of Gandhi and his style of functioning created a popular image among the Congress workers of the district.⁶⁷ As a result the workers of the Jalpaiguri district Congress got considerable response from different sections of people and the petty bourgeoisie of Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar. In both the towns, people of different profession, lawyers, traders, unemployed youth, even the students attended several meetings of Swaraj and participated in the campaign and picketing programme in favour of boycott movement. For this exercise a good number of people in the district emerged as ardent nationalist.⁶⁸

When we are to study the political history of any particular region, we should keep it in our mind that the national political situation have certainly a particular role on regional politics. At that time the non-co-operation movement under the leadership of Indian National Congress reached its climax. To make it a grand success the all India Congress leaders used to visit different parts of the country to campaign in favour of the national cause. In Bengal also like some other district Congress leader visited Jalpaiguri not once but several times. In May, 1921, Deshbandhu Chitteranjan Das, khilaphat leader Maulana Samsuddin, Das' wife Basanti Devi and some other leaders visited Jalpaiguri. When Deshbandhu Das' along with his political colleagues arrived Jalapiguri on 26th May, 1921, they got a warm reception and a huge crowd was present in the station. Almost all the leaders of the District Congress committee and the prominent persons of the town were present at the station. The crowd shouted with the slogans 'Gandhiji Ki Jai', 'Chittaranjan Das Ki Jai', 'Bandemataram', 'Allah. Ho Akbar' etc. The contemporary newspapers of the District reports that a monster meeting was held in the afternoon of the day.⁶⁹ On behalf of the Jalapiguri Municipality, Vice-chairman Ganesh Chandra Sanyal delivered the welcome address. In this meeting Deshbandhu Das and Moulana Samsuddin explained the national political situation giving emphasis on the issue of Khilaphat and gave a call to join the non-co-operation movement.⁷⁰ During the time of his visit to Jalpaiguri, Das met so many people of Jalpaiguri and explained the non-co-operation programme.⁷¹

Das' call for participation in the Non-co-operation programme was very much appealing to the people of Jalpaiguri. As a result we see that Ganesh Chandra Sanyal, a veteran lawyer of the district suspended his law practice and Jagadindra Deb Raikot resigned from the post of Honorary Magistrate. Many students refused to continue their education in the government school and they come out of it. During this movement for the first time an organized protest rose against the British rule. Many prominent persons of Jalpaiguri town get themselves involved with the mainstream of national politics. In this connection it can be noted that some prominent persons as well as tea planters like Jogesh Chandra Ghosh and Tarini Prasad Roy came forward to contribute to the 'Tilak Swaraj Fund'. Not only this, Md. Sonallah, the most important leader of the district Khilaphat Committee made the largest contribution of Rs. Ten thousand to the Tilak Swaraj fund. Due to his generous contribution for the cause of national movement he set an example in the district Deshbandhu Das was so impressed that he offered him the honour of title 'Amir-ul-Mulk'. Even many women out of their own interest donated their gold and ornaments to the Tilak Swaraj fund.⁷²

During the course of the nationalist movement, specially from the time of non-co-operation movement, Jalpaiguri like some other parts of Bengal always played a significant role and among the five (Presently six) district of North Bengal Jalpaiguri had an exceptional revolutionary character. But it is unnecessary to elaborate the discussion describing several facts related for the growing of national sentiment. So to sum up, the course of the non-co-operation movement in Jalpaiguri aroused nationalist political consciousness in the minds of thousands of people having various social backgrounds.

From non-co-operation to the civil Disobedience Movement the course of political activities in Jalpaiguri gradually developed. But there were so many complexity and crosscurrents. The demographic structure of the district and some local issues in different places of Jalpaiguri made a wide spread discontent at popular level. The *Rajbansi* peasants and the plantation labours

have also got the idea of national interest. Not only this, the unrest among the Nepali and tribal tea garden workers, trouble for non-payment of revenue and rents, boycott of tea-garden hats, incidents of popular violence at Madarihat and Mainaguri all were examples of the impact of national political activities in Jalpaiguri. Though the district Congress leadership could not utilize this discontent at popular level at large and failed to give proper guidance due to some of their weakness.

On the eve of the Civil disobedience movement the national activities in different forms were at progress in the district. Congress organizations came to be set up in many parts of the district. It has already mentioned that in Jalpaiguri town prominent persons like Sreenath Hoare, Pritinidhan Roy, Trailkya Nath Moulik and Nirendra Binode Sen, all lawyers, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, a muktear, Tarapada Sanyal, a medical practioner and Tarini Prasad Roy, a leading tea planter had joined the Congress.⁷³ But during October, 1924, when Khagendra Nath Dasgupta was arrested by the British police under the Bengal ordinance for vernacular press, the Jalpaiguri district Congress committee was in a state of decline for the time being. Khagendra Nath's arrest and his temporary absence in the district politics made a setback in the political life of Jalpaiguri. His temporary absence in district politics made a crisis to the nationalists of Jalpaiguri and the Thana and local level Congress committees ceased its existence due to the lack of effective guidance.

From this stage we see that the press of the district raised this voice of protest against the repressive measures and some ordinance issued by the British government. Regarding the local issues in Jalpaiguri we have series of examples of popular protest by the gentry of the town and the popular masses. The nationalist newspapers of Jalpaiguri covered all this news and highlighted particularly on reactionary measures of the British. We have mentioned that Khagendra Nath Dasgupta was imprisoned for one year for the publication of 'MUKTI BANI'. He was a great political activist and popular organizer of the district Congress. Several times on different issues he wrote against the British

in his paper Muktibani in an attacking manner. Naturally it had an impact on public mind and gradually created a nationalist sentiment among the common people. As a result the British government could not allow him to publish Muktibani. To stop the mobilization of public opinion through Muktibani the government warned Mr. Dasgupta, arrested him and the paper Muktibani was banned. In this connection one incident may be mentioned here. On 13th of October, 1929, the British government arrested and imprisoned some revolutionaries of Jalpaiguri. Among them were Birendra Nath Dutta, Suproakash Dutta, Chunilal Basu, Bijoy Kumar Hoare, Sasadhar Kar and Bhupati Nath Chanda with the charge of objectionable and seditious activities against the Raj. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta as a district Congress leader and editor of Muktibani vehemently protested and criticized this illegal action of the British government. Even in his paper he wrote against this unjustified action. At that time Khagendra Nath was the secretary of the Jalpaiguri district committee. The British officials were very much aware of all these developments. The situation became so serious that the government to restore their imperial interest determined to take all possible steps against Mr. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta. As a result the British I. B. Inspector along with the police simultaneously searched the residence of Mr. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, the office of 'MUKTIBANI' and the district Congress office.⁷⁴ This is not all about this incident. After arresting him the British government (police) filed a case of seditious activities against Mr. Dasgupta accusing him of violation of the court. The title of the case was Superintendent and remembrance of Legal Affairs vs. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta.⁷⁵ The trial of this case continued for a long time. The contemporary newspapers of Jalpaiguri among which the most prominent paper 'TRISROTA' reported the proceedings of this police case against Mr. Dasgupta.⁷⁶ The members of the district Congress committee and other nationalist personalities of the district took it very seriously. The reporting of TRISROTA on this case became very popular and a subject of discussion among the people of Jalpaiguri town. Definitely this news created an

impact upon the minds of the common people in favour of the national movement.

It is already mentioned that the case filed by the British police against Khagendra Nath Dasgupta has become a very sensitive political issue in the town. After a long trial, Deputy Commissioner Mr. C. R. Mukherjee in his court gave the judgement and accordingly Mr. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta got the punishment of imprisonment for one year.⁷⁷ The issue of the imprisonment of Mr. Dasgupta, which was very much illegal and the repressive measure against the nationalist, were very much criticized and a voice of protest rose among the inhabitants of Jalpaiguri town. This sensitive issue became so popular that automatically it created national sentiment among the common people at large. The newspapers published from Jalpaiguri like TRISROTA and JANAMAT focused this issue and they published all the proceedings of the case. The available sources reports that due to reactionary measure of the British government, other than Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, some other persons also were victimized. In this connection one case may be referred. When the paper Muktibani published different type of articles, some of them were provoking the idea of nationalism. The British officials considered it harmful to their administration and naturally the writers of those articles became the target of the British government and consequently they had to suffer. At that time an article entitled 'BICHAR' written by Bhabaranjan Gangopadhaya was published in Muktibani.⁷⁸ The British government took it exception, and the writer of this article Bhabarajan Gangophaya was warned and finally he was imprisoned for one year.⁷⁹ This newspaper (Muktibani) due to its anti-British character had to suffer so many times. The British government became very much cautious and took different steps to harass its editor and the writers at the same time. The government observed that the sensitive news and articles published in this paper and the vigorous character of its editor were creating anti-British agitation and it was very harmful to them. Quite naturally they could not allow it. So, to stop its publication, the Deputy commissioner Mr. C. R. Mukherjee issued an order against the publication of press. Due to the issue

of this order the paper 'Muktibani' got a strong set back and ultimately the publication of Muktibani was stopped. Apart from this, the order of the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri also affected the printers of the publication. As a result we see that the printer of Muktibani was warned, to impose a check upon the printers, the British government adopted a new strategy. The government claimed the mortgage of one thousand rupees from the 'SARALA PRESS' of Jalpaiguri, the Printer of Muktibani. This attitude of the British government was another example of repressive measures against the press publication. As soon as this order was issued, the proprietor of the Sarala press of Jalpaiguri became very much worried and they could not bear the risk to publish Muktibani. Due to all of this restrictions imposed by the British government the publication of 'MUKTIBANI' was stopped. This unjustified and repressive measures of the government was vehemently protested by nationalists of Jalpaiguri and created an anti-British agitation, which spread out through out the district.

The contemporary newspaper of Jalpaiguri 'TRISROTA' reacted against this unjustified incident and the opinion of the editor was focused on its issue.

The paper 'TRISROTA' covered this with the heading: -

'SARALA PRESSER NIKOT JAMIN DABI'.⁸⁰

'The British Government claimed the mortgage of Rs. One thousand only from the local printing press of Jalpaiguri; 'The Sarala printing works limited'. After the issue of this press ordinance on 27th October 1930, so far it is known that no paper related with district Congress or the ideology of nationalism was printed in the Sarala press. Immediately after the issue of this press ordinance the publication of Muktibani remained stopped.⁸¹ We don't have any available source about further development regarding this press ordinance.

In our present study, now we are to look at the nineteen thirties. During this phase we see that the freedom struggle took many steps forward. The

decade began with second non-co-operation movement and ended with the beginning of the Second World War. Well ahead of this movement the national political situation became very much tensed. Huge numbers of strikes or hartals were held throughout the country. In 1928, 203 strikes were held in India involving 505,000 workers.⁸² At that time the Calcutta Congress and the all parties' convention, communists convened the first all India conference of workers' and peasants' parties. The conference stressed on many issues with special emphasis on the freedom of press.

Along with the political unrest all over the country, some local issues also aggravated the political sensitivity in the Jalpaiguri district. The Non-co-operation (civil disobedience) movement of 1930-32 assumed the proportion of a mass movement in the district. For the first time the rural gentry took part in the movement and came forward and joined political activities. Organized attempts to politicize the plantation workers began in the district. As our study is not concerned with this we are simply to explain the political situation. From last few years the total political developments in the district was to some extent remarkable. In the winter of 1926, Sorojini Naidu (a Congress leader) visited Jalpaiguri and addressed a large meeting. In April 1928, Subhash Chandra Bose visited Jalpaiguri and addressed two meetings. In September 1929, J. M. Sengupta and several other Congress leaders came to Jalpaiguri on the occasion of a youth conference.⁸³ These visits of the nationalist leaders helped to keep in circulation the ideas of nationalism and different type of social reforms. In these circumstances the political atmosphere in the district of Jalpaiguri was very much fertile for the nationalists to execute their political agenda.

When the wave of the Civil Disobedience Movement was at the peak and it reached to all corners of our country under the leadership of Gandhi, the national dailies as well as the local vernacular newspapers were upholding the views of this movement. In the case of Jalpaiguri, we see that the news of this movement was circulated by the newspapers among the general public. Along

with the daily national newspapers, the local vernacular newspapers also played a significant role in propagating an anti-British agitation. In this stage the British government again became very much aggressive with the vernacular newspapers of Jalpaiguri and was determined to stop the voice of these newspapers. It is significant to note that in spite of all this threat from the government, the local vernacular newspapers did not stop their publication. The situation in the district became so aggravated that British government did not care to take any kind of step against the newspapers of Jalpaiguri. Just to stop the voice of the newspapers the British government with the power of a special Act issued an ordinance on 27th October, 1930. Naturally the press owners exposed their reaction against this press ordinance.

In response to this ordinance, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal wrote in his paper JANAMAT',

“The Executive Committee of All India Congress, on protest to the ‘Emergency Press Act’ requested the indigenous press owners not to publish their papers.”⁸⁴ In this connection the indigenous press owners adopted some resolutions in a meeting, which was presided over by the veteran and famous press owner and editor Sri Ramananda Chattopadhaya. Some of the decisions of the meeting were as follows: -

- a) Until or unless the press ordinance is dissolved and new circular issued about the vernacular press, no vernacular press will be published.
- b) The papers, which are to support the special press ordinance, will be boycotted.
- c) The Vernacular paper publishing their bulletins violating these decisions are to be boycotted.⁸⁵ Accordingly some developments in the case of publication came to be noticed.

As per direction of the Congress and decision of the vernacular press owners' Association, the publication of JANAMAT and TRISROTA, two weekly newspapers published from Jalpaiguri were stopped and ‘NISHAN’.

another paper of Jalpaiguri also remained unpublished. But after one month Janamat, Trisrota and Nishan came to be re-published, with an exception. As a protest to the press ordinance the editorial column remained blank as per the decision of the 'Indian press owners association'. Later on, regarding their republication, Trisrota in an editorial wrote, "As per the decision of the "All India press owners", we re-appear before the Indian citizens with our republication."⁸⁶

So far we have discussed about the newspaper Muktibani, its editor Khagendra Nath Dasgupta and some other political issues of the district, it appears that Muktibani as a newspaper always criticized the activities of the British government and at the same time raised the voice of protest, which ultimately turned to be a popular movement against the Colonial rulers. Though the British government did not care to take any kind of action against the paper and its editor Mr. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, a leading nationalist of the district, it cannot be denied that Muktibani had a significant contribution to the cause of our national movement in the district.

We have already mentioned that two other weekly newspapers namely 'JANAMAT' and 'TRISROTA' were there in Jalpaiguri. Regarding the involvements of these two newspapers in the district politics, we have so many cases to refer. Like Muktibani, Janamat and Trisrota were also very much interested with the national political affairs and both of the editors were active nationalists. As a result, like Muktibani, the publication of 'Janamat' and 'Trisrota' also became the target of the government. Here we can refer an example about the attitude of the government towards the vernacular press of Jalpaiguri. The nationalists of Jalpaiguri observed the 'Prisoners Day' in the town, which was like a political agitation against the government. This news of observation of 'prisoners Day' was highlighted by 'TRISROTA'. The British government took it offence against TRISROTA and the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri wrote a letter to the Editor of Trisrota. The letter is quoted here.

From

No..... 721-G

HERBERT GRAHAM, ESQR, I.C.S.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, JALPAIGURI.

To

THE EDITOR, TRISROTA,

JALPAIGURI,

Dear Sir,

I am directed by Government to refer to the account of 'Prisoners Day' in Jalpaiguri published in the TRISROTA of 10th July 1932, and to warn you not to publish detailed proceedings of such prohibited or illegal meetings as they account to propaganda in favour of Civil Disobedience Movement.

I have etc.

Sd/H.Graham

Deputy Commissioner

Jalpaiguri

28.7.1932.⁸⁷

From this letter of the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri it is quite evident that the government was always very much aware about the vernacular publications and they (Publications) were not allowed to do anything, which goes against the interest of the government. In so many cases we have noticed that the publications of Jalpaiguri extended support and highlighted the nationalist activities in Jalpaiguri. Similarly, the publications were also determined to achieve their goals and it can be mentioned that they played a positive role to spread the message of nationalism. The publications also did not spare the government, and they ceaselessly protested against the illegal and unjustified activities of the government. In this connection the role of Trisrota was no doubt remarkable. But this is not all. We can refer another case like Trisrota in Jalpaiguri.

Like TRISROTA, the editor of JANAMAT, another nationalist paper of Jalpaiguri also received a letter from the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri.⁸⁸ But it is fact that by all means the British government could not resist the spirit of nationalism propagated by this two papers (TRISROTA and JANANAT). Lastly the British government took a new strategy against these vernacular newspapers. The Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri stopped all kinds of advertisement to the Janamat and by this action a new financial problem was created to the editor. In spite of all these measures Janamat and Trisrota had a firm determination with their objectives to preach the idea of nationalism and to raise anti-British sentiment. Another important side of this paper was the news items published in the paper. Regarding the contemporary political movement the news items printed in Trisrota were very much attractive to the common people. In this connection, some of the editorials of this paper were very much significant and highly appreciable. We just mention one example about it. When the famous Revolutionary 'JATIN DAS' died in the Lahore Jail after performing 63 days fast, it became a very sensitive issue and the news was covered by all the leading daily newspapers. In Jalpaiguri we see that the editor of Janamat wrote about it in its editorial. The title of the editorial was 'ABAR ASIO FIRE' (come back again). About this incident Pritinidhan Roy, editor of Deshbandhu mentioned that Mr. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal was a publishing article against the illegal and unjustified activities of the British government. In some cases he did not hesitate to attack the government.⁸⁹ Another important Editorial published in Janamat on the heroic and patriotic activities of Binoy, Badal and Dinesh was a stirring incident.⁹⁰ This Editorial was very much attractive and got much response in favour of the nationalists. No doubt, these publications were very much disliked by the British government. Quite naturally the Deputy commissioner of Jalpaiguri again issued a separate order to resist the spirit of the Vernacular press of Jalpaiguri.

Mr. H.Graham, Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri in his office order wrote to the Editor of Janamat: -

From
Deputy Commissioners' Office
Jalpaiguri.

“Whereas I am satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that Babu Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, by caste Brahmin of Jalpaiguri, Editor printer and publisher of the weekly newspaper (vernacular) entitled ‘JANAMAT’ by printing and publishing by way of Congress propaganda in the aforesaid newspaper, wit, ‘JANAMAT’ false and distorted accounts of political events which have occurred in the district of Jalpaiguri, in particular accounts of Congress works and of action taken by the police authority to suppress them, has acted and is about to act in a manner prejudicial to the public safety and peace.

Now, therefore, in exercise to the powers conferred upon me under section 4 and 57 of the Emergency Powers Ordinance, 1932, I hereby make the following order, namely, that for the period of one month from the date of this order the said Babu Jyotish Chandra Sanyal shall not print or publish the said Newspaper ‘JANAMAT’ or any portion of it”.

Sd/ H. GRAHAM
Deputy Commissioner.
Jalpaiguri,
The 22nd May, 1932.⁹¹

As a result of the Emergency ordinance on vernacular press issued by the Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri ‘JANAMAT’ remained unpublished for one month. But after this temporary interval of one month the publication of Janamat reappeared more vigorously. In this connection one thing may be mentioned that the Editor of Janamat, Mr. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal and of TRISROTA, Mr. Suresh Chandra Paul, both were lawyer by their profession. So they were very much aware about the provisions of the press ordinance. Taking into account all this things, they continued their publication becoming more conscious and cautious about the government press ordinance. So these

publications (Janamat and Trisrota) remained unstopped, though they had to face so many troubles from the British government. It is evident that from that time up to independence, these two papers of Jalpaiguri played a very important role in creating anti-British agitation among the people of this region.

Apart from JANAMAT and TRISROTA, there was another nationalist paper published from Jalpaiguri was 'DESHBANDHU' (24th Magh, 1344 B.S.). It was a bi-monthly journal and its editor was lawyer Pritinidhan Roy. He was also the secretary of the district Congress Committee. As we have already mentioned the views and objective of this paper in our previous discussion, now we are to mention some of the editorials and news items, which had a particular influence on contemporary political atmosphere. Some of the Editorials of 'DESHBANDHU' clearly revealed that the purpose of this publication was to make the people aware of the activities of the Indian National Congress. Mr. Pritinidhan Roy, the editor of 'DESHBANDHU' wrote an editorial entitled 'GANASANGRAMER VITTI' (in Bengali). In this article he appealed to the general people not to become so much emotional, but to create movement on the basis of disciplined thought maintaining public relations.⁹² 'DESHBANDHU' also published an article entitled 'MUKTA BANDEER EKI SAMASHYA' (one of the problems of Jail-free prisoners). In this article he welcomed all of the jail-free prisoners' of Jalpaiguri.⁹³ Like this, so many references may be mention about the performances of 'DESHBANDHU', which have influenced the nationalist activities, as a result of which the national movement got much inspiration. In this context, 'DESHBANDHU' as a publication must have the credit to inspire the spirit of national movement in the district. Specially, the editorial of this paper were very much appealing for the cause of national movement. But this paper (DESHBANDHU) could not survive for long. In spite of that, it must be admitted that Mr. Pritinidhan Roy with his publication had created a very significant impact on the nationalist and the contemporary political movement.

To understand the role of the newspaper of Jalpaiguri, we have thoroughly discussed about different press publications, about editors and editorials, some important news items etc. And accordingly it is found that the newspapers of the district had a particular role in the nationalist movement and as a media they were a strong propagator in favour of the national movement. Even these vernacular newspapers of the district spontaneously reacted against the British government due to their illegal, unjustified and repressive measures against the Indian national leaders. On some important issues, these newspapers have categorically printed news and articles, which had a great impact to aware the supporters of the national movement and the common people at large. No doubt, this regional vernacular press of the district added some special force to the cause of national movement in micro level. Moreover, on some local issues, which have already been mentioned (some cases) in our discussion, these newspapers have stormed the local political situation. As a whole it is found that the total political situation of the district have been reflected on these local vernacular newspapers of Jalpaiguri district. To be more particular we would mention some other references of political activities concerned with Jalpaiguri district, which will give us some other information about the role, or contribution of the newspapers of the district to the national movement.

It has already been mentioned that during the period of national movement specially within the phase of Non-Co-operation Movement to civil Disobedience Movement, so many leaders of all Indian Congress, like Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sorajani Naidu, J.M.Sengupta and others visited Jalpaiguri. The purpose of their visit to Jalpaiguri were solely political. In this connection, one thing may be mentioned. On 10th day of February, 1923, Congress workers from the North Bengal District except Darjeeling and Malda assembled at Jalpaiguri to get a discussion about how to carry on the programme of National Movement laid down during the session of 'Gaya Congress'. At that time Deshbandhu C.R.Das was visiting Jalpaiguri and he was invited to address the meeting. In

his address Mr. Das categorically explained the contemporary political situation and also appealed to the people to join the national movement as it was very urgent. It is found that his political appeal got sufficient response and the political leaders of Jalpaiguri became stronger in their political activities.

Another example we can refer here is about Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi visited Jalpaiguri on 9th and 10th June, 1925. It was a very important incident in the political life of Jalpaiguri. Elaborate preparations were made to give him a befitting reception. From the early morning of the day of his arrival people poured in from far corners of the district to have a 'DARSHAN of GANDHI'. Professor Ranjit Dasgupta in his book, 'Economy, society and politics in Bengal' has very nicely explained about Gandhiji's visit to Jalpaiguri. The local press of Jalpaiguri (TRISROTA and MUKTIBANI) on every pages of their publication focused on the importance of this visit of Gandhi. According to a newspaper account, the crowds stood on both side of the road leading from the Jalpaiguri town station to Gopalpur Bhavan, the residence of the leading Tea planter, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, where Gandhi stayed. In the afternoon, meetings of more than 10,000 (Ten thousand) people were held. Honour and addresses were presented to him on behalf of the Jalpaiguri Municipality, the Reception Committee, the Indian Tea planters' Association, Hindu Sabha, Students Association and a number of bodies. It is found from different sources that the Mahatmaji's visit to Jalpaiguri has stirred the all over political situation of the district. The people of the district got much inspired in every sphere of life. But during his visit in Jalpaiguri, he mainly dealt on Khaddar, exhorted the rich to contribute their mite, the educated to improve the 'CHARKA' and the poor to popularize 'KHADDAR'. Apart from this symbolic campaign he also emphasized the need for Hindu-Muslim unity, castigated untouchability as a blot on Hinduism and pointed out the growing vice of drinking and laxity of morality.⁹⁴

Not only Deshbandhu C. R. Das and Mahatma Gandhi, several other Congress leaders also visited Jalpaiguri from time to time and addressed public

meeting. During the winter of 1926, Sorojini Naidu came to Jalpaiguri with some political programme and addressed a large meeting. In April, 1928, Subhash Chandra Bose visited Jalpaiguri and addressed two public meetings. In September 1929, J. M. Sengupta and some other leaders came to Jalpaiguri on the occasion of a youth conference.⁹⁵ These visits of the Congress leaders to Jalpaiguri and their political campaign in the district helped the nationalist workers of Jalpaiguri to a great extent. As a result a new flow started to keep in circulation the ideas of nationalism and social reforms. No doubt, these political activities had a special importance and the leading daily newspapers published from Calcutta covered all this news, likewise, the contemporary vernacular newspapers published from Jalpaiguri like 'JANAMAT' under the Editorship of Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, 'TRISROTA' of Suresh Chandra Paul and 'MUKTIBANI' under the Editorship of young Congress worker Mr. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta helped to spread the message of nationalism in this region.

In our present discussion, we have so long studied about the regional vernacular press and their contribution to the freedom movement of our country. Considering so many cases about the role of these publications it has become evident that the vernacular press of Jalpaiguri district played a significant role for the cause of our freedom movement. It is also found that these activities and patronage to the national movement performed by the newspaper was very much disliked by the government. To restore their interest, the government have imposed so many conditions on the newspapers, adopted different type of repressive measures, harassed the Editors of the newspapers, even sometimes they were arrested by the British government. Not only this, the printers and the writers of articles in the newspapers were also been hackled and threatened by the government. All these measures were adapted to suppress the spirit of nationalism, which were inspired and propagated by these vernacular newspapers. In spite of all these, it is also found that the newspapers did not remain unpublished. They did not care for the government in their national propaganda. The Editors of these newspapers of Jalpaiguri were so

determined to reach their goals and any kind of threat, ordinance, conditions for harassment, financial troubles and so many things could not resist their spirit of nationalism. In this light, we have referred so many cases regarding the role of the newspapers, editors, printers and writers. Taking an all over view about the role of the press of Jalpaiguri it is found that during this period, the political life of Jalpaiguri got much inspiration and vehemently protested against the unjustified and illegal activities of the Colonial rulers. So it can be said that the publications of Jalpaiguri played a significant role in mobilizing the public opinion in favour of the national movement.

5.10 ASSOCIATIONS (SABHA-SAMITI) AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT:

In our discussion about the press we have made a detailed study, specially on its role and contribution in the freedom movement of our country. In this study it is found that directly or indirectly these regional vernacular press of North Bengal have played a significant role in mobilizing public opinion and at the same time gathered mass support for the cause of freedom movement. Similarly, in our present discussion, we will see that the Association (Sabha-Samiti) also contributed for our national movement. Before entering into the regional level, if we examine the role of some all India or all Bengal Association or organization it will be quite evident that they made significant platform for patriotic activities. To be more specific, it can be said that the press and Associations are very much related to each other and press are the mouthpiece of different organization. In this regard, 'SAMBAD KOUMUDI' of Raja Rammohan Roy may be mentioned as the mouthpiece of 'BRAHMO SABHA/SAMAJ'. However, for our purpose let us discuss on the Associations, which were founded or linked with our present area of North Bengal and played some role for the freedom movement.

In all Bengal perspectives, it is found that the growth of public organizations and Associations were closely related to the growth and development of the Bengali press. From the first half of the nineteenth century,

we have so many references to mention that with the development of Bengali press (Vernacular Press) a series of Associations and organizations emerged and played a significant role in the context of social-cultural and political activities. So far we know about the Indian organizations and Associations, it can be referred that Raja Rammohan Roy's 'ATMIYA SABHA' founded in 1815 may be regarded as the pioneer of truly Indian public Association of the nineteenth Century.⁹⁶

In our present discussion we will have to mention about so many Associations, which are not directly related with our study. But for our better understanding about the role of the Associations and organizations we would mention in brief about some organizations. In this connection, the name of 'ATMIYA SABHA' may again be mentioned and this organization had some direct connection with North Bengal of undivided Bengal specially in the field of socio-cultural activities. It is well known that Raja Rammohan Ray spent a considerable time of his life at Rangpur and many meetings of his Atmiya Sabha were held there. The report of the meetings and his sayings and doings there reached amongst the rich and influential persons who gathered around him at that time. Among the learned associates of Rammohan Ray, who materially helped him in quoting and expounding ancient scriptures, were two well-known Sanskrit scholars, one of them was Hariharananda Tirthaswami who was connected with Rammohan's work at Rangpur.⁹⁷

Rammohan acquired his knowledge of the English language from 'DIGBY', his civil service employer who presumable provided him with his first window to the West.⁹⁸ Mr. Digby stated... "With the progress of his knowledge, Rammohan began to take, while at Rangpur, a keen interest in European politics, specially in the course of the French Revolution".⁹⁹ From this reference we can have information that from the very beginning of the socio-cultural reform movement through Associations Rangpur (within North Bengal of undivided Bengal) had a strong background. Later on, when Rammohan started his Socio-religious reform movement through 'Brahmo

Saha' and received a strong opposition of the orthodox Hindu community headed by Raja Radhakanta Deb, Rammohan had to face a strong opposition in North Bengal (Rangpur) also. In Rangpur, Rammohan's circle aroused the hostility of orthodox critics who were headed by Gourikanta Bhattacharya, the author of a tract-'Jnananjan', against the reformers.¹⁰⁰

While we are to examine the contribution of the Associations (Sabha-Samiti) of North Bengal in the context of freedom movement, we must keep it in our mind the trend of the all Bengal Associations even earlier from the period of our study. Like Atmiya Sabha, it is found that many similar associations of different people, different ideas and objectives sprang up. Among these to mention only a few were Goudia Samaj (1828), Academic Association (1828-29), Sarbatottya Dipika Sabha (1832), Sadharan Jnanoparjika Sabha (1838), Tattvabodhini Sabha (1839), Sorbasubha Kari Sabha (1850) and Bidyotsahini Sabha (1853). Most of these Associations had started their own organ to get their viewstand ideas communicated to a broader section of the population.¹⁰¹

All these Associations or institutions engaged themselves with different activities in the socio-cultural field. In the field of political activities, no platform was established till that time. The first to be established in Bengal of that kind was an Association, called 'Bangabhasa Prosarika Sabha, founded in 1836. The name and activities of this Association are little known. The first reference to it occurs in an anonymous letter published in 'JNANANNESHAN' on December 17, 1836. Bangabhasa Prasatika Sabha regarded the government measure as highly injurious to the country. As reaction, it decided to summon a public meeting to discuss the proposal of sending a petition to the government signed by five thousand persons. In this connection, a circular was accordingly distributed widely among the people in Calcutta and its immediate neighbourhood.¹⁰² Accordingly, on November 12, 1837, the landholders of Calcutta and its immediate neighbourhood met at the Hindu College to establish an association in order to safeguard their interest. After a long

discussion, an organization named as "ZAMINDARY ASSOCIATION" was inaugurated in July, 1838. But the name was soon changed to "LANDHOLDERS' SOCIETY". It was open to all persons having any stake in the land, irrespective of caste, creed or country. Its activities were not confined to Calcutta only and kept touch with all the districts.¹⁰³

Similarly, another Association was established. In order to rouse the interests, of the English public in Indian affairs, Mr. Adam established the 'British India Society in England in July 1839. By this time, Dwarkanath Tagore returned from London in January 1843. After his return from London, he aroused unparalleled enthusiasm among the Bengalis by a series of lectures and was mainly instrumental in founding the 'Bengal British India Society' on April 1843.

Thus, it is found that there were two political Associations in Bengal since 1843, viz., the Land Holders Society and the Bengal British India Society. The first represented aristocracy of wealth and the other, aristocracy of intelligence.¹⁰⁴ But if we examine/ the activities of these two Associations, we will see that none of these can be said to have achieved great popularity. But there can be hardly any doubt that they served to rouse the political consciousness of the people. Subsequently, these two existing political Associations in Bengal silently merged themselves into a new one named, 'THE BRITISH INDIAN ASSOCIATION', The British Indian Association was founded on October, 29, 1851.¹⁰⁵

Though, So many organizations and Associations emerged during the course of different phases, it is found that until the late nineteenth century, the Associations in North Bengal, however, had not played any significant role in the political, Social and cultural history. Due to so many reasons specially, the absence of roads and consequent difficulties in transportation narrowed down the range of social and economic contact with the outside World. With the establishment of 'The Indian Association' in June 26, 1876, we get some reference of political activities in the distant districts of Bengal. 'Surendra Nath

Banerjee' in his book 'A Nation in Making' reminisced: 'Political work in the mofussil was than a new thing, and the new born enthusiasm for political progress that 'we are able to evoke in the most distant parts of the province is one of the most pleasant and enduring reminiscences of my life'.¹⁰⁶ It is evident that, in the very first year of its existence, the Indian Association affiliated a number of Associations in different parts of the country, united to it in sympathy, and having a common scope of action. These Branch Associations were in Bagura, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Pabna etc. This was principally achieved by the all India political tour undertaken by Surendranath on behalf of the Association.¹⁰⁷ Though these places are not lying with the geographical boundary of present North Bengal, but we would keep it in our mind that our study started from 1869. So, before the partition of 1947, these places were known as North Bengal. The trend of the political activities through Associations or institutions had a great impact on the Association of North Bengal as a whole.

The emergence in 1885 of the Indian National Congress, which was destined eventually to pilot India's struggle for freedom to success, was the logical culmination of the politics of Association of the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁸ Unlike the first session, elected delegates representing diverse organization from different parts of India including East, South and North Bengal came at the time of Congress session. It does not represent any organization of North Bengal. But the fact is that North Bengal was becoming involved with the Associations and its political activities.

The growth of Samities or Associations served as an important factor in translating the revolutionary spirit into action all over Bengal. On March 1902, the 'Anusilan Samiti' was established in Calcutta by Satish Chandra Bose, with the well-known barrister, Pramatha Mitra as its President. The ostensible purpose of founding this Samiti was to develop physical strength and courage among the young Bengalis.¹⁰⁹ In 1905, the Dacca Anusilan Samiti was set up under the control and supervision of Pulin Behari Das. While the

organization of the Dacca Anusilan Samiti was the most compact in Mymensingh and Dacca, it was fairly active from Dinajpur in the North-West to Chittagong in the South-East and from Cooch Behar in the North-East to Midnapur in the South-West. And it had about 500 units or branches mostly in rural areas.¹¹⁰

In this discussion, one thing is noticed that mainly the Associations and organizations of Calcutta had their branches in North Bengal and naturally to some extent they engaged themselves in political activities. Later on we will discuss about the political activities of these associations. But one thing is noticeable that none of the Association or organization was founded in North Bengal purely with political character. At the same time it is also found that a good number of Associations or Organizations were established in different districts of North Bengal mainly with the Zaminders and the Tea planters and some other people. Let us now have a brief account about those Associations.

5.11 RAJSHAHI ASSOCIATION (ESTABLISHED - 21ST JULY 1872)

From the records of the Govt. of Bengal Home Department, (801) we get a series of Association recognized by the government, which was published by Bengal Government Press, Alipur, Bengal, 1946. 'Rajshahi Association was one of them.'¹¹¹ Objectives – (1) To provide education of the people (2) To promote the cultivation of arts and science by the people of the country and the advancement of national literature (3) To assist in the development of healthy public opinion (4) To develop and assist in the development of the internal resources of the country and (5) To promote sanitation and public health and some other objects of an altruistic nature.

Constitution of, and Qualification for membership – The constituents of the Association are – one president, two or more vice presidents, one secretary, three assistant secretaries, and if necessary one Deputy secretary. Members to be elected from amongst the adult mail residents of the districts or from amongst the landholders of the district.¹¹² Total members of the Association were 294. Its president was Raja Prativa Nath Roy of Dighapatia and the secretary Babu Sarat Kumar Ghosh M. A. B. L.

All this details about the association are not necessary for the purpose of our study. But to know about a regional Association of North Bengal, its objects and constitution can give us some information, which will throw some light on our study. In fact, an association that was established in 1872, could not have an active part for the cause of national movement. Freedom movement as such did not start during this time. A national sentiment and patriotic activities had been reflected through some associations. In the case of 'Rajshahi Association' we also find some short of nationalism, which has been clearly mentioned in its objectives. One of the important objectives of the Rajshahi Association was to promote the cultivation of arts and science by the people of the country and the advancement of national literature. The organizers of this association no doubt had the clear idea about nationalism, and this influenced them to cultivate the national literature, which will ultimately provide a sense of nationalism. So it is the initial sense of the Associations of North Bengal to raise a voice for the cause of nationalism. Again we see that this association was giving emphasis for the development of public opinion in its objectives, item no. 3. It is, of course, a credit of their organization because, in the year 1872 it was not so easy matter to advocate in favour of public opinion. In course of time, the public opinion, which was going to be generated by this association, took the shape of vehement protest against the British rule and involved so actively in the freedom movement.

Likewise, we have the information about a series of associations in north Bengal. Some of them were located in the geographical area of pre-1947 North Bengal, i.e., North Bengal of undivided Bengal. It has already been stated that as our study starts from 1869, we have to mention so many things, which belongs to North Bengal of undivided Bengal (Before 1947). In this connection we are to mention about some associations of different districts though all of them had no any direct link with the freedom movement. From the government records we find a list of associations recognized by government and most of them were formed by particular groups of people to protect their own (individual or collective) interests.¹¹³ In spite of that some

indications are being noticed which mean a sharp difference between the interests of the British Government and the Indian people. Some people of North Bengal were thinking of their own to protect their interest through these associations. These associations became a common platform of a particular group of people, which were sometimes advocating in favour of national interest. Now we are to mention about some other regional associations of North Bengal:

- i) Muhamadan Association, Rajshahi [Established – 1884]
- ii) Dinajpur Land holders Association [Established – 1905]
- iii) Anjuman – I – Islamia, Dinajpur. [Established – 1894]
- iv) Dinajpur Merchant's Association. [Established – 1910]
- v) Duars planters Association. [Established –Exact date not known]
- vi) The Anjuman – I – Islamia, Jalpaiguri [Established – 1892]
- vii) The Indian Tea planters Association Jalpaiguri, [Established – 29th June, 1918]
- viii) Muhammadan Association, Rangpur. [Established 1887]
- ix) The North – Bengal Zaminder's Association, Rangpur, (formerly known as Rangpur Zaminder's Association) [Established – 1907]
- x) Kshatriya Samiti, Rangpur, [Established – 1910]
- xi) Pabna Anjuman- I – Islamia. [Established 1905]
- xii) Malda Muhammadan Association. [Established 1890]
- xiii) The Malda Association. [Established – 1887]
- xiv) Darjeeling planter's Association. [Established 1877]
- xv) The Terai planter's Association, Darjeeling.
- xvi) European Association (Darjeeling Branch). [Established – 25th June, 1913]

- xvii) Anjuman – I – Islamia, Darjeeling. [Established 5th December, 1909]
- xviii) Hillmen's Association, Darjeeling. [Established 1917]
- xix) The Terai Indian planter's Association Simulbari, Darjeeling. [Established – 1928]

Apart from all these associations some other association also emerged and engaged themselves mainly in the field of socio culture activities, which will be studied in our next chapter. But the associations of different districts of North Bengal need some clarification. First of all we find that the Anjuman – I – Islamia of different districts of North Bengal and the Mohammedans Association of Malda and Jalpaiguri were to some extent identical. It is found in the memorandum of these association that their objectives were to promote by all legal and constitutional means, the well – being of the Mohammedans of the respective districts and to ameliorate their educational, social and religious status. Not only this, the Anjuman–I–Islamia of Jalpaiguri was more conscious about their community at large. This organization desired the promotion of loyalty towards the British Government and the promotion and protection of social, political and educational and other rights and interest of the Mohammedans community.¹¹⁴ Particular question in which the Association was interested, and upon which it would be in position to offer an opinion of value—questions affecting Mohammedans interests. In the memorandum of this association it is found that this Association was to some extent careful and conscious about the political status of their community. [Another Association namely 'Kshatriya Samiti', Rangpur, was not at all a political Association but a social Association or organization in the initial stage. Though it is found that after 1920's this Association of the 'Rajbansi' community of North Bengal took an active part in the political activity of Bengal. Even under the banner of this Association some candidates contested in the election of Bengal legislative council against the Swarajya party of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and also against the Communist party. But it may be mention that their involvement in

the political atmosphere was confined within the Rajbansi community. In the memorandum of the said Samiti we find some reference as its objects:

- a) To spread useful knowledge and self-establishment.
- b) To promote religious, social, moral and intellectual advancement.
- c) To reform the Samiti by spreading useful knowledge of the Shastras.
- d) To improve the economic condition of the community and
- e) To promote by its culture of science, literature, history, etc. One thing more has to be mentioned here is that the particular question in which the Association is interested and upon which it would be in a position to offer an opinion of value – All questions concerning, religion, Society, self Government, Sanitation, education, economic conditions, land interest and the defence of the country.

Hillmen's Association of Darjeeling was another association, which was interested to protect the purpose of the hill people of Darjeeling. Its objects were : The educational and economical improvement of the hill people and the protection of their civic rights. The cultivation of national will by displacing tribal and sectional prejudices. The creation of the spirit of cooperation and brotherhood among the Hill people of the Darjeeling district.

Similarly the Tea Planters Association, Merchants Association, Land holders Association and some other associations of North Bengal were interested for their own cause. They had not any special commitment for national interest particularly for freedom movement. But if we go through the memorandum of these associations, we will see that almost of the associations had some feeling for education, national/regional culture, development of internal resources of the country protection of their legitimate rights, advancement of national literature, development of healthy public opinion, to develop useful knowledge and self-establishment, to promote moral, social and intellectual advancement and so many things. Sometimes their objectives meant for a particular group or community and at the same time they raised

some issues, which prepared the ground for freedom movement. As such the contribution of these associations to the freedom movement are not so material but it cannot be denied that the groundwork was done by them.

In our previous discussion, we have mentioned about a series of Association and their background. Most of those associations were engaged with socio- cultural literary activities. They had no direct link with the freedom movement of our country but the outcome of their activities were no doubt led to the national consciousness which generated the public opinion for the cause of national movement.

Apart from this Association we have the reference of some other socio-cultural and literary Associations/ organizations in North Bengal. Here we are to mention the names of some associations: -

- i) Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti (KAS)
- ii) Varendra Research Society (VRS)
- iii) Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha
- iv) Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan (USS)
- v) Malda National Council of Education (MNCE)
- vi) Malda Jela Sahitya Sammelan
- vii) Arya Natya Samaj (ANS), Jalpaiguri
- viii) Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha, Malda Branch
- ix) District Khilaphat Committee, Jalpaiguri
- x) District Congress Committee, Jalpaiguri etc.

Information about all these associations is not available. But some stray references and information about these associations clearly reveals their stand. Some of these associations had a significant role in the socio-cultural and literary field of the contemporary period. Directly they did not participate in the campaign of the national movement, but it is fact that due to their effort a

national consciousness and the feeling of nationality emerged and consequently a situation developed out of which some people or a group of people came forward to participate in the freedom movement of our country. More specifically, it can be said that the National council of education, Malda Branch, had a nationalistic background. It was founded by the initiative of Acharya Benoy Kr. Sarkar and at the same time it was a branch of National Council of Education, Jadavpur. We just mention this to understand the importance of this organization. It is well known to us that national council of education had a Swadeshi background. Malda district as well as North Bengal also took an active part in the Swadeshi Movement through this organization and the message of Swadeshi had reached the remotest corners of this region.

We have the reference of an organization of the peasants in the district of Jalpaiguri. We know that the district of Jalpaiguri had some agricultural background. A highly significant development of the district was the formation of the District organizing committee of the 'Krishak Samiti' on December 23, 1938, with Gurudas Roy as secretary and Sachin Dasgupta as assistant Secretary, Gurudas Roy (1919-61) had earlier been associated with the 'SHREE SANGHA' and Bengal Volunteers, the later organization being responsible for much of the daring terrorist activities in the early 1930s. After his release from Jail in 1937, he came to Jalpaiguri and got in touch with the leftists and socialist minded Congress workers, including Sachin Dasgupta. This Krishak Samiti was the first peasant organization in the district and its impact on the political life of the district came to be felt.¹¹⁵ We don't have any detail information about the political activities of this organization. But from other references it is known that the district Congress Committee had a strong hold over the peasants and Tea-garden workers and under the leadership of the district Congress these peasants and Tea-garden workers raised the voice of protest against the British Government.

Regarding association and their role in the freedom movement, we can mention one more reference in the context of Dinajpur district. It is found that

during the First World War the revolutionary movement spread in the district of Dinajpur. When the struggle for Swaraj began in 1919, local Congress leaders of Balurghat preached the ideals of the Congress through out the Sub-division. (Before partition, Balurghat was a sub-division in the Dinajpur district). Some primary Congress committees were organized even in the interior villages. A Mahila Samiti, a National School, an arbitration Board for settlement of civil disputes, and a National Sub-Registrar's office were also set up at Balurghat. Although these attempts at setting up a parallel administration did not succeed, Hindus and Muslim of the Dinajpur district jointly took part in the Khilphat Movement in 1920.¹¹⁶ So it is found that in the district of Dinajpur, the primary Congress committee, a Mahila Samiti, a National School, an arbitration Board for settlement of civil disputes were very much active for the cause of national movement and they had a significant contribution to it. This association or organizations fought with some local issues and they had to suffer due to the repressive measures adopted by the British government, as a result of which their movement could not continue for long. But the associations of Balurghat with their limited capacity dedicated themselves for the cause of the freedom movement.

Last of all it has to be mentioned that the associations of Cooch Behar and Darjeeling were to some extent, silent on the issue of the national movement. This was quite natural. Because, being a native princely state having friendly relations with the British government, it was not possible to allow any kind of protest movement. So the associations/organizations of Cooch Behar remained indifferent about the national movement. Similarly the associations of Darjeeling also were less interested about the freedom movement. In our study about the role of the press in the freedom movement we have already explained the situation in Darjeeling. In the case of association the position was almost same. The association of Darjeeling were like 'European Association, Anjuman-I. Islamia, Darjeeling Branch, Tea Planters Association, Simulbari, Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, the Hillmen's association etc. All were interested with their own cause. But some association like

'Gorkha Dukkha Nibarak Sammelan' had some voice of protest and this protest movement subsequently gave birth of a consciousness about nationalism in a limited sense. As a result we see that some patriotic literature were coming out and a good number of nationalist writers emerged. Though they had no direct contribution for our freedom movement, but in other sense, their contribution in the socio-cultural activities must be admitted.

Now, we are to conclude our discussion. So long we have discussed in detail about different type of associations of the districts of North Bengal. A brief review of this discussion reveals that all these associations don't have any similar or unified character. Their (associations) views and standpoints were different. It has already been stated that the publications of Cooch Behar and Darjeeling had a passive role in the context of freedom movement. Similarly the associations of this district did not have any significant contribution in this regard.

In Dinajpur, (presently North and South Dinajpur) there were no such important publications. But when we are to study about the associations of the different district of North Bengal it have been clear to us that some associations of Dinajpur district like Mahila Samiti, National School, an arbitration Board, and a National Sub-Registrar's office etc. were very much interested and took active part in the freedom movement of our country. Though their initiative for the national movement could not last for long due to so many reasons, which was quite natural, but their participation and contribution were undoubtedly something significant.

Last of all we have to mention some thing about the associations in the district of Jalpaiguri and Malda. In our study we have already seen that Jalpaiguri and Malda, the two district of North Bengal had some distinction in all respect during the period of our study. In our study about the role of the press it is found that the publication of this two district (already mentioned earlier) have exercised a strong nationalist outlook and ultimately it appears that they were a strong supporter of the freedom movement. In so many cases it

has been proved that the publications took an active part to generate the public opinion in favour of the freedom movement. Similarly the associations of these two districts of North Bengal (Jalpaiguri and Malda) achieved the credit of upholding the cause of national movement. The association of Jalpaiguri and Malda, which have already been mentioned earlier, no doubt got the credit as the generator of public opinion. In this connection we find that the associations/organization of this two district (Jalpaiguri and Malda) witnessed numerous popular protest movements, which were found to be reflected on the local newspaper and periodicals. Some associations were not at all interested with any kind of political activities. But it is fact that some associations of North Bengal (Jalpaiguri, Malda and Dinajpur district) played a significant role in moulding and regenerating social, economic and political consciousness amongst the common people of this region. In the long run it is found that some associations with their certain political agenda created a significant impact on the minds of general people and a new political situation has been emerged. It is fact that no single factor cannot be the generator of the national movement. Along with so many factors the associations of the different district of North Bengal added something, which have accelerated the contemporary political situation and an anti-British agitation started in some parts of North Bengal. As a whole it must have to be admitted that the associations of North Bengal had certain contribution for the cause of freedom movement of our country.

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