

**ROLE OF THE PRESS AND ASSOCIATIONS IN  
THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL  
MOVEMENTS:  
A CASE STUDY OF NORTH BENGAL  
(1869 – 1969)**

*Thesis submitted to the University of North Bengal, Darjeeling,  
West Bengal, for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History*

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## DECLARATION

The present Ph. D. Dissertation entitled "Role of the Press and Associations in the Socio-Cultural and Political Movements: A case study of North Bengal" (1869-1969), submitted by me for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History from the University of North Bengal, is entirely based on original materials carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Professor, Department of History, University of North Bengal and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted in any academic institution for such degree or diploma for me.

Supervisor

*Ananda Gopal Ghosh*

(Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh)

PROFESSOR

Candidate

*Nilangshu Sekhar Das*

(Nilangshu Sekhar Das)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has grown out of a special interest on 'Media and Society' in modern times keeping in view the modern trends in historical writings. It was a longstanding professional urge to discover and report on what media had been doing for this country. The emergence of the Indian press, properly so called, was the product and a stimulant of the process of national regeneration that began in the 19th century. Similarly, different types of associations, either socio-cultural or political have also got much credit to reframe our social structure and social changes. In trying to define and to promote it, the press and associations have been playing an important part to focus on so many important aspects of our society. We know that the press is the mirror of public opinion and a chronicles of social, political and cultural events. Out of this belief the present work has been undertaken to know about the role of the press and associations of North Bengal, a particular geographical area, both in the pre-partition and post-partition period. As I am a permanent inhabitant of this region and most of my personal and official assignments are confined within the jurisdiction of this region, I became very much interested with the Regional Vernacular Press and Associations of this place. My association with this area as the son of the soil, proved to be of great advantage during the period of my intense investigations.

I have been fortunate enough to get a committed supervisor, Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh at the Department of History, North Bengal University, who, despite his busy academic and social assignments and responsibilities curved out long hours to lend me persistent guidance and direct me over the last six years, responding to my calls even at odd hours. I wish to express heartfelt and sincere gratitude for his active supervision and constant help, encouragement, advice and patience throughout the course of my research work. The present work also benefited from the comments, in sights and co-operation and support of my teachers Professor Pranab Kumar

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During the long period taken in the making of this work, I had to utilize many traditional sources, relevant records preserved in the National

Archives of India, New Delhi, The West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta, National Library, Calcutta, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, Cooch Behar State Library, Bharatibhavan Pathagar, Kaligram, Chanchole, Malda, North Bengal University Library and Mathabhanga College Library. I express my sense of gratitude to the staff of these institutions for rendering valuable help and co-operation in connection with my research work. My sincere thanks are also due to a good number of social worker and political activists with whom I had the opportunity to discuss various issues pertaining to the subject of the present study.

I would also sincerely like to acknowledge that the present work could not have come to success without the generous support of the University Grants Commission (UGC) for approving my leave under the Faculty Improvement Programme (FIP) for two years during which I conducted my field work and completed by research. During the course of this research work I have received help from a host of friends and well wishers, for which I am privileged to thank Dr. Samir Das, Principal, and other colleagues at Mathabhanga College, Cooch Behar. Dr. Padam Nepal, Senior Lecturer in Political Science, St. Joseph's College, North Point Darjeeling deserve special thanks for his fruitful suggestion, care and encouragements which provided me with energy and vigour to complete the present project.

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Finally and most importantly I would like to thank all my family member whose unconditional love and support is the pillar of my pursuits. I am deeply indebted especially to my wife Dr. Ratri Nandi Das, Reader in Bengali, Bagdogra College and my little son Samyabrata for their co-operation, inspiration and quiet encouragement, and as a small token of appreciation for all this, I dedicate this thesis to them.

Siliguri,

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Nilangshu Sekhar Das

## ABBREVIATIONS

AARC	:	Annual Administrative Report of Cooch Behar State
AP	:	Anandabazar Patrika
ABP	:	Amrita Bazar Patrika
ANS	:	Arya Natya Samaj
AIGL	:	All India Gorkha League
BSP	:	Bangiya Sahitya Parishad
CPI	:	Communist Party of India
EPW	:	Economic and Political Weekly
GD	:	Gour Doot
GDNS	:	Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan
HM	:	Hindu Mahasabha
INC	:	Indian National Congress
ITPA	:	Indian Tea Planters Association
JMSS	:	Jalpaiguri Muslim Sahitya Samiti
JSS	:	Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti
KPP	:	Kamtapur Peoples Party
KS	:	Kshatriya Samiti
ML	:	Muslim League
MMA	:	Malda Mohammedan Association
MNCE	:	Malda National Council of Education
MZSS	:	Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan
NCE	:	National Council of Education

NEBULA	:	Nepali Bhutia and the Lepchas
OUP	:	Oxford University Press
PKS	:	Proceedings of the Kshatrtiya Samiti
RBDS	:	Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha
RSP	:	Rangpur Sahitya Parishad
SAB	:	The Statistical Account of Bengal
US	:	Uttarbanga Sambad
VRS	:	Varendra Research Society
UD	:	Uttarkhanda Dal
UTJAS	:	Uttarbanga Tapshili Jati-Upajati Samiti
HS	:	Hitasadhani Sabha
BPCC	:	Bengal Provincial Congress Committee
KAS	:	Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti
RAS	:	Radh Anusandhan Samiti
UBS	:	Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan
MBE	:	Member of British Empire
IHQ	:	Indian Historical Quarterly
MA	:	Malda Association

## INTRODUCTION

1. In the proposed dissertation entitled 'The Role of the Press and Associations in Socio-Cultural and Political Movements: A case study of North Bengal, (1869-1969), we have presented a historical analysis about the role of Press and Associations in the Socio-Cultural transitions that have taken place in the present North Bengal districts in the state of West Bengal. However, a part of our study may be out of the present North Bengal because we have taken the study from 1869 which was prior to independence, known as North Bengal including the present geographical area over which our study is concerned. But after the partition of 1947, some parts of the then North Bengal have been merged with the present Bangladesh. It was found that before the partition these places which are presently some districts of Bangladesh were the main centres of Socio-Cultural practices of North Bengal in undivided Bengal. Our area of study i.e., present North Bengal had a very close link with those districts (Rajshahi, Rangpur in Bangladesh) in the course of their Socio-cultural activities. Though the Cooch Behar state had some outstanding contribution in this field but it was a later phenomenon. Initially Cooch Behar was very much associated with the literary activities of 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD' which will be discussed in the course of our study. As Press and Association (SABHA-SAMITI) of North Bengal emerged in those places (before 1947), naturally we must have to mention it in our study though presently they are lying with Bangladesh. While doing so we have begun with the geo-historical profile of North Bengal, its background and the origin and development of Press and Associations and the role they played in the contemporary socio-cultural and political movements in the region. In different phases of our study we will focus on several aspects covered by the Press and Associations in North Bengal which ultimately stands as the creators and interpreters of the public opinion, contributing towards the socio-cultural and political transitions of the region. As a result of all these developments it will be evident that the

emergence of the North Bengal question as a distinct geo-political entity and tied with it, the emergence of demands for recognition of socio-cultural identities premised around ethnic, linguistic and cultural bases in the region, have raised. This identity of two-pronged identity question, first the identity of North Bengal as a distinct geo-historical and political entity on the one hand, and secondly, the emergence of a multitude of identity based movements in North Bengal speak of not only the deprivation of the region from the benefits of development, but also the mis/ non-recognition of the socio-political claims of a variety of ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups in the region. In our present dissertation these have been amply illustrated by the emergence of Press and Associations in the region over the years.

## **2. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The proposed dissertation will attempt to look into the significant socio-cultural and political transition of the five districts (Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri Darjeeling, West Dinajpur and Malda) of present North Bengal between the years 1869 and 1969. It may be mentioned here that in recent times a growing interest is noticed among a number of historians and the common people for writing regional/ local history which is known to the Social Scientists as area studies. It is felt that case studies at regional/local or micro-level will be helpful in bringing to light many untouched corners of the history of our recent past. It is out of such idea that this work is proposed to be undertaken. In fact an over all study on different aspects of social, cultural and political history of present North Bengal in the colonial and post-colonial period is yet to receive scholarly attention. For this reason the area of present North Bengal (five districts mentioned above) find little place in the main stream of social cultural and political history.

It may however be mentioned here that before the partition of 1947 the area of North Bengal had a vast geographical boundary in which some districts of present Bangladesh like Rajshahi, Rangpur, Pabna were included. During ancient and medieval period this region (North Bengal) had the privilege of

having many famous capital cities. But within the period of our study we find a different North Bengal viz., the northern part of West Bengal. Our area of study had also some historical traditions. The Princely state of Cooch Behar had some different features both in cultural and political activities during the British Colonial rule. As it was a native state of the British, political activities against the Raj were restricted. In spite of that Cooch Behar had witnessed a series of political movements. In the field of cultural activities this area had a glorious past like 'Brahmo-Movement.' The religious faith of Vaishnavism and Saivism were established on the Royal family and their subjects. But during the time of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, the Brahmo religion flourished in Cooch Behar definitely by the influence of Keshab Chandra Sen the Brahmo Samaj reformer of Calcutta.

The most important district of North Bengal is Jalpaiguri which has a distinction in the field of social, cultural and political movement from the colonial period to recent times. Specially in the field of political activities the Associations/ organizations and vernacular press made a significant contribution in the growth of national political regeneration. It may be mentioned here that at the second annual session of Indian National Congress in Calcutta in the year 1886, Jalpaiguri was represented there by participating the session. During the first half of 20th Century, repeated visits of All India Congress leaders like, C. R. Das, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu and over all Mahatma Gandhi with several political programme very much influenced the political life of the district.

In the field of press publication and cultural activities Malda district had a distinction. The most illustrated paper published from Malda was GAMBHIRA and it encouraged the intellectual and educated people of the district. In 1320 B.S. the intellectuals associated with the publication of Gambhira arranged Malda Jela Sahitya Sammelan which could be marked as social and cultural practice. Probably this was the first district-wise Sahitya Sammelan in Bengal. Similarly West Dinajpur (at present North and South

Dinajpur) had also some political social and cultural activities. It may however be mentioned here that the Press Publications from North Bengal were mostly regional and Bengali vernacular press. The only exception was the district of Darjeeling. In the hill areas other than Bengali general publications in Nepali, Hindi, English and Tibetan were there. This was due to different linguistic and cultural background.

Our study proposes to begin with a brief description on the background of the press publications and establishment of several Associations. It is well known that the Indian Press had a glorious background. Specially Bengal played a significant role in this field. But the role played by the regional/local vernacular press of North Bengal are yet to receive the attention of the social scientists. Not only the Press, the Associations of North Bengal (SABHA-SAMITI) which were established in different times with the patronage of different personalities made a strong commitment on the socio-cultural and political activities. The Associations and Publication of North Bengal within the period of our study shows how a new socio-cultural regeneration emerged in this region. In this connection we will study the origin and growth of social mobility in North Bengal. The political scenario of this region in the period of our study will also come under the preview of our research. One of our major aims is to trace the emergence and growth of nationalist politics in North Bengal at various levels.

In regard to the period of our study I would like to say something. In the first place, I shall explain the selection of the beginning year of our study. The title theme of our study is the role of Press and Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) on the different aspects of North Bengal. In this regard we had to start our study from the year 1870 because the first newspaper in North Bengal was published in this year. But we have started from one year back (1869) because during this year Jalpaiguri district was formed by the Colonial rulers. The formation of this district was purely an administrative decision. But later on it was framed as divisional head quarter of Rajshahi Division which got a

special importance over which our study is concerned. So the year 1869 is a landmark in the socio-cultural and political history of North Bengal. The reason of selecting 1969 as the ending year of my study is that, in this year a new political dimension started. After independence the socio-cultural and political practices of North Bengal was going on in a normal way. But during 1969 a new political demand started what is known as “Uttarakhanda Andolan” among some local people of this area. I would like to mention here that one of the aims of our research is to highlight the root of some social problems which were generated by the active role of Associations and publications.

### **3. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The number of major publications on our study is very scanty. In fact the socio-cultural and political developments in North Bengal during the period of our study still awaits the historians. It is to be noted that a series of publications of press and Association have been published. But so long no serious attempt has been made by scholars to highlight the importance and contributions of the regional, local publications on socio-cultural and political field. The pioneer work on Newspapers and periodicals “Bangla Samayik O Sambadpatre Sekalar Katha” by Brajendra Nath Bandopadhyaya is even today regarded by the scholars as the source material in this field. “Samayik Patre Banglar Samaj Chitra” by Binoy Ghosh also deserves much credit. Some other scholars in Bangladesh and West Bengal devoted their interests in writing on press and publications in Bengal. The name of the scholars in Bangladesh, Anisuzzaman, Mustafa Nurul Islam, Muntasir Mamun and in West Bengal Partha Chatterjee and Jitendra Nath Bose must be mentioned in this regard. But the interesting fact is that none of these scholars have discussed even to a little extent, about the press and publications of present North Bengal. Brojendranath Bandopadhyaya in his book mentioned the names of a few number of publications of North Bengal. But actually no researcher was interested to pay his attention to the area of North Bengal. I would like to draw attention to one important point. Some non-academic researchers whom we want to termed as ‘Loka Aitihāsik’ have

written on some aspects of our study. All of these works are written in Bengali. Other than Press, there are some association in North Bengal. But no scholar have taken interest on the Associations/ organizations.

Though some of the scholars have focused on some of the problems of this region, very little work has been done so far on the Socio-Cultural history of this region. Recently a trend has grown up for writing regional/local history out of which some Scholars became interested with this area. But the interesting fact is that, as Cooch Behar was a princely state and had a royal background, most of the historical works were confined with its history. Some District-wise attempts have been made by some collective efforts but this is a very little out put for our purpose. Among the earlier works done, mention may be made of Meherab Ali, 'Dinajpure Sangbadikatar Ekso Bachar' (in Bengali), Jahar Sen, 'A cultural profile of Darjeeling', Charu Chandra Sanyal, 'The Rajbansis of North Bengal', Ranjit Dasgupta, 'Economy, Society and Politics in Bengal; Jalpaiguri 1869-1947', etc. These publications are no doubt of great importance and to some extent related with our study. But one thing have to be mentioned that no substantive study connected with the growth and development of Press and Association in present North Bengal have done by any scholar which reflects the socio-cultural life and social transition of present day North Bengal. In fact due to so many factors especially underdevelopment, this type of literary and intellectual practices did not start properly.

However, there are certain other publications and associations, which exclusively deal with the subject of North Bengal. But that study was initiated from those places which are presently beyond the scope of present North Bengal. 'VARENDRA ANUSANDHAN SAMITI', 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD', 'UTTARBANGA SAHITYA SAMMILAN' had some outstanding achievements in this field. But after 1947 we had to deal with a different North Bengal, where, such type of Associations did not develop. In spite of all these, literary and cultural practices of this region got much credit which was not explored with due importance.

Apart from this we notice some articles published in different journals and periodicals in different times which were to some extent focused on the subject of our study. But they were almost incomplete and stray and cannot give sufficient information on the growth and development of Press and Associations in this region. Sometimes we find some information on our study from district gazetteers, administrative reports, census report, district handbooks, native newspaper files etc. But all these are not sufficient to understand the main theme of our research. Over all it can be said that we have not any major work on this field of study. So in our present dissertation we propose to throw some lights on the socio-cultural development and cultural regeneration of this area. One more thing has to be mentioned in this connection. For our study, we used the spelling of words as usual what we get in different texts and reports.

#### **4. HYPOTHESIS**

This is not a conventional history of the regional, Local Vernacular Press and Association. In my research work I shall make a comprehensive and critical study about the Vernacular Press and different Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) of North Bengal as a creator and interpreter of the public opinion. In fact, from 1870, the year in which appears the first press publication (The Darjeeling News), and within next few years, when a series of publication appeared, some significant changes took place in social and political life of North Bengal. In this work I have narrated how the intelligentsia of North Bengal was responding and reacting to the forces of change, exploitation and injustice under the British colonial administration through the medias and Associations. So from this point of views this issue is going to be one of the major hypotheses of my research scheme.

Though geographically present North Bengal belonged to the radius of the state of West Bengal, the socio-cultural and political condition of this area was something different from the rest of West Bengal. The history of modern journalism in India began with the publication of 'Hickey's Gazette', alias

Calcutta General Advertiser on January, 1780. But in the context of North Bengal, we see that after one hundred years, (1870) a printing press was established at Darjeeling. Similarly a series of publications appeared in different districts of North Bengal and each had a separate background and identity. At the same time, the Associations of North Bengal also played a major role in mobilizing the public opinion. So the second hypothesis of my research is to throw new light on this issue which are not studied earlier by the predecessors.

The third research hypothesis is to draw a complete picture of national movement in press and in the activities of Associations (SABHA-SAMIMTI) in North Bengal. During the period of our study we see so many unknown persons and untouched incidents were there which were reflected in the contemporary news papers of North Bengal. These papers will also present a vivid account of the prosecution of the editors and journalists of the nationalist press by the colonial rulers. As a mark of public protest, the peasants and masses of North Bengal also participated in the nationalist movement against the colonial rulers. In this regard the response of the masses organized by different Associations of North Bengal which were reflected through medias are to be studied meticulously. The regional/local Associations of North Bengal (SABHA SAMITI) had also some significant contribution in mobilizing the socio-cultural reforms and popular protest movement against the colonial rulers. This is a unique feature of the social history of present North Bengal. This question is to be studied in proper socio-historical perspectives.

## **5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The first research question which greatly pre-occupies my mind is the question of North Bengal identity. Generally, the northern part of West Bengal is known as North Bengal. But is there any legal stand or decision in any form to identify this area as North Bengal? The question arises, how this area (Northern part of West Bengal) got a separate identity? This separate identity of North Bengal is no doubt an outcome of a long time socio-cultural and

political exercise. This research question has to be studied in some detail in my research work. It is fact that media and Associations in their own exercise have highlighted the issue of separate identity of North Bengal. Most important was the role of Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) which prepares the ground and demand for separate social, cultural and linguistic identity. We know, from the first half of the 19th century Bengal produced a huge number of Associations which had significant contribution in socio-cultural change. During the period of our study, we find a considerable number of Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) in North Bengal. For example we can mention the name of some associations/ organizations like-‘Dinajpur Bhatpara Unnatisadhani Sabha’, Malda Jela Sahitya Sammelan, Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha, Arya Natya Samaj, Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti, Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, NEBULA, Hillmen’s Association, Rajbansi Kshatriya Samiti, Hindu Mahasabha. Muslim League etc. With their effort and under the guidance of the intellectuals of this region a series of newspapers came out which highlighted the social and cultural features of North Bengal.

The second issue of my research question is the separate identity question of language, ethnicity, culture and the process of social change in this area of study. How the people of this area raised their voice for the recognition of their language culture etc. We have to draw our attention on the Associations of North Bengal which gathered public opinion and that were ventilated through the publications of North Bengal. As a result a separate identity in all spheres emerged and some social crisis and tensions have been generated. At the same time the publications from Calcutta also played some role in this question of separate identity of North Bengal. It is surprising that in the Calcutta Press publication we see many articles and news which highlights the North Bengal sentiment.

In recent times we all are aware of the fact that some social unrest and problem on identical question of North Bengal is going on in this region. Even some people are in favour of a separatist movement demanding the recognition

of their language, culture and separate geographical boundary. Whether it is justified or not that is not my question. But where lay the truth and root of their separate identical question have to be studied carefully in our research. I would like to trace the forces that operated behind such type of separate identity and regenerated a new socio-cultural dimension. In recent times this North Bengal gets much importance. Naturally the question arises why not so long. Perhaps, the Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) with their certain agenda have been found to be the operator of the sentiment of the common people. It may be mentioned here that a powerful social mobility had emerged and spread among a certain group of people of North Bengal particularly in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling district.

## **6. METHODOLOGY OR THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to prepare this dissertation I would like to follow different types of methodology. Materials from the West Bengal State Archives and National Archives, District Collectorate Record Office and also the oldest libraries and institutions will be collected and consulted very meticulously. It is unlikely that I will get sufficient materials on my study in the Archives and National Libraries. I am sure that for my study I shall get sufficient source materials in the Report on Native Newspapers. Being a study on North Bengal some important source should be available in the oldest libraries of the different districts of North Bengal. I think Cooch Behar State Library will help me much in this regard. I will have to make considerable use of local materials such as the records that has been present at the Collectorate Record Offices, contemporary weeklies and Journals published from North Bengal. Apart from all these, I will like to give much importance on oral history study. I will meet with many people as possible who were either active or close witness to the socio-cultural and political life of North Bengal in the first half of the twentieth century.

The existing conceptual framework for understanding our research proposal is generally derived from the conceptual frameworks of studying

conventional history. One single method is quite inadequate for various reasons. So in the process of our research, we will have to follow different type of research methodology to understand the questions concerned with our study. As our study is concerned with so many dimensions of history like social mobility, social transition, social awareness, cultural regeneration, growth of public opinion in a particular geographical area, our research methods frequently involve surveys, together with follow-up procedures like sampling, Scaling and various techniques of data processing. In a region, like present North Bengal these processes of data processing hardly find any place due to non-availability and non-preservation of contemporary evidences like Regional newspapers, journals, periodicals, proceedings and memorandum of the Associations. So we have to adopt a technique of combination of descriptive analysis and use of selective data for the purpose of our study. It is found that neither case study method nor survey method could be practicable options for the study of North Bengal. Hence our dependence on contemporary literature, Reports, Newspaper clips, proceedings are to some extent an essential rather compulsion. But this sets an obvious limits to our study. However, in our research method we used intensive interviews with relevant persons like political leaders, intellectuals, common people, local non-professional and non-academic writers (Loke Aitihāsik) to overcome the limitations to some extent.

Though our study is basically developed on qualitative data (Primary Source), it is quite impossible to clarify our problem in the frame of a specific method. So in various ways we have to use secondary sources. This is because, dictated by the imperatives of our methodological preference for an emergent analysis, we began our study with secondary research. This provided us the opportunity to grasp the contextual peculiarities and historicity on the socio-cultural movement like ours. We undertook the collection of data pertaining to the origin, objectives, issues, demands and strategies of the movements under study. Further, we proceeded to the study of the responses to the movement from the rulers and civil society. Finally we restored to archival research. This exercise helped us to design a broad framework for the analysis of the socio-

cultural and political movements in Bengal in general and the movements in North Bengal under study in particular.

With these sources proper the present work is proposed to study the different aspects of 'North Bengal' and the socio-cultural developments of this region within the period of our study. To this end, the whole study has been organized into eight chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The first chapter entitled 'Geo-Historical profile of North Bengal' connected with a brief historical background of this region. This chapter will attempt to give a description of that geographical area of North Bengal which have changed its area and shape in course of times. The second chapter will focus on the background of the Press-publications and Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) in North Bengal giving some highlights on the origin, growth and development of Press and Associations in general. Next there is a chapter in which discussion will be made on some important publications and Associations and their role in the contemporary socio-cultural and political movements in North Bengal. The fourth chapter will make a brief study on the growth and development of some Non-Bengali Vernacular Press and Associations in Non-Bengali dominated areas of North Bengal i.e., Darjeeling hill areas. In this chapter mention must have to be made about some English papers also. As this area had some different ethno-linguistic background, quite naturally they performed their literary and intellectual activities through the press and Associations which had some Non-Bengali origin. Chapter five makes a brief study about the contribution of the Regional Vernacular Press and the Associations in the freedom movement of our country in the regional level. This chapter will also attempt to discuss on political awareness of this region through the local Regional press and Associations along with the all India Dailies within the broad canvas of national political environment. This chapter followed by another chapter on Regional Associations (SABHA-SAMITI). Here an attempt has been made to discuss the various activities of the regional associations in the field of socio-cultural development of North Bengal. Here we will see how regional organizations/ Associations influenced the interested people of this

area for their socio-cultural development. The next chapter (VIIth chapter) deals with a unique question i.e., Emergence of North Bengal question. Though the North Bengal question has got some psychological as well as historical background, it is very much relevant considering the present socio-cultural and political situation. How the North Bengal question emerged through the medias will be discussed in the course of our study in this chapter. In the last chapter (chapter VIII) we have discussed the problems connected with emergence of Ethnic, Linguistic and Cultural identity question. Though identity question is not the main theme of our study, somehow it has raised as an aftermath of our study due to ethnic, linguistic and cultural background of this region. Apart from the theoretical framework of identity question, it will be discussed simply as a historical evolution and its analysis.

Conclusion of the thesis contains the summary of findings of the study. Without any elaboration it will just mention some important facts which are already discussed in the course of our study in different chapter.

The appendices contain the lists of some rare documents like photocopies of some old newspapers, journals and periodicals, leaflets, news items and heading of some articles which were preserved in the archives and old libraries. Some documents are also collected from individual preservations of some distinguish personalities of the different districts of North Bengal.

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GEO-HISTORICAL PROFILE OF NORTH BENGAL.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Before we enter into the detail study of our problem, we have to determine the area or field over which our investigation is concerned. This chapter will attempt to give a description of that geographical area of North Bengal which had been changed its area and shape in course of times. Even during the period of our study from 1869 to 1969, the geographical boundary of North Bengal had been changed due to the circumstances created by the colonial rulers. The chief aim of this chapter is to analyse the nature of the changes brought about in the area and the history of North Bengal in general. It is admitted by so many scholars in different volumes that history of North Bengal in general are very rich and glorious. From ancient times, it had a tradition, and of course, sometimes it was the central place in the context of the history of whole of Bengal. During ancient period we find mention of the capital city of Bengal was situated in North Bengal. During the later Gupta Period and later on under Sasanka, North Bengal played a remarkable role not only in the history of Bengal, at the same time in the context of the history of North-East India and Northern India also.

In this connection it has to be mentioned that the North Eastern region of India situated in one of the greatest migration routes of mankind<sup>1</sup> from the time immemorial, had been the inhabitant of population which perhaps represent the admixture of all most all the racial strains, like Aryāns, the Alpine-Iranian and the Tibeto-Burman, later being the most numerous and predominant. They had migrated to settle in the region with their own culture, language and religion as groups of Non-Hindu affiliation.<sup>2</sup> In the context of our present study on North Bengal and its socio-cultural history, it is found that this region is said to have inhabited by the Non-Aryān tribes having Mongoloid traits and features. Accordingly we find some areas of our study like Ccoch Behar (presently a district of North Bengal) which is admitted as the head

quarters of those tribes who were called indiscriminately Koch, Rajbansis and Pali.<sup>3</sup> During the medieval period, we find that the region was similarly important in the history of Bengal. From early medieval period to the advent of the colonial rulers, Bengal (particularly North Bengal) were always in the main stream of history. Considering all those things, it may be assumed that the geographical area, which is called North Bengal, had a glorious past. It is quite known that sometimes this North Bengal with its geographical and historical prominence highlighted various aspects on the history and archaeology of Bengal.

Before studying history of North Bengal, it seems desirable to know the geography and geographical boundary of this area. North Bengal, at present a narrow area of land at a short distance from the Chinese border connects to two divisions of India as a vital point in the bottom of the Himalayas. Its geographical proximity with Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the North, Assam and Bangladesh in the east, and Bangladesh, West Bengal and Bihar in the South and West has provided her a special place of strategic importance.<sup>4</sup> Since long past, North Bengal has been serving as the eastern gateway for the passage and communication of people, commodities and ideas between the Indian Sub-continent in the West and Assam, Burma, China and other parts of South-East Asia in the East. This area is situated in the centre of the network connecting different civilization.<sup>5</sup>

## **1.2 NORTH BENGAL DURING THE VEDIC AND PURANIC AGE**

During the Later Vedic age, we find mention of some places the name of which are demarcated with some areas of present North Bengal. At that time North Bengal was probably known as 'PRĀGJYOTISHA-KĀMARŪPA' and a vast adjoining Himalayan regions.<sup>6</sup> We know that in the ancient divisions of India North Bengal, the area of our study was known in the name of 'PAUNDRA or PUNDRA.'<sup>7</sup> As regards the geographical boundary of present North Bengal in ancient Bengal, we have further testimony of the

'RAJATARANGINI' that PUNDRAVARDHANA or chief town of PUNDRA was the capital of the king of GAUḌA.<sup>8</sup>

Present North Bengal, a geographical boundary of six districts over which our study is concerned (viz., Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda) have so many historical dimensions in respect of its ethnicity, culture, language and in economic and social aspects. When discussing about its past geographical and historical importance we find a series of information about its importance both in ancient and medieval period. Dr. N. N. Acharya in an article, "New Light on North Bengal from the records of Assam History" have mentioned very specifically about the geographical boundary and historical importance of this area.<sup>9</sup> In the ancient literature we also come across a few other place-names and the names of the people associated with North Bengal such as Kirātas (hill people of North Bengal) the Paliyas (Rajvansis of North Bengal), and Kachchha (CoochBehar).<sup>10</sup> Some other places in this area have also important impact on the history and culture of North Bengal some of the places were Kingdom of Matsya located in the West of the river Koratoya,<sup>11</sup> Vijoya Pura, which is situated on the North of the Purnia District and Gorkha King of Nepal conquered it.<sup>12</sup> Madra and Salya Kingdoms are situated on the North-West of Kamarupa and at the bottom of the Bhutan hills.<sup>13</sup> From the period of Mahabharata we have also some reference of North Bengal. There is mention of twenty-three Princes of the family of Bhagadatta, who continued to govern after his death in the Kurukshetra war. It is also known to us that those princes ruled over Bengal including its northern part.<sup>14</sup> We have further reference about Bhagadatta, the king of PRĀGJYOTISA, sided with the KAURAVAS along with the other eastern countries-ANGA, VANGA and PUNDRA "Practically the whole east supported them".<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in this context we find the mention that the people led by BHAGADATTA were the CINAS and the KIRĀTAS.<sup>16</sup> About the Kiratas, we have so many references in which we will get some relevance with our study on North Bengal. From the 'MAHABHARATA', we came to know that the kiratas are mountain

dwellers.<sup>17</sup> Apart from these, we have so many information about the kiratas, the inhabitants of this region (North Bengal). But all these things are not required to be discussed for our purpose. However, to draw a Geo-Historical profile of present North Bengal we will have to go through so many evidences to get a clear picture on the area of our study.

### 1.3 NORTH BENGAL DURING THE ANCIENT AND EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

According to our above discussions, we see that during the early historical period we come across a few geographical names, which signified the territories hardly covered the entire area of the boundary of North Bengal.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the territories beyond the Pundravardhanabhukti appear to have been ignored by the people in general, although the place was not altogether unknown to them as we learn from the references to the temples of Śveta Varāhasvāmin and Kokāmukhasvāmin situated in the Himalayas (Himavachehikhare), in the Damodarpur Inscriptions of the 5th century A.D.<sup>19</sup> When we to know trying to study the socio-cultural, and political history of North Bengal, we have to know its past. It is fact that North Bengal came into limelight of history since the days of the emergence of the city in Pudanagala (Pundranagara) on the bank of the Karatoya in c. 3rd century B.C. We had to wait for a few centuries more dawn to the age of Guptas to have a clearer picture about the socio-economic life of the people of this region.<sup>20</sup> For our study, very little is known of Bengal during the period between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Gupta Empire, i.e., approximately between 200 B.C. and 350 A. D. There is, however, no doubt that Bengal now occupied a definite place in the political and economic map of India. This is proved by the accounts of the Greek and Roman writers of the period. Pliny, a great Roman scholar of the first century A.D. refers to the Gangarides through whose country flowed the Ganges, in the final part of its course. The Gangaradai are also mentioned by the great Roman poet Virgil in his 'GEORGICS' (about 30 B.C.)<sup>21</sup> We also get some information from the 'PERIPLUS OF THE

ERYTHRAEAN SEA' written by a Greek sailor who made a Voyage along the Western and Eastern Coasts of India. His date is not definitely known, but is usually placed in the second half of the first century A.D. Another Greek writer, Ptolemy, who flourished in the first half of the Second century A.D., refers to the five mouths of the Ganges and adds that "All the country about the mouths of the Ganges is occupied by the Gangaridai". And the king lived in the city of Gange.<sup>22</sup> Gangaridai, denoting the people of Bengal, were very powerful in the fourth century B.C. and the above references indicate that their name and fame were known even to the remote countries of the west during the next five hundred years.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding the prominence of North Bengal during the post Maurya period nothing can be said definitely. Kushāna coins have been discovered in large number both in North and South Bengal. But this does not necessarily indicate the suzerainty of the kushānas over Bengal.<sup>24</sup> More definite information is available for the political condition of Bengal at the beginning of the fourth century A.D.

According to R.C. Majumdar, Bengal was then divided into a number of states, one of which was Samatata, comprising the delta of the Ganges to the east of the present Hooghly river. Another was probably DAVĀKA which lay between Samatata and KĀMARŪPA (roughly denoting present Assam, a portion of which is still called by that name). The exact location of Davāka cannot be determined. Fleet looked upon it as the ancient name of Dacca, while V.A. Smith located it in 'NORTH BENGAL'. The existence of a third State, about the same time may be inferred from some records engraved on the Susunia Hills about twelve miles to the North-West of the town of Bankura in West Bengal which mention the name of Maharaja Chandravarman.<sup>25</sup>

It is an established fact that the foundation of the Gupta Empire was a landmark in the history of ancient Indian history. The rise of the Imperial Guptas put an end to this state of things, and gradually whole of Bengal was conquered by them. There are some controversy regarding the early home land

of the imperial Guptas Dr. D. C. Ganguly, however, propounded the view that the early home of the Imperial Guptas is to be located in Murshidabad, Bengal, and not in Magadha<sup>26</sup> (IHQ vol. XIV). What ever it may be, that is not our concern. But when we are to discuss about the Geo-historical position of North Bengal it must be mentioned that during the Guptas, we find the mention of North Bengal which was included within the Gupta Empire. The view is based on the tradition recorded by I-Tsing that Maharājā Sri.Gupta built a temple for the Chines priests and granted twenty four villages as an endowment for its maintenance. This temple was known as the 'Temple of China', was situated close to a Sanctuary called Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no<sup>27</sup> which was about forty YOJANAS to the east of Nālandā following the course of Ganges. Considering the views of Allan and Fleet Dr. Ganguly concludes that the original home of the Guptas was in Bengal and not in Magadha. Dr. Ganguly located it definitely at Murshidabad as its distance from Nālandā is about forty Yojonas (equivalent to 240 English miles). But Dr. Sudhakar Chattopadhaya has argued that as the Chinese pilgrim first went to the Ganges from Nālandā and then voyaged down the river the distance from Nālandā to the Ganges Should be included in the total and this takes us to 'MALDA' in Varendra.<sup>28</sup> Due to some controversy we may not accept the view that the early home of the Imperial Guptas is to be located in Mushidabad, Bengal, and not in Magadha, it is valid presumption that the parts of North Bengal were included in the territory ruled over by the founder of the Gupta family. During the post-Gupta period, the reign of 'Gourādhipa Sasanka' was the most significant incident in the history of Bengal. It is an accepted view that Sasanka occupies a prominent place in the history of Bengal. Unlike the three kings in lower Bengal who preceded him, he is more than a mere name to us. He is also the known king of Bengal who extended his suzerainty over territories far beyond the geographical boundary of that province. What we know definitely about Sasanka is that some time before 606 A.D. Sasanka became the king of Gauḍa with his capital at 'Karnasuvarna'. There is hardly any doubt that both Northern and Western Bengal were included in the domains of Sasanka. We have further reference

about the geographical boundary of Sasanka's domain. Hiuen Tsang who travelled in Bengal about 638 A.D. Shortly after the death of Sasanka, mentions, besides Kajangala (territory round Rajmahal) four kingdoms in Bengal proper viz., Pundravardhana, Karnasuvarna, Samatata and Tamralipti. The first two undoubtedly denote to the two component parts of Sasanka's Kingdom viz. North Bengal and northern parts of Western Bengal.

It is mentioned that the capital city of his Kingdom was Karnasuvarna, presently situated in Murshidabad district. Some historians have described that Sasanka was the first son of the soil who was ruling over both northern and southern parts of Bengal. If this view is accepted, then it is true that during the 7th century A.D. North Bengal had an important impact on the history and culture of Bengal. After Sasanka's death anarchy and confusion was prevailing in Bengal both in Southern and Northern parts. The death of Sasanka proved to be a political disaster of the first magnitude. Not only were the dreams of a far-flung Gauda Empire rudely shattered, but within a few years his kingdom, including the Capital City Karnasuvarna passed into the hands of Bhās-Karavarman the hostile king of Kāmarūpa.

After the foundation of the Pāla dynasty in the middle of the 8th century A.D. this anarchy came to an end. The rule of the Pāla dynasty from about the middle of the eighth century A.D. marks a new epoch in the history of Bengal. It is interesting that this dynasty with so many political and cultural dimensions continued to rule nearly 400 years. During the rule of the Pala rulers, North Bengal the area of our study had a very important cultural background. Immediately after the fall of the Pāla dynasty, another dynasty, the Senas came into prominence to rule this area.

During the Pāla period, we have so many references that North Bengal was included within the frame of Pāla Empire. In the first place 'RAMACHARITA' definitely refers to Varendri as the 'JANAKABHUH' or ancestral home of the pālas. We should of course remember that Varendra (also called Varendri) denoted the northern, and the Vaiṅga, the eastern and

southeastern part of Bengal. The evidences of Ramacharita and Gwalior inscription might therefore appear to be contradictory, unless we regard Vaiṅga as denoting the whole Province of Bengal. Such an use of the name Vaiṅgacan can, however, be justified or explained only on the supposition that the pālas were originally the rulers of vanga, and the name came to be applied to the rest of the province. Whatever may have been the limits of the kingdom of Gopala it is reasonable to hold that he consolidated his authority over the whole of Bengal.

The Sena dynasty, that ruled in Bengal after the Pālas, appears from the official records that they had included North Bengal within their Empire. It is evident that Lord of Gauda who according to Deopārā Inscription, fled before Vijayasena, was almost certainly Mahanandapala whose dominions in Bengal were at that time confined to North Bengal. That Inscription records the creation by Vijoyasena of the magnificent temple of Pradyumnesvara whose ruins now lie on the bank of an enormous tank at Deopāra about seven miles to the west of the town of Rajshahi. This proves the effective conquest, by Vijoyasena of at least a part of North Bengal. It was perhaps in connection with this expedition to North Bengal that Vijoyasena came into conflict with Vardhana, king of Kausāmbī and defeated him. It is very probable that Vijoyasena's young grandson, Lakshmanasena, took part in this expedition in North Bengal.<sup>29</sup> Hence, from this discussion it appears that during the Sena period North Bengal had some importance in the geographical jurisdiction of the Sena kingdom. As already noted above, Lakshmanasena's campaign against Gauda, Kamaruipa and Kalinga might refer to expeditions which he led or accompanied during the reign of his grandfather.

After the Sena rule Bengal witnessed a new experience due to the sudden attack of the Turks. The only detailed account of the Muslim invasion of Bengal during the reign of Lakshmanasena is 'TABAQĀT-I-NĀSIRĪ',<sup>30</sup> a historical work composed by Maulānā Minhaj-ud-din Abū umar-i-usmān. Without any detailed discussion about the muslim invasion in Bengal it may be

mentioned here that when Baktiyar khilji arrived at Lakhnawati, (13th century A.D.) the power of the Sena rulers collapsed and a new chapter was opened in the history of Bengal and North Bengal in particular.

#### 1.4 NORTH BENGAL DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

When Baktiyar Khilji became successful in establishing the power of the Delhi Sultanate in Bengal, the history and culture of this area opened a new chapter. During the subsequent period the Sultans of Bengal established the cities (towns) of Gour and Pandua which had created tremendous impact on the life and Various activities of the people of this region, As we are making a study on Present North Bengal, it may be mentioned here that these cities of Gour and Pandua are presently situated in Malda district which in within the geographical jurisdiction of our area of study. With the advent of Islam in this area and the contact and interaction of an alien culture with the existing system in all respect gave birth of a change and created new ideas which are of far reaching consequences. When we are to sketch in brief the historical outlines of North Bengal which is required to be thoroughly investigated we find that this area had vast geographical boundary which had been changed in course of different times.

#### 1.5 NORTH BENGAL IN THE MODERN AGES.

So long we have described and highlighted the geographical profile and its historical importance from ancient period to early medieval and medieval period. During medieval Period, the history of Bengal as well as North Bengal have been studied elaborately in different Volumes. But in modern times the geo-historical profiles of North Bengal to some extent in rather difficult due to a series of factors. Before the partition of 1947 North Bengal had a vast area some parts of which at present are lying with Bangladesh, now an independent state. At that time the area of North Bengal was confined within the Northern side of the Ganges and the western side of the River Brahmaputra.<sup>31</sup> The area of North Bengal at that time covered the area of undivided Rajshahi Division, (Dinajpur, Pabna, Bagura, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Jalpaiguri, Maldah, Darjeeling)

Cooch Behar Princely state, some parts of Purnia District in Bihar, some parts of undivided Nadia District. Moreover the Districts of Goalpara and Kamarupa (partly) of Assam were situated within the geographical jurisdiction of North Bengal.<sup>32</sup> Akshay Kumar Maitreya have mentioned that the Rajshahi Division is known as North Bengal comprising the Districts of Rajshahi, Maldah, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Bagura and Pabna. It is quite evident that some places of the above mentioned districts are at present lying in Bangladesh. But at the same time, according to Akshay Kumar Maitreya, we have an outline about the geographical area of North Bengal. Of course it was the picture of North Bengal during the pre-partition era, (1947) and in undivided Bengal. At that time, the study of the history of North Bengal, its Socio-Cultural practice gained much importance in the context of the history of Bengal with the sincere effort of some contemporary Scholars. In the pre-partition era, we have a good number of Institutions and Associations which were engaged in the socio-cultural study mainly to study the history and archaeology of this region. For instance, we can mention the name of 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD' which was established in Rangpur as a branch of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad in the year 1905.<sup>33</sup> About this institution we find the reference that, "Accordingly on 11th Baishak, 1312 B.S, (1905) Rangpur Sahitya parishad started with 28 members as a branch of Bangiya Sahitya parishad".<sup>34</sup> Perhaps it was the first branch of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad which was established in North Behgal (Rangpur). For academic and intellectual exercise, Rangpur Sahitya Parishad had a distinction and it started to publish a PATRIKA (journal) as its mouthpiece. The 'Rangpur Sahitya parishad patrika' with its outstanding academic exercise marked a significant role in the study on North Bengal. It is stated that 'As a Branch of Bangiya Sahitya parishad this institution was inaugurated with the avowed object of (i) making archaeological discoveries in North Bengal and Assam.'<sup>35</sup> This Institution, (Rangpur Sahitya Parishad) from its inception was very much interested with literary activities and due to this interest the Parishad arranged a literary conference in the name of "UTTARBANGA SAHITYA SAMMILAN".<sup>36</sup> About this literary conference

it is mentioned that, "It was in the 3rd year of Parishad's existence the first literary conference met under the Presidentship of Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Babu Surendea Chandra Roy Chaudhury, the secretary of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad, has appointed as permanent Secretary of North Bengal literary conference.<sup>37</sup> The Parishad had a special interest on literature, and due to this interest the Parishad arranged 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' the first literary conference in North Bengal. The Rangpur Sahitya Parishad was an important institution, which was devoted on research activities especially on history and archaeology of North Bengal. If we quote some relevant portion from the editorial of the PATRIKA, it will be evident that the prime motive of the Parishad's Patrika was to explore on the history and archaeology of North Bengal.

"Half Portion of the Patrika will contain the folk literature, archaeology, different historical facts and events and the details of the different rare books. Another half portion will publish the rare and unpublished books, description about the authors of the books of North Bengal and book review".<sup>38</sup>

This organization was no doubt a research institute which may be entitled to the distinction of having regular publication on Socio-cultural history of undivided North Bengal. It may be mentioned in this connection that the study of history and socio-cultural aspects of this area have started lately. Some scholars, like Akshay Kumar Maitreya took a special care on research and publication through this organization. In this connection mention may be made that some of the issues of this Patrika published so many important articles on linguistics, ethnology, history and cultural identity of the people of North Bengal. Akshay Kumar Maitreya wrote an article, entitled "Uttarbanger Puratatanusandhyane" which was a pioneer work on the archaeology of North Bengal.<sup>39</sup> So long, any article or book had not been published particularly on North Bengal. From this work of Akshay Kumar Maitreya it became evident that historically the area of North Bengal can attract the attention of the scholars. At the same time so many unknown information came into being and

enriched the history and culture of North Bengal. Similarly, during the same year, another article was published by Hamed Ali, entitled, "Uttarbanger Musalman Sahitya".<sup>40</sup> It was a study of new taste and identity which is evident from the title of the article. From medieval period particularly from the time of the invasion of Baktiyar Khilji this area of North Bengal went under the Muslim rulers and that rule had been continued up to the coming of the British. During this long period under Muslim rule some literary activities of the Muslims of this area were developed. Hamed Ali, in his article have highlighted on this new dimension of Muslim literature. The writers in this Patrika did concentrate their writings not only on socio-cultural field but on other sides also. For instance we can mention that Keshablal Basu wrote an article, titled "Uttarbanger Swastha Tatyanusandhan". It was published in three parts in the Sahitya Parishad Patrika.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from Rangpur Sahitya Parisad, another institution was established in Rajshahi for the cause of North Bengal study. It was 'VARENDRA ANUSANDHAN SAMITI' which was established in 1910 in Rajshahi. Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray and Akshay Kumar Maitreya were the most interested scholars who with their intimate and sincere efforts founded this organization to cultivate the socio-cultural and historical study of this region.<sup>42</sup> Another interesting thing is that the selection of the name of the institution is also significant. Probably, the very word 'Varendra' signifies the glory of the past of this region (see chapter 6.4). Whatever it may be we can mention one thing that before the establishment of the 'Rangpur Sahitya Parishad' in 1905, and the 'Varndra Anusandhan Samiti' in 1910, no institution or organization had any interest or activity on the study of this area. In fact though the Bangio Sahitya Parishad was working in broad sense about literature, language, history, archaeology, culture, and so many things, but it was in wide perspective. In this connection this two institutions had a special character to emphasis on the study of North Bengal. As the head of these two institutions Akshay Kumar Maitreya proved his scholarship though he was a lawyer by profession at the Rajshahi court.<sup>43</sup> His activities and fame was by far the greater

for his historical research since he was a pioneer researcher on the history of Bengal on scientific way. Before the establishment of this institute, Akshay Kumar, due to his personal interest on history and culture of Bengal started to publish a quarterly journal under the title 'Aitihāsik Citra' in 1899.<sup>44</sup> As a distinguish scholar, Akshaya Kumar was full of glory throughout his life. He had a series of publications and his main aim was the collection and preservation of antiquities as well as encouraging the study of the history and culture of Bengal in general, but North Bengal in particular. In his writings, the study of North Bengal have mostly highlighted. Such as we can mention here that a lecture was delivered by Akshay Kumar in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, in 1927, under the title, 'The ancient Monuments of Varendra'. It was edited by K. C. Sarkar and published in 1949.<sup>45</sup>

#### 1.6 CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF NORTH BENGAL.

From the above discussions it is clear that the territory 'North Bengal' in undivided Bengal had a glorious past/ history. Now let us have some idea about the cultural background of this region. From the archaeological evidences discovered in different places of the Brahmaputra Valley prove that most of the sculptures, temples, coins, inscriptions etc. were the works of the Hindu people and patronized by the Hindu royal authorities.<sup>46</sup> Apart from this the icons of the Buddhist deities preserved in the Assam state Museum shows that in the medieval period Tāntrik Buddhism could have some hold in the Brahmmaputra Valley. In the Brahmma Putra Valley two rock-cut Jaina Sculpture have been found and it prove that the Jaina faith existed here. These Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina people who settled in Brahmmaputra Valley<sup>47</sup> and spread their culture in this region must have come from the west i.e. region located to the immediate west of prāgjyotisha, Kāmarūpa or Assam. We know that the immediate west of the present state of Assam stands 'North Bengal' and a part of Bangladesh. So, it is not unlikely that these Bhuddhist, Jaina and Hindu faith were predominantly prevailing in this region of North Bengal. Dr. D. C. Sircar in his study on Mahasthan inscription pointed out that both North Bengal and North

Bangladesh were included in the Mauryan Empire.<sup>48</sup> After the decline of the Mauryas so many dynasties ruled India among which the Kusanas were the most famous (before the emergence of the Gupta rule). On the basis of the evidences, specially the discovered coins belonging to the Kushāna Empire also included this region.<sup>49</sup> It is evident and accepted by the scholars that the Mauryas and Kushānas were perhaps best known for their Buddhist religious faith and cultural activities. So it can be said that Buddhism or Buddhist religious faith could have some hold among the people who settled in this region.

During the Gupta rule Pundravardhana or North Bengal was included in the Gupta Empire from the 4th century to 6th century A.D. So many scholars have admitted it and now it is a well-known fact. It is said that, during the days of Kumara Gupta I North Bengal formed an important administrative division.<sup>50</sup> At that time, if we look into the religion and cultural activities of this North Bengal region, it will be evident, that a change in the cultural field of North Bengal came into being. At that time one very important thing has been mentioned by Dr .D. C. Sircar that, the *prāggyotisha* or *Kām rūpa* Kingdom was separated from the Pundravardhana territory in the west only by the river 'KARATOYA'. About the origin of the Guptas, some scholars have made an attempt to locate the original home of the Imperial Guptas some where in North Bengal.<sup>51</sup> Reference may be made that I-tsing, the Chinese pilgrim has stated that 'Mahārāja Sri-Gupta built a temple for the Chinese priests and granted twenty-four villages as an endowment for maintenance. Quite naturally the question may raise that where this temple was located. By measuring the distance, on the basis of the Survey of India Maps, it has been suggested that Sri. Gupta, the first known member of the Gupta dynasty, who made an endowment of twenty-four villages for the maintenance of the 'temple of China' situated near Mrigasthavana (Mi-li-Kia-Si-Kia-Po-no) stūpa in Malda.<sup>52</sup> Though, in the later centuries, particularly during the 13th century, we find in the *Taboqiāt-I-Nasiri*, that it might have been situated in Rajmahal, just opposite to Malda. What ever may be the location of the Chinese temple, either

in North Bengal or else where, the fact is that the Gupta Emperor (Maharaja Sri-Gupta), no doubt, had some soft corner and respect to Buddhism.<sup>53</sup> Probably for this reason he personally patronized the cause of Buddhist religion by granting twenty-four villages to a Buddhist temple (Temple of China), constructed for the cause of the Chinese priests.<sup>54</sup>

After the Guptas, the break up of the Gupta Empire followed by inevitable results. The provinces and feudatory states declared their independence and the whole of North India were divided into a number of independent states. In the home provinces of the Gupta we find a long line of rulers and the family is known in history as the 'later Guptas of Magadha'.<sup>55</sup> It was after the reign of Skandagupta that decline of the Gupta Empire became extinct. Inevitably the Gupta Empire broke up and on ramified parts different rulers related to Guptas were ruling. Although the Gupta Empire broke up small families related to the Guptas were found to rule in some parts as local rulers up to the eight century A.D. Remover of strong rule at the centre, the distinctly after Budhagupta brought the centrifugal forces in action and Kathirowar, Bundelkhand, North Bengal became virtually independent.<sup>56</sup> With the growing weakness of the central authority due to struggle for succession among the princes of royal blood and personal inefficiency of the rulers, the feudatories of the Gupta Empire began to raise the standard of rebellion and eventually tore off their local areas from the Gupta Empire.<sup>57</sup> During the rule of the later Guptas, about 525 A.D. an independent kingdom was established in Vaiñga i.e., East and South-Bengal, but North Bengal still remained under Guptas, when the Gupta Empire fell, Gouda comprising west and probably also North Bengal asserted independence, but were defeated by the Maukharis. Subsequently, half of a century later the throne of Gouda was occupied by Śasāñka. Bana and Hiuen T-Sang have described Śasāñka as the king of Gauda and he settled his capital at Karnasubarna (near Murshidabad) and probably soon made himself master of the whole of Bengal. So during this period, we also find that there were some political and cultural identity of North Bengal under the independent rule of Śasāñka. What ever may be the geographical boundary of present North

Bengal, or the historical background of this region, it is simply to have an idea about the area of our study. Our major objectives are something different. In this course of study there are so many ups and downs as a result of which we find an area, northern part of present West Bengal which is popularly known as 'North Bengal'.

## 1.7 NORTH BENGAL DURING THE POST PARTITION ERA

In the initial stage, immediately after the great partition of 1947, the term 'North Bengal' was a vague one. From that time this term 'North Bengal' took the shape of a verbal geographical area which had no official recognition. But its socio-political and cultural character remained something different which did not come to be highlighted. Though North Bengal is a particular geographical area in the northern part of West Bengal comprising five districts (presently six districts) of the northern part of West Bengal, still its remarkable Socio-cultural feature, and identity cannot be denied. During recent times so many Scholars of different fields are trying their best to explore and highlight the issues of North Bengal. Even some measures have already been taken from the part of administration (Government) considering its importance. But the root of this issues and problems are yet to be investigated and emphasis should be given properly on the particular points which are related with socio-cultural practices and identity question.<sup>58</sup>

So far we have discussed about the geo-historical profile of North Bengal right from ancient period to the colonial rule. From this discussion it is understood that some etymological and socio-cultural identity during the period of our study (1869-1969) are inherent. It is evident that North Bengal is the meeting place of different group of peoples with different cultural identities. The Aryans, the Non Aryans, Dravidians, and the Mongoloid peoples all have settled here. Moreover, North Bengal may be called to be a part of 'KIRĀTA-BHŪMI'.<sup>59</sup> The Kirātas or the Mongoloids are the early settlers of North Bengal. In the ethnological framework of North Bengal we see that, the Koches, the Bodo-Kacharis, the Meches, the Garos, the Totas, the Jaldas, the

Limbus, the Kirantis, the Lepchas are all of Mongoloid origin and the early settlers of North Bengal.<sup>60</sup> But one thing we observe that the Rajbansis are the dominant among the early settlers of North Bengal. Among the different group of people, it is evident that the Rajbansi people were majority in this region. They are found in good number in all the five (presently six) districts (Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, North and South Dinajpur, Darjeeling plain and Malda). We have sufficient documents and evidences in favour of the above statement. But at the same time one interesting fact which has to be studied, that from early period, people of different ethnical groups and cultures have settled in North Bengal. Their social habits, social structure cultural practices, always maintained a general unity and harmony. In our study from ancient times to pre-colonial period we don't have any major social and cultural troubles in respect of their language and culture like present days. But later on due to several factors like financial exploitation, and poverty of the common people, we get some incidents of troubles of agrarian and peasant discontent. We find a series of agrarian and peasant revolt in Bengal during the colonial period.<sup>61</sup> Immediately before the partition of 1947 we observe peasant revolt like 'TEBHAGA MOVEMENT' specially in present North Bengal region.<sup>62</sup> After independence, in North Bengal Changes happened to come on different aspects. With the passage of time, tremendous changes have taken place in this region (North Bengal) in respect of Socio-economic, political and cultural fields. During the period of our study North Bengal came into limelight in respect of socio-cultural and political tensions. In the last three decades, the entire region and its people have attracted and held the attention of the rest of the country. No doubt, it must have definite reasons which are going to draw due importance. While studying about the Geo-historical profile of North Bengal we have simply observed its traditional-history and geographical boundary in course of different periods. This is just to have the traditional dimensions of history and culture of present North Bengal. But he period of our study is 1869 to 1969 of which the major part was within the framework of British India and the rest in Independent India. During the period of the one

hundred years North Bengal have witnessed series of incidents in respect of political and social movements. It is fact that both in pre-partition and Post-partition period so many unrest had taken place in course of times. Those unrests which took place in North Bengal were sometimes time-specific, geo-specific as well as ethno-specific and they had an important impact on our socio-cultural and political history. More specifically it may be mentioned that a series of Socio-political movements with certain aims and objectives have brought some change in our socio-cultural atmosphere. It is really a matter of great surprise that most of the post-colonial problems in West Bengal were originated in present North Bengal. For example, we can refer some cases like Cooch Behar Merger question with West Bengal, the Berubari question of Jalpaiguri Enclave or Chitmahals, the Naxalite Movement in Darjeeling District and the movement of some hill community in Darjeeling. The nature and importance of these movements were so grave that for all these incidents the name and fame of North Bengal has taken place in the national and international atlas. In this situation what we tend to ignore is the enormous potential of such incidents for bringing about desired change in the order.

So long we have discussed on various aspects related to North Bengal, the area of our study. Now we would like to turn our eyes on a very important issue which is the main theme of our study i.e., publication of press and formation of Association. It is evident that like greater Bengal or undivided Bengal there emerged a good number of press publications and Associations in North Bengal. In Socio-political and cultural activities, these publications and Associations had a great role to play In fact these publications and formation of Associations were practically the reflection of society, polity, economy and cultural practices of North Bengal. In fact these were the mirrors which constantly highlighted most of the major socio-political problems.

In this perspective, we have a series of theoretical framework. 'Russick' in his 'Social and political philosophy' pointed out about the issue of man's relations with the society. According to him, it is the society, that shapes man

as a social being: in social life man attains complete development of his personalities. There is no such thing as 'merely an individual experience': there is no idea of man divorced from his social circumstances. Man minus his social surroundings is a misnomer, he attains some meaning only as a member of the society.<sup>63</sup>

Theoretically it can be said that social problem come out due to many reasons. Individual problem is one which affects one individual or a small group. On the other hand a public social issue is one which affects the society as a whole, or the larger part of society. At the same time social problem may change with the passage of time. What was not considered a social problem a few decades back might become a crucial social problem after two decades. For example, the population explosion in our country was not viewed as a social problem up to the late 1940's of the twentieth century but from the early 1950's it has come to be perceived as a very crucial problem. Social change as well as the political change creates new conditions in which an issue comes to be identified as a social problem. Similarly, youth unrest in India was not a problem up to 1940s but in the 1950s and the 1960s it became a problem and in the 1970s and the 1980s it became a very serious one and continues to be so in the 1990s.<sup>64</sup> These are not quite fit to study the social and political problems of present North Bengal. Some problems of distinct character emerged in North Bengal of which some were in the colonial period and the other after independence. However, it is a very persistent question, that why these crisis came out. There is no doubt that after 1950 a new political dimension emerged in North Bengal the root of which required to be studied. The demographic character, social structure, political environment, cultural identity question, the racial stratification, backwardness of the area (North Bengal) in respect of communication, education, treatment and other essential services, all these things will contribute sufficiently for the socio-cultural and political movements in North Bengal.

We have studied elaborately on the diversity of the Geo-historical profile of North Bengal of which six districts will comprise the field of our present study. In these six districts the most important district of North Bengal is Jalpaiguri district which has a distinction in the field of Social, cultural and political movements from the Colonial period to the recent times. Specially, in the field of political activities the Associations/organizations and Vernacular press of Jalpaiguri made a significant contribution in the growth of national political regeneration. It is surprising that, within one year of the establishment of Indian National Congress, Jalpaiguri got contact with this all India political organization.<sup>65</sup> For example, it may be noted that at the second annual session of the India National Congress in the year 1886, Jalpaiguri district was represented there by participating the congress session.<sup>66</sup> Without any communication with the all India political organization and without any organized political force of the district this participation in the session of the Congress could not have been possible. In this context the elites played an important role. In the colonial context of the British Indian Nationalist politics this has often been viewed at least basically as a reflection of western educated people.<sup>67</sup> This western educated people or the elites were always active for constitutional reforms and competition and conflict among what have been considered as elites groups for having an increasing share in the formal political institution under the British Raj.<sup>68</sup> But politics is viewed here as an endeavour on the part of the people to bring about a transformation in their social economic and political situation. We have a series of examples of socio-political movements not only in the district of Jalpaiguri, but more or less in all the six districts of North Bengal (see chapter 5). Here, I just mentioned an example of the emergence of political activity only in the district of Jalpaiguri in the early stage. During the colonial period the picture of CoochBehar district (at that time, Princely state) in respect of Social and political movements, was to some extent different from the other districts of North Bengal. As it was a native state, and there was a friendly relation between the Cooch Behar state and the British government political activities against the Raj were restricted

there. <sup>69</sup> Moreover, deportation law was existing there for which any kind of seditious activities were strictly prohibited.<sup>70</sup> In spite of that situation, Cooch Behar had witnessed some political movements rather incidents. Other than political movements, in the field of Socio-cultural activities Cooch Behar had a glorious past like 'Brahmo-Movement'. Before Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, the Cooch Behar Royal family was very much influenced by the religious faith of Vaishnavism and Saivism. At the end of 16th century, the great Vaishnava religious leader 'Sankaradeva' came to Kamata-Koch kingdom.<sup>71</sup> His appearance in Cooch Behar stirred the religious life of the Royal family and the common people at large. It is said that Mahārāja Naranārāyana in the later part of his life was influenced by this Vaisnava faith.<sup>72</sup> Moreover prince Sukladhyaja (Chila Roy) married Kamalapriya the daughter of Ram Roy, who was a near relative of Sankaradeva. But in spite of all this the religious faith of Vaishnavism could not stay for long in Cooch Behar.<sup>73</sup> The common people of Cooch Behar state had a special softness and belief on Saivism. According to their religious belief the Saiva cult was the symbol of fertility (EPW. April, 1991). As a result they again started to worship the Saiva cult and Vaishnava religious movement was getting a failure.<sup>74</sup> Like 'EKSARAN' religious faith, which was introduced by Sankaradeva, 'BRAHMO-RELIGION' (Brahma movement) also got so much importance in the religious life of the Cooch Behar Royal family. This happened definitely by the influence of Keshob Chandra Sen, (a- Nababidhan Brahma preacher) the great Brahma leader of Calcutta and the historical marriage of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan with Suniti Devi, daughter of Keshob Chandra Sen.<sup>75</sup> During the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, who after receiving English education tried to inculcate the spirit of the twentieth century ideals on his own people, Brahma religion flourished in Cooch Behar. This is a long story in the history of Cooch Behar. We have just mentioned it as a reference for good understanding of the discussion. Likewise, so many instances may be mention as a reference of Socio-political and cultural activities of North Bengal in other districts also. Specially during the colonial period Malda played a very significant role in the

context of Press publication. All of these will be discussed in the appropriate place during the course of our study.

When we will be discussing about the 'Role of the press and Associations in the Socio-cultural and political Movements', we will have to look into the respective areas for a few decades which were under the colonial administration.

## 1.8 SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT AMONG THE RAJBANSI COMMUNITY.

In dealing with the socio-political stirrings of the period it is important to take account of the 'RAJBANSI KSHATRIYA MOVEMENT' that emerged and spread among the Rajbansis of North Bengal including Rangpur and Dinajpur and Goalpara district in Assam. The movement came to be called the Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement. In our later discussion (Chapter 6) we will make an elaborate study on different aspects of this movement. Here, in this profile of North Bengal we are just to mention a few words about this.

It is evident that the background of the movement was provided by the social, political and economic change that took place under the British rule.<sup>76</sup> The fact was something like that for over several centuries social mobility involving various autochthonous groups of North Bengal, particularly the Rajbansis had been taking place. At the same time, new opportunities for social mobility were opened up through commercialisation of agriculture, improvement of communications and spread of education, though to a limited extent. These developments generated new social tensions and strivings which partly found expression through the Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement. In our later discussion we will try to explain the background of this movement in details. Here we are to mention that this movement was at first started as a social reform movement, and the scope was provided by the colonial government, particularly the census operations which since 1891<sup>77</sup> tried to classify each Hindu Social group or caste on the basis of social hierarchy recognized by Hindu public opinion directly contributed to the growth of the movement. In

course of so many dimensions, ultimately the movement started by some Rajbansi zamindars, joteders and some intellectuals with the claim that the Rajbansi Hindus were Kshatriyas of Aryan origin who lost their kshatriya status due to non-observance of Vedic rituals since long time. Ultimately this Rajbansi kshatriya movement have mobilized most of the people of this Rajbansi community which initiated in voicing protest against this and led to the formation of 'RAJBANSI KSHATRIYA SAMITI' in 1910. This social movement of the Rajbansi community will be an important part of our socio-political history of North Bengal.

Under the colonial administration, we see a major transformation have taken place in the social and political situation of North Bengal. It is from this standpoint that the emergence and growth of Socio-political Movements including nationalist politics in most of the districts of North Bengal had started. Regarding nationalist politics, and movements in Jalpaiguri and Malda districts, stirred the total atmosphere in the first quarter of the twentieth century. At that time the administrative policy of 'Divide and Rule' as expressed by Curzon's initiative to downgrade Bengali predominance in the sphere of higher education, government services and nationalist politics, and the 1905 partitions of Bengal presidency led to a political and cultural ferment among Bengalis throughout the former imperial presidency.<sup>78</sup> People of this Bengal presidency considered this action of Lord Curzon as illegal and unjustified. As a result Bengalis, both Hindus and Muslims in western Bengal and mainly Hindus in East Bengal came out against this unjustified imperial policy and developed the ideology of Swadeshi Nationalism<sup>79</sup>

In the nationalist perspective, Jalpaiguri was still then torpid. At that stage political consciousness remained at a low level both in the local issues and in the context of the main stream of the nationalist movement.<sup>80</sup> However, the swadeshi and anti-partition movement had its reverberation in the district of Jalpaiguri town in particular, with the emergence of an urban middle class in the Jalpaiguri town political movement started and it got leadership and

inspiration from legal practitioners, teachers and Bengali Tea-planters. Students and young men from these families were active participants in this movement. The day on which the partition of Bengal was officially introduced, (16 October, 1905) 'RAKHI BANDHAN' was observed by all Bengalis as a symbol of brotherhood and unity of the people of Bengal. In Jalpaiguri town too the day was observed. A large crowd led by Jogesh Chandra Ghose a leading tea planter, walked barefoot (the traditional Hindu sign of mourning) through the town. At the same time a campaign was launched to boycott foreign goods. More interesting, at Dinbazar, the market place of the town, propaganda for the boycott led to the arrest of three young men. Two of them were sentenced to imprisonment for two weeks.<sup>81</sup> Apart from Jalpaiguri district, there are mention of so many incidents of nationalist politics in some other districts of North Bengal (Malda, Darjeeling and West Dinajpur). Some of these will be mentioned in appropriate place in course of our study. Not only political activities, in the field of Socio-cultural activities, the North Bengal districts were also aware about different type of Social issues. Sometimes it was found that North Bengal has seized the eyes of whole Bengal as well as India. Regarding those issues the regional vernacular press and Associations of North Bengal played a significant role which have become an interesting field of study. Even the all India dailies sometimes covered some issues of North Bengal. For example, we can refer the name of Amrita Bazar patrika. During 1930s a Provincial conference of the Congress party was held at Jalpaiguri. All the proceedings of the conference were reflected on the pages of Amrita Bazar Patrika. Amrita Bazar Patrika (ABP) covered the proceedings like this:-

“Jalpaiguri, February 4-the session of the Bengal provincial conference opened at 4.p.m. when S.j. Saratchandra Bose, the president of the conference, accompanied by S.j.Subhaschandra Bose, S.j.Bepin Behari Ganguly and others entered the pandal. The assemblage, numbering more than 15000 rose to a man to extend an ovation to the Bose brothers who passed through the crowd exchanging greetings on either side.”

“The president took his seat on the dais which was decorated with flowers and foliage, pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal and S.J. Subhaschandra Bose were hung up prominently as also some quotations from the poetical works of Rabindranath Tagore.”

Dr. Charuchandra Sanyal, Chairman of the Reception committee welcomed the delegates. His welcome to S.J. Subas Chandra Bose, the president elect of the Indian National congress was loudly cheered by the entire assembly.<sup>82</sup> It is also evident that the communist party of India was also active to some extent with their organizational activities at Jalpaiguri.<sup>83</sup>

From ancient period to early medieval period, North Bengal as a Geographical area gained much importance. In our discussion it is found that during that time North Bengal was a meeting place of different ethno-cultural identities. Later on during the medieval period some cities were grown up in North Bengal which got much importance in our Socio-cultural history. Even during the colonial period. North Bengal witnessed so many Socio-cultural movements. In our national movement North Bengal also played a significant role though it had certain limitations. Hence, as a whole it is found that for our present study North Bengal got a unique geo-historical profile which have attracted so many scholars for a comprehensive study on different fields.

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- <sup>8</sup> Rajatarangini, IV, 420-21.
- <sup>9</sup> Mukherjee, B.N. and Bhattacharya, P.K. (Eds) op.cit p.p. 72-78.
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- <sup>11</sup> Bhuyan, S.K., Kamarūpa Buranji, Gauhati, 1958, p.112.

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<sup>12</sup> Ahmed Khan Chowdhury, Amanatulla, KochBeharer Itihash, (in Bengali) part-I, CoochBehar, 1936, p. 195

Narratives of Bogle Mission, pp.150, 161-and 165.

<sup>13</sup> Goswami, H. C., Darrangājvamsavali, Revised by Saran, N. C. Gauhati, 1973, p. 61.

Hamilton, W., Description of Hindustan, Vol. I, 1971, pp. 202-203.

<sup>14</sup> Ain-I-Akbari, by Abul Fazal, quoted by Robinson, W. Descriptive Account of Assam, Delhi, 1975, p.147.

<sup>15</sup> Majumdar, R.c. (Ed) History and culture of the Indian people, Vedic Age, 1971, p.306.

<sup>16</sup> Bhattacharya, Mandira., Some Aspects of the cultural History of Assam, Bulletin of the Assam State Museum, No. vi, 1985, p.38.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp. 367, 375.

<sup>23</sup> Majumdar, R.C., History of Ancient Bengal, First Edition, June, 1971, p.36.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. xiv, pp.532-535.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.p.532.

Dr. Ganguly inadvertently takes this (Mrigasikhāvana?) as the temple founded by Maharaja Gupta.

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<sup>28</sup> Chattopadhyaya, Sudhakar, *Early History of North India*, pp. 137-38.

Bhattacharyya, P. K. Two Silver coins of Sasanka in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. No. 2. 1979.

<sup>29</sup> It is said in the *Mādhāinagar* (c.13) and *Bhowal* cp.(c.12) that Lakshmanasena suddenly seized the goddess of fortune of the king of Gouda while he was a *kumāra* and sported with the women of *kalinga* while he was young. It would thus appear that Lakshmanasena undertook an expedition against Gauda even before he attained his full youth.

<sup>30</sup> The text was printed in Calcutta in 1864 and translated into English by Major H.G. Raverty in 1881. The following account is based on this English translation, and references to its pages are given with in brackets. A critical translation of the passage relating to the raid on *Nadiyā* has been published in *Indian historical Quarterly*, XVII. 92.

<sup>31</sup> Majumdar, R.C., *History of Bengal*, part I, Dacca University, P.2.

<sup>32</sup> Mahmud Abdul Oahab (Ed) *Itihash Anusandhan*, 7, p.532.

<sup>33</sup> *Proceedings of the Rangpur Sahitya Parishad and its Eight years work*, 1913, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Proceedings of the Rangpur Sahitya Parishad*, 1913. p.7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Rangpur Sahitya Panishad patrika*. Ashwin, 1313 B.S.

<sup>39</sup> *Rangpur Sahitya Panishad patrika*, 1315.B.S. second issue.

<sup>40</sup> *Rangpur Sahitya Parishad patrika*, 1315. B.S. Third issue.

<sup>41</sup> Roy Debajyoti (Ed), *Mamoir of the Rangpur Sahitya Panishad Patrika*.

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<sup>42</sup> Bhattacharya, N.N., The Varendra Research Society and its contribution to Historiography in Bengali, Tarasankar Banerjee (ed) Historiography in Modern Indian Language, P.101.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.P.103.

Mukherjee B.N. and Bhattacharya, P.K. OP. cit. P.10.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. P.11

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. P.12

<sup>46</sup> Chaudhury, R. D., North Bengal: The Gateway of spread of Aryan culture in Assam as known from Archaeological evidence, Mukherjee B. N. and Bhattacharyya, P. K. (eds.) Op. cit. p.44

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Sirkar, D. C., "Money in pre-Ahom Assam and its neighbourhood," coinage and economy in the North-East states of India, Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi, First edition, p2.

<sup>49</sup> Majumadar, R. C., History of Ancient Bengal. Op. cit p.36.

Kusāna coins have been discovered in large number both in North and South Bengal. But this does not necessarily indicate the suzerainty of the kushānas over Bengal. For coins are carried by way of trade far beyond the territory of the rulers who used them, and kushāna coins have been found even in the Ganjam District in Orissa.

<sup>50</sup> Chaudhury, R. D., North Bengal : The Gateway of spread of Aryan culture in Assam as known from Archaeological evidence in Mukherjee, B.N. and Bhattacharyya, P. K. (eds.) Op. cit. p.45.

<sup>51</sup> Majumdar, R. C. History of Ancient Bengal. Op. cit. P. 37.

Dr. Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya has argued that as the Chinese Pilgrim first went to the Ganges from Nālandaā and then voyaged down the river the

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distance from Nālandā to Ganges should be included in the total and this takes us to Malda in Varendra.

<sup>52</sup> Chatterjee, Bhaskar., place of KAJAMGALA in the Early Historical perspective of North Bengal, in Mukherjee B. N. and Bhattacharyya, P.K. (Ed)OP. cit. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Majumdar, R. C., History of Ancient Bengal. OP. cit. p.37.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Majumdar, R.C., Ancient India, (Reprint) 1994, p.248.

<sup>56</sup> Choudhury, K. C. History of Ancient India, Calcutta, 1982, p.294.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Dakua, Dinesh, Kāmatapuri Andolonon Asol uddyeshya (in Bengali) Calcutta, 2001.P.15

According to Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy, the phrase ‘identity politics’ has become to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social group. The most important and revolutionary element of identity politics is the demand that oppressed groups be recognized not in spite of their differences but specifically because of their differences.

<sup>59</sup> Gupta, Pabitra, Ethnic affinities of the Early settlers of North Bengal: A study with reference to the Rājbanis. In Mukherje B. N. and Bhattacharya, P. K. (eds.), Op. cit. P.157.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Chatterjee, Partha, Agrarian Relations and Communalism in Bengal, 1926-1935 in Ranajit Guha (Ed) Subaltern studies-I. Delhi. 1982. p.9.

For further discussion, see Partha Chatterjee, Agrarian Relations and Politics in Bengal: Some considerations on the making of the Tenancy Act Amendment 1928, occasional paper, 30, center for studies in social sciences, Calcutta.

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<sup>62</sup> Saha, Jagat, Tebhaga Andolone Jalpaiguri, (in Bengali) PASCHIMBANGA, Jalpaiguri District Issue. 2001. p.99.

<sup>63</sup> Paul, Satyendranath, A History of political thought of Modern Bengal. Calcutta, 1999 p.228.

<sup>64</sup> Ahuja, Ram, Social problems in India, Second Edition, New Delhi, 2004, p-197

<sup>65</sup> Ghosh, A. G. – Jalpaiguri Jelar Rajnaitik Jiban (in Bengali), TRISROTA 20.5.1990.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

In this article, we find the mention that Dr. Tamij Uddin Ahmed, a physician of Jalpaiguri attended the Calcutta Congress of 1886.

<sup>67</sup> John Gallahar, Johnson, Gordon and Seal, Anil, (Eds) Locality, province and Nations: Essays in Indian politics, 1870 to 1940, Cambridge, 1973, pp.1-28.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ghosh, A. G., Cooch Behar Rajye Rajnaitik Andoloner Ruprekha in Madhuparni (Bengali) (Ed) Ajitesh Bhattacharya, CoochBehar district special issue. 1396 B.S. p.395.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Debnath, Pabitra Kumar- Religion and Religious Establishments of kāmata-Koch kingdom, (An unpublished thesis) University of North Bengal. 19993, p. viii.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. ix.

Bhattacharyya, P. K. Rise and decline of Sankaradeva's Vaisnavism in Fifteenth and Sixteenth century's in the Economic and political weekly, April, 27, 1991, pp. 15-16.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>75</sup> Borthwick, Meredith, Keshub Chandra Sen, Minerva Associates publishing Ltd. India, 1977, p183.

<sup>76</sup> Dasgupta, Ranjit-op, cit p.87.

<sup>77</sup> Barman, upendranath, Rajbansi Kshatrya Jatir Itihash, Jalpaiguri, (3rd edition) 1388 B.S. p.56.

<sup>78</sup> Dasgupta, Ranjit, OP. cit. p.82

<sup>79</sup> Sarkar, Sumit., The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908, PPH, New Delhi, 1973. pp. 418-44.

<sup>80</sup> Dasgupta Ranjit, Op cit. p. 83.

In this book it is referred that one stray report suggests that Jalpaiguri had a branch of Indian National congress with Umagati Ray, a legal practitioner as secretary as early as 1893. (Madhuparni, Jalpaiguri Jela Sankhya, 1394 B.S., Balurghat, Annexure facing p. 402) But nothing is known about its activities or subsequent course.

<sup>81</sup> Sanyal, Mukulseh, Swadhinata Andolone Jalpaiguri, (in Bengali) Jalpaiguri district centenary Souvenir, 1970, p.322.

The names of the arrested three persons accordingly to this account were Durgadas Chakraborty, Adyanath Misra and Ananda Biswas.

<sup>82</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika, February 5, 1939.

<sup>83</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika, January 19, 1947.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND OF THE PRESS-PUBLICATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS (SABHA-SAMITY) IN NORTH BENGAL

#### 2.1 A GENERAL STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESS

The Indian press has a glorious history. Specially during the early period of publications, Bengal played a very significant role which subsequently turned to be a socio-cultural and political Movement. When we will be discussing on the press-publications, it is very much necessary to point out the particular character of the press. As we know that the different press in course of times have changed their character, it is obviously necessary to identify its character to learn better about the purpose of the press.

Before we study about the press of our period and jurisdiction, it is necessary to look into the character of Indian press. It is not unlikely to say that the Indian press is not like the British press or French press, 'a press of one language'. It is a press of the major Indian languages in most of which, apart from English, it had its beginnings about the same time. The growth of such press was bound to be multifarious, and at the beginning somewhat diverse. But there has been an underlying unity, with common urges and common conditions. Along with political unity came economic unity, and along with it commonness of development, especially with the enforcement of a common legal system all over the country.<sup>1</sup> In tracing the developments of Indian press during nearly last two centuries, it would be useful to know where the Indian press has arrived.

According to 1977 report of the Register of Newspapers for India, India continued to be the second largest publisher of daily newspapers in the world in 1976, with a marginal increase to 875 from 835 in 1975. In circulation, Indian daily newspapers occupied the third place in Asia, coming next only to the USSR and Japan. Newspapers published in India touched 34.075 million in total circulation, marking a rise of 0.235 million in 1976, as

compared to 1975, when circulations stood at 33.822 million. The growth of circulation during 1971-76 was 4.456 million. The circulation of dailies in 1976 was 9.338 million as compared to 9.383 in 1975.<sup>2</sup> Along with the daily newspapers, the circulation of weeklies also fell, though the circulation of fortnightlies, tri-bi-weeklies and monthlies increased. Though the above information are not directly related with our study, it is presented to have a picture about the press publication which covered almost the major Indian languages and different places of India. Among the daily newspapers and periodicals in different Indian languages English dailies are accounted for the highest circulation figures, Hindi came next, followed by the Malayalam.

Before we discuss about the press of our area of study, let us have an idea about the circulation of newspapers. The largest number of newspaper, 3,289 was in Hindi, followed by English (2,765), Urdu (975) and Bengali (855). At the same time it is evident that the largest number of dailies (252) was in Hindi, followed by Marathi and Urdu (94 each), Malayalam (91), English (89), Tamil (58), Kannada (53), Gujarati (37), Bengali (22), and Telugu (17).<sup>3</sup> There are so many information regarding daily newspapers, journals, periodicals, weekly and fortnightly journals. But we don't need all these things for the purpose of our study. In spite of this it is to be noted that these are the figures given by the Registrar of newspapers for India in his 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, 1977.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to say that figures do not tell everything but they tell something. From its origin the Indian Press has grown but not much. In terms of needs, the growth has been inadequate, slow and uneven. Technically, the advance has been little in modern period. M. Chalapathi Rau, in his book, "The Press" have very nicely presented a detail picture about it. In different Indian presses we see that under British rule, it was a story of struggle for liberty and alternating period of benevolence and repression by the Government. It is easy to think in terms of press laws successive Governor General, the Indian Renaissance corresponding to the enlightened outlook of Raja Rammohun Roy and his successors, the great landmarks of the Great Rebellion, the first world war, independence and so on. From this arose a desire

to sponsor a history of Indian press (including regional and local) which would do it in a different way. There were few statistics, though British reviews gave a broad idea of growth in this accounts of struggle between the press and the government. The attempt here is to trace the growth of press against the existing political, social and economic background, to see how fitfully it started, how it had struggled, how it grew under the limitations of literacy and of standards of living. During the colonial period, press publications have got so many limitations and restrictions. So its publications and circulation was not so easy and smooth. So many times, press publications have got threats from British Government by different press ordinances. But we see that the biggest period of growth of the publications took place after independence, under conditions of adult surface and growth of liberty. The Indian Press started as press of dependency and later on the press became the press of developing society compelled to answer many challenges. At present publication of press is not only the medium of news dissemination, but also as a purveyor of advertising service. Such an history called for both objectivity and keen interest in the subject; it had to tell the story of the press as well as reflect the changing life of the people.<sup>5</sup>

It is not known when exactly printing from movable type was invented. CAXTON, England's first printer, set up a press at 'The Red Pale' in the Almonry at Westminster in 1476, having learnt the art in Cologne. The first presses, two of them arrived in India in 1550, though nothing was published till 1557 when a catechism, reputedly by St. Francis Xavier, was printed and circulated.<sup>6</sup> The early Portuguese settlers, followed by a number of Jesuits, needed quick means of communication for conversion. An English Jesuit, Thomas Stevens, believed to be the first Englishman to have leaved in India, translated a Portuguese primer into the local language for the use of college pupils.<sup>7</sup> A press was set up in Punikael in Tinnevelly District, in 1578 and another at Vypicotta in 1602. the next printing press was established in 1679 at Ambalakad, south of Trichur, and there the first Tamil-Portuguese Dictionary was published. The authorities were apprehensive of the effect of printing. The

arrival of thus Englishmen in India and the flow of commercial information led to the formation of the East India Company and its first excursions in India.

## 2.2 PRESS IN INDIA

It is evident that the first newspaper in India were started by those who had grievances against the company and resigned from its service to express them. The first attempt to start a newspaper in Calcutta was made in 1776 by William Bolts. He had resigned from the company's service after censure by the court of Directors for Private trade under company's authority. He made it known he had "in manuscript many things to communicate which most intimately concerned very individual". There was alarm and resentment in official quarter and Bolts was directed to go back to Europe. This was the early story of the publication of press in India.

James Augustus Hicky has the distinction of launching the first newspaper in India. The history of modern journalism in Bengal began with the publication of Hicky's Bengal Gazette, alias Calcutta General Advertiser on January 29, 1780 as a two sheet weekly. The glory of being the first publisher of a newspaper in India owing to an Englishman, who like William Bolts, —a Dutch advertiser came to this country in expectation of a rich harvest from Pagoda tree.<sup>8</sup>

After Hicky's Bengal Gazette came the India Gazette, a weekly newspaper started by Peter Reed and B. Messing in November, 1780.<sup>9</sup> Other papers that appeared after 1780 in Bengal were in Calcutta Gazette (1784), The Bengal Journal (1785), the Oriental Magazine or Calcutta amusement (1785), and the Calcutta Chronicle 1786.<sup>10</sup> Towards the close of the eighteenth century six more papers came out. These were the Calcutta Courier (1795), the Bengal Hurkaru (1798), the Morning Post (1798), The Telegraph (1798), the Oriental Star (1798), and the Asiatic Mirror (1798).<sup>11</sup> All these were English papers and journals owned and run by the Europeans and were exclusively meant for the European society in India. Even in England at that time the press did not do anything for the political awakening of the people. As late as 1795 the *Times of*

India supported the Government in return for a pension of £ 600. Naturally in Bengal the situation was no better.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3 PRESS IN BENGAL

At the beginning of Bengali Press did not owe its origin to any political consideration. Though it was destined to play a vital role in the political movement of the succeeding years. It was, in other words, a manifestation of the all round awakening that was taking place in Bengal in the early nineteenth century.

The history of vernacular press viz. Bengali journalism begins amid controversy some writers give the honour of being the first Bengali Weekly to the Bengal Gazeti of Ganga Kishore Bhattacharya while others give the credit to the *Samachar Darpan*, edited by J. C. Marshman.<sup>13</sup> Very little is known either of the contents, or about the views on matters of public interest.<sup>14</sup> The year 1818 also saw the birth of the monthly 'DIGDARSAN'. Digdarsan published popular articles on history, politics and science. The DIGDARSAN and the SAMACHAR DARPAN were started by the Serampore Baptist mission.<sup>15</sup> The first issue of Samachar Darpan came out on May 23, 1818. It carried both Indian and foreign news.<sup>16</sup> In April, 1818 William Carey and John Marshman established the 'Friend of India'—an English monthly which was later brought by Robert Knight, the founder of the Statesman.<sup>17</sup> At that time many periodicals were started by the Christian Missionaries exclusively for religious propaganda.<sup>18</sup> The 'GOSPEL MAGAZINE', a bi-lingual monthly journal, brought out in 1819 by the Baptist Auxiliary Mission Society, was one of them. It was the first periodical in Bengal which was started with the sole object of propagating Christian theology.<sup>19</sup> Apart from this, the periodical was involved with some controversial issues in respect of religion. On July 14, 1821, the Samachar Darpan, however, published a letter attacking Hinduism. As a reaction, Raja Rammohun Roy sent a reply to the Editor of Darpan protesting against such improper attack and vindicating Hinduism. When the editor of the Darpan refused to publish the reply, Rammohun, under the name

of Shibprasad Sharma brought out the bi-monthly 'Brahmanical Magazine' in which he vigorously assailed Trinitarian Christianity and tried to prove that it was no better than Hindu polytheism.<sup>20</sup> [Making a scathing criticism of the unseemly attack made on the Hindu religion Rammohun wrote that it was only natural that the conquerors would ridicule the religion of the conquered. Though the Brahmanical Magazine (first published in 1821) had a very short life it heralded the beginning of the long-drawn controversy between the missionary and the Hindu papers.] The activities of the Christian missionaries set in a reaction in the Hindu community. Some of whom felt the necessity of counteracting the missionary criticism. Primarily, with that in mind Tarachand Dutta and Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyaya was the publisher of the 'KAUMUDI'. But owing to differences of opinion on the question of the practice of 'SATI' and other issues Bhabani Charan left the 'Sambad Kaumudi'. He started the 'SAMACHAR CHANDRIKA' on March 5, 1822<sup>21</sup>. It is reasonable to assume that the views expressed in paper – Sambad Kaumudi, reflected the mind of Raja Rammohan Roy. As a counter move the weekly – Samachar Chandrika was brought out by the orthodox Hindus on March 5, 1822.<sup>22</sup>

It is evident from the records that some of these papers were propagating in favour of some religious faith. For example we can mention the name of Samachar Darpan, which had an intention of vindicating Hinduism. On the other hand the 'Samachar Chandrika' was the chief organ of the orthodox Hindus. When the Regulation of XVI of 1829 was passed prohibiting 'SATI', the Samachar Chandrika launched a vigorous campaign against it. Though this campaign was not long lasting and ultimately the system of Sati was abolished, but in the early stage the initiative of socio-religious reforms reflected on papers had both positive and negative approaches.

Within a short time two other monthly magazines were published and they were the PASVABALI, started in February, 1822 and the 'CHRISTER RAJYABRIDDI' started in May of the same year. Thus in the period from

1818 to 1822 altogether nine Bengali periodicals and newspapers came into existence<sup>23</sup>. These newspapers in their early stage were the spokesman of the contemporary socio-religious condition of Bengal. In this connection it can be noted that, Alexander Duff, who had no high opinion of the early Bengali newspapers and periodicals admitted that they were strong manifestations of the newly awakened spirit of the age<sup>24</sup>.

When we are to study about the early Bengali Press, it is evident, from the very beginning, the press in Bengali was under strictest surveillance and control. The government suspicion and dislike for the press was intensified by the 'abusive and disparaging statements' – published in the 'JAM-I-JAHAN-NUMA'. The Jam-I-Jahan-Numa, the first Urdu weekly, was published from Calcutta on March 28, 1822 and its editor was Harihar Dutta<sup>25</sup>.

Regarding press publication in Bengali in the early stage, some members of the Governor General's council were strongly in favour of stringent press regulations. The then Governor General, Lord Hastings, incurred the displeasure of the court of Directors by his liberal attitude to the press in India. Lord Hastings left India for England on January 9, 1823. John Adam became the acting Governor General of India. The government first decided to suppress the 'Calcutta Journal' of James Silk Buckingham who had incurred the displeasure of Adam and other high officials by his persistent criticism of the Company's administration. After settling his old score with Buckingham, Adam proceeded to curb the freedom of the entire press in Bengal. An ordinance was issued on March 14, 1823, proclaiming that no one should publish any newspaper, periodical and such other things without obtaining a licence from the Governor-General in council, signed by the Chief Secretary to the Government.<sup>26</sup> The ordinance was placed before the Supreme Court on March 15, and it came into operation from April 5, 1823.<sup>27</sup> But it is interesting to say that in spite of all this ordinance and regulations the Bengali Press played a significant role in respect of social and religious reforms as an open media in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Press as media

of communication with people and ruling authority raised in 1818 under British ruling in India by Sir James Silk Bankham through his first published paper in India where he placed the thought to people that they should be free and fluent in their communication even in British rule. The paper was 'Calcutta Journal', where it was expressed—"As far as Europeans only whether in or out of service the freedom or the restrictions of the press could do little good or harm and would hardly deserve any serious attention". He also told that it could corrupt or disaffect the Indian Army and work for the overthrow of the British power. It might spread among the people the principle liberty and stimulate them to expel the strangers who rule over them and to establish a National Government. A free press and domination of stranger are things which are quite incompatible and can long exist together. Thus the press with the orientation of free opinion became an established thought for the first time in 18<sup>th</sup> century India.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.4 SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE PUBLICATIONS OF NORTH BENGAL

It has been mentioned that James Augustus Hicky have the credit of publishing the first newspaper in India on January 29, 1780. After that, thousands of newspapers, journals and periodicals in different languages have been published from different corners of our country which have already mentioned in brief. But when we are to study about the press publications from present North Bengal, we see that following one hundred years from 1780 we got no newspaper or journal published from this area. Though Bengal played a very significant role in context of press-publication, but it is surprising that North Bengal did not have any share in that publications. In North Bengal, press publication was a bit late. In our present work we are to study about the press published from North Bengal. Before we enter into a detailed study, it is necessary to look into the background of the publications from the present North Bengal.

During the period of our study it is evident that a series of Books have been published on press and periodicals of different times. But it is surprising that no serious attempt has been initiated by scholars about the importance and contribution of the local newspapers of present North Bengal. (Viz.- Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, and Malda) But it is fact that with the greater part of Bengal, as well as the whole country, more than a dozen of newspapers had been published from North Bengal. In this regard, the pioneer work on newspapers and periodicals was "BANGLA SAMAYIK O SAMBADPATRE SEKALER KATHA" by Brajendra Nath Bandopadhyaya is even today regarded by the scholars as the source material in this field. Next to Brajendra Nath Bandopadhyaya credit must be given to Binoy Ghosh. His famous work on press "SAMAYIK PATRE BANGLAR SAMAJ CHITRA" deserves much credit. Kedar Nath Majumdar, another expert in this field wrote an important book on press-publications earlier than this two scholars. His book "BANGLA SAMAYIK SAHITYA" was published in 1917. Following the above mentioned personalities and getting inspired with their writings on press-publications, some scholars in Bangladesh and West Bengal devoted their interests in writing on press and publications of Bengal. The names of the scholars of Bangladesh are Anisujjaman, Mustafa Nurul Islam and Muntasir Mamun whose contributions in this field are very significant. In their study some references have also been made with regards to the press and publications of Bengal. The names of Dr. Partha Chatterjee and Jitendra Nath Bose must be mentioned in this connection. Their works "BANGLA SAMBAD PATRA O BANGLAR NABOJAGARAN" and "ROMANCE OF INDIAN JOURNALISM" respectively had a great contribution to this subject. Another book on press and periodicals entitled "The Indian press" was published. This is a compilation of articles on the Vernacular press of modern times and it deserves much credit on the subject. In addition to above mentioned works, some other scholars have got some significant contribution on press-publications.

But the interesting fact is that none of these scholars have discussed, even to a little extent, about the press and publications of present North Bengal. Brajendra Nath Bandopadhyaya in his book mentioned the names of a few numbers of publications of this region. But nothing details have been studied there. Considering the position it is found that actually no researcher in that stage was interested to pay attention on the press publications of North Bengal.

Under the above circumstances a primary attempt has been made here to make a study on the background, growth and development of press and publications of the specific area of present North Bengal in the Nineteenth and first half of the Twentieth century. Though primary document on the subject are rare and Archival records are not available, still considering all this things this work have been undertaken. But it is a very difficult task to collect materials and information about of the above mentioned subjects particularly on the present North Bengal. There are so many difficulties in collecting information on the subject. Firstly, very few numbers and copies of these papers are available at present. No chronological order of these papers are maintained.

Our present study starts from 1869 and at that time the geographical shape of North Bengal was quite different. So for our study we require some publications which had been published from Rangpur, Dinajpur and Rajshahi in present Bangladesh. At present, due to non-availability of these publications and geographical disadvantage, it is not possible to collect detailed information about the papers published from Bangladesh. Some papers are preserved at the State Archives of West Bengal and National Archives of India. We have collected our information and documents from Archival sources, District Annual Report and from personal collections and interviews. We are to start our study from 1870 because in this year (1870) the first newspaper in present North Bengal was published from Darjeeling and it was in English. Though the main publications from this area was in Bengali but apart from Bengali newspapers English, Hindi, Nepali and Tibetan newspapers also enriched and

focussed much on its socio-cultural and political activities during this period. So we see that at the beginning, the press and the periodicals of North Bengal were published in some major Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, Nepali and Tibetan. A good number of newspapers were also published in English. As a result it is evident that the publications of North Bengal during the period of our study was multi-lingual and consequently the progress of such press was bound to be multifarious in character.

Another phenomenon of the publications of North Bengal was that, in comparison with the publications of Calcutta (Kolkata) and East Bengal (presently Bangladesh) the publications of North Bengal was a bit late. This was due to several factors which was mainly the lack of infrastructural disadvantages. Moreover, socio-culturally this area was backward in comparison with Calcutta and some parts of East Bengal (Modern Bangladesh). The literacy rate of this area was very poor. Quite naturally the wave of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance came lately in North Bengal. Throughout North Bengal, the jurisdiction of our study, there was only one institution for higher education in Cooch Behar (The then Victoria College), the native state in the Eastern region. According to contemporary administrative report it is found that the number of recognised high school were only fourteen. Naturally it is found that a few number of Western educated (educationally interested) people were there in North Bengal during the period. Quite naturally, it can not be expected that the people of North Bengal most of whom did not have proper education may have any interest with the publication of newspaper, journal and periodicals. Even in the first half of twentieth century the social picture remained all the same. For instance , one example may be mentioned here. According to the census report of 1931, it is found that the literacy rate in Jalpaiguri district was 4.8%. From this report we can get a clear idea that a very negligible number of people could be interested with publication from North Bengal.<sup>29</sup> In addition to that, there were so many lackings of essential pre-requisites regarding printing and publications in North Bengal. The infrastructure needed for press publication can not be expected in such an area. There were no printing press,

efficient compositor, news media, advertisement and other sources to collect news. In spite of all these difficulties, publications started from the districts of North Bengal, though it was too late.

## 2.5 REASONS FOR LATE PUBLICATION IN NORTH BENGAL

It is known to all of us that before the partition of 1947 'North Bengal' had a different geographical area. The separate identity of present North Bengal, The area of our study came into being after 1947. But we know that before 1947, North Bengal had a different geographical jurisdiction and identity. In the undivided Bengal, this region (present North Bengal) probably had no important cultural and intellectual background. We have so many references that the cultural centres of nineteenth century—undivided North Bengal was Rangpur and Rajshahi, presently located in Bangladesh. At that time, Rangpur was famous for various reasons. Moreover, a large part of Goalpara (in Assam) and Jalpaiguri was attached with Rangpur. The publications from Rangpur was easily available to its adjacent districts. The people of this area considered that the publications from Rangpur was enough for the readers (interested persons) of Jalpaiguri, Goalpara (Assam), and Cooch Behar. When we are discussing about the background of the press publications of present North Bengal and it has already been mentioned that the first publication started in 1870, in this connection, it is noticeable that in 1847, the first newspaper was published from Rangpur and during the late nineteenth century at least five papers were published from Rangpur (in modern Bangladesh). We just mentioned it to explain the one of the reasons for late publication from the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar in present North Bengal.

Similarly Rajshahi (another district of modern Bangladesh) was the other centre pot of Malda and Dinajpur. Like Rangpur, Rajshahi was also culturally and intellectually developed. So many cultural and research institutions were established there to cultivate socio-cultural and intellectual activities. 'Varendra Anusandhan Samiti' (1910) was one of them. (see chapter

6.4). In this circumstances, it is quite natural that there must be press-publications from that place. These publications from Rajshahi were enough for the interested people of Malda and Dinajpur. It is also noticeable that only a few number of people of this area were interested in this context. Naturally no attempt was made to publish papers from the area of present North Bengal.

During this period another factor responsible for late publication was the media of Calcutta (KOLKATA), which reached to the districts of North Bengal. 'Education Gazette'<sup>30</sup> 'Sambad Pravakar', 'Bharat Mihir', 'Hindu Ranjika' (published from Rajshahi) all these papers had their agencies for circulation in North Bengal. For example—it can be mentioned that Education Gazette, edited by Bhudeb Mukhopadhaya had its own agents at Jalpaiguri. From contemporary district records it is known that Bhabani Charan Ghatak, Kedarnath Mukherjee and some other persons were regular subscribers of 'Hindu Patriot' edited by Harish Chandra Mukherjee. At the same time Bhabani Babu was the subscriber of 'INDIA' published from London. Naturally it can be assumed that some publication from outside North Bengal met the needs of media for enlightened people of this region. The number of this educated people was very negligible. So it is quite expected that in such an educationally backward area, only a few literate persons will take initiative to publish newspapers or journals of their own from North Bengal. So they did not think it urgent to publish separate papers from North Bengal.

But during the last quarter of the nineteenth century the socio-cultural and political scenario had been changing gradually. Rate of literacy and number of educated person were also increasing. As a result, they got some interest and initiative to introduce print media. Moreover, due to some of the social and political factors, attempts were being made to publish papers in mother tongues (local vernacular languages). In this way the vernacular press in this area were emerging. In this connection, rail communication played an important role. The introduction of "Northern Bengal state Railway" in the year 1878 and the "Darjeeling Himalayan Railway" in 1881 had a great role to play

for the publication from North Bengal. The introduction of railway communication in this region have shortened the distance with the other parts of the country and made contact easier and smooth from one place to another which helped the educated people of this region to think about their own press. This railway communication in this region also made an easy communication between North Bengal and Calcutta. As a result the cultural influence of Calcutta made the enlightened people of the region interested to publish papers and periodicals.

In the year 1885, the press publication got some opportunity due to administrative reforms by the imperial rulers. The Local Self-government Act of 1885 helped the growth of municipalities in each district. The recommendation for growth of municipalities and this type of local self-government inspired and helped the educated people to ventilate their own ideas and opinions. Quite naturally they got interested for press-publications as it was the ideal medium to fulfil it. By this time the 'Indian National Congress' had already come into being and some people specially politically interested persons have attached themselves with this political organisation. There is no doubt that the establishment of Indian National Congress was a landmark and this incident made some people of this area interested with the political activities. Though before the establishment of Indian National Congress the 'Indian Association and Sir S. N. Banerjee had seized the eyes of the people of Bengal. Moreover, during the last half of nineteenth century, a wave was also in force in North Bengal to organise some Associations to make discussions about social and cultural reforms. In this context press as a media was very much important to generate the public opinion. For example, we can mention the reference of "Dinajpur-Bhatpara Unnatisadhani Sobha" which published a paper named 'SUHRID'. Thus in our present discussion it is found that during second half of the nineteenth century, the enlightened people (Western educated young group) of North Bengal had taken initiative to publish newspapers from their own districts. During this period a series of publications came out and these publications continued for a long period. If we categorise these

publications, we can divide them in two phases; viz. – the publications from pre-swadeshi period to swadeshi and swadeshi to the period of independence. But the objectives of our present study is not like this. In our present discussion one more important factor which helped for the publications was the contemporary situation. The impact of the contemporary political situation and the newly born nationalistic ideas helped to a great extent to generate the minds of the people of this region to meet the need for the press publication and it was in full force up to the period of independence. But it is true that only this atmosphere which is explained are not sufficient for press publications. Some other conditions and facilities are also required for this purpose. The inevitable thing required for publication was the availability of the printing press. Let us now point out some of the early information about the establishment of printing press in North Bengal.

## 2.6 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PRINTING PRESS IN NORTH BENGAL

During the early period of press-publications there was no scope for availing the facility of printing press in North Bengal. None took any initiative to provide the facility of printing machinery in North Bengal. It is true that due to several factors it was too late to emerge an intellectual class in North Bengal who could have a special interest for this. But it is surprising that even for business purpose nobody took any interest to establish any printing press. It is found that no one extended any effort to establish press (printing machinery) for cultural and intellectual practice. Because, intelligentsias (literate group) did not emerge in this area due to several unfavourable situations which has already been mentioned earlier.

Now in our present discussion, it is necessary to make a brief study about the history of the printing press in North Bengal during the nineteenth century. It is controversial and we cannot say definitely when the first printing press was established in North Bengal. We got no evidence to make a definite conclusion on it. It is assumed that in 1870, a printing press was established at Darjeeling to publish “The Darjeeling News”, a weekly paper. Before the

publication of this paper, we got no evidence about any other publication in North Bengal. So this printing press was the earliest one in North Bengal. But it may be noted that this was not vernacular printing press. It was an English printing press. Journals and papers printed by this press were in English. But the exact date of the publication of the "Darjeeling News" is not definitely known. According to W. W. Hunter, in the year 1871, the circulation of the paper was 150. The news items covered in the paper was mainly about the owners of the tea gardens. So it can be mentioned that the first publication from North Bengal was the "Darjeeling News".<sup>31</sup>

We have some reference about the first Bengali printing press which was established at Jalpaiguri in the same year, 1870. The proprietor of this printing press was the Cooch Behar princely state.<sup>32</sup> The purpose of this press was not to publish any journal or newspaper, but to print necessary papers for the state administrative works like cash book, forms, receipt for land revenue etc. Later on, in the year 1876, due to some administrative necessity, this press at Jalpaiguri was transferred to Cooch Behar town, the head quarter of the state.<sup>33</sup> The establishment of this two printing press, one at Darjeeling and the other at Jalpaiguri was very significant in the history of printing and press publications in North Bengal. This two printing press encouraged interested persons of the adjacent districts and they also took necessary steps to establish printing press from their districts. As a result, we see, within a decade other two districts of North Bengal viz., Malda and Dinajpur districts established separately one printing press each. A printing press was established at Dinajpur in the year 1885 and the other at Malda in 1888. Moreover, one more printing press was established at Jalpaiguri in 1895. On the whole, we see that from 1870 to 1895, there were at least five printing presses in North Bengal. It is significant to some extent that one hundred years back, when a large number of printing presses were started in Calcutta, at that time there was not even a single printing press. But between 1870 and 1895, at least five printing presses were established in the four districts of North Bengal. So, this development in the field of printing machinery no doubt implies that an intellectual and cultural

exercises were coming into force, though it was a bit late. Not only this, it is also evident that during this period one Hindi Press also was established in Darjeeling. The source of our proposition is that during 1889, a Hindi monthly journal was published from Darjeeling under the supervision of 'Arya Samaj'. But at the same time it has to be mentioned that we have no definite proof whether it was printed at Darjeeling or outside. There were references about some publications which were published from North Bengal, but due to the lack of printing machinery were printed at Calcutta. For example it should be mentioned that during 1914 to 1916, the most illustrated paper published from Malda (a district of North Bengal) was 'GAMBHIRA'. It was published from Kaligram, near Chanchole, but printed from Methcalf press of Calcutta.<sup>34</sup> 'GAMBHIRA' was a bi-monthly literary journal. But this publication did not last for a long time. The duration of this paper was from 1914 to 1916.

The editor and at the same time publisher of the journal 'GAMBHIRA' was Krishna Charan Sarkar, the Zamindar of Kaligram at Malda. Its purpose was to make different types of social reforms, to enhance social awareness among the people of different classes of the society.<sup>35</sup> But considering the performance of these presses, the common thing has to be mentioned that most of these printing presses were established with the view of business purpose. The chief objectives of these presses were to print Bills, different types of forms, leaflets, cash books etc. But considering the nature of all the printing presses during this period, the exception which we notice is that during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, only one printing press was established in North Bengal with a view to publish a newspaper. The name of this printing press was 'Krishnakali Press' of Malda.<sup>36</sup> This printing press had a national character. Radhesh Chandra Seth, an advocate, intellectual and a famous nationalist leader was its proprietor. In our later chapter we will discuss in detail about it.

So long we have discussed about the background of the printing press in North Bengal. On the basis of this discussion we got a clear idea about the

background of the printing press and publications in North Bengal. Though it was too late in comparison with the publication of Calcutta and some parts of North Bengal of undivided Bengal (Rangpur, Rajshahe) but considering the character of some of the publications of North Bengal it is evident that the publications from this area played an important role in all perspectives, viz., social, cultural and political. But the fact is that, these papers have not been properly maintained and preserved in the Archives. Having a detailed investigation on the subject of our study it is found that from North Bengal, more or less we have publications from all the five districts, viz., Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, West Dinajpur (presently North and South Dinajpur) Jalpaiguri and Malda. But we see that the publications of all the districts of North Bengal are not equally important. But the publications from Jalpaiguri and Malda have some special political, social and cultural background and it will be focussed specifically in the course of our study. The publications of Darjeeling were totally different due to its socio-cultural particularly ethnical and linguistic background. As Cooch Behar was a princely state, it had some compulsion in this respect. From West Dinajpur, there were as such no important publication. All these things will be discussed categorically later on.

## 2.7 A GENERAL STUDY ON THE BACKGROUND OF THE ASSOCIATIONS (SABHA-SAMITI) IN NORTH BENGAL

The growth of public organisations and Associations in Bengal was closely related to the growth and development of the Bengali press. Though the foundation of the 'Asiatic Society' by William Jones and thirty 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 Rammoan Roy's 'ATMIYA SABHA' founded much later may rightly be regarded as the pioneer of truly Indian public associations of the nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Before we enter into the study about the Associations or SABHA-SAMITI of North Bengal, it is necessary to look into the background of the Associations in North Bengal emerged later on. In this context Raja Rammohan

Ray was no doubt the pathfinder on it.<sup>38</sup> In 1814 Rammohan Ray retired from service and after sometimes settled down in Calcutta. In Calcutta he came in contact with a number of persons whose minds were influenced by the western education and who therefore fully sympathised with his rationalistic views and principles. With their cooperation Rammohan founded in 1815, the 'Atmiya Sabha' which held meetings for propagating the monotheistic doctrines of Hindu Scriptures.

Before he settled down in Calcutta, Raja Rammohan Ray spent a good time in Rangpur and engaged himself in different types of social works. Many reports of the meetings held at Rangpur and his sayings and doings there much have reached them and he was already an interesting personality to many. Amongst the learned associates of Raja Rammohan Ray, Hariharananda Tirthaswami was very much connected with Rammohan's work at Rangpur.<sup>39</sup> Rammohan's outstanding contribution to the cause of social reforms remained as a landmark to the countrymen. But his social reforms could not be done so easily. Chiefly with a view to defend Hinduism he started publishing a periodical/ journal in English and Bengali called 'BRAHAMANICAL MAGAZINE' or the missionary of the Brahmins. But Raja Radhakanta Deb along with his conservative Hindu friends protested against him by presenting a petition to the Governor General on behalf of the orthodox section of the Hindu community. Soon after in January, 1830, an association of orthodox Hindu, called the 'DHARMA SABHA' was established. The method which these people then began to practice in their social agitation were organisation to stir up latent and unvocal opinion, petitions to Government, abuse of opponents and social ostracism. Even in Rangpur, Rammohan's circle aroused the hostility of orthodox critics who were headed by Gaurikanta Bhattacharya, the author of a tract—Jnananjan, against the reformers.

Many similar associations of different people, different ideas and objectives sprang up during this period. Among these to mention a few were 'Gaudia Samaj' (1828), Academic Associations (1828-29), Sarbatattva dipika

Sabha (1832), Sadharan Jnanoparjika Sabha (1838), Tattvabodhini Sabha (1839), Sarbasuhakari Sabha (1850), and Bidyotsahini Sabha (1853).<sup>40</sup> Most of these organisations (SABHA-SAMITI) had started their own organ to get their views and ideas communicated to a broader section of the population.<sup>41</sup> From social point of view all these organisations had some important contribution in the socio-religion reforms. Apart from these socio-religious organisation and institutions, a good number of political organisations were established. The political leaders of Bengal did not rely on the contemporary press and platform alone for carrying an agitation for political reforms. They also realised the necessity of organising political associations. The first to be established in Bengal was an association, called 'BANGABHASA PRAKASIKA 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 the Jnananneshan on December 17, 1836. Bangabhasa Prakasika Sabha regarded the Government measures as highly injurious to the country.<sup>42</sup> It decided to summon a public meeting to discuss the proposal of sending a petition to the government signed by five thousand persons. A circular was accordingly distributed widely among the people in Calcutta and its immediate neighbourhood.<sup>43</sup> Actually our study is not concerned with the Associations (Sabha-Samiti) of Calcutta. But it is necessary to know how and under what circumstances the associations and institutions began to emerge. In July 1838, 'Zamindary Association' the name of which was soon changed to 'Landholders Association' was established. It was open to all persons having any stake in the land irrespective of caste, creed or country and it would keep in touch with all the districts.<sup>44</sup> Another organisation 'The British India Society' was established in July 1839, by Mr. Adam in order to rouse the interests of the English public in Indian affairs. The Landholders society of Calcutta decided to co-operate it and appointed a committee to supply regular information to the later and about the India's grievances and demands.<sup>45</sup> Another important Association was 'Bengal British India Society'. It was founded by Dwarakanath Tagore after his return from London in January 1843. There were thus two political associations

in Bengal since 1843, viz., the 'Landholders Society' and the 'Bengal British India Society'. The first represented aristocracy of wealth, and the other, aristocracy of intelligence.<sup>46</sup> These two existing political associations in Bengal silently merged themselves into a new one named, 'The British Indian Association'. This Association was founded on October 29, 1851.<sup>47</sup>

In the fifties, the British Indian Association was quite active and was complemented by the historian—Rutledge, as the great counterpart of similar English organisations. The 'Black Acts' controversy, in which the young Bengal leader—Ramgopal Ghosh—figured, led to much political excitement. As a result, there was the formation in 1851 of 'the British Indian Association' in which all groups joined in radicals, moderates and even the conservatives. The British India society of the radicals and the landholders association of the moderates being now both defunct, the new association forged a new comprehensive unity for the furtherance of Indian interests and defence of Indian rights. Unlike the two older bodies again, the new institution was exclusively Indian in membership. Debendranath Tagore, as the secretary of the Association, sent out a circular letter to other metropolitan towns to take up the work of organised agitation.<sup>48</sup>

## 2.8 ASSOCIATIONS IN NORTH BENGAL

Until the late nineteenth century, we don't have any information about Association or SABHA-SAMITI in North Bengal. The association of North Bengal in the initial stage could not play any significant role in the political, social and cultural history. Even with wide variation in cultural, social, ethnological identity of the people of the Himalayan region, under-development is the common factor bringing them together. Barring a few localised centres the density of population in the region was low. Virtual absence of roads and consequent difficulties in transportation narrowed down the range of social and economic contact with the outside world purchase of and sale of handicrafts and surplus of crops used to take place in the weekly or bi-weekly hats and also at the annual Mela or Fair in every year.<sup>49</sup>

It is well-known to all of us that the 'Indian Association' was established by S. N. Banerjee on July 26, 1876, though the formation of such a body was considered a year earlier i.e., June, 1875. Surendranath Banerjee in his 'A Nation in Making' reminisced : 'Political work in the mofussil was then 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'.<sup>50</sup> From the first annual report it is known that the association which had started with the membership of 70, had risen to 200. 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 Bogura, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Pabna etc. This was principally achieved by the all India political tour undertaken by Surendranath Banerjee on behalf of the Association.<sup>51</sup> From the information we observe that the all Indian political Association had its branches in some areas of North Bengal in the undivided Bengal. As our study is concerned with North Bengal which have changed its geographical shape in course of time, it is necessary to say that both socio-cultural and political associations emerged and played a significant role.

Like the Indian association, 'Brahmo Samaj' was another important socio-religious organisation which has its branches and activities in different towns of North Bengal. Keshab Chandra Sen joined the Brahmo Sabha in the year 1858 and within a few years he proceeded to stir it up from the stagnation into which it had fallen after the great days of the 'Tatvabodhini' movement. He started a 'Sangat Sabha' for religious discussions.<sup>52</sup> He launched out on mission tours, and appearing an all India figure. In East Bengal he aroused enthusiasm and alarm the district towns to build Brahmo group. The Brahmo Samaj was also established in various places of North Bengal. From Miss Collect's Raja Rammohan Ray's biographer Brahmo year book, Brahmo Samaj was established at Boalia in Rajshahi in 1859, Cooch Behar in 1873, Dinajpur in 1870, Jalpaiguri in 1870, and Rangpur in 1862.<sup>53</sup> in these district towns of

North Bengal so many socio-religious reform works were undertaken. In North Bengal Brahma Samaj activities became manifest, in the early eighties, in such places as Jalpaiguri, Saidpur and Siliguri, owing to the presence of Chandicharan Sen, well known as North Bengal workers.<sup>54</sup> He devoted all his spare time to the cause of Brahma Samaj at Jalpaiguri in North Bengal. After his departure the Samaj had suffered decline and the work partly being kept up at Jalpaiguri, by a number of Brahma families who have temporarily settled down there.<sup>55</sup>

The nineteenth century movements to reform the Hindu Society and Indian religion, like Brahmaism and Bhaktivadi Saktadharmo of Ramkrishna and Muktibadi Sevadharmo of Vivekananda, also made their impact in North Bengal. The Brahma congregation Hall of Jalpaiguri was established in the year 1901 (other opinion in 1904) and Ramkrishna Mission was established in 1923. Both Ramkrishna Mission and Brahma Samaj did much for the spread of modern education the benefit of which also reached to North Bengal. This two institutions gave much importance on education specially, the female education and social service. But it is found that their influence and sphere of action were limited to the educated middle classes of the urban areas.<sup>56</sup> It is evident that throughout the period of British rule Jalpaiguri remained essentially a rural and plantation district. But at the same time it is also evident that some voluntary organisations for social service named like 'ARYA SAMAJ' was formed in Jalpaiguri on July 20, 1904. This institution had a great role for the cultural practices and cultural activities of the district. Still this institution is in existence and playing a significant role in the cultural activities of the district. It may also be noted that this Arya Natya Samaj, an institution of glorious past is going to celebrate its centenary year. While discussing about the associations and institutions of North Bengal (SABHA-SAMITI) we have a lot of associations in different districts of North Bengal. Among them some were political and the others were working in socio-cultural areas. We have mentioned the name of such associations in some places which are at present laying in modern Bangladesh. But we have to mention those Associations

because before the partition 1947 those places were situated within the jurisdiction of North Bengal in undivided Bengal. Moreover, it is also necessary to mention that Rangpur and Rajshahi were the centre pot for socio-cultural activities in North Bengal. But after 1947, the jurisdiction of North Bengal has been changed and present North Bengal, the area of our study came into existence.

The town known as Rajshahi was always a famous centre of learning. Its importance was further augmented when it was transformed into headquarter of Rajshahi district in 1825 and that of Rajshahi division in 1875. Facilities for Western Education were created in the town through the establishment of high schools and college between 1828 and 1873. A Sanskrit College richly endowed by Rani Hemanta Kumari Devi of Puthia Raj Family was founded here in 1894. The aristocrats and landlords of this area worked jointly to establish in 1878 the 'Rajshahi Association' which provided a forum for reading papers on history, science, literature and art. A branch of 'Bangio Sahitya Parisad' was opened about this time at Rajshahi (1907) in addition to that eleven journals and periodicals were published from Rajshahi between 1865 and 1900 including the 'Jānankura' (1872) the 'Pratibimba' (1872) and 'Aitihāsik citra'. The last named, which was edited by none other than Akshay Kumar Maitreya was indeed very important because it was probably the first historical journal in vernacular language (Bengali) in India. It is also interesting to note that Akshay Kumar Maitreya began to publish this historical quarterly at the suggestion of great poet Rabindranath Tagore who was highly impressed by the literary efforts of Maitreya aimed at making his country-men conscious of their glorious historical past.<sup>57</sup>

Another important institution was the 'Varendra Research Society'. This was founded in June 1910 as a centre for the promotion of higher studies and research in the history of Bengal at the liberal patronage of Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray of Dighapatiya Raj family. Kumar himself acted as the president of the society with Akshaya Kumar Maitreya as the Director and Ramaprasad

Chanda as the honorary Secretary.<sup>58</sup> This institution, with its best effort founded a Museum which was historically very important. The museum of the society became a storehouse of antiquities which included sculpture , epigraphs, coins, terracottas, metal ware paintings and manuscripts collected from various phases of Bengal. For the proper utilization of all these collections the society built up a big library. It also arranged archaeological tours and excavations to attract students, teachers, and persons interested in history and antiquarian studies.<sup>59</sup>

In the context of present North Bengal the area of our study, we will make detailed discussion on different type of associations in a later chapter (see chapter 6). Some of which are already mentioned. Though there were some variations among the associations of present North Bengal, in spite of this their importance in respect of our study cannot be denied. In the present context we would like to mention the name of some associations of present North Bengal which had a significant contribution for the socio-cultural development of the region.

First of all we would mention the name of 'COOCH BEHAR SAHITYA SABHA', an outstanding socio-cultural association of North Bengal. It was founded in 1915 with the Royal patronage and it had achieved a significant contribution for the promotion of literary and cultural practices.<sup>60</sup> Next to Cooch Behar, a series of Associations/ organisations were founded at Jalpaiguri with different aims and objectives. Among them some were very much relevant with our study. Here we are to mention the names of some associations/ organisations.

- i) Debating Club, Jalpaiguri (1887)
- ii) Arya Natya Samaj, 1900 (another opinion 1904)
- iii) Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti (1928)
- iv) Jalpaiguri Muslim Sahitya Samiti (1931)
- v) The Anjuman-I-Islamia, Jalpaiguri (1892)

vi) The Indian Tea Planters Association (1915).

Apart from these Associations/organisations some other Associations were also founded at Jalpaiguri and they were GANA KALYAN SAMITI, MARWARI RELIEF SOCIETY, INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY, SISUNIKETAN, SISUMAHGAL, SISU-UDYAN and MILE-MISE (for reference see Chapter 6.2).

In Darjeeling district, we also get the reference of a good number of associations/ organisations which were to some extent different character from the associations of other districts of North Bengal (see chapter 6.10). Several associations/ organisations mostly of cultural and literary character emerged at Darjeeling to ventilate the grievances of the hill people and to fulfil their aspirations. The associations emerged at Darjeeling were as follows :

- i) Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (1924)
- ii) Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan (1932)
- iii) Nebula (1935)
- iv) Gorkha Samiti, later on 'Gorkha Association (1926)
- v) Gorkha Library (1918)
- vi) Hillmen's Association (1917)

In addition to these associations some other organisations/associations (samities) were formed in Darjeeling district and they were—Nepali Sahitya Adhayan Samiti (Kalimpong), Nepali Sahitya Prasar Samiti (Siliguri), Arya Samaj (Darjeeling Branch), Gorkha League (Darjeeling Branch). The details of all these associations/ organisations are studied in Chapter 6.10.

In Malda district, we also find some associations/ organisations which exercised some socio-cultural activities. Radhesh Chandra Seth, a renowned intellectual cum nationalist and Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar, renowned scholar and nationalist, were the main force to establish and activate these organisations. The associations/ organisations founded in Malda were ;

- i) Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha (Malda Branch). Its exact date of establishment is not known.
- ii) Malda Zila Sahitya Sammelan (1317 B.S.)
- iii) Malda National Council of Education (1907)
- iv) Malda Mhammadan Association. (1890)
- v) The Malda Association (1887)

The activities and contribution of all these associations/ organisations of Malda will be discussed in chapter 6 (see Chapter 6.11).

Like all these associations/ organisations mentioned above, we don't have information about association from West Dinajpur district (presently North and South Dinajpur). A very little are known in this respect and we will mention it in course of our study. Hence, in the present North Bengal districts, we find a huge number of associations emerged in course of different times. In our present context, most of these associations/ organisations got significant contribution for the socio-cultural and political development of North Bengal.

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## CHAPTER 3

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

#### 3.1 BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

It is quite natural that due to the "Deportation Law" prevailing in the Cooch Behar princely state (presently Cooch Behar district) any kind of seditious activities was not possible<sup>1</sup>. During the Swadeshi period, it is found that the king of Cooch Behar Princely State had some soft corner with this movement. But the press and Associations as such had no right to do anything which will encourage the public opinion against the state power. For example, we can mention one incident which warned the supporters of nationalist movement, specially the students of 'Victoria College (Presently Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal College). During the course of Non-Cooperation movement some students of Victoria College were to some extent getting prepared to take part in this movement.<sup>2</sup> In this context, His Highness the

Maharaja of Cooch Behar Sir Jitendra Narayan Bhup-Bahadur K.C.S.I. delivered a speech to the students of Victoria College, Cooch Behar, on 24th of March, 1921.<sup>3</sup> Some portions of this speech are mentioned here for our better understanding on the issue.

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

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

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

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

in his book “Dinajpurer Sangbadikatar Satabarsha” have mentioned about some publications and other literary works but they were not so much related with the contemporary political activities. No doubt they had some contributions in the context of socio-cultural life but as our area of study is different, we would not discuss it which is beyond the jurisdiction of our area. In spite of all these we have some reference regarding publication in this region and it had definitely a political character. It is evident that we find some pamphlets/leaflets published from Balurghat of West Dinajpur district with some nationalist news against the colonial rulers.<sup>5</sup> As a result we see that the British Government strictly warned the ‘Balurghat Trading and Publishing Company’ in 1930.<sup>6</sup> Except this we don’t have any other definite information of press publication in this district. But during the course of ‘Quit India Movement’ the Dinajpur district had a significant contribution in the context of national movement. As we have no reference of contemporary publication or archival record, it is not possible to make any documentary study about this district. So our study in this regard will be confined mainly within two districts of North Bengal, viz., Jalpaiguri and Malda.

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

### **3.2 IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS OF JALPAIGURI.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.3 IMPORTANT ASSOCIATIONS OF JALPAIGURI

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

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

First of all we will mention about a cultural organisation of Jalpaiguri. In 1900 (other reference, 1904), a voluntary socio-cultural organisation named 'ARYA NATYA SAMAJ' was formed in the district headquarters with the initiative of some local gentlemen.<sup>12</sup> But about this organisation (ANS) we have some other reference and it differed with the year of establishment of this organisation. During the Swadeshi Movement in the year 1907 a national school was founded in Jalpaiguri town, and in the initial stage it was located at the ground of the 'Arya Natya Samaj' established in the year 1904.<sup>13</sup> So, in the District Gazetteer of Jalpaiguri we find that the Arya Natya Samaj was established in the year 1900, and Ranjit Dasgupta in his book mentioned that this organisation was founded in the year 1904. What ever it may be, that is not the subject of our study. What we can say about this organisation (Arya Natya Samaj) is that, it was a drama-cum cultural organisation. In the cultural life of Jalpaiguri, this organisation must have to be given the credit of a high standard cultural platform, which had a significant contribution to the cultural life of Jalpaiguri. In this connection one thing may be mentioned that the auditorium of the Arya Natya Samaj have been used as the Venue of many nationalist activities. Available sources suggest that the Arya Natya Samaj had a close link with the nationalist activities. The prominent personalities of the district were attached with this social and cultural organization. Many cultural programme were arranged by this organization. More appropriately, it may be mentioned here that the Arya Natya Samaj with its cultural activities have patronized the

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

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

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

Again in 1943, Jalpaiguri was affected by flood and the common people of their area suffered much. In 1943, the Jalpaiguri Relief Committee was formed to help the famine-stricken people of the district. Side by side a ‘Flood Committee’ was formed and functioned upto 1946.<sup>15</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 3.4 IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS OF MALDA

In our present discussion, now we would attempt to mention about the important publications of Malda district and at the same time we would discuss about their involvement and contributions in the contemporary socio-cultural and political situations. In our discussion on the background of press and publications of North Bengal (see Chapter 2) we have explained the growth and development of press publication in the Malda district. However, for our present study we would have to mention some important publications of Malda. From the last decade of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, when the Western educated middle class intelligentsia of North Bengal began to publish newspapers and periodicals in their respective districts, Malda also shared and took a pioneering role. The person who initiated the process of publication from Malda was Radhesh Chandra Seth. 'KUSUM', the first monthly periodical Published from Malda was edited by Radhesh Chandra Seth, a front ranking intellectual of Malda district. The exact date of its publication is not known, but it is assumed by some other references that KUSUM was first Published probably in 1890.<sup>22</sup> Apart from this Radhesh Chandra Seth had the

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

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

An overall study about the publications of Malda is not the purpose of our present study. The present study attempts to look into the contribution of some publications in the socio-cultural and political life of Malda. In this regard now we will mention something about the most important and reputed newspaper of Malda. This newspaper was 'GOURDOOT' edited by Radhesh Chandra Seth, and it started its publication from 1896.<sup>26</sup> Though it started its publication from 1896, but within a short period the publication of this newspaper came to an end temporarily due to some severe financial stringency of its editor (Radhesh Chandra Seth), which is already mentioned in our discussion of Chapter 5. Now we will try to have an analysis on 'GOURDOOT' regarding its intellectual social, cultural and political involvement in the district of Malda.

### 3.5 GOURDOOT AND SOME SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES

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

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

### 3.5.1 SOCIAL ISSUES

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

Another problem of the poor people of Malda was the enormous Price-hike of the essential commodities. This unnatural price-hike, which resulted a constant suffering of the people, was reported by Gourdoot, dated August 17, 1944. The Gourdoot strongly protested against these dishonest motives of the businessmen of Malda. According to the editor of Gourdoot, some dishonest merchants were responsible for this sudden price-hike. To stop this ill motives of the merchants and to stop the financial stringency of the common people, this newspaper (Gourdoot) made an appeal to use district administration to take drastic action against them. The editor of this paper expressed the opinion that the situation about the price of the essential commodities were as grave as it was in 1943.<sup>31</sup> Regarding this issue it can be said that as a newspaper/media

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.2 POLITICAL ISSUES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.5.3 ROLE OF THE COMMUNISTS

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.6 IMPORTANT ASSOCIATIONS OF MALDA

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

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

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

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

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

In the case of Malda district we see that when the government remained almost indifferent about the cultural life of the people and any social development, some sort of cultural organisations were formed by the local intellectuals and social activists for the interest of their own society, caste, community, education and other essential necessities. In these circumstances, first of all we would mention about one socio-religious organisation i.e. 'RAMAPUR BOALIA DHARMA SABHA'. Actually it was an organisation of Rajshahi district in present Bangladesh. About the press publication in Malda we get the reference that Radhesh Chandra Seth published a paper namely 'KUSUM' in 1885.<sup>56</sup> But as it was of very short duration, Radhesh Chandra started to publish one paper, which was a mouthpiece of 'RAMPUR BOALIA DHARMA SABHA'.<sup>57</sup> (See the background of the publication of Malda in this chapter). In this connection it may be assumed that a branch of Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha was established in Malda. Nothing details are known about this organisation. But it is assumed that it was an organisation/association to perform the socio-religious practices.

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

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

Apart from these publications, he started to write one book on the geography of Malda. But unfortunately before completing this book he departed from this world in the year 1911.<sup>59</sup> Radhesh Chandra with such literary knowledge and intellectual qualities took the initiative to arrange a Sahitya Sammelan at Malda as a mark of Cultural development. To make it a success he personally made a contact with the renowned historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar who happens to be a son of Rajshahi a district of undivided North Bengal and invited him to kindly be present in the Sahitya Sammelan to be held at Malda. During 1910, a person (Radhesh Chandra Seth) from Malda was taking this type of initiative really claims some special credit. Ultimately it is found that a 'SAHITYA SAMMELAN OF NORTH BENGAL' was held at Malda on 25<sup>th</sup> day of PAUSH, 1317B.S.<sup>60</sup> A good number of intellectuals and literarily interested persons attended this Sahitya Sammelan and as a result the total cultural lift of Malda district was very much encouraged. Subsequently it is found that in Malda, some literate persons got interest in literary and cultural activities which may be marked as a development in the cultural life of Malda. So in this brief discussion it may be assumed that the 'Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan', within its limited scope achieved much for the cultural regeneration in the district. In this regard one thing is clear that a Swadeshi spirit was created in sub-regional level. We can refer his book's Malda her Itihaser Upadan, which is very much symbolic in the context of Swadeshi spirit.

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

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

For the study about the Association of Malda, now we will confine our discussion on a particular Association, which was more or less trying for the betterment of Mohammedans community. This Association was Malda Mohammedans Association (Established in 1890.) Its object was to improve the social, political and educational condition of the Mohammedans community of the district<sup>62</sup> (for details see chapter 5). In the district, according to government reports it is found, the Mohammedans were the second largest community. According to W. W. Hunter (SAB, Vol. VII) in Malda, the population is almost evenly divided into Hindus and Mohammedans. More specifically, it can be said that the proportion of Hindus is greatest in the North and West of the district and of Mohammedan's in the South.<sup>63</sup> So, it is not unlikely that being a major community of the district the Mohammedans will try to develop their community at large. The membership of this Association was open to all educated Mohammedans and its official business was transacted by an elected committee of 30 members, mostly resident of English Bazar. A general meeting was held once in a year. In the year 1890, total number of its member was 130. Name of the president and secretary of the Association were respectively, Maulavi Muhammad Ismail Chaudhury and Khan Sahil Abdul Aziz Khan B.L. The Association was mainly concerned on the questions affecting Mohammedans interest.<sup>64</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After joining the Bengal National College in Calcutta, Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar decided to open a branch of it at his birthplace, Malda. With this intention he had been at Malda for sometime. When he was busy with the programme of national education, he realized the urgency to provide proper national education to the poor, illiterate and ignorant people of his birthplace (Malda). After reaching Malda, Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar within a very short time made all necessary arrangements with the help of some of his associates and with a very enthusiastic Swadeshi spirit he established the 'MALDA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION' on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1907.<sup>70</sup>

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

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

In the context of Folk culture of Malda, which is known as 'GAMBHIRA', Benoy Sarkar had a great contribution. To encourage the people of Malda associated with Gambhira he announced a prize of Rupees 25/- (Twenty five) for collection and compilation of the history of Gambhira. This announcement of prize for Gambhira was published in 'Malda Samachar' (1907). Getting inspired by this, Haridas Palit published an article on "Adyer Gambhira" which was published by 'BANGIYA SAHITYA PARISHAD' in 1909.<sup>74</sup> On the basis of this article, Benoy Sarkar, when he was in London, wrote and published one of his famous book, 'The Folk Element in Hindu Culture' in 1917.

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

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## CHAPTER 4

### GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-BENGALI PRESS AND SOME ASSOCIATIONS IN NON-BENGALI DOMINATED AREAS OF NORTH BENGAL

#### 4.1 BACKGROUND

In our Present chapter we have to discuss about some press publications and Associations, which have emerged from some Non-Bengali origin. In this context one question arises, why these non-Bengali institutions originated. From a broad perspective, it can be said that this is not unlikely due to some geographical and ethnical identity or background. We know that Indian history and culture is multi-dimensional and in this connection Bengal has all kinds of priority. In North Bengal also we find the same picture in respect of ethnicity and culture. In our previous chapter, we have mentioned very clearly about the geographical areas of North Bengal. (See Chapter 1) While observing about the cultural and intellectual activities of the people of North Bengal, it is found that the educated people and the intellectuals of Darjeeling District and some, area of Jalpaiguri (Duars) were publishing press and periodicals in different languages other than Bengali. During the period of our study we find a large number of vernacular publications from different parts of present North Bengal (six district). In this context one interesting and notable thing is that North Bengal was representing not only the Bengali newspapers, Journals and periodicals, but also English, Hindi, Nepali, Tibetan and Rajbanshi (local dialect) newspapers that enriched and focused the social, cultural and some other activities of North Bengal.

In these activities of Darjeeling hill areas and some parts of Duars, the British rulers had a very important role to play. After coming of the British in Darjeeling and other adjacent areas, the education and other cultural activities were coming into light. In this regard, the year 1866 may be taken as a marking

period in the history of Darjeeling. During this time peace was established within its boarder and thenceforward began the march of progress and administration cohesiveness. Rapid progress was at last made in the development of the communications of the district, which the Sikkim expedition of 1860 and the Bhutanese war the year before had shown to be vitally essential. It is also found that from that time the first attempt to make the hills the home of European education was started. For some years Bishop Cotton had been advocating the establishment of Hill Schools for Europeans, and his efforts were supported by Lord Canning who pointed out in a celebrated minutes how the domiciled English and Europeans would, if neglected become profitless, unmanageable, and a glaring reproach to the government, while if properly cared for, they might become a source of strength to British rule and at usefulness to India.<sup>1</sup> The main result of this movement was the establishment of several Hill schools, the first of which St. Paul's School, which was transferred in 1864 from Calcutta to Darjeeling.<sup>2</sup> The establishment of this School at Darjeeling is a very important step for the development of English education in the hilly region. Subsequently within a short time a good number of English schools were established at Darjeeling as a result of which the people of Darjeeling hill areas got the facilities of modern education.

#### 4.2 BACKGROUND OF EDUCATION IN THE DARJEELING HILL AREAS

It is well known to all that education is the most powerful instrument for the intellectual and cultural exercise of any place or area. Without literary background it is absolutely impossible to have any literary activities, intellectual interaction and cultural practices. In this respect the Christian missionaries were the pioneer to introduce modern education in the hill area of Darjeeling.<sup>3</sup> For the last generation practically the only organization for meeting the primary education of the people of the hills has been the Church of

Scotland Mission.<sup>4</sup> We find some reference in the District Gazetteer of Darjeeling that Government has had its own Anglo-Hindi and High Schools and has established and maintained several vernacular schools in the Terai. But it has had such confidence in the Mission- a confidence which public opinion, as voiced by municipalities following the lead of Government by planters and by Indians of different classes and creeds, has emphasized as not misplaced that up till the year 1906. The Mission for its outstanding contribution in primary education got so much credit. For this reputation it is found that the Government contributions to primary education, as well as those of the two municipalities of the district (Darjeeling and Kalimpong), have been entrusted to the Mission for expenditure; for it has been found that practical solid-educational work on broad wise lines has been obtained through the Mission at a minimum cost to Government.

When the British took over the district, it is found that popular education was practically unknown.<sup>5</sup> Only a few numbers of better class or boys of some well to do families got the facilities of private tutors. For education in general there was none and no schools worthy of the name were in existence. The first attempt to reach the hill people by education was made by Revd. W. Star, a private missionary, who added to his record of good work in Darjeeling by opening a school for Lepchas. After him came a band of German Missionaries, one of whom, Mr. Niebel, devoted himself especially for schoolwork, prepared some Lepcha primars, and gathered some boys together into schools. But it was not till the advent of the Revd. William Macfarlane, in the year 1869 that any broad scheme of vernacular education was devised for the district. Mr. Macfarlane soon set himself to draw some statesmanlike scheme of education based on that of which he aimed at putting some opportunity for even the initial stage of learning within the reach of every child. He realized that the first thing necessary to secure this end was a class of trained teachers; and with this object he collected a band of hill lads, to teach

whom he devoted the first year of his missionary life in the hills. This class was the nucleus of the Training School at Kalimpong, which now trains teachers for the whole district. Moreover, to encourage the cause of general education in the Darjeeling Hill area, Mr. Macfarlane induced Government to offer Scholarship for the students during their course of education. He also grasped the fact that the Nepalese were people of a stronger character than any of the other hill tribes, and he soon found that their language was so akin to Hindi that he could use many Hindi Text-books as a means of instruction. He also found that the Lepchas and Bhutias from their contact with Hindi and Nepali-speaking people, were soon able to converse in the language. So he fixed upon it as the 'Lingua Franca' and in it prepared textbooks, some of which are still in use in the district. For the development of education in the hill he was so interested that he himself taught hour after hour in the face of many discouragements, great difficulties, and the frequent disappearance of the most promising pupils. With this non-stop effort, at last he was able to offer, with the help of Government, to start primary schools all over the district. Quite naturally and as per the requirement of the situation, Government came forward to his aid with liberal grants. Subsequently it is found that within a few years, Mr. Macfarlane's system had so taken hold of the district that in 1873 there were 25 primary schools with 615 boys and girls receiving instruction. During those days it was not so easy to do all this thing for the cause of education in a hill station like Darjeeling. But it is the reality that the Scotland Mission out of its own interest with education did so much for the spread of education. In this way the educational Department of the Church of Scotland Mission work in the district became a most important factor in the spread of knowledge amongst the people.

It is evident that in Darjeeling the Christian missionaries were the pioneers in the field of education.<sup>6</sup> In 1850, Revd. W. Start a private missionary opened a school for the Lepchas. After him, came Neibel, a German missionary

who prepared Lepcha primars and collected some boys for the school.<sup>7</sup> It appears from the Annual General Administration Report of the Cooch Behar Division, in the year 1867-1868 that there was a so-called Anglo-Vernacular School in which English, Urdu and Hindi were taught. Again in the Annual Administrative Report of the Cooch Behar Division (AARC), in the year 1869-70, it was stated that one School (Private) for the education of the Lepchas had been established at Lebong and another (it was also private) for "Hindu" at phanseedewa.<sup>8</sup> Later on, many other schools in different times had been established in Darjeeling where Non-Bengali Vernacular teachings were reflected on press publication.

Apart from the missionary activities in the field of education, Government has its own Anglo-Vernacular Schools at Darjeeling and Kurseong reaching a special class principally the children of Bengali and other immigrants into the district. But the main educational work must always remain that of primary schools, the object of which is to teach the hill children to read and write in their own vernaculars. In this system/ stage one thing always kept in mind that the instruction given in the primary schools is of the simplest, viz., reading, writing spelling, arithmetic, a little geography and a very little science.

Another person who left significant contribution for the education of hill people was Revd. R. Kilgour. If we mention some statistics about the education of the hill people it will show how great the progress of education among the native population of the hills has been during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. From Government report it appears that during 1860-61 there was only one school receiving Government aid, the English School at Darjeeling, which had a total attendance of 16 pupils. Nearly after ten years, in 1870-71 one more English School and 16 Vernacular Schools had been started, and there were, in all, 18 Government and aided schools attended by 500 pupils; in 1872-73 the district contained 3 Middle schools, 23 Primary schools, 1 Normal and Girls' schools, the number of pupils on the rolls being 680. So during these ten years,

we see that the system of education in the Hill area of Darjeeling was going through in increasing both the number of schools as well as pupils. Again in district record of Darjeeling in the year 1894-95 the number of schools had increased to 109, with an attendance of 3,830 pupils and in 1904-05 there were altogether 142 schools with 3,950 pupils. Of these schools, two are High schools, of which one at Darjeeling had an attendance of 220 and the other at Kalimpong, which contained 70 boys. Though these figures does not mean to show the total picture of education in Darjeeling Hill area, but it gives a picture on the state of education and the rapid progress on it. After a long time if we look into the census report of Darjeeling in the year 1901, it seems a special return was made of those who were able to read and write any language. This was no doubt a good result of the special initiative for the spread of education in the Darjeeling Hill area. Later on it is well known that the vernacular and English education in Darjeeling reached a considerable height and the literacy rate of the district is high ranking in our state and remarkable also.

Our main perspective is not to explain the system of education or its progress in the Darjeeling Hill areas. But when we are to study about the press publication and formation of Associations and their cultural and intellectual activities it is very much necessary to know the background of it. As because without educational background such exercise could not be possible. This is not the sufficient discussion about the background of education in the hill area of Darjeeling. As it is not the field of our discussion, we have just mentioned something about it.

### 4.3 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-BENGALI VERNACULAR PRESS.

Among the five districts of North-Bengal (presently six), Darjeeling district, specially the Hill area had something different phenomenon in so many spheres like ethnicity, language, education, communication and also in the field of national movement. To be more specific, ethnically, linguistically and as

well as culturally the hill portion of the district had a different character from the rest of North Bengal. Though, there were a considerable number of vernacular publications from Darjeeling, none of them were published in Bengali version. The root cause of it must be the educational background in Darjeeling. Moreover, among the inhabitants of Darjeeling hill sections (except Siliguri) the total number of Bengali speaking people were very negligible. The permanent residents of Darjeeling were mainly the Nepalese-Bhutias and Lepchas and a few also belonged to other community. Quite naturally in this non-Bengali environment, the press and publications emerged there were most expected to be in non-Bengali version. Above all, the benefits of education encouraged the inhabitants of hills to exercise their literary activities in English. In this connection, the history of Darjeeling and its inhabitants makes an interesting study. We are not to discuss about this, as it is not concerned with our subject. However, the British people like Grant, Lloyd, Herbert, Campbell, Edger and Cloud with their personal effort had left very important records about different aspects of Darjeeling and its strategic and geographical position. Eminent Scholars like B.H. Hodgson, Csoma de Koros, J.D. Hooker, L. A. Waddell, Lord Ronaldsay, Sarat Chandra Das and Rahul Sankrityayan were struck by its immense potentiality as an area of cultural study. In the field of press-publication, specially in the Hill area of Darjeeling it is evident that a complete Non-Bengali influence had been reflected. This is due to so many factors some of which had been mentioned above. In this context, it may be mentioned that professor Jahar Sen in his essay have made a detailed study on the subject.<sup>9</sup>

In the initial stage we get information about a series of Non-Bengali vernacular press and some publications in English. It appears from the official report in the year 1892 that the following newspapers and journals were in circulation in Darjeeling district. Here we can mention the name of some

weekly and monthly publication in different non-Bengali version. These are as follows: -

The Darjeeling News (weekly in English)

- I. News and Notes (Monthly in English)
- II. Darjeeling Standard (Weekly in English).
- III. Masaiki Masik Samachar (Monthly in Hindi).<sup>10</sup>

Again, in the official record of Darjeeling in the year 1897-98, we find mention of the following journals and Newspapers.

- I. The Darjeeling Times (Weekly in English)
- II. The Darjeeling Standard (Weekly in English)
- III. Darjeeling Mission Ka Masik Samachar Patrika, (Monthly in Hindi), and
- IV. Darjeeling-Kalimpong-Sikkim News (monthly in English).<sup>11</sup>

From the official records and from reference of the history of the Nepali literature it is quite evident that a series of newspapers were in regular circulation in Darjeeling. As we don't get the original copy of those publications, we cannot categorically discuss on it. But it can be presumed that a literate intellectual class was very much engaged with the cultural and intellectual exercise in Darjeeling through media and press publications. It is interesting to note that when a lot of papers and periodicals were published regularly in the Hill area of Darjeeling, we don't find even a single paper in Bengali in the Hill area. It was solely for linguistic, ethnic and different cultural background of Darjeeling. Though we find a lot of Non-Bengali papers, the main purpose of them were not definitely known. How far they were engaged in the literary and cultural activities, we don't have definite proof. But one thing is very clear that the Tea-planters had an important role for the publications. The Tea-planters from their commercial outlook and necessity

inspired these publications. They also used the printing press for printing handbill, cash Book and some other commercial cum official documents. So it is obvious that in the initial stage of printing and publications the Tea-Planters had some significant contribution. Another factor is also important on the issue of publication in Darjeeling. The government for their administrative works generally used the press. Most of the government official papers and documents were also printed there. So, this also encouraged the printing machinery in Darjeeling. Apart from this some other academically interested persons with their cultural taste and intellectual character used this press publication as an intellectual and cultural exercise.<sup>12</sup>

When we are to study on the growth and development of the Non-Bengali vernacular publication, it is expected that in the hill area of Darjeeling where most of the population were Nepali speaking must produce or introduce Nepali press. But the real picture was something different and initially we don't get any Nepali publication in Darjeeling. It appears from the official reports of the year 1892, 1897 and 1898 that though a dozen of newspapers were in circulation, all were either in English or in Hindi, we don't have even a single publication in Nepali language during this time. The reasons for the late publication of press in Nepali Version had a different background which is not the matter of discussion of our study. Now in our present discussion we are to mention about the publication of Nepali Newspapers in the pre-independence period.

So far our investigation is concerned it appears that the first Journal (Publication) in Nepali Language in India was 'GORKHA BHARAT JIVAN' and it was published in the year 1886.<sup>13</sup> This publication was started by Motiram Bhatta, a pioneer figure in Nepali literature, and printed by Babu Ram Krishna Verma in his press Gorkha Bharat Jiban at Varanasi. From this reference it is interesting to note that, though our study is concerned with the six district of present North Bengal and now we are discussing on the Non-

Bengali Vernacular Press, we find the first Nepali Publication not in the Nepali populated area of Darjeeling but at Varanasi in U. P. The young contributors to this journal hailed from Nepal, but they settled at Varanasi for study. Laxmi Sundas in his discussion on Nepali "PATRA-PATRIKA" is of the opinion that they must have been imbued with inspiration from Hindi and Nepali literature. The effort of this young and literate contributors were focused mainly on the enrichment of Nepali language and literature and homogenization of Nepali Society by acquisition and assimilation.<sup>14</sup>

After the publication of 'GORKHA BHARAT JIVAN', we don't have any other publication within few years. Within the jurisdiction of our study, it is found that the first Journal/newspaper in Nepali language published from Darjeeling was GORKHA KHOBAR KAGAT'. Its first issue was published in the year 1901 and it was edited by Ganga Prasad Pradhan.<sup>15</sup> While we are to make a brief survey about the journals and other publications of Darjeeling, it is found that during this time the Nepali language made an exercise to acquire literary qualities through newspapers and journals as a result of which so many publication came out within a short time. The paper 'GORKHA KHOBAR KAGAT' had a different background also. Its editor Ganga Prasad Pradhan was an active worker of Scottish Baptist Mission. Quite naturally the paper focused on the missionary activities in the Darjeeling hill area.

Although Benaras could be said to have been the literary centre for Indian Nepalese for the first three decades of this century, Darjeeling published its first Nepali periodical in 1901. The 'GORKHA KHABAR KAGAT', a monthly paper, which continued publication for 30 (thirty) years, was a very different venture from the other periodicals of the time, as its principal aim was to propagate the Christian faith among the Nepalese of the region.<sup>16</sup> Its editor was a vicar, the Rev. Ganga Prasad Pradhan, who seems to have paid very little attention to the language of his journal as long as it communicated the required message, Paras Mani Pradhan, a noted grammarian was the another important

person attached with the publication of this periodical. The 'Gorkha Khabar Kagat' was regarded with suspicion by most Nepali-speaking Hindu and its parochial and proselytizing articles were written in language which was widely criticized for its colloquial 'Roughless' and grammatical inconsistencies. Its long life is surprising in view of the fact that it rarely sold more than 50 (Fifty) copies of each issue.<sup>17</sup>

This paper was published in simple non-literary spoken Nepali. It had some special interest on Society and the activities of the common people. Moreover, this paper published news and other information for the enlightenment of the common people. During this period the main concern of the journals published from 1912-1939 was investigation to different aspects of Nepali Society, Culture and language propagation of republican ideas and condemnation of the social evils like child marriage and polygamy. It implies that these publications were actively engaged in Social reforms. They also propagated the cause of education for the women and advocated for a radical change in social outlook.<sup>18</sup>

In the year 1918, a literary journal named 'CHANDRIKA' was published from Darjeeling. This publication could not survive for long and most probably it continued for two years only. Though this paper was in existence for a very short time, but it is appreciable that a small literary group emerged in Darjeeling based on this publication. This paper named 'CHANDRIKA' was edited by Dr. Parasmani Pradhan.<sup>19</sup> In true sense, it was the first literary journal in Nepali language. In this connection it can be said that this publication played an important role for the growth and development of modern Nepali literature.<sup>20</sup> It was printed in the Hari Press of Kurseong. The 'CHANDRIKA' proclaimed in an editorial column that the Gorkha language has its origin in Sanskrit language or Deva-Vani, which was being spoken by Fifty-two lakhs of Gorkhas.<sup>21</sup>

In 1930, we find another journal namely 'ADARSHA', Published from Kalimpong. It was a monthly journal and its editor was Sesh Moni Pradhan. 'ADARSHA' had a distinct character because this bulletin focused specially on the financial situation and economic activities of the hill people. From some issues of the journal, it is evident that this paper dealt with the economic problems of the people of the Hill areas of Darjeeling District.<sup>22</sup> In this context the paper got a good response from the Hill people.

The hill people of Darjeeling on the basis of their ethnical and cultural identity formed an association. The name of the association was 'NEBULA'. The word NEBULA itself identify three communities/tribes of hill. NEBULA means: - Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha. This Association out of their own literary interest published a journal namely 'NEBULA' as their spokesman in the year 1935. The editor of this journal was K.D.Pradhan.<sup>23</sup> The contributors of this paper were to some extent politically interested and they involved themselves with the political activities. Quite naturally their political outlook were reflected on the publication of 'NEBULA'. As a result, this paper was always alarmed with the political demands of Darjeeling Hill people. It is not unlikely and unreal that due to the political exercise of some literate Hill people through this publication, an intellectual group/class emerged in the Darjeeling Hill area. Some of them engaged themselves in different type of social work.

After the publication of 'NEBULA' in the year 1935, we find another publication in Non-Bengali version in Darjeeling. In the District Gazetteer of Darjeeling we do find the mention of another Nepali Vernacular press. In the year 1940, this new paper 'KHOJI' was published and its editor was Rupnarayan Singha.<sup>24</sup> It was a monthly journal and it was mostly literary in character. In this context one thing should be mentioned that like 'NEBULA' it was also the product of a social organization. The journal 'NEBULA' was published with the initiative of 'NEBULA ASSOCIATION'. Like wise 'KHOJI' a literary journal was also published with the initiative of another

social organization of Darjeeling hill area. The name of this organization was 'GORKHA DUKSHA NIBARAK SAMMELAN' (See Chapter 6.10.2). It was purely a social organization patronized by a good number of young and literate hill people Man Kumar Chhetri, K.B.Gurung, Keshab Bahadur Chhetri, Dr. Sushila Pradhan and some other persons were the regular contributors of 'KHOJI'.<sup>25</sup> With the publication of this paper one significant fact is evident that some social organizations were coming into light through media. Gorkha Duksha Nibarak Sammelan was one of the examples. However, with the name of this organization it is clear to us that the life of the Gorkhas in the hill was not always full of pleasure. They had to suffer due to so many problems, which are still existing and known to all of us. But the interesting thing is that before independence, in the year 1940 onward, a social organization like Gorkha Duksha Nibarak Sammelan was performing its duties and used the media and generated the public opinion, which can be regarded as a landmark in the history of press publication in the Darjeeling Hill.

This is not all, we have some other reference and information regarding publication in Nepali language in Darjeeling. M. J. Hut mentioned the names of two papers. One of that was published from Darjeeling and the other from Kalimpong. The name of these two papers were 'GORKHALI RABI' and 'GAUM SUNDAR PATRIKA'.<sup>26</sup> The paper 'GORKHALI RABI' was published from Darjeeling. Though this publication started with some promising manner and got a good response from the hill people, but unfortunately it survived for a few years only. So far it is known about 'Gorkhali Rabi', its duration was from 1933 to 1937.<sup>27</sup> According to M. J. Hut, the other paper 'GAUM SUNDAR PATRIKA' was published from Kalimpong, another Hill Station in the district of Darjeeling and the first issue of it was published in the year 1939.<sup>28</sup> Nothing details is known about this paper. In this context one thing may be noted that the publications in Nepali language in the Darjeeling district was not concentrated in the head quarter of

Darjeeling. The two other hill stations like Kalimpong and Kurseong also got the interest of publication and the literate people of this hill town were also conscious with their literary, cultural and intellectual exercises. We have already mentioned about the publication from Kalimpong. The Kurseong town had some thing distinction in printing machinery as a result of which we see that the first literary journal in Nepali language 'CHANDRIKA' was printed in the 'HARI PRESS' of Kurseong.

In our previous discussion we have already mentioned that some organization out of their own literary interest published papers or journals as their campaigning issue or publicity organ. Here, we would again mention the name of one outstanding Nepali literary journal/periodical which was the mouthpiece of 'The Nepali Sahitya Sammelan' (Nepali literature Association). No doubt, it was an organization established following the spirit of 'Bangio-Sahitya Parishad' and 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan'. This literary and cultural organization was established in the year 1924. This organization took the initiative for the development of Nepali language and literature. With the view of their cultural and literary activities, this organization decided to publish a literary periodical. As a result of which, "THE NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELAN PATRIKA" was published in the year 1932.<sup>29</sup> The Editor of this paper (journal) was Padma Prasad Pradhan. It was a monthly publication. Renowned advocate Rupnarayan Singh and Parashmani Pradhan were its main contributors. This paper with a special care did a lot for the development of Nepali language and literature. In fact the initiative taken by this publication got a good response in this perspective. The publication of 'THE NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELAN PATRIKA' continued for a long time. After a long time, in the year 1959, the name of the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan Patrika was converted into "DIYALO". The reasons for which this change came into being are not definitely known. However, in a changed form the mouth piece of 'THE NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELAN', 'DIYALO' was published for the

first time in the year 1964, and the same journal survives even at present under the name 'DIYALO'.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, with the decline of Banaras as a Nepali literary and political centre after the overthrow of the Ranas in 1950, Darjeeling has become the second most important town in the Eastern Himalaya for Nepali writers.<sup>31</sup>

For the growth and development of the Nepali language and literature, Paras Mani Pradhan was most renowned and active campaigner. He was the person who was first concerned with the controversies surrounding the issue of standardization and later made great effort to obtain official recognition of Nepali as a major literary language from the Government of West Bengal in 1961 as well as Government of India.

Between 1955 and 1961 the movement for making Nepali the official language for administration in the three subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong various political hues emerged. Apart from political parties like C. P. I. and A. I. G. L. who found for the issue on the floor of the West Bengal legislative Assembly. There were also non-political organizations that helped to bring pressure on the West Bengal government. Ultimately the West Bengal Official Language Bill was passed in 1961 stating that the Bengali and Nepali language would be used for official purpose of the state in the three subdivision of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. In this issue Parasmani Pradhan played an important role and he came forward immediately to help the Nepali community in implementing the Nepali language in the government offices.<sup>32</sup>

Another important publication in Nepali was 'GORKHLI'. It was the first Nepali weekly in India.<sup>33</sup> Although it could not maintain circulation beyond the seventh week of the second year (1916), it was very highly regarded by Nepali writers: Suryavikram Jnavali, the editor of this publication (GORKHALI) was a Benaras born Nepali who was extremely active in Nepali literary circles. This publication played a very significant role for the Socio-

Cultural development of this region. The declared aims of 'GORKHALI' were the provisions of educational reform and caste-divisions amongst the Nepalese communities.<sup>34</sup> For the development of the Nepali literature, a great deal of attention was paid by this publication reflecting a growing awareness of literary language. In the first issue of 'GORKHALI' published in 1915, its editor Suryavikram Janavali exposed his objectives in the editorial statement. Some portion of his statement is quoted: -

'At a time when men of all races have applied themselves to the development of their languages, it is most regrettable that it is only our Gorkha brothers who have all owed their language to lag behind. Our language is just as capable of spreading knowledge and wisdom as any other. Yet Calcutta University considers our language to be weak and affords it no place (in its syllabus). Because there is no prospect of progress for a language, which remains oblivious of the notions of Science and Art, we have opened a publishing house, the Himalaya press in Kashi, the sacred centre of learning. As a service to our Gorkhali brothers, we have brought out a weekly paper entitled 'GORKHALI'.<sup>35</sup>

Jnavali attempted to drum out nationalism with his historical writings and his attitudes were reflected by the nationalistic and patriotic poems of Dharanidhar Kairala (Sharma) a famous poet of Darjeeling. A few lines of his poem are mentioned here as recorded by M. J. Hut in his book 'Nepali- A National language and its literature'.

"Oh my country men! Up and awaken!

Join in with progress, join in now,

Wash away the dust from your minds,

Cast away the purse of Fear".<sup>36</sup>

We have information about some other publications in Nepali language from Darjeeling in the pre-independent period. But we got no scope to mention

about all of them. Even in the post-independent period we got a series of publications, which have performed their social responsibility in respect of cultural and intellectual exercise. For instance, we can mention that in 1945 another newspaper entitled Gorkha was published from Darjeeling. 'GORKHA LEAGUE', the regional political organization of Darjeeling hill area (1943)<sup>37</sup> published its mouthpiece 'GORKHA' in 1945. Ranadhir Subba was the editor of this paper and it continued for a long time.<sup>38</sup> Though this publication was the mouthpiece of a political organization, it got much importance for its literary and cultural practice. In our present discussion we may have more information on press publications. For example, it could be mentioned that before our independence, Theodore Menon Published a Journal, entitled 'SATHI' in 1949, from Darjeeling. Apart from this some other periodicals and journals were also published from different places of Darjeeling hill area. Now we are just to mention the name of those publications. 'HIMADRI' a Nepali Vernacular periodical was published from Kalimpong in the year 1948. 'BHARATI' was published from Darjeeling in 1949 and this publication continued up to 1958. Another Nepali periodical was 'HAMRO KATHA' and it was published from Darjeeling in 1949. Last of all we get a periodical namely 'SIKHSI' published from Darjeeling in the year 1949. There may be some other Non-Bengali vernacular press also. Our purpose is not only to present a list of those publications. The objectively of our study is to see the role and contributions of the press in the literary, cultural, social and intellectual exercise.<sup>39</sup>

So long we have discussed about the Nepali Vernacular press. But among the Non-Bengali Vernacular publications, we have information about the publication of some other Non-Bengali Vernacular press from Darjeeling Hill area. From the Government Report of 1889, it is evident that from Darjeeling a periodical entitled "MASIK SAMACHAR PATRIKA" was published in Hindi.<sup>40</sup> It was published with the initiative of the Darjeeling 'Arya Samaj' and it played a role as the mouth organ of the Darjeeling Arya

Samaj Branch. This paper 'MASIK SAMACHAR PATRIKA' was a monthly publication in Hindi. Not only this, but we have the information of some other publication in Hindi vernacular. It is found in the official Report of Darjeeling in the year 1897-98 that "DARJEELING MISSION KA MASIK SAMACHAR PATRIKA" was published in Hindi. It was also published as a monthly journal. Though we have no detail information about so many publications in Hindi in Darjeeling within the period of our study, but it is true that the Hindi speaking people of the hill area were also interested to publish journal/periodical as a literary and cultural practice of their own. With the initiative of those people in Darjeeling, another Hindi journal namely "Masaiki Journal" was published from Darjeeling.

In our present discussion we have mentioned a good number of non-Bengali vernacular press and their socio-cultural background. At the same time it is also evident that a large number of English journals/periodicals were published from Darjeeling the background of which have already been discussed. In this connection, it must be mentioned that the first press in North Bengal was established in Darjeeling and it was in English. Again we see that the first publication from North Bengal was 'THE DARJEELING NEWS' in English in the year 1870. From the account of W. W. Hunter it is known that in the year 1871, the circulation of the paper was 150.<sup>41</sup>

From the report of the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling in the year 1892, it is known that during this time some important English newspapers and journals were published from Darjeeling. As our discussion are very much confined with the Non-Bengali Vernacular press. We are just to mention the names of the English Publications.

- I. The Darjeeling News (Weekly in English)
- II. News and Notes (Monthly in English)
- III. Darjeeling Standard (Weekly in English).

IV. Darjeeling Times (Weekly in English)

V. Darjeeling-Kalimpong-Sikkim News (Monthly in English)

So, it is found that apart from the Non-Bengali Vernacular publications in Darjeeling, a series of English publications were there and they occupied a prominent place in the field of publications in Darjeeling.

Not only English and Vernacular press (except Bengali), it is interesting that from the hill district of Darjeeling a Tibetan paper was published. It is quite natural, because a good number of Tibetan refugees had been settled there due to some inevitable reason (Sino-Tibetan tension during 1950s). The Tibetans, settled in Darjeeling were also interested to engage themselves in publication as a media to highlight their Socio-cultural life. As a result we find that, "YULLCHONG SOSCI SARGIAR MELLONG" a Tibetan monthly paper was published from Darjeeling in the year 1924.<sup>42</sup> It was the first Tibetan publication from Darjeeling as well as North Bengal.

During 1940-48 a large number of manuscripts and cyclostyled journals and periodicals appeared in different places in Darjeeling district. Through details are not known about them, but it must be admitted that the contribution of these journals was not insignificant in the context of socio-cultural history of Darjeeling and the growth and development of Nepali literature. For the development of modern Nepali literature, these journals contributed a significant role as like as the role of the little Magazine to the development of modern Bengali literature. The journals also played an active part to mobilize public opinion. The lyrical under-current of Nepali literature manifested itself in the publication of 'PUKAR' in the year 1948. Another publication the 'BHARAT' in the year 1949 loudly proclaimed the glory of Indo-Nepali culture. His excellence Kailash Nath Katju, Government of West Bengal, sent a message to the Editor of this journal, which was published in its Version No. 1 June, 1949.<sup>43</sup> This message was a unique one, which was full of historical significance. From that time onwards, a large number of Nepali journals

stepped forward into the modern age. But at the same time, it is true that most of the journals were short-lived. Its primary reasons were that they owned their origin and existence on individual enterprise. During the subsequent period so many journals/periodicals (like little Magazine) were published. But as our purpose is not to draw a picture of those publications, we like to turn own eyes to other side, i.e. cultural and intellectual exercise of the hill area of Darjeeling District.

#### 4.4 ASSOCIATIONS IN THE HILL AREAS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT

##### **ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATIONS**

It is an established truth that the growth of public organizations and Associations were closely related to the growth and development of press and other Socio-cultural changes. Similarly, the Associations or Institution of different time and place in our country played a very significant role for the socio-cultural changes and it had an active part in the political situation. In this context we may mention that the foundation of the 'Asiatic Society' by William Jones and thirty gentlemen representing the elite of the European Community on January 15, 1784, was various reasons a land mark in the cultural history of our nation. Yet, Raja Rammohan Roy's 'ATMIYA SABHA' founded much later may rightly be regarded as the pioneer of truly Indian public Association of the nineteenth century.

While we are to look into the Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) we see that many Associations of different people different ideas and objectives sprang up. Among these to mention only a few were Gaudia Samaj (1828), Academic Association (1828-29), Sarbatattvadipika Sabha (1832), Sadharan Jnanoparjika Sabha (1938), Tattvabodhini Sabha (1839), Sarba Subhakari Sabha (1850) and Bidyatsahini Sabha (1853), which has been mentioned earlier. Most of these bodies had started their own organ to get their views and ideas communicated to a broader section of the population.<sup>44</sup> But this is the beginning of the history of Associations/ Organizations and their contributions in the Socio-Cultural,

religious and intellectual field in all Bengal perspectives. Now for the purpose of our study we will confine our attention on different Associations/Organizations in the hill district of Darjeeling.

Though we have already mentioned that the press-publication and the establishment of different type of Associations started much later in North Bengal as well as in Darjeeling (see chapter 2) but their role was not insignificant. In a country so predominantly rural like ours, the role of these local Associations/ Organizations (SABHA-SAMITI) can hardly be over estimated. Indeed it is a fact that these local Associations, during the period of our study served as a very useful platform in highlighting the necessary and growing aspirations and problems of the local people and in enlightening public opinion in our vast local area. It is found that the sense of this awakening of different social group was mirrored by various social organization of the time. Needless to say, the establishment of any organization must have some definite aims and objectives. Here we will make a brief study on a few organizations, which were established, by the Nepali and other hill community of the Darjeeling hill district with a view to develop and highlight the causes of their own.

#### 4.5 NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELAN (1924)

While we are discussing on the issue of establishment of organization or Association in Darjeeling, the Non-Bengali dominated area of North Bengal, first of all we must have to mention the name of 'NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELAN' (Nepali Literature Association) in the year 1924.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, it was a literary organization in Nepali Language initiated by the Nepalis of Darjeeling. Moreover, if we examine about the character and activities of this Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, it must be clear that this organization was a follower or new addition of 'Bangiya Sahitya Parishad' of Calcutta established in the year 1907 and Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan of Rangpur, so far the best literary organization in Bengali, Nepali Sahitya

Sammelan had some outstanding publications in Nepali which are regarded as the treasure of Nepali literature. Let us now see the background of this Nepali Sahitya Sammilan in Darjeeling.

The arrival of Dharanidhar Kairāla (Sharma) and particularly Sūryavikram Jnavāli as teachers of Nepali at Darjeeling in 1919 and 1923 from Beneras and their association with a culturally advanced men like Pārāsmani Pradhān soon gave birth to a literary organization like “NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELLAN” in the year 1924.<sup>46</sup> This organization, associated with a good number of literate people, and devoted for the development of Nepali language and literature achieved the best performance so far. The Nepali Sahitya Sammelan served a useful purpose by getting more than twenty books written, translated and published by reputed firms for the benefit of School Children.<sup>47</sup> Among its early literary publications are ‘NAIVEDYA’, an anthology of Dharanidhar’s poems. In this context it may again be noted that Dharanidhar Kairala (Sharma) was a famous poet in Nepali literature and in his writings the sense of nationalism or to some extent patronage to the Nepali identity were deep rooted. The spirit of the great Bengali poets like D.L. Ray, Nobin Chandra Sen, Hem Chandra Bondopadhyaya and the great dramatist like Girish Chandra Ghosh were reflected on the writings of the Nepali poet, (Dharanidhar). For our reference, it will be better to quote a few lines from the poem of poet Dharanidhar. “Jāga Jāga aba Jāgana Jāga, Iāga unnati

Vishe aba lāga

Gorkha nīda abata parityāga bho bhayo

ati Sutyau aba Jāga.”

“Awake, Awake, now you awake,

Walking up the path of progress take,

Deep slumber now forsake,

its enough you slept long, now awake,”<sup>48</sup>

Among the other activities of Nepali Sahitya Sammilan, a literary organization, we see that a series of valuable publications were made. For our purpose and to have an estimate of this organization we are just to mention something more about this 'SAMMELAN.' 'BADHŪSIKSHĀ OF BHANŪBHAKTA,' 'MAN LAHARĪ, a poetical work with social reform as its theme written in folk meter by Mahānanda Sāpkota, the biography of Bhānubhakta by Motiram Bhatta, a number of historical accounts of kings of Nepal and Nepali heroes by Sūryavikram Jnavāli, and 'KATHA KUSUM' (1938), and anthology of original Nepali short stories.<sup>49</sup> This is not all about the contributions of Nepali Sahitya Sammelan in respect of the development of Nepali language and literature. Apart from this it had something outstanding contributions for the growth and development of Nepali language and literature as well as for the upliftment of Nepali Community, Social reform and Social change at the same time. Considering all this things about the contribution of 'NEPALI, SAHITYA SAMMELAN', it must be admitted that during the first half of the twentieth century this organization/Institution achieved a significant contribution for the development of hill society and Nepali community at large. As we don't have the scope to study about this organization in details, but taking into account the special contribution on literary activities it must be admitted that the 'Nepali Sahitya Sammelan patrika,' the mouth piece of this organization published a Journal of high standard.

#### 4.6. NEBULA :

'NEBULA' was another organization of the Darjeeling hill area established the name in the year 1935. The name of the organization itself signifies the name of three communities of Darjeeling hill. These hill communities were the Nepalis, Bhutiyas and Lepches (Lepchas). When any organization emerges with a view to meet the cause of any particular community or some communities of a particular area, it means that the organization must have certain agenda of activities. As we don't have any copy

of the proceedings of this organization we cannot definitely say anything about it. But with some other references it is found that this organization (NEBULA) was very much active to highlight the problems and propagated the political demands of this three hill communities (Nepali, Bhutiya and Lepchas) of the Darjeeling district. Apart from this, NEBULA published, a journal as its mouth organ which had successfully achieved something in rousing the demands for their development and social upliftment. The name of the journal was also 'NEBULA' and it was published from Kalimpong. Its Editor was K.D. Pradhan who was a renowned social worker. This Journal though it was the mouth organ of a particular community had a special interest with literary exercise. They published few articles of literary value and at the same time played a significant role in mobilizing public opinion, promote the consciousness of the Darjeeling hill people in general.<sup>50</sup> About Nebula, no more details can be said due to the non-availability of its copy.

#### 4.7 GORKHA DUKKHA NIVARAK SAMMELAN

About the organizations of the Nepali community in the hill district of Darjeeling we find the mention of a Social organization namely "GORKHA DUKKHA NIVARAK SAMMELAN".<sup>51</sup> The name of the organization is self-explanatory i.e., an organization or a platform to remove the sufferings and ill conditions of the Gorkhas. The Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan was founded in the year 1932 and subsequently this organization became so popular with its branches in many towns and cities of India. It is known to all of us that the Gorkhas or the Nepali speaking population was scattered throughout the length and breadth of India from Bombay, Calcutta, Benaras, Bangalore, Dehradun to Shillong, Imphal, Arunachal, Lucknow, Madras and Darjeeling.<sup>52</sup> When this organisation spread in some of the cities or towns all over India, it can easily be considered as an important and popular social organization with certain aims and objectives. We have so many references about the social condition of the Nepali community of Darjeeling and at the same time it is also

known to us that in a hill station like Darjeeling most of the inhabitants were not in a good condition. As a result it is quite natural that they will try for their betterment and will assemble under the umbrella of such type of organization.

Most of the organizations, associations or institutions generally like to mobilize public opinion in their favour through some publication or literature. Like wise 'Gorkha Dukkha Nibarak Sammelan' had a publication as their own mouthpiece to make a publicity about their organization, its activities and to highlight itself as a social welfare organization. This organization published a journal namely 'KHOJI' in the year 1940.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps it was the second literary journal to be published from Darjeeling. Its chief editor was Rupnarayan Singh, a renowned novelist and short story writer. This journal, as a spokesman of 'Gorkha, Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan' achieved a lot both in the field of social reform and in the literary practice of the local people of Darjeeling. 'KHOJI' did not produce any poet of repute but unlike its predecessor 'CHANDRIKA' it produced mostly articles written by local talent and its prose had the distinct charm of the Nepali language of Darjeeling. It can also be said that this organization (Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan) had some special interest for the progress of the Nepali language and literature. With the publication of 'KHOJI' the mouth piece of the organization Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan' achieved something significant contribution not only for the development and progress of Nepali language and literature but at the same time created a strong public opinion in favour of their social position. Considering all this things, it must be admitted that as a social and cultural organization Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan performed an outstanding responsibility advocating the socio-economic backwardness of the Indian Nepalis.

It is important to note here that like the above-mentioned associations or institutions, we have reference about some other socio-cultural organizations. The aim of our study is not to have a detailed study about all the

organization. Here, we are to mention the name of some other Associations like 'NEPALI SAHITYA ADHYAYAN SAMITI', in Kalimpong, 'NEPALI SAHITYA PRASAR SAMITI' in Siliguri, 'ARYA SAMAJ' Darjeeling Branch, and 'GORKHA LEAGUE' Darjeeling branch (1943). Considering the character and activities of these organizations it is found that except 'GORKHA LEAGUE' all other organizations were very much active in the field of social reforms, cultural activities, publication of Journals and periodicals, and highlighted the Socio-economic backwardness of the hill people. The spirit of all these organization were to some extent identical in respect of social upliftment, development of language and literature, and to mobilize public opinion in their favour. It is well known to all that during the early twentieth century 'Arya Samaj' had a distinction in the field of Socio-religious reforms. Quite naturally, it is expected that the Darjeeling branch of Arya Samaj also maintained the spirit of the organization. Similarly, Nepali Sahitya Adhayan Samiti, and Nepali Sahitya Prasar Samiti were the platform to explore on Nepali language and literature. With the help of the different type of activities of these organizations the sense of awakening of the non-Bengali hill communities started.

Apart from these social organizations now we are to study about some other associations, which had more a political character than in the social-cultural field. In this connection, one thing has to be mentioned to realize about the inspiration behind these organizations or Associations. Needless to say, the establishment of any organization in Nepal generated the spirit among the People of Darjeeling, specially the Nepali community to establish organization of their own and these organizations in due course of time significantly contributed for the socio-cultural, economic and political cause of the hill people in Darjeeling.

#### 4.8. GORKHA LEAGUE

While the literary activity in Nepali in Darjeeling and some other Nepali populated areas in India were growing, Thākur Chandan Singh, in the year 1921 established the 'GORKHA LEAGUE' in Dehradun. This organization (GL) was one of the reflection of the new social consciousness engendered by foreign travel and exposure among the Gorkha servicemen who returned from the war in Europe in 1918.<sup>54</sup> As a political group the league aimed to effect social reforms in Nepal. Though it is not within the jurisdiction of our study, as a reference it can be mentioned that the Gorkha league published two Nepali journals from Dehradun: 'GORKHA SAMSĀR' in the year 1926 and 'TARUN GORKHĀ' in 1928.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, an independent organization namely 'GORKHA LEAGUE' was established in Darjeeling in the year 1943 for the general interest of the Gorkhas, a Nepali community in Darjeeling.<sup>56</sup> Apart from socio-economic issues this Organization from the very beginning became interested with political matters. The league was in contact with a number of great national leaders. With its role and activities as a socio-political organization, it seems that this organization was very much active with the political demands of the Gorkhas. It was a common slogan of the league that "there can be no improvement in the condition of the people without political reforms."<sup>57</sup> It is also found that some other organizations were founded at Darjeeling whose basic demands were political, social and cultural reforms. Immediately after the First World War, the 'GORKHA SAMITI' was revived at Darjeeling. Due to some political cause Gorkha Samiti was renamed as 'GORKHA ASSOCIATION.' During the years of the First World War terrorist and revolutionary activities were very strong under the leadership of 'ANUSILAN SAMITI'. As GORKHA SAMITI was sounded like ANUSILAN SAMITI, it was suspected as a terrorist organization by the British Government. So it had to rename itself as 'GORKHA ASSOCIATION.' Its prime aim was to promote socio-cultural interest of the Indian Nepalis.<sup>58</sup> The

key persons behind this were Dal Bahadur Giri and his elder brother Agam Singh Giri.

In the year 1918, another organization 'The GORKHA LIBRARY' was opened at Kurseong with the object of bringing about a rapid progress of the educationally backward Nepali community of Darjeeling.<sup>59</sup> The establishment of a Library for the Gorkhas, no doubt signifies the thrust of education and knowledge for them.

So long we have discussed about a lot of organizations/ institutions which were mainly engaged in reforms in different fields. Now we will attempt to have a discussion about some organizations which had some content with the national movement of India.

In this context we must mention the name of Dal Bahadur Giri who had been earlier associated with the 'GORKHA ASSOCIATION'. Dal Bahadur Giri had the distinction to open a branch of the Indian National Congress at Darjeeling.<sup>60</sup> Under his leadership the wave of the Non-Co-Operation movement spread to the Tea garden areas like a wild fire. Dal Bahadur Giri was a good organizer and to propagate about the Non-Co-Operation movement he got the company of some other persons who had significantly campaigned for the national movement. Among them we must mention the name of BHAKTABIR LAMA. Bhaktabir Lama was so popular in the Darjeeling Tea plantation areas for the propagation of non-co-operation movement for which he was popularly known as 'ASOHAYOGI LAMA.'

Another Association namely the 'Hill men's Association' was founded in 1919 which took up some other political cause of the hill people of Darjeeling. At that time Darjeeling was deprived of any representation at the provincial legislative body because, it was an excluded area. Even the Montague Chelmsford Report did not contain any Provision for the popular representation of Darjeeling Under the circumstances this 'HILLMAN'S

ASSOCIATION' was founded in 1917 and raised the voice to establish their demand.

In our discussion, we have already mentioned about the Gorkha Samiti or the Gorkha Association. It is interesting to note that the Gorkha Association of Darjeeling started a branch of it in Calcutta in 1926 under the Presidentship of Agam Singh Giri, the elder brother of Dal Bahadur Giri.<sup>61</sup> The objectives of this branch was nothing but to mobilize the public opinion in their favour in a broad perspective. Like his younger brother Dal Bahadur Giri, Agam Singh Giri was also involved in the Non-Co-Operation Movement. Quite naturally it is expected that the British Government would not like such type of organization and its activities which encouraged the cause of national movement. As a result the British Government watched the activities of the Association very closely so that it cannot be detrimental to them.

In our present study we have thoroughly discussed on the non-Bengali Vernacular press and Associations in the Darjeeling hill area. From this discussion it is clearly found that those press and Associations, within its limited capacity have contributed a lot for the growth and development of language and literature,

## References

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<sup>1</sup> O' Malley, L. S. S., Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling, First published 1907, Reprinted 1985, second Reprint 1999, LOGOS PRESS, New Delhi, p.28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 171.

“It was not till the advent of the Revd. William McFarlane, in 1869, that any broad scheme of Vernacular education was devised for the district. Mr. McFarlane soon saw that the one thing required for the development of the district, for raising the people in the scale of civilization, and incidentally for obtaining a powerful lever for his mission work, was some statesmanlike scheme of education.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 170

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Pradhan, Kumar - Process and consequences of the unification of Nepali with particular reference to Eastern Nepal, 1750-1850, Diss, Calcutta University, 1982, P. 82.

<sup>7</sup> O' Malley, Op cit, P. 170 – 71

For details see Banerjee, P. and Gupta S. K. (Eds) – Man, society and Nature–The cultural profile of Darjeeling by Jahar Sen, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Banerjee, P. and Gupta, S. K. (Eds) Op cit, p.139.

<sup>9</sup> Sen, Jahar. Darjeeling Zila Nepali Bhasa O Sahitya Charcha. SAMATA, July – September, 1989, P. 57.

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<sup>10</sup> Banerjee, P. and Gupta, S. K. , Op cit, p.143.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> Sen, Jahar – Op cit, Samatat, July – September, 1989, P. 57.

<sup>13</sup> Pradhan, Kumar - A History of the Nepali Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1984, P. 46.

An important contribution of Motirām Bhatta was the publication of the first Nepali Journals, 'GORKHĀ BHĀRAT JĪBAN', a monthly from Benaras in 1886. The Journal was edited by Rāmkrishna Varmā but not a single copy of it has been found as yet. The only information that one can obtain about it is from an advertisement in a Hindi Journal BHĀRAT JĪBAN.

<sup>14</sup> Sundas, L- "Bharatma Nepali patra Partika Ko Attasi Varsa", Academy Nibandhawali (University of North Bengal, 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Pradhan, Kumar – Op cit, P.73.

<sup>16</sup> Hutt, M. J. – "Nepali – A National Language and its Literature, School of Oriental and African Studies", London, S. Publishing Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 1988, P.143.

<sup>17</sup> Devokota, Grishmabahadur – Nepalko Chhapakhana Ra Patra Patrikako Itihas, Kathmandu, 1966, P. 52.

<sup>18</sup> Pradhan, Kumar – Op cit, P.73.

Gorkha Khabar Kāgat Published from 1901-1932 from Darjeeling was edited by Rav. Gangaprasad Pradhān and was printed in his own Gorkha Press. Being a clergymen of the Scottish Baptist Mission it is said that the objective set by Gangaprasād was to propagate Christianity through the Journals and scholars do not consider it to be of any worth because it was apparently published with a non literally motive and, as a historian of

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Nepali literature Tānā Sharmā says “in a colloquial and unrefined language with a regional imprint.”

<sup>19</sup> Personal collection of relevant paper by Dr. Kamalesh Ch. Das, Reader in History, Balurghat College.

<sup>20</sup> Pradhan, Kumar, Op. cit., P.77.

Pārasmani Pradhān besides Dharanidhar and Surjavikram Jnavāli has been a leading man of letters at Darjeeling from the early part of this century (twentieth century) born in 1898 at Kalimpong, he worked as a school inspector and teacher. He brought out a literary monthly magazine, ‘CHANDRIKA’, in 1918. Though it survived only for two years, it has left a significant mark in the development of Nepali language and literature. Later he established his own printing press and has devoted his life to the cause of his language by publishing another literary monthly magazine ‘BHĀRATI’ from 1948 to 1957.

<sup>21</sup> Sen, Jahar – The Cultural Profile of Darjeeling in Banerjee, P. and Gupta S. K. (Eds) Man Society and Nature, P.144.

For details see Pradhan Kumar, Op cit, P. 77.

<sup>22</sup> Madhuparni, Sarad Sankhya (Autumn Number) 22nd year, Paschimbanger Nepali Bhasai Sambad O Samayik Patra-Patrika by Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, P. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Pradhan, Kumar, Op cit, P.80.

<sup>25</sup> Banerjee, Amiya Kumar, Darjeeling District Gazetteers, P.582.

<sup>26</sup> Hutt, M. J. – Nepali : A National Language and its literature. School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Sterling Publishers Private limited. New Delhi, 1988. P.148.

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<sup>27</sup> Hutt. M. J., Op. cit., P.148.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Pradhan, Kumar, Op. cit., P. 80.

For details see Hutt. M. J., Nepali : A National Language and its Literature.

<sup>30</sup> Adhikary, Ramlal - Nepali Nibandha yatra, Darjeeling, 1975, P. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Hutt, M.J., Op cit, P. 147.

<sup>32</sup> Pradhan, Indramani, Parasmani Pradhan Makers of Indian literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1997, P.60.

<sup>33</sup> Hutt. M. J., OP. Cit., P.147.

<sup>34</sup> Tānāsarmā – Nepāli Sahityako Itihās, Kathmandu, 1970, P. 80.

<sup>35</sup> Hutt. M. J., Op. cit, P.145.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Bhai Nahar Sing, Bhai Kirpal Sing (Ed.), History of all India Gorkha League, 1943-1949, Nirmal Publishers and distributors, New Delhi, 1987, P.VI.

<sup>38</sup> Hutt. M.J., Op cit, P. 148.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> General proceedings, September, 1989, P.57.

<sup>41</sup> Hunter, W.W. - A statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X, P.17.

<sup>42</sup> Sen, Jahar - Darjeeling Zila Nepali Bhasa O Sahitya Charcha, SAMATAT, July – September, 1989, P. 57.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Pradhan, Kumar – Op. cit., P.79.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Pradhan, Kumar- Op. cit., P.80.
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- <sup>55</sup> Bhai, Nihar Singh, Bhai, Kirpal Singh (Ed.). Op. cit., P.VI.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid. P.78.
- <sup>58</sup> Pradhan, Kumar, Op. cit, P. 78
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid.

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

### 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

### 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1947, Gourdoot published an article entitled, "The freedom of the press".<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup> 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 Nikunjbehari Gupta. They belonged to Gandhilian Camp.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> After few years in 1896 Radhesh Chandra published two weekly newspapers 'Gourbarta' and 'Gourdoot'.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> 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'.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

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.<sup>32</sup>

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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

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."<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

Another paper with Swadeshi spirit was published by Robindra Mohan Ray from Jalpaiguri in the year 1929.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

When the final decision of partition of Bengal was officially executed from 16<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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”.<sup>46</sup>

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.<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup>

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.<sup>49</sup>

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.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup> 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".<sup>55</sup>

Krishna Kumar Mitra, the editor of the 'SANJIBANI' in its issue of 13<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> July 1905, in which some resolutions were passed in favour of boycott.<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup>

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 muktair and respectable old man of the town became its first president and Sibdayal Pal was its secretary.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup>

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 26<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> During the time of his visit to Jalpaiguri, Das met so many people of Jalpaiguri and explained the non-co-operation programme.<sup>71</sup>

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.<sup>72</sup>

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.<sup>73</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> 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.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> The British government took it exception, and the writer of this article Bhabarajan Gangophaya was warned and finally he was imprisoned for one year.<sup>79</sup> 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'.<sup>80</sup>

'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 27<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> 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.”<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> 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."<sup>86</sup>

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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup>

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.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> Another important Editorial published in Janamat on the heroic and patriotic activities of Binoy, Badal and Dinesh was a stirring incident.<sup>90</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1932.<sup>91</sup>

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' (24<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> '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.<sup>93</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup>

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.<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup>

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.<sup>97</sup>

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.<sup>98</sup> 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".<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup>

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.<sup>101</sup>

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.<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup>

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.<sup>104</sup> 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.<sup>105</sup>

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'.<sup>106</sup> 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.<sup>107</sup> 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.<sup>108</sup> 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.<sup>109</sup> 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.<sup>110</sup>

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 - 21<sup>ST</sup> 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.'<sup>111</sup> 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.<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup> 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 – 29<sup>th</sup> 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 – 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1913]

- xvii) Anjuman – I – Islamia, Darjeeling. [ Established 5<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>114</sup> 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.<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116</sup> 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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- <sup>86</sup> TRISROTA, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1930
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- <sup>89</sup> JANAMAT, Subarna Jayanti Sankhya, P- 6.
- <sup>90</sup> Gongopadhaya, Bhabaranjan- 'JANAMAT' Patrika O tar Pratisthata Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, 'JANAMAT' Subarna Jayanti Sankhya. P- 11
- <sup>91</sup> TRISROTA, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1932.
- <sup>92</sup> DESHBANDHU, 6<sup>th</sup> Baishakha, 1345 B.S.
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<sup>101</sup> Chakraborty, Samarjit- op. cit., P- 14

<sup>102</sup> Majumdar, R.C.- The history and culture of the Indian people- British paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part II, General, 1991, P- 444.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid P- 446.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid P- 446.

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<sup>106</sup> Banerjee, Surendra Nath- A Nation in Making... P- 60

<sup>107</sup> Bagal, Jogesh Chandra- History of the Indian Association, (1876-1951). Calcutta, 1953. P- 20

<sup>108</sup> Mukherjee, A.K.- History of India's struggle for freedom, Part I, Calcutta, 1990, P- 130.

<sup>109</sup> Ray, Dalia- The Bengal Revolutionaries and Freedom Movement, New Delhi, 1990, P-11.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. P- 13.

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<sup>113</sup> Records of the Government of Bengal, Home Department, (801), 1946.

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**CONTRIBUTION OF THE REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS (SABHA-SAMITI) IN THE FIELD OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH BENGAL UPTO 1969**

**6.1. INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter we have clearly explained about the contribution of the Regional vernacular press and the Associations in the freedom movement within the framework of our study. More specifically it can be said that in chapter 5 we have tried to give some highlights on the role of the Associations in the course of freedom movement in this region (North Bengal). Within the course of this study we found some very clear and categorical evidences, which have already been focused, in our discussion. It is evident that the local or the Regional Associations of North Bengal were closely related with the process of Socio-cultural development of North Bengal. In our study about Press and Associations we have found that the rural press most of which were vernacular constitutes one of the most important print media for reaching out to the hundred of million people in all parts of our country. Similarly we get a link between the Press and the Associations sometimes which becomes a component to each other in imparting certain programme or interaction. In the context of this study we can say, during the last few decades it is found that several Associations or Organizations from global position to National, Regional, even in sub-Regional levels have been playing special attention towards different type of problems, prospects and development in all respect.<sup>1</sup> In the regional level particularly in Bengal we see that during the Nineteenth century a good number of Associations in different field emerged and achieved a lot for the cause of socio-cultural and political developments. In this context it is not possible to deny the contribution of the Associations (SABHA-SAMITI) in the process of socio-cultural progress. So, it is found that the Associations are now increasingly recognized as an important platform for the promotion of social awareness and development.

## 6.2. POSITION OF NORTH BENGAL BEFORE AND AFTER 1947

When we are going to have a discussion about the contribution of the Associations or the organizations in the Socio-cultural development of North Bengal, let us have a categorical set up of the subject. We will attempt to make a study on the topic within the period 1869-to 1969, the scenario of one hundred years. But at the same time it has to be mentioned that before and after 1947 the idea or the area of North Bengal was not same. Though our study is concerned with the area of the five districts of North Bengal, (which was defined as Northern part of West Bengal after 1947, and subsequently known as present North Bengal), but we have to keep it in our mind that the cultural developments or cultural regeneration of present North Bengal (the area of our study) was started from the North Bengal of undivided Bengal viz., before 1947, some parts of which are presently lying with Bangladesh. So to present a picture about our study we will have two phases, which is concerned before and after 1947. Without explaining the position of North Bengal before 1947, it is absolutely impossible to understand the position of cultural development or cultural regeneration of present North Bengal. So, in our present context we will have to look into the subject giving proper attention on North Bengal into two phases, which is the core area of our discussion.

In our present study it is interestingly noticed that the Calcutta based scholars and institutions-though they did not remain aloof from the nationalistic or socio-cultural fervour, were not interested in writing either in Bengali or in any subject related to North Bengal (History, archaeology, language folklore etc). But we see that the 'VANGIYA SAHITYA PARISAT' in Calcutta and the scholars associated with this institution were attached with a huge number of research activities in different fields. But it is surprising that they did not take any initiative or get interested on North Bengal and started to write anything on the unexplored field of North Bengal. This task was eventually taken up by a North Bengal Institution 'The VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY' of Rajshahi the cultural centre-pot of North Bengal of undivided

Bengal. This Rajshahi town was always known as a famous centre of learning, trade and commerce. Its importance was further augmented when it was transformed into the headquarters of the Rajshahi district in 1825 and that of Rajshahi Division in 1875.

### 6.3. SOCIO-CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH BENGAL

Regarding the history of these Associations in North Bengal of pre-independence period we have the reference of an Association in Rajshahi. The aristocrats and the landlords of this area some of whom had some special interest for cultural activities, worked jointly to establish in 1878 the 'RAJSHAHI ASSOCIATION' which provided a forum for reading papers on history, science, literature and art'.<sup>2</sup> For example, we can mention that a Sanskrit college richly endowed by Rani Hemanta Kumari Devi of Puthia Raj family was founded here in 1894. Another reference of association which we get, is that a branch of 'Vangiya Sahitya Parisat' was opened about this time (1905) at Rajshahi.<sup>3</sup> One significant fact we notice in this regard is that after the establishment of the Rajshahi Association, Branch of Bangiya Sahitya Parisat and the Sanskrit College, an educational Institute, were established in Rajshahi and some development in the field of cultural practices were taking place. Though this process was started sometime earlier by the landlords and aristocrats of that particular region, but it is the credit of these Associations, the common platform of the intellectuals. As a result we see that as many as eleven journals and periodicals were published from Rajshahi between 1865 and 1900 including the 'JNĀNANKURA' (1872) the 'PRATIBIMBA' (1872), and the 'AITIHĀSIK CITRA'. The last named, which was edited by none other than Akshay Kumar Maitreya, the most illustrious son of North Bengal. This was indeed very important because it was probably the first historical journal in Bengali language.<sup>4</sup> In it (AITIHĀSIK CITRA) were published the translations of 'RIYAZ-US-SALATIN' by Rampran Gupta and that of 'INDIKA' by Bhavagovinda Chaudhuri. It is also interesting to note that Akshay Kumar Maitreya began to publish this historical quarterly (Aitihāsik Citra) with the

suggestion of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore who was highly impressed by the literary efforts of Maitreya aimed at making his countrymen conscious of their glorious historical past.<sup>5</sup> In the subsequent period it is found that a huge number of articles based on literature, history of Bengal particularly North Bengal, archaeology and art were published in this journal. Akshay Kumar Maitreya with his scholarly attention started to explore some untouched corners which got a treasure of history and culture of our country. Hence we see that with this effort of Sri Maitreya patroned by these Associations an atmosphere of cultural advancement started in Rajshahi, which subsequently influenced a considerable number of scholars.

#### 6.4. VARENDRA RESEACH SOCIETY

Another outstanding cultural cum research Association was the 'VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY' (VRS). This Varendra Research Society was founded in June 1910 as a centre for the promotion of historical studies and research in the history of Bengal at the liberal patronage of Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray of the Dighapatiya Raj family. From the inception of this Institution/ Association, the persons attached with it were very much, committed for its outstanding achievements in the socio-cultural and academic activities. While Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray himself was the President of this Association, Akshay Kumar Maitreya and Rama Prasad Chanda renowned historian and archaeologist became its Director and honorary Secretary respectively. This Varendra Research Society set up a high standard museum of its own for the better preservation of its historical and archaeological assets. The collection of this society was so rich that gradually the museum of the society became a storehouse of antiquities which included sculptures, epigraphs, coins, terracotta's metal ware, paintings and manuscripts collected from various places of Bengal (see chapter 2). For there proper utilization the society build up a rich library which helped the students and the scholars too much. As an academic and cultural organization this society (Varendra Research Society) was very much aware with its responsibility and

commitment. So to attract students, teachers and persons interested in history and antiquarian studies, the society (VRS) arranged archaeological tours and excavations time to time which contributed a new mark for the cultural development of this region. It should be pointed out in this connection that Rama Prasad Chanda was a good friend of Rakhal Das Banerji who had also undertaken the task of writing a complete political history of Bengal. Banerji's work in two volumes, under the title 'BĀNGLĀR ITIHĀS' one dealing with the history of ancient Bengal and the other with that of medieval Bengal was published two years later (1914). Again from the footnotes of this 'Gaudarājamālā', it is understood that Sri Chanda was also helped by Rakhal Das Banerji in many ways. Both of them left no stones unturned to explore the myth of the kulaji tradition. Though Banerji did not belong to the Varendra Research Society, he had some personal and academic contacts with its members, and the activities of the Varendra Research Society must have inspired him to write a History of Bengal in Bengali. Dr. N. N. Bhattacharya in his article, "The Varendra Research Society and its contributions to historiography of Bengal" has clearly mentioned that for the sake of information the first serious work on numismatics in Bengali was also done by Banerji under the caption 'Prācina Mudrā' which came out in 1922. Though it was not a complete success, but it has to be mentioned here that the Varendra Research Society undertook a plan to prepare in Bengali a comprehensive history of Bengal in eight volumes dealing with all the branches. So it is found that this association of the scholars and intellectuals of Bengal under the umbrella of Varendra Research Society got some significant contribution in the field of literature, history and over all cultural activities of Bengal particularly on North Bengal.

#### 6.5. RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD

Regarding cultural development of North Bengal, another important organization/ association was the 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD'. This Rangpur Sahitya Parishad was founded as a branch of the 'BANGIYA

SAHITYA PARISAT' (hereafter Rangpur Sahitya Parishad as RSP and Bangiya Sahitya Parisat as BSP) in 1905. We get a reference about this RSP from its proceeding that "Accordingly on 11th Baishak, 1312 B.S. (1905) Rangpur Sahitya Parishad started with 28 members as a branch of Bangiya Sahitya parishad.<sup>6</sup> In this connection one thing more has to be noted that it was the first branch of BSP in North Bengal. Some intellectuals and Zaminders from most of the districts of North Bengal were its members and patronized this Association for their cultural practices. At the time of formation its president was Mahamohopadhaya Pandit Jadabeswar Tarkaratna and secretary was Surendra Chandra Roy Chowdhury, a Zaminder of Rangpur who were personally interested for the cause of literary and cultural activities. In the mean time Akshay Kumar Maitreya also came forward to be associated with this Association/ organization (R.S.P). Within a short time it is found that these intellectuals and the academically interested persons of North Bengal were gradually becoming interested and associated with this institution out of their own interest. In this context we are quoting relevant parts from the proceedings of the Parishad which are as follows:-

"From the very beginning Akshay Kumar Maitreya and Pandit Kokileshar Bhattacharya Vidyaratna, M.A. the well known literateur and professor of Sanskrit, Cooch Behar Victoria College, became Associate Member of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad. Besides, Rai Calicadas Dutta Bahadur C.I.E, Dewan of Cooch Behar became Associate Member..... Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, the pillar of North Bengal, donated Rs. 500 and became its first patron and life member. After his death Raja Rajendra Narayan became a patron and donated Rs.500.<sup>7</sup>

It is remarkable that the Rangpur Sahitya Parishad from the very beginning was getting the support and co-operation of the Zaminders, intellectuals and some literate persons of North Bengal which facilitated its organizers to promote the cause of cultural atmosphere in this region. Though it

was located at Rangpur, a culturally advanced place in undivided North Bengal, but it was patronized by the renowned persons from this area of North Bengal. In this connection we can refer the name of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and after his death Raja Ragendra Narayan of Cooch Behar state who became its patron and life member of this organization.<sup>8</sup> As a result some positive measures were being found and a cultural flow came into being in North Bengal. This RSP started its journey with only 28 (Twenty Eight) members and within only seven years its total members raised to 432.<sup>9</sup> As a cultural landmark in North Bengal the RSP got much credit by publishing a literary periodical and that was 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD PATRIKA'. This Patrika was the mouth organ of RSP which with all its sincerity was engaged in research on history, archaeology, Folklore and Folk literature of North Bengal, and so many things related with the socio-cultural history of North Bengal.<sup>10</sup> About the aims and objectives of R.S.P, it is generally said that, "As a branch of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad this Institution was inaugurated with the avowed object of (i) making archaeological discoveries in North Bengal and Assam."<sup>11</sup>

During the period of our study we find that several type of Association or organizations had emerged, the detail working of which are not much known. In our Present context we would try to confine our study within the jurisdiction of cultural field and at the same time we will try to show how cultural developments were gradually taking place in North Bengal. For this purpose we have mentioned something in brief about the activities of two noteworthy organization viz. (i) VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY and (ii) RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD of undivided North Bengal. No doubt, these two organizations in their activities achieved the ability to demonstrate the interdependent character of intellectual activities and to show how cultural regeneration in one intellectual domain lead to a realignment of thought in other realms as well.

## 6.6. UTTARBANGA SAHITYA SAMMILAN (USS)

Regarding the contributions of the Associations in the cultural development of North Bengal, now we are to refer another organization, specially a literary organization. It was the credit of the 'Rangpur Sahitya Parishad' that with its initiative a literary conference was arranged which was called "Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan" (USS). It is mentioned in the proceedings of the Rangpur Sahitya Parishad that a literary conference (USS) was held at Rangpur for the promotion of literary activities in this region. A few lines from the proceedings are as follows:-

"It was in the 3rd year of parishad's existence, the first North Bengal Literary conference met under the presidentship of Akshay Kumar Maitreya. Babu Surendra Chandra Ray Chowdhury, the secretary of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad, has appointed as permanent secretary of North Bengal literary conference."<sup>12</sup>

The first conference of the Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan was held in the Town Hall of Rangpur in 1908. From the very beginning this organization got the active co-operation of some distinguish personalities from different places of North Bengal and Western Assam. For example it can be mention that during the first conference of Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan (USS) a good number of complimentary messages were received by the organisers of this Sammilan. Among the most distinguished were the Raja Pratap Chandra Barua Bahadur of Gouripur in Assam, Kalikadas Datta Bahadur, C.I.E, the Roy Dewan of Cooch Behar state, Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray of Dighapatiya. On behalf of the 'Bangiya sahitya parishad' Sj. Byomkesh Mustafi attended this conference. Akshay Kumar Maitreya, the illustrious son of Varendrabhumi and the renowned historian presided over this Sahitya Sammelan.<sup>13</sup> From these references it can be assumed that the organisers of Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan got a very positive response in their endeavour of literary and cultural activities. Before this sammilan (conference) we don't have the

reference to say anything about such type of intellectual intercourse of the literary and cultural interactions among the intellectuals of whole North Bengal and the adjacent area of North Bengal i.e., Lower Assam or Namoni Assam.

However, as our purpose is not the detail study about this organization (Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan) we would not elaborate our study about this organization and its cultural activities. But from its Various type of literary activities one thing is observed that with the foundation of this organization the intellectuals of North Bengal found a common platform of their own to assemble together and to express themselves in their intellectual and cultural activities. Quite naturally it is found that a new flow of cultural regeneration with new thoughts and ideas started in this region which ultimately resulted to investigate the antiquarian of rare evidences on the history and cultural life of North Bengal. So long it was found that no organization/Association could create such an atmosphere getting involved a huge number of scholars, intellectuals and culturally interested persons throughout North Bengal. During the first decade of the twentieth century, when only a negligible percentage of people were literate in this area, it was not so easy to create an association for literary and cultural practices, the consequences of which were very much prospective and noteworthy. More interesting was that the Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and Maharaja Jitendra Narayan of Cooch Behar Princely state and a good number of Zaminders of North Bengal were also assembled in this platform which was generally an exception and gave an additional inspiration to the organisers of this Association for their literary intellectual and cultural practices. So considering the over all circumstances we do have a situation contending a consciousness for the development in respect of cultural and literary activities in North Bengal. Gradually this cultural consciousness was getting cemented and becoming dominant in different streams of socio-cultural activities like literature, history, archaeology, press publication, organization of different cultural Associations, holding of cultural conferences etc. As an outcome of all these things a cultural manifestation and consciousness were

emerging in North Bengal which gave birth of a gradual growth and development of cultural activities in the area of our study.

So long our study was concerned with the Associations which were located in the areas in North Bengal of undivided Bengal and it had some direct link with the present North Bengal, the area of our study. It was found that the cultural ideological trends were being started from that places which ultimately flourished and reflected more or less on all the districts of present North Bengal. Though it is not possible and we don't have the scope to deal with all of them, but for the purpose of our study we will make a brief study on a few organizations/Associations for the better understanding of our problem.

#### 6.7. LITERARY AND CULTURAL PRACTICES AT COOCH BEHAR

In the context of present North Bengal let us have a discussion on the cultural activities at Cooch Behar (princely state and later on Cooch Behar as a district). In our previous discussion about the 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' at Rangpur, it was found that the Maharajas of Cooch Behar and some high officials and professors of Victoria College had a close link with it (Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan).<sup>14</sup> In addition to that we have so many references that the Maharajas of Cooch Behar state and some high officials of Cooch Behar state had some special interest for literary activities. For a long time some Maharajas were the great patrons of literature and socio-cultural and religious activities at Cooch Behar.<sup>15</sup> As a result we see that a good number of books of different disciplines (History, literature, translated books, Poranik Stories, etc.) were written by some persons of Cooch Behar royal courts and by some intellectuals of the state.<sup>16</sup> These literary and cultural activities at Cooch Behar had a great influence on the cultural development of Cooch Behar as well as in North Bengal. As a result of these literary practices at Cooch Behar, it was found that within a few years a new era of cultural regeneration was started at Cooch Behar which got more inspiration and active support during the reign of Maharaja Nripenra Narayan Bhupbahadur.

In this context one thing must have to be mentioned to understand this development of Socio-Cultural and intellectual regeneration. In so many places in the history of Cooch Behar and its modernization the incident referred was the historic marriage of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan with Suniti Devi, the eldest daughter of Keshab Chandra Sen, the celebrated Brahma Reformer of Calcutta. It was on 6th march-1878, the marriage ceremony of Maharaja Nirpendra Narayan and Suniti Devi took place which had a great impact on every sphere in the history of Cooch Behar.<sup>17</sup> After this marriage the Cooch Behar state was stepping towards the process of modernization and within a few years some institutions were established which had created far reaching consequences in the field of education and Cultural life of Cooch Behar state. As Suniti Devi was the daughter of renowned Brahma family, she had some special interest for the cause of Brahma movement. Due to this background, Suniti Devi, the Maharani of Cooch Behar founded a 'Brahma Mandir' (Brahma temple) in 1887. On the other hand the idea and the activities of the Maharaja in building Cooch Behar into a modern state can be traced in the writings of Maharani Suniti Devi. "From the day of his succession to the throne, the Maharaja devoted all the earnestness of his nature and great process of organization of the plans for comfort, well-being and education of his subject"<sup>18</sup> To spread western education specially for higher education, Maharaja Nripendra Narayan established the 'Victoria College' in 1888. In 1890 Cooch Behar state took the special interest for the cause of women education due to what 'Suniti College' was established in that year. Another landmark in the history of higher education and cultural attainment was the appointment of Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal, the noted philosopher and great intellectual, as the Principal of Victoria college (presently Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal College). At that time due to the initiative of Acharya B. N. Seal, a good number of professors/ scholars in different subjects came from Calcutta to join the Victoria College. For this special venture the Victoria College in the subsequent years during the first decade of the twentieth century attained the glory of excellence in the field of higher education. As a whole it was found

that due to the benevolence of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and special initiatives of Maharani Suniti Devi, who had a mind of modern thought and ideas, and the contribution of Acharya B. N. Seal in the field of higher education, Cooch Behar state became a core-place of education and culture in North-East India. The students came from Assam got the message of a high cultural profile from Cooch Behar. As a recognition of his scholarship Acharya B. N. Seal was awarded so many honour both in India and abroad like Rome and London. At the time of his retirement as principal of Victoria College, the Cooch Behar state as a tribute to his excellence delivered a humble address to him. Some portions of that address are mentioned here:-

“The invaluable services of Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal M.A. Ph. D. whose retirement from the state service caused an irreparable loss to the Victoria college of which he was the principal for sixteen years deserve appreciative notice and grateful recognition. He was appointed to the post in March, 1896 and the departure made by his highness the late Maharaja Bhup Bahadur in his selection was amply justified by Dr. Seal’s distinguished academic attainments, intimate acquaintance with the working of Calcutta University and extensive experience of the needs and conditions of Indian Education which immediately bore fruit in raising the status of the College..... Dr seal extended his untiring energy and activity beyond the sphere of his legitimate duties of the reorganizations of the state Higher English Schools (Collegiate and Sub divisional) which he admirably effected with the limited resources at his disposal”.<sup>19</sup>

Not only this about the contribution of Acharya B. N. Seal and the Victoria College for the cause of education and culture in Cooch Behar, we get something more important reference from the writings of Kumud Bandhu Chakraborty, the most beloved student of Acharya B. N. Seal, who stood first class first in B.A. examination in philosophy Honours. Kumud Bandhu

Chakrabarty wrote, "In those days, Cooch Behar had a galaxy of teachers. They used to read and read hard the subjects they professed and were eager to know of the wider world of letters. Thus on Sundays and holidays, Dr. Seal used to have at his house classes of the professors, the subject being, if it is to be given a name universal culture. I was not discouraged if sometimes I made bold to listen from a side room, there was professor Shyam Charan Chakraborty of philosophy whose rational and analytical approach to philosophical problems was often commended to be by Dr. seal, professor Jay Gopal Banerji who later on come to occupy the University chair in English and others. The lure of these classes sometimes attracted stalwarts from Calcutta. Bepin Chandra Paul, for example, the celebrated political thinker and writer was a visitor to Dr. Seal's house at that time, 1908-09. He used to come and stay at a stretch for weeks. The result could be seen in many of his subsequent articles and notably in his "Soul of India".<sup>20</sup>

So long we have discussed about the Victoria College of Cooch Behar and its principal Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal, the world famous philosopher, whose contribution was naturally for the cause of higher education and culture in the Cooch Behar state. Now we would try to give some other references about the "COOCH BEHAR SAHITYA SABHA" and some other literary practices at Cooch Behar.

#### 6.8. COOCH BEHAR SAHITYA SABHA.

When we were discussing about the press publications at Cooch Behar (See chapter 3), it was found that Cooch Behar have achieved the credit of publishing a series of Periodicals and Journals. In this context we must have to mention that the "COOCH BEHAR SAHITYA SABHA" was an association/organization which have contributed a lot for the cultural development of North Bengal. This Association (Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha) was founded in 1915 with the Royal patronage and it had a significant contribution for the promotion of cultural practices at Cooch Behar as well as North Bengal. Before we discuss about this Sahitya Sabha, let us have a brief idea of its background. It

has already been mentioned that the Cooch Behar state had a significant contribution in press-publication (See chapter 3).<sup>21</sup> In the history of the literary activities the journal which had an outstanding contribution was the 'PARICHARICA'. Paricharika started its publication in 1878 and was edited by Nepal Chandra Majumdar. In the initial stage it was published from Calcutta under the supervision of 'Nababidhan Brahma Samaj'. Some members of the family of Keshab Chandra Sen took special interest to publish this paper and they published it for Twenty Eight years. But due to some unavoidable circumstances this publication was stopped in 1906. After ten years in 1916 'PARICHARICA' again started its publication under the direct supervision of 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha'. This time it was edited by Nirupama Devi, who was the wife of prince Victor Nityendra Narayan of Cooch Behar Raj family and younger sister of Maharani Suniti Devi. When the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha took the charge to publish this literary journal, it was found that the journal attained the status of a high standard literary journal. Most of the contemporary stalwarts of Bengali literature of Bengal used to write and publish their articles in this journal. In this new phase of its publication it is found that famous writers of the Bengali literature of the contemporary period including the great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore used to write in this journal. Among other writers in this journal we can mention the name of Kazi Nazarul Islam, Banaphul, Kumud Ranjan Mallik, Kabi Sekhar Kalidas Roy and so many writers.<sup>22</sup> From this reference it may be assumed that 'PARICHARICA' which was publishing from Cooch Behar, a native state, got the credit of a highly standard literary journal and had a close contact with the front ranking novelists, poets and writers of the contemporary period. No doubt, it was an achievement of the 'Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha', the literary and Cultural mouth organ of the Cooch Behar state. In so many issues of this journal (PARICHARICA) these famous writers published their articles which in the subsequent period became a landmark in Bengali literature. Considering all this things specially the connection of Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha with the all Bengal intellectuals and scholars, it can be said that at that time Cooch Behar

became a core place of literary and cultural practices due to which a good number of writers emerged at Cooch Behar in the subsequent period. As a result it was found that after the marriage of Suniti Devi with Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup bahadur of Cooch Behar state, an association of the intellectuals, Scholars and writers came into being and an atmosphere for cultural and literary practices were created at Cooch Behar. Another important factor was that due to this matrimonial relation with a renowned Brahma family of Calcutta which was very much enlightened with western education, Cooch Behar state got the advantage to have a close link with the famous intellectuals and writers' of Calcutta. As a result the newly educated people of Cooch Behar got a scope to contact with the Calcutta based writers and Cooch Behar was gradually developing in the context of education and cultural activities. So it is evident that during the first decade of the twentieth century Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha was very much successful to develop a situation to promote the cause of cultural activities. Another factor which encouraged this cultural activities at Cooch Behar was the social position of Keshab Chandra Sen and his sincere initiative for the cultural development and westernisation of the Native state. This enlightened mind of Keshab Chandra Sen and his social position in Calcutta facilitated to make a bridge between Calcutta and Cooch Behar for intellectual interaction among themselves. Taking advantage of this situation and getting the patronage of the royal court a series of journals and periodicals (at least six journals) were published from Cooch Behar for a long time. As a result of this practice a galaxy of writers and an intellectual community came into being which contributed much for the cultural development of Cooch Behar as well as North Bengal. Among those writers the first and for most was the novelist 'Janaki Ballav Bidyabinode' who wrote the novel 'SOBHA' in 1912.<sup>23</sup> Another writer Subodh Kumar Chakraborty who in his later life became so famous in Bengali literature Ramani Biksha initially started his writings in the journals and periodicals of Cooch Behar. In addition to this the persons who were very much associated with the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha were Bijoya Charan Gupta, Bhagawati Charan Bondopadhaya

(writer of Cooch Behar Itihash, in Bengali), Kokileswar Bhattacharya, Sarat Chandra Ghosal, Bimal Chandra Chakraborty, Niharbala Devi, Khan Chowdhury Amanat ulla Ahamed, Ashruman Dasgupta, Dr. Birendra Nath Bhattacharya, Akhil Chandra Palit, Devi Prasad Sen, Jiban Krishna Mukhopadhaya and others. So in our discussion about the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha, an association of literary and cultural activities and about the intellectuals and writers associated with this literary platform is found that a new wave for the development of literature and culture came into force at Cooch Behar which was very much influenced by the contemporary stalwarts of Bengal, the prime mover of twentieth century society and culture. This cultural atmosphere was prevailing for a long time at Cooch Behar even after its merger with the Indian union. More significantly it is found that this cultural atmosphere created due to so many factors encouraged the total situation of education and culture even after its merger. As a result we see that Cooch Behar became a high profile place for literary and cultural activities. So in this discussion about the contribution of associations for the cultural development, Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha and its royal patronage for this purpose had a significant contribution.

As an example of this cultural development at Cooch Behar we can refer a series of journals and periodicals published from Cooch Behar after 1950. In this context we are just to mention the names of these papers –

i) Awan, ii) Awaz, iii) Amader patrika, iv) Uttorayan, v) Yugabarta, vi) Jagaran, vii) Mashal, viii) Khabar, ix) Seemanta, x) Nagarik, and xi) Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha Patrika. These huge number of publications and specially the initiative of Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha got much recognition for the Cultural development of North Bengal as a whole. So it can be said that a Cultural regeneration was started at Cooch Behar due to the sincere initiative of Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha. Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha as an association had achieved an outstanding contribution for cultural development of this region. Cultural atmosphere which was created

by this association and its patrons had far-reaching consequences. As a result it was found that a new generation emerged with new thoughts and ideas of modern literature and culture. In our limited scope it is not possible to mention about all of them. Dr. Nripendra Nath Paul in his article “Cooch Behar Adhiunik Kaler Sahitya Charcha Chalchitra” have presented a detailed picture of literary and cultural activities in Cooch Behar up to the Period of 1990s.<sup>24</sup> In this article Dr. Paul have elaborately studied about almost all the literary creativities in the field of poem, Novel, Drama, short story, articles on socio-economic and cultural field, History, Archaeology, Folk culture and folk song, Puranic literature and many things.<sup>25</sup> In our study it is not possible to mention the names of all poets, Novelists, Historians, Folklorists, Dramatists and other writers’. But it is fact that the cultural regeneration which started during the period of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and Maharani Suniti Devi continued for long which deserves much credit in this field.<sup>26</sup>

#### 6.9 LITERARY AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AT COOCH BEHAR IN THE POST-INDEPENDENT PERIODS

With the beginning of the twentieth century the literary practice initiated by some employees of the Cooch Behar state gave the birth of a huge number of writers’ in different subjects. We have already mentioned that Janaki Ballav Biswas published a book titled as ‘SOBHA’ in 1319 B.S.<sup>27</sup> In addition to this, some other writers of Cooch Behar who were established in their own field of interest were – Bimal Chakraborty, Sarat Chandra Ghosal, Manindra Nath Mitra, Jiban De (a political activist, later on a communist leader and member of Legislative Assembly of West Bengal), Ashani Bhusan Majumdar (brother of the renowned novelist Amiya Bhusan Majumdar) and others.<sup>28</sup>

In the literary and cultural history of modern Cooch Behar as well as Bengal as a whole the name of AMIYA BHUSAN MAJUMDAR is a landmark in true sense. He was born at Cooch Behar on 22nd of March, 1918 and brought up there. Amiya Bhusan had a family background of literary activities.

His mother Jyotirindudevi was Personally interested with literary activities and she herself used to write some stories.<sup>29</sup> Amiya Bhusan started his literary life with the little Magazine which is something exception to a great novelist like him. For sometime he edited a Journal "Uttarayan". Professionally he was an employee of the Post and Telegraph Department and later on he was actively involved with trade union movement. Along with all these business he devoted himself in writing in all the branches of Bengali literature throughout his life. It is really a matter of pride of North Bengal that he wrote and published fifteen (15) outstanding novels some of which got national prestigious awards. The outstanding awards he got during his lifetime were (1) Bankim Purashkar in 1986, (2) Academy Puraskar in 1986.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to all these literary performances Amiya Bhusan Majumdar had a great interest in art. In some exhibitions, his drawings attracted the attention of the interested persons.<sup>31</sup> Considering all these literary and cultural activities of Amiya Bhusan Majumdar it is evident that from the pre-independent period to till 1990s, he contributed a lot for the socio cultural development of this region. In a word it can be said that the house of Amiya Bhusan Majumdar was the 'Cultural Power House of Cooch Behar.'<sup>32</sup>

#### 6.10. SOCIO-CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT

In the study of different perspectives either socio-cultural or political, it is found that the emergence of Associations/ organizations or Institutions (SABHA SAMITIS) have a clear indication of the general awakening of the people specially in the particular area where it was founded. Since long back we have so many references that there came some changes particularly in the relevant field due to the formation of some Associations/organizations and their activities. It may also be mentioned that the tone (aims and objectives) of these Associations were being noticed in several dimensions for the cause of social, cultural and political developments. Even in the present days it is being noticed that this type of SABHA – SAMITIS are generally formed to ventilate the grievances of the people and sometimes they place their charter of demands

before the rulers / administration to fulfil their aspirations.<sup>33</sup> At the same time it is also a fact that there had emerged several Associations and organizations, mostly of cultural and literary character which provided meeting places for exchange of views and for the promotion of common objectives.<sup>34</sup> Since most of these Associations were short-lived, information as to their organization and working were extremely meagre.<sup>35</sup> However, for the purpose of our study now we would like to mention something about some socio-cultural Associations/organizations of Darjeeling District (specially in the hill areas) and their contribution for the socio-cultural development of this region.

In the history of associations of Darjeeling District, we have the information of different type of associations / organizations during the period of our study. But due to the lack of information we cannot say definitely when the association of any character was sprang-up in Darjeeling for the first time. So far it is known, there was no association in the Darjeeling District during the early phase of our study. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century some association in formative state were existing, but their basic character were Ethno-political. From Government Record and District Gazetteer of Darjeeling, we don't get any reference of any association during this Nineteenth century. But from some secondary sources it is known that during 1883 a Branch of 'INDIAN ASSOCIATION' of S. N. Banerji was founded at Darjeeling.<sup>36</sup> For this purpose (opening of a Branch of Indian Association) Babu Dwaraka Nath Ganguly and Dwarakanath Ghosh came to Darjeeling from Calcutta.<sup>37</sup> Nothing details are known about this. In addition to that one more information we get from the same source that in the year 1886, two representatives from Siliguri attended the 'INDIAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE' held in Calcutta. So it is found that in the initial stage both the Darjeeling Hill and plain areas had some involvement with nationalist organisations.

In the early stage of the political activities in Darjeeling one most important incident was the role of 'Bagha Jotin.' Before he engaged himself in revolutionary activities, he was at Darjeeling for his service from 1902 to 1907.

At that time he was very much influenced and attracted with the revolutionary activities of 'ANUSILAN SAMITI', a terrorist organization. At that time Bagha Jotin with some of his close disciples opened a branch of Anusilan Samiti at Darjeeling. The name of this association was 'BANDHAB SAMITI'<sup>38</sup>. In every evening he used to take classes to some youths explaining the ideals and sacrifices which was depicted in 'GITA.' But it is not known whether any person of Nepali community or any other hill community were present there.

During 1905, when the people of Bengal (including northern part of Bengal i.e. North Bengal) got very much excited against the illegal and unjustified scheme for partition of Bengal, people from all parts of Bengal raised a voice of opposition and started agitation to unsettle this settlement.<sup>39</sup> At that time on 16th October, 1905, Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das and Sister Nivedita addressed a meeting in Town Hall of Darjeeling criticising the unjustified decision of the British Government.<sup>40</sup> In their speeches, the ideals of Swadeshi Movement was very much highlighted due to which some people were impressed with the spirit of Swadeshi. As a result, it was found that to spread the spirit of Swadeshi in Darjeeling town, Khagendra Nath Roy started a co-operative society. To popularise the Swadeshi movement, Swadeshi commodities were sold from this centre. Though this initiative of Khagendra Nath Roy could not achieve anything outstanding but it must be admitted that some sort of Swadeshi organization was going to be emerge at Darjeeling.<sup>41</sup> Though the purpose of our study is not to explain about the political associations at Darjeeling but the associations which dealt with socio-cultural reform were sometimes involved with political rather national movement. However, let us now try to say something about the role of the associations of Darjeeling for the cause of socio-cultural developments.

### 6.10.1 NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELAN, (1924)

About the study of Nepali language, literature and cultural activities in Darjeeling, one can think of the sixty years between 1880 and 1940 as a period in which Nepali language and literature forged ahead in many new direction.<sup>42</sup> This period was the age of awakening both in National, Regional even in the sub-regional levels. It was a period of momentous happenings in the socio-cultural regeneration and the awareness of the economic exploitation of the British rule which had given birth to a strong sense of nationalism and received impetus from the contact of European writings and thoughts.

In our study in chapter 4, we have already mentioned about 'NEPALI SAHITYA SAMMELAN', (1924), and some of its literary activities. It has already been mentioned that Dharanidhar Kairala (Sharma) and Sūryavikram Jnavāli, two teachers of Nepali at Darjeeling and their association with Parasmani Pradhan gave birth to 'Nepāli Sāhitya Sammelan, in 1924. The name of this Association/ organization indicates that it was a literary organization particularly a Nepali Literary association. A good number of educated persons of Darjeeling were associated with this organization and with their best effort did some outstanding achievements for the development of Nepali language and literature. From its character and literary activities we find some similarity of it (Nepali Sahitya Sammelan) with the 'BANGIYA SAHITYA PARISHAD of Calcutta which was established in the year 1907. It was also influenced by the Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammilan and to some extent imitated it. It is an established fact that a good number of eminent personalities of Calcutta with their special interest for Bengali language and literature founded this organization (B. S. P) in 1907 in Calcutta and contributed significantly for the development of Bengali literature and culture. Similarly it is found that Nepali Sahitya Sammelan had some outstanding publications and achieved a lot (so far the best literary performance) for the development of Nepali language, literature and culture. These contributions of this association may be regarded as the treasure of Nepali literature which had a far reaching

consequences for socio-cultural development of the Darjeeling hill areas as well as the Nepali community as a whole. Before the initiative of this organization, we don't get any reference of any well organized literary practice for the literary and cultural development of Nepali community. It is really praiseworthy that the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan served useful purpose by getting more than twenty books written, translated and published by reputed publishing companies the benefit of which went to School children.<sup>43</sup> About its publication we have already mentioned in our previous discussion. (see chapter 4). There we found that Dharanidhar Kairala, (Sharma) had a strong literary background. He was a famous poet in Nepali literature of the contemporary period. It was noticed in his writings that the national feelings of the contemporarily Bengali poets like D. L. Roy, Nabin Chandra Sen and Hem Chandra Bondopadhaya and others were reflected in the writings of Dharanidhar Kairala<sup>44</sup> (Sharma). From some records of this association it is evident that no organization before N. S. S. (Nepali Sahitya Sammelan) performed so many literary achievements which had a great impact for the growth and development of Nepali Language, literature as well as for the upliftment and socio-cultural development of the Nepali community as a whole.

'Nepali Sahitya Sammelan' for its literary development made a common platform. In addition to publication and translation of many books, this Sammelan started to publish a Journal and it was 'NEPĀLĪ SĀHITYA SAMMELAN PATRIKA', a journal of high standard.<sup>45</sup> It gave birth to a host of renowned litterateurs of future and survived for about a few decades. It was an important association of the writers and socio-culturally interested persons. Who in their later life contributed significantly in the socio-cultural activities. Hence, considering all these things specially the contribution of the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan for the cause of socio-cultural development in the Darjeeling Hill area, it must be admitted that during the first half of the twentieth century this organization achieved something outstanding for the development of Darjeeling Hill area and the Nepali Community at large.

## 6.10.2 GORKHA DUKKHA NIVARAK SAMMELAN

In the Darjeeling Hill district we find one organization / Association, specially a Social organization, namely the 'GORKHA DUKKHA NIVARAK SAMMELAN'. It was founded in 1932 with its branches in many towns and cities of India.<sup>46</sup> Hence it can be assumed that though this organization was founded at Darjeeling it had some connection with the Gorkha community throughout India. From the name of this organization it is understood that the socio-cultural movement of Bengal as well as India had some influence on it.

For the formation of this organization (G.D.N.S) it must have some background. General standard of living of this hill community was not up to the mark though they were getting higher wages than such labours obtain in many plain districts.<sup>47</sup> In spite of the general prosperity which prevails, the indebtedness of the people is one of the most serious economic problems of the district. This was due to the reckless manner in which they contract debts owing to the customary obligation to incur heavy expenditure on marriage, funeral and other ceremonies, to their love of drinking, to their propensity to gambling, to their simple delight in display of all kinds, which leads to an extravagant outlay on dress, ornaments and jewellery and finally, to their improvident habits.<sup>48</sup> Not only this, due to many of the reasons they had to suffer. Generally it is said that to remove their sufferings and ill condition in all respect, this Gorkha organization emerged and mobilized the public opinion of this community not only at Darjeeling but in some of the important towns where they reside. It is known to all of us that the Gorkha or the Nepali speaking population was scattered through out the length and breadth of India from Bombay, Calcutta, Benaras, Bangalore, Dehradun to Shillong, Imphal, Arunachal, Lucknow, Madras and Darjeeling.<sup>49</sup> For their common interest when this G.D.N.S. spread in some of the cities and towns all over India, it can easily be considered as an important and popular social organization which had certain aims and objectives. Moreover, it is known to all that in a hill station like Darjeeling, most of the inhabitants were not in good condition. As a result

it is expected that the Gorkha community will try for their betterment and will assemble on a common platform.

In our study it has been found that most of the important Associations/organizations got some publication to ventilate their thoughts and ideas, to highlight their problems and to propagate their demands. G.D.N.S. also started to publish a literary journal namely 'KHOJĪ' in 1940. This journal was the mouth organ of G.D.N.S. and its chief editor was Rupnarayan Singh a renowned novelist and short story writer. It is already mentioned that Khoji did not produce any poet of repute but unlike its predecessor 'CHANDRIKĀ' (1918) it produced mostly articles written by Local talent and its prose had the distinct charm of the Nepali language of Darjeeling.<sup>50</sup> With the literary practices among the persons associated with G.D.N.S. a Socio-Cultural environment came into being and some special interest for the progress of Nepali language and literature have developed. Along with all these literary activities it is found that the G. D. N. S. was active enough to create a strong public opinion in favour of their low social position. At the same time this organisation adopted so many programme to develop their social position. If we make a review of this G. D. N. S., it must be admitted that, as a social and cultural organization Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelan performed an outstanding responsibility for the socio-cultural development of their community at large.

### 6.10.3 NEBULA

If the objectives of Ādarsa, edited by Śeshmani Pradhān from Kalimpong in Darjeeling since 1930 and of Udyog from Nepal since 1935 was to create an interest in economic enterprises, NEBULA (1935), signifying Nepalis, Bhutiyas and Lepches (LEPCHAS) published from Kalimpong with K. D. Pradhan as the editor was brought out to highlight the problems and propagate the Ethno-political demands of the three hill communities of the Darjeeling District.<sup>51</sup> Though Nebula was basically a literary journal Published from Kalimpong in Darjeeling, its organizers had certain objectives. To achieve

it they were always active to highlight the problems of three particular hill communities (Nepali, Bhutiyas and Lepchas) of Darjeeling district. particular hill communities (Nepali, Bhatiyas and Lepchas) of Darjeeling district. Due to the non-availability of its copy it is difficult to estimate about its activities. But it is true that this literary organization published some articles of literary value and played a significant role in rousing the consciousness of the general public.<sup>52</sup>

From some other references it is found that NEBULA as a social organization performed some responsibilities. For the upliftment and betterment of their social position this organization earnestly tried to propagate in favour of their political demands. The most prominent organizer of NEBULA (Editor of the journal, NEBULA) K. D. Pradhan, was a renowned social worker. With his sincere social work, K. D. Pradhan became very much popular among the people of this three particular communities (Nepali, Bhutiya and Lepchas). His role on behalf of this organization was very much significant.<sup>53</sup> So far our study is concerned with NEBULA, it is found that though it has emerged as a periodical, at the same time it got some importance as a social organization. From this view point some political demands and problems of these three communities came to be noticed which mobilized the public opinion, promoted the consciousness of the Darjeeling hill people in general.<sup>54</sup> Considering all this developments it can not be denied that 'NEBULA' as a social organization got some positive role in the field of socio-cultural development of Darjeeling Hill area.

#### 6.10.4 GORKHA SAMITI AND GORKHA LIBRARY

Due to the activities of different type of socio-cultural Associations/organizations the sense of awakening among the Nepalis were getting popularity and some other organizations were founded at Darjeeling and other places in India by Indian Nepalis. The Gorkha Samiti was revived at Darjeeling immediately after the First World War.<sup>55</sup> As its name sounded like that of 'ANUSILAN SAMITI', a terrorist organization of Bengal, it had to

rename itself as 'GORKHA ASSOCIATION' (1926) under the pressure of the British Government. At that time Agam Singh Giri was its president. Its aim was to promote socio-cultural interests of the Indian Nepalis<sup>56</sup> In the mean time we find another cultural organization at Kurseong in Darjeeling. The 'GORKHA LIBRARY', was opened in 1918 with the object of bringing about an upliftment of the educationally backward Nepali community.

In addition to these Associations/organizations we get the information about some other socio-cultural organizations at Darjeeling which were equally active for the promotion of their socio-cultural life. In our limited scope it is not possible to get a detail study about all of these organizations. But the aims, objectives and spirit of these organizations clearly reveals that they were always active to promote their social position and cultural development. For example we can mention the name of some other Associations/organizations like:-

- i) NEPALI SAHITYA ADHYAYAN SAMITI. (Kalimpong)
- ii) NEPALI SAHITYA PRASAR SAMITI. (Siliguri).
- iii) ARYA SAMAJ, (Darjeeling branch)
- iv) GORKHA LEAGUE (Darjeeling Branch)
- v) HILLMEN'S ASSOCIATION (Darjeeling).

Considering the activities of these Associations/organizations it is found that these organizations were very much active in the field of social reforms cultural activities, publication of journals and periodicals, publication of books and highlighted the socio-economic backwardness of the people of Darjeeling hill area. (see chapter 6). Hence the spirit of all these organizations were to some extent identical in respect of general awareness, promotion of social position, socio-cultural upliftment, development of language and literature and the mobilization of public opinion for the cause of their own. So far our investigations are concerned it is found that the Nepali Sahitya Adhyayan Samiti and Nepali Sahitya Prasara Samiti were the platforms to explore on

Nepali language and literature. At the same time the 'HILLMEN'S ASSOCIATION', founded in 1917 took up the cause of the hill people of Darjeeling.<sup>57</sup>

This brief account outlining the development of Nepali language and literature shows that Nepali language, literature, culture and society assumed a distinct shape during the first quarter of the twentieth century. This trend of literary development that started from the later part of the Nineteenth century continued to grow more vigorously in the subsequent period. At that time so many important works were written and published which are already mentioned earlier. The activities and projects taken up by different socio-cultural associations /organizations inspired the hill communities of Darjeeling (both man and woman) to take up work for the development of their language and literature. These initiatives of different socio-cultural Associations/organizations produced the sense of consciousness and awakening among the Darjeeling hill communities and got a significant contribution for the socio-cultural development of this area.

#### 6.11. SOCIO-CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF MALDA DISTRICT.

Generally the political associations or the organizations of different type serve as the mouth-piece of the people of some particular area presenting to the authorities their "needs and grievances, hopes and aspirations". Its sponsors does not believe in action oriented programmes of the rajmels or village assemblies, but pinned their faith on constitutional agitation that redress of grievances of the people and reforms in administrations could be effected by prayers and petitions. Resolutions which were adopted in general sessions after due deliberations on all burning questions of the day were forwarded to the government for its considerations. But the character of Socio-Cultural associations/organizations are different and their activities generally concerned with the socio-cultural issues which are already discussed in the study of Cooch Behar and Darjeeling Districts. Now we are to give some pieces of information's about the socio-cultural associations of Malda which have

achieved an outstanding role for the social and cultural awareness of the district as well as North Bengal.

### 6.11.1 NAME OF THE ASSOCIATIONS

First of all we would like to mention the names of the associations/organizations and subsequently discussion will be made about them and their contribution in the socio cultural issues.

- i) The Malda Association. (Established 1887).
- ii) The Malda Muhammadan Association, (Established 1890).
- iii) Malda Branch of Rampur-Boalia Dharma Sabha.
- iv) Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan.
- v) Malda National Council of Education. (Malda Branch).

Some other associations both socio cultural and political started in this district But as it is not possible to have a study about all of them, we will discuss only on the associations mentioned above.

### 6.11.2 THE MALDA ASSOCIATION (MA)

This Association (MA) was established in 1887.<sup>58</sup> For public interest it had different type of activities. Without any detail discussion about the activities of this association if we just quote some portion of its aims and objectives, formation and its constitution, we will have a clear picture about this organization. From the list of registered associations of the Govt. of Bengal we find the following information.

“Object – to improve the conditions of the people of the district-in every direction. Constitution of, and qualifications for membership – Membership is open to an adult educated residents of the district. All the office bearers are Hindus, and the Association does not represent Mohammedans, most of the members belong to the legal profession. Others are Zamindars, merchants, physicians and pleaders. No permanent fund. Subscriptions realized as occasion arises.

Member – 55.

Name of principal officials –

President – **BABU JADU NANDAN CHOUDHURY.**

Vice President –

Name and address of Secretary –

**BABU RADHIKA LAL SATIAR, B.L.**

Pleader, Malda.

Particular questions in which the Association is interested and upon which it would be in a position to offer an opinion of Value - may be consulted on questions of general interest.

Remarks – NIL”.

From the above statement concerned with the objectives of this association is quite evident. How far it was active with socio-cultural issues that cannot be stated definitely. But from its memorandum it may be said that this Malda Association was a platform to look after the general interest of the district.<sup>59</sup>

### **6.11.3. MALDA MUHAMMEDANS ASSOCIATION (MMA)**

According to the Government Reports it is found that in Malda district Mohammedans were the second largest community. W.W. Hunter (SAB, Vol. vii) stated that in Malda the population is almost evenly divided into Hindus and Muhammedans. More specifically, it can be said that the proportion of Hindus is greatest in the North and West of the district and of Muhammedans in the south.<sup>60</sup> So it is not Unlikely that being a major Community of the district the Mohammedans were very much aware to develop their community. Objects of this association was to improve the social, political and educational condition of the Muhammedans community.<sup>61</sup> List of the Registered Associations, Government of Bengal shows that “Membership is open to all educated Muhammedans. Business is transacted by an elected committee of

30, mostly resident of English Bazar. A general meeting is held once a year. Expenses met from Voluntary subscriptions and donations. Possesses no fund, present members include all leading Mohammedans, pleaders, Mukhtears, landowners, trade men and physicians.” The association was run by some officials—

President – Maulavi Muhammad Ismail Choudhari.

Name and address of the secretary-

Khan Sahib Abdul Aziz Kkan, B.L. pleader, English Bazar.

Particular question in which the Association is interested and upon which it would be in a position ..... Questions affecting Muhammedans interests.<sup>62</sup> It is found that most of intellectuals (pleaders, physicians etc) got some active involvement with this association (MMA) to look after the general interest of the Mohammedans of the district. So as a social organization (MMA) the association was very much concerned for the betterment of their community.

#### 6.11.4 RAMPUR BOALIA DHARMA SABHA, (Malda Branch)

In our discussion in chapter 3, we have already mentioned about this organization/ Association. We don't have any details about this organization (RBDS). Actually it was an organization of Rajshahi District (in present Bangladesh) a branch of which was established at Malda. Due to the initiative of Radhesh Chandra Seth, a renowned intellectual of Malda, (already mentioned earlier in chapter 3) a branch of this organization (RBDS) was established at Malda. In the course of publications from North Bengal (before 1947), a journal namely 'HINDU RANJIKI' was published and it was the mouth piece of 'RAMPUR-BOALIA DHARMA SABHA'<sup>63</sup> of Rajshahi. From this reference it is known that it could not play any significant role in the socio-cultural field. But it is assumed that as a social organization some sort of socio religious activities were performed by it. From the activities of this organization (Malda Branch) it is evident that some intellectuals and social

activists were assembled together for the cause of this organization and performed some socio-religious practices.<sup>64</sup>

#### 6.11.5 MALDA ZELA SAHITYA SAMMELAN (1317 B.S).

Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan (MZSS) was perhaps the most important organization/Association in the cultural life of Malda. So far it is known that this MZSS is the oldest and seems to be the first districtwise organization in North Bengal. This organization was a common platform for the literary and cultural activities in the district. Among the organizers of this Sahitya Sammelan, the key person was Radhesh Chandra Seth. In our discussion in chapter 3, we have already mentioned that Radhesh chandra had a special literary interest due to which he published some papers and periodicals and wrote a good number of books. As a mark of regional interest he started to write one book on the geographical identity of Malda.<sup>65</sup>

For the cultural development of Malda, Radhesh chandra took the initiative to arrange a Sahitya Sammelan (Literary Conference) at Malda. From the proceedings of this Sammelan (conference) it is known that sir Jadunath Sarkar a renowned historian, who happens to be a son of Rajshahi, a district of North Bengal of undivided Bengal kindly consented to attend this conference. After a long time preparation it was found that ultimately a 'SAHITYA SAMMELAN OF NORTH BENGAL' was held at Malda on 25th day of Paush, 1317 B.S.<sup>66</sup> This initiative of Sahitya Sammelan in the district which was arranged for the first time got a good response in the cultural life of Malda. As a result it is found that a good number of intellectuals and interested person with socio-cultural activities from Malda district as well as some other places of North Bengal attended this 'Sahitya Sammelan'. Quite naturally the total cultural life of Malda district was very much encouraged. Due to this literary exercise in the district a good number of educated as well as interested persons involved themselves in literary and cultural activities which may be marked as a development in the cultural life of Malda.<sup>67</sup>

From this brief discussion about the 'Malda zella Sahitya Sammelan' (MZSS) it may be assumed that this organization / Association, within its limited scope achieved so many things for their general awareness and it started a cultural regeneration in Malda district as well as North Bengal.

#### **6.11.6 MALDA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION (MMCE)**

In our discussion about different type of Associations/organizations in the district of Malda we have found the process of so many socio-cultural activities. But apart from all these Associations/organization, the most important and noteworthy Association was the 'MALDA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION' (MNCE) which had a long drawn impact on the socio-cultural even in the political life of Malda. About the background of this Association we have already discussed (see chapter 3).

It has already been stated that to popularise the issue of national education among the students of Bengal a campaign was started during 1905-06 by Radhakumud Mukhopadhaya, Rabindra Narayan Ghosh, Nripendra Chadra Banerjee and Benoy Kumar Sarkar of Malda.<sup>68</sup> After the establishment of the 'National council of Education' (N.C.E.) on 11th June, 1906, Benoy Kumar Sarkar tried his best to make it a success. After joining the 'Bengal National College in Calcutta Professor Benoy Kumar Sarker decided to open a branch of it at his birth place, Malda. With this intention he had been at Malda for some days. After reaching Malda, professor Sarkar within a very short time made all necessary arrangements with the help of his associates and established the "MALDA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATION" ON 6th day of June, 1907.<sup>69</sup> From the perspective of Swadeshi Spirit, it was a landmark in the history of Malda.

Apart from the establishment of Malda National Council of Education Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar initiated some other programme for the cause of national education (Swadeshi Siksha). During 1913, it was found that at least 11 (eleven) Schools were established in different places of Malda under the supervision of Malda National Council of Education. So, from this initiative of

Malda National Council of Education (M.N.C.E) it is evident that MNCE performed a very positive role for the purpose of education in Malda district. It may also be mentioned that to encourage the students, professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar announced different type of prizes and Scholarship for the students of Malda. Each and every School had a library and a workshop for vocational teaching. The MNCE used to visit these Schools frequently. In this context one renowned historian and former teacher of the Bengal National College stated that, "It was due to Benoy Sarkar that Malda became a place of interest. Some of us used to visit Malda to see Benoy's field of operation".<sup>70</sup> We have so many references to explore on this field of study. But for our purpose all are not needed to be explained. However, it is fact that the Malda National council of Education had a significant contribution for the spread of education in the district.

For the development of the cultural life of Malda, one more thing has to be mentioned here. It is known to all that 'GAMBHIRA' was a popular folk culture of Malda. Considering its importance (GAMBHIRA) and to encourage the people associated with it (Gambhira), Benoy Sarkar announced a prize of Rs.25/- (Twenty five) for collection and compilation of the history of Gambhira. As a result we see that Haridas Palit of Malda published an article on 'ADYER GAMBHIRA' which was published by 'BANGIYA SAHITYA PARISHAD' in 1909.<sup>71</sup> On the basis of this article, Benoy Kr. Sarkar, when he was in London wrote and published one famous book "The Folk Elements in Hindu Culture" in 1917.

So, in our brief discussion it is evident that as an organization / Association the Malda National Council of Education (MNCE) got a significant contribution for the development of education and culture of Malda. Though 'GAMBHIRA' the popular folk culture of Malda was not directly related with the MNCE, Benoy Kr. Sarkar during the course of his activities at Malda undertook a Scheme for its development. Quite naturally it can be said

that as an association MNCE had an outstanding contribution for the Socio-Cultural development of Malda, as well as North Bengal.

## 6.12 SOCIO-CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF JALPAIGURI DISTRICT

In our study about the socio-cultural associations/ organizations of Jalpaiguri we will see a huge number of organizations (SABHA-SAMITIS) of different type which were engaged in so many socio-cultural activities during the period of our study. If we try to discuss about all of them (so far known) it will be too much voluminous and to some extent irrelevant. So for our purpose we will make an attempt to focus on some of them and perhaps that will be enough to understand the main tone of our study.

Before our discussion about socio-cultural associations of Jalpaiguri it has to be mentioned that in the initial stage the cultural practices in the district were started by individual efforts. In this connection the name of Umesh Chandra Roy may be mentioned who wrote one book entitled 'Sikkimer Itihash' (in Bengali) in the year 1875.<sup>72</sup> Next we can refer the name of Taraknath Gongopadhyaya who wrote the story 'Soudamini'. Krishnamohan Chokrabarty was another person of Jalpaiguri who wrote 'Brahmaputra Mahatyam'.<sup>73</sup> Girish Chandra Sen translated 'KORAN' in Bengali and Salimuddin Ahmed was another person who also translated 'KORAN' in Bengali.<sup>74</sup> In fact in the initial stage the literary practice in Jalpaiguri was started by individual effort and not by any organization.

### 6.12.1 DEBATING CLUB. JALPAIGURI, 1897

When Jogesh Chandra Ghosh was a student of presidency college, Calcutta (Later on a renowned Tea-planter of Jalpaiguri), he was very much influenced by the associations/organizations of Calcutta. From that time he had a mind to form a platform of the educated people of Jalpaiguri to perform different type of socio-cultural activities. As a result we see that he established a 'DEBATING CLUB' at Jalpaiguri in the year 1897. Raja Jagadindradev Raikot was its president and Jogesh Chandra Ghosh himself was the secretary of this Debating club. (Jogesh Jiban, Bhubaneswar Mukhopadhyaya, p.36).

## 6.12.2. ARYA NATYA SAMAJ

Regarding the establishment of this organization we have some confusion. From one reference we find that in 1900, a Voluntary Social service organization named 'ARYA NATYA SAMAJ' was formed in the district headquarters with the help of some gentlemen.<sup>75</sup> From another reference it is found that it was established in 1904. During the Swadeshi Movement when a National School was founded in Jalpaiguri (1907), in the initial stage it was located at the ground of the 'Arya Natya Samaj', established in the year 1904.<sup>76</sup> Whatever may be the year of its establishment (either in 1900, or in 1904) that is not so important to us. But from available sources (Platinum Jubilee Smaranika, 19.4.1979) we can say about this organization i.e., Arya Natya Samaj that it was a drama –cum cultural organization of Jalpaiguri. Along with different type of cultural activities of Jalpaiguri a series of dramas including some lyrical dramas of Rabindra Nath Tagore were staged in the auditorium of A. N. S. In this connection one thing may be mentioned that the auditorium of this organization (ANS) has been used so many times as a venue of nationalist activities.<sup>77</sup> Naturally it is assumed that this organization had a close link with the nationalist activities. Available sources suggest that the prominent personalities of Jalpaiguri were closely attached with this organization. From its very inception this socio-cultural organization (ANS) have patronized all kinds of cultural activities in the district. At the same time it had a mission to campaign against all kinds of evils. Sashi Kumar Neogi, one of the organizers of ANS and editor of Trisrota, stated that members of this organization will spent their time in literary practices and cultural entertainment.<sup>78</sup> Another purpose of this organization was to give proper guidance to the restless youths who were involved in different type of unsocial activities and to lead them in the main stream of the social life.<sup>79</sup> Sri Nirendra Nath Bagchi, one of the senior executive member of ANS wrote that, "Arya Natya Samaj, though it was mainly a dramatic organization, tried sincerely to inspire the youths for education and literary activities,"<sup>80</sup> About the socio-cultural activities of ANS, we have so many references which are not needed to be mentioned here.

However, on the basis of our findings it is found that this organization played a significant role in the cultural life of Jalpaiguri even after 1947.

### 6.12.3. JALPAIGURI SAHITYA SAMITI

The cultural atmosphere which was the outcome of Arya Natya Samaj and TRISROTA, (a literary journal of Jalpaiguri) was followed by some other associations. 'JALPAIGURI SAHITYA SAMITI' was one of them. Some educated persons of Jalpaiguri who got some special interest for literary as well as cultural activities took the initiative and formed this literary organization namely 'Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti' during the month of August, 1928.<sup>81</sup> This organization also performed some socio-cultural activities which had some impact on the cultural life of Jalpaiguri.<sup>82</sup> About the aims and objectives of this organization it is mentioned that members of this J. S. S. (Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti) will have discussion on literature, articles related with literature, reading and criticism on the writings of famous authors and their books etc. Some of the members of this organization were—Sri Umapada Banerjee, Bireswar Prasad Basu, Mohini Mohan Ghosh, Nirendra Binod Sen, Pramatha Nath Basu, Indubhusan Bhattacharya, Umesh Chandra Sarkar, Narendra Kishore Nandi, Jitendra Nath Majumdar, Pritinidhan Roy, Bhabesh Chandra Ghosh and Durga Prasanna Ghatak.<sup>83</sup>

### 6.12.4 JALPAIGURI MUSLIM SAHITYA SAMITI

During 1930, a good number of Muslims were there in Jalpaiguri town and they were sufficiently influential and possessed some qualities (see chapter 3). At the same time it is also found that there were not even a single Muslim member of the Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti. So for their own purpose and out of interest the Muslims of Jalpaiguri town established a literary association within three years after the establishment of 'Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti'. The name of this association was 'JALPAIGURI MUSLIM SAHITYA SAMITI' (J.M.S.S.) established in the year 1931.<sup>84</sup> Some of the office bearers of this association were as follows:-

President – Tajmal Hossain.

Vice President – Moulavi Safdar Ali and Maulavi Lajemuddin.

Secretary – Maulavi Md. Sukurullah

Assistant Secretary – Maulavi Azmal Hossain.<sup>85</sup>

The first conference of this Muslim Sahitya Sammelan was held at Jalpaiguri in 1931, and was presided over by Maulavi Ismail Saheb, B. L. Some of the persons attended this conference were Maulavi Jaharatulla Ahmed, B.L, Maulavi Safiuddin, B.A., Maulavi Azizur Rahman, B.A. etc.<sup>86</sup> From the educational qualifications and social status of the persons attended this conference of J.M.S.S. it is very much clear that the Muslims of Jalpaiguri were also aware about their cultural life, and literary development.

#### 6.12.5. THE ANJUMAN-I-ISLAMIA, JALPAIGURI (established-1892)

In our discussion about associations in chapter 3.3, we have already mentioned about this association and some of its activities which were pointed out by Ranjit Das Gupta as sectional politics to some extent. In spite of that association had some importance to promote the social, political and educational interests of the Muslims of Jalpaiguri district. About its objects it is mentioned as follows:-

“The promotion of loyalty towards the British Government and the promotion and protection of the social, political and educational and other rights and interests of the Muhammadan Community”.<sup>87</sup> Total member of this association were 165. Some principal officials of the association were entitled to look after the functioning of it. Principal officials were-

President – Nawab Musharruf Hossain, Khan Bahadur, B.L.

Secretary – Maulavi Kazi Abdul Khaleque.

Particular question in which the Association was interested and upon which it would be in position to offer an opinion of Value questions affecting Muhammadan interests.<sup>88</sup> Hence. it is found that though it was interested with

the affairs of a particular community, but as an association it got some credit performing the responsibility for looking after the social and educational interests of the Muslims of the district.

#### 6.12.6 THE INDIAN TEA PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION, JALPAIGURI

It was in 1915 at the initiative of Tarini Prasad Roy, Aminur Rahman, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, and several others, the Indian Tea planters organized the 'INDIAN TEA PLANTERS ASSOCIATIONS' (ITPA) with the aims of safeguarding their interest and ventilating their grievances to the government.<sup>89</sup> So it was an association absolutely for the Tea professionals and they were more interested with their own business than the social and cultural activities in the district. But it has to be mentioned that this ITPA was an association of the indigenous Tea-planters. Name of the principal officials of this association were:-

President – Babu Tarini Prasad Roy

Vice President – Messrs B. K. Banerjee, D. C. Ghosh and N. K. Ghosh

Secretary – B. C. Ghosh

Particular question in which the association is interested and upon which it would be in a position to offer an opinion of Value – All matters concerned with the Tea. Industry. The members of the association have views on matters like the Reforms Scheme.<sup>90</sup> Hence, from these objectives it is clear that the association was not directly concerned with the socio-cultural matters of the district. But from the sources of other association (Arya Natya Samaj) it is found that some of the principal officials of ITPA and some members of this association were the patron of many socio-cultural even political activities (Swadeshi) in the district.<sup>91</sup> Even today we see that A. P. Roy of Jalpaiguri (son of Tarini Prasad Roy and a renowned tea planter) is a great patron of 'Uttar Sarani Sahitya Chakra, a socio-cultural organization of Jalpaiguri.<sup>92</sup>

### 6.12.7. BRAHMO SAMAJ (JALPAIGURI BRANCH)

Brahmo Samaj, Jalpaiguri Branch was established in 1869, the year of the formation of the district.<sup>93</sup> In the initial stage there were only a few number of Brahmos in Jalpaiguri. In the District Gazetteer of Jalpaiguri it is mentioned that a House for the Brahmos was constructed in 1901 at Samajpara, Jalpaiguri.<sup>94</sup> Later on, probably in the year 1923 a permanent house for the Brahmos of Jalpaiguri and a Brahmo Samaj temple was established.<sup>95</sup> At that time Hari Mohan Chakrabarty was the Secretary of this Association. During the census of 1909, when the total population of Jalpaiguri town were only 10,231, there were only a few number of Brahmos. But they were mentioned as Hindus. During 1940 to 1950 the number of this Brahmos were gradually increasing. From contemporary newspaper we find that during 1944, Indubhusan Majumdar was its secretary and Jyotirindra Das was the Assistant Secretary. Some other members were Sunitibala Chanda, Sadhana Basu, Nirmal Nalini Dutta, Debaprasad Dutta and Sudhir Chandra Nath.<sup>96</sup>

Indubhusan Majumdar, Secretary of the Brahmo Samaj was appointed as the principal of Ananda Chandra College of Jalpaiguri. Santi Majumdar, wife of Indubhusan Majumdar was also associated with some women organizations of Jalpaiguri. It is also significant that some educated women of Jalpaiguri town were actively involved with the reform activities of Brahma Samaj. Some of them were Hemprava Chanda, Ashrukana Dasgupta, a lady doctor of Jalpaiguri Sadar Hospital, Sarala Manjari Dutta, Sadhana Basu, teacher of Sadar Girls School and her sister Karuna Basu, Aruna Dasgupta (wife of Khagendra Nath Dargupta, a district Congress leader).<sup>97</sup>

About the role of the Brahmo Samaj activities in Jalpaiguri, it is found that during the initial stage it (Brahmo Samaj) played a constructive role. Within a very short time some schools, libraries and cultural programmes were organized by this organization. Specially women education was very much encouraged in the district. So it is found that Brahmo Samaj as an organization took some positive steps for the cultural development of the district.<sup>98</sup>

## 6.12.8. SOME OTHER VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

In the socio-cultural life of Jalpaiguri district, the Voluntary organizations of different character played an important role. During the period from 1920 to 1946, huge number of voluntary organizations were founded and they did something for community welfare which have already discussed in chapter 3. Now we don't have the scope to discuss about the welfare activities of these organizations. Among them we are just to mention the name of some organizations and they were—GANA KALYAN SAMITI, MARWARI RELIEF SOCIETY, INDIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY etc. (see Chapter 3). Apart from this SISU NIKETAN, a voluntary social service organization for child was founded in 1937-38. In 1944, a children education centre namely 'SISUMAHAL' was started. In 1954, a Juvenile organization named "DANPITEDER ASAR" started working for the physical and mental growth of children.<sup>99</sup> Some other organizations like 'SISU-UDYAN', and 'MILE-MISE' were also started at Jalpaiguri. So far our information is concerned it is found that all these organizations were engaged in different type of socio-cultural and welfare activities.

## 6.13 KSHATRIYA SAMITI (KS)

Though we are discussing about the associations of Jalpaiguri, the activities of the Kshatriya Samiti cannot be confined either in Jalpaiguri or in any particular district of North Bengal. In course of discussion about the Socio-political stirrings during the first half of the twentieth century it is important to take account of a movement that emerged and spread among the Rajbansi Hindus of Jalpaiguri district and also other parts of North Bengal, particularly Rangpur and Dinajpur, the princely state of Cooch Behar and Goalpara district in Assam. The movement came to be known as the Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement led by the Kshatriya Samiti.<sup>100</sup> The background of the movement was provided by some social problem of the Rajbansis is due to the census report of 1891. In this census both the Rajbansi and the Koch community belonging to the Hindu social group or caste on the basis of social hierarchy

were treated in the same category. The census authority gave instructions to the effect that the 'Rajbansi is the same as Koch'.<sup>101</sup> As a reaction several leading Rajbansi Zamindars and Jotedars of Rangpur took initiative in voicing protest against this report. They urged F.M. Skrine, then District Magistrate of Rangpur, to recognize Rajbansis as a caste separate from the Koch and to allow them to be recognized as Kshatriya. The District Magistrate called for the opinion of the intellectuals on the identity of the Rajbansis. After consultation with representatives of different School of Pandit Samaj, important personalities of Hindu Society and prominent 'Rajbansi Kshatriyas' the opinion came out that the Rajbansis and the Koches two entirely different casts that the former were of Kshatriya origin and that they had been degraded to a Bratya state due to non-observance of Vedic practices.

However, the identity of the Rajbansi Hindus conspicuously changed in the census of 1901. They were regarded not as Bratya Kshatriya as recognized earlier. To quote the then Magistrate of Rangpur,

"On a recent reference to the superintendent of census operation, he has ordered that the man are to be classed Rajbanshis and not Bratya Kshatriya, I therefore decline to reopen the matter.<sup>102</sup> Hence, in the 1901 census, the Rajbansis were enumerated as belonging to the lower caste. They were mentioned as Rajbansis and not as Bratya Khatriyas unlike in the previous Census report. The Rajbansis were socially degraded in their position, which led to their frustration. They were an aggrieved lot, and to exonerate them of their grievances pertaining to their social degradation, one Rajbansi intellectual Panchanan Barman, who was the then advocate of the Rangpur Court, took the leadership of the Rajbansi Community in pursuit of their social identity in the upcoming census of 1911. In these circumstances, an association was formed named 'Rajbansi Kshatriya Samiti', an organization of Rajbansi Kshatriyas in 1910 attended by around 400 delegates from Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Assam and presided over by Madhusudan Ray an advocate of Jalpaiguri. The Samiti (KS) placed its charter of demands for the resolution of

their identity and social position. The period in the aftermath of the 1911 census saw the publication of a report by the then Superintendent of census O' Mally in 1913 which said that the Koch and the Rajbansis were separate communities.<sup>103</sup>

But it is fact that Sanskritisation, or the assimilation of tribal or semi-tribal people into Hindu fold was not so smooth. In this circumstances the movement started with particular emphasis on 'UPANAYANA SANSKARA' or the wearing of the sacred thread and on the basis of that readmission to Kshatriya status. In February 1912 (27 MAGH, 1319 B, S.) several thousand Rajbansis from different districts of North Bengal congregated at Debiganj on the bank of 'KAROTOYA' a river sacred to the Rajbansis (in Jalpaiguri district) and took sacred threads as a symbol of sanskritisation.<sup>104</sup> Similar congregations were arranged in different places for the same purpose in the subsequent period. Within a few years it is found that the KS guided by small group of Rajbansi lawyers and educated persons worked for the spread of education among the members of the community. The Samiti also took the initiative to raise a fund for the community to provide loans to Rajbansi agriculturists and urged them to improve their agricultural practices. A co-operative credit society was also organized.<sup>105</sup> To highlight different reform programme for the community the Samiti (KS) brought out a monthly Journal named as 'KSHATRIYA' which dealt with the various socio-economic problems of the Rajbansi community.<sup>106</sup>

Another important achievement of the KS was to provide physical training to the Rajbansi youths. At that time the outbreak of the First World War prompted the Samiti leaders to give a call to the young men of the community to show their kshatriyattva that is, martial abilities by joining the British army and issued appeal to the government for raising two battalions composed exclusively of Rajbansis. As a result it was found that several hundred Rajbansi youths from Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Goalpara (Assam) Joined the army and went to the war. In this context Panchanan

Barman, secretary of the Samiti contributed a lot and in recognition of the service rendered by Panchanan Barman he was conferred the titles of 'RAI SAHEB and M.B.E. (member of the British empire).<sup>107</sup> With several activities, the Samiti claim to be a non-political association. As a social organization the Samiti worked for so many social, intellectual, moral and religious progress of the Rajbansi Community.<sup>108</sup> However, it is found that the Samiti took a political position in course of several Occasions. All these are not required to be discussed here. But it is fact that the Kshatriya Samiti created an apparent caste solidarity among the Rajbansi's in general and an identity consciousness among the educated and well to do section of the community in particular. On the whole, the Rajbansi Kshatriya movement represented an endeavour to find social identity and status for the Rajbansi community though it had some anomalies and internal tension. In spite of so many socio-religious and economic reform programme the Samiti did not have any programme for the poor peasants and 'ADHIARS' (share croppers) who constituted the bulk of the Rajbansi Hindu peasantry. The movement remained confined mainly among the large landlords, Jotedars and better off peasants. Hence it can be stated that the immediate objective of the 'Kshatriya Samiti' was to regain the lost social status of the 'Rajbansi community' in the Hindu social system.

So far our study is concerned with the contribution of the Associations (SABHA-SAMITIS) in the Socio-Cultural movement of North Bengal, it cannot be denied that the 'KSHATRIYA SAMITI' had a great contribution for the social, religious and cultural development of the Rajbansi community who were at that time probably one third of the total population of the region. Though the Samiti started to work as a social organization to regain their social status and for social upliftment, in course of time it had a multidimensional impact in our society which require to be investigated in details. Hence on the whole it can be said that the Kshatriya Samiti had a great contribution for the socio-cultural regeneration of present North Bengal.

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- <sup>2</sup> List of Associations recognized by Government – Corrected upto 1st April, 1945, Govt. of Bengal, Home Department. (801). Bengal Government press, Alipur, Bengal. 1946.
- <sup>3</sup> Bhattacharya. Dr. N. N.— The Varendra Research Society and its contribution to historiography in Bengali. Historiography in Modern Indian Languages, edited by Tarasankar Banerjee.-P.101
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Proceedings of the Rangpur Sahitya Parishad and its eight years work, p. 3. For details see Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, ‘Uttarbanga Namer Sandhane’, N. L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal. 2006.
- <sup>7</sup> Rangpur Sahitya Parishad. Proceedings of its eight years work. PP. 5-6.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 13.
- <sup>10</sup> Rangpur Sahitya Parishad Patrika, Aswin, 1913 B.S.
- <sup>11</sup> Rangpur Sahitya Parishad and its eight years works, 1913, p. 3
- <sup>12</sup> Proceedings of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad. p.7
- <sup>13</sup> Ghosh, A.G.— Uttarbanga Namer Sandhane, N. L. Publishers, Siliguri, West Bengal, 2006, p.43 .
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>15</sup> Chattopadhyaya, Goutam (Ed)–Itihash Anusandhan Vol-XI (in Bengali), Rajpristhaposokataya Cooch Behar Desiya Rajye Sikshar Prasar by N. S. Das, Firma KLM. Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, p.504.

<sup>16</sup> Dam. Mrinal Kanti.–Cooch Behar Rajparibare Sahitya Charchha, (in Bengali), p. 247.

<sup>17</sup> Proceedings of the Government of Bengal Judicial (political) Dept., August, 1878, No. 132, p. 77.

Brahmo public opinion, Vol.I, August-8,1878,p.228.

“The rites observed were strictly Hindu in all essential features, though in difference to the religious principles to the brides father, idolatrous Mantras were omitted and the presence of an idol was insisted on. Care was, however, taken to retain whatever the Brahmanas considered essential to the validity of the marriage. No Brahma ceremony was interpolated at least in public. The Brahma portion of the Assembly was set together chanted some prayer in low voice for about two minutes, but neither the Raja nor the bride took any part in any form of Brahma service of the occasion LOC. Cit

<sup>18</sup> Devi, Suniti, Autobiography of an Indian Princes, London, 1921, p.45.

<sup>19</sup> Bandopadhyaya. Bhagawati Charan – Cooch Beharer Itihash. (in Bengali), Edited by Nripendra Nath paul, Anima prakashani, Calcutta, 1987, p. 248. Majumdar, Subhendu, Adhunik Siksha O Cooch Behar Victoria College. (in Bengali) (1888-1938), Paschimbanga Rajya Pustak Parishad, Calcutta, 2000, p.96.

<sup>20</sup> Chakraborty, Kumudbandhu – “Reminiscences” Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal Birth Centenary Souvenir, Calcutta 1964, p. 55.

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- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>24</sup> Paul, N. N. – Koch Behare Adhunik Kaler Sahitya Charchar Chalচিত্রা, in Madhuparni, Cooch Behar District special issue, edited by Ajitesh Bhattacharya, issue editor, Ananda Gopal Ghosh. 1396 B.S., P. 262.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Roy, Swapan Kumar, Pracin Cooch Behare Mudran Yantrer Abirbhab O Pragatir Unmesh (in Bengali), Uttar Patri, (ed.) Amlan Jyoti Majumdar, Cooch Behar, p. 82.
- <sup>27</sup> Paul, N. N. op. cit. P.266.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.268
- <sup>29</sup> Paul, Dr. N. N. – Koch Behare Adhunik Kaler Sahitya-Charcher Chalচিত্রা (in Bengali), Madhuparni, Cooch Behar District special issue. (Ed.) Ajitesh Bhattacharya, P. 268.
- <sup>30</sup> Mukhopadhyaya, Haripada, Sakthyatkar, (personal interview with Amiya Bhusan Majumdar), Published in Madhuparni, Cooch Behar District special issue, editor by Ajitesh Bhattacharyya and issue editor Ananda Gopal Ghosh, 1396 B.S., P.497.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.501.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid. P. 496.
- <sup>33</sup> Barpujari, H. K (Ed) – Political History of Assam, Vol. I, (1826-1919), The Press and Political Association, published by the Government of Assam, Dispur, Guahati, 1977, p.p. 158-59.

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<sup>39</sup> Sarkar, Sumit – The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1973. (Relevant portion) .

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<sup>42</sup> Pradhan, Kumar – A History of Nepali Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi 1984, p. 73..

<sup>43</sup> Pradhan, Kumar, Op cit, p.79

<sup>44</sup> Ghosh, A. G., Darjeeling Zela, 1393 B. S., p.3.

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<sup>47</sup> O' Malley, LSS., Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling, p.111.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.114

<sup>49</sup> Pradhan, Indramani., Parashmani Pradhan, Makers of Indian Literature, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1979.p. 65.

<sup>50</sup> Pradhan, Kumar, OP. Cit.P80.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>53</sup> Ghosh, A.G., and Roy Sayal Ratna., Growth of public opinion in North Bengal, A case study of the development of Newspapers and periodicals (1870-1947), North Bengal University Review, Humanities and Social Sciences, 1993.

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<sup>56</sup> Ghosh, A. G.– Darjeeling Zela (in Bengali), 1393 B.S, p.5.

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<sup>58</sup> List of Associations Registered by Government. Corrected upto 1st April, 1945. Govt. of Bengal, Home Department (801), Bengal Government Press, Alipur, Bengal, 1946 (Hereafter List of Associations, Op cit)

<sup>59</sup> . Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Lambourn G.E., Bengal District Gazetteer, Malda. P.29.

<sup>61</sup> List of Associations, Op cit, 1946.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Palit, Haridas – Maldaher Radhesh Chandra,(in Bengali), North East publications, Malda, 1935, p.10.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Som, Susmita – Maldaha Zeler Itihash Charchha, Dipali Publishers, Malda, 2006. P.279.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>68</sup> Mukhopadhyaya, Uma – Swadesh Sevok Benoy Sarkar, in Dr. Prodyot Ghosh edited Acharya Benoy Kumar Sarkar, (in Bengli), Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar Janma Satabarshiki Committee, Malda, 1988, p.78.
- <sup>69</sup> Bandopadhyaya, Jitendra Nath – Bharatiya Sanskritir Itihash O Swarup Alochanaya Benoy Sarkarer Dan, (in Bengali) Dr. pradoytf Ghosh (Ed) Acharya Benoy Kumar Sarkar birth centenary committee, Malda, 1988, p.6
- <sup>70</sup> Mukhopadhaya, Uma., OP. Cit. P.79.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Ali, Ahmed, Itihash Granthapanji, p169, Manuscript, 1382 B.S. Chittagong University, Bangladesh.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> Jugantar, 27th September, 1984.
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- <sup>77</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>78</sup> Trisrota, 5th February, 1928.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>81</sup> Trisrota, 19th August, 1928.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>83</sup> Kirat Bhumi, edited by Arabindakar– Jalpaiguri Saharer Sahityalekhya, by Dr, A. G. Ghosh, p. 15.
- <sup>84</sup> Trisrota, 24th May, 1931.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> List of Associations, Op cit, 1946.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Dasgupta, Ranjit. Op, cit. p. 64.

In the list of Associations recognized by the Govt of Bengal (corrected upto 1946) Home Department (801) it is mentioned that the 'INDIAN TEA-PLANTERS ASSOCIATION' was established in 1917.

<sup>90</sup> List of Associations, Op cit, 1946.

<sup>91</sup> ITPA, Platinum Jubilee Smaranika Jalpaiguri, 1979.

<sup>92</sup> Kirat Bhumi, edited by Arabinda Kar, Jalpaiguri, Seet Sankhya, 1396 B.S.

<sup>93</sup> Roy, Subir, Jalpaigurite Brahma samsj (in Bengali) Madhuparni, (ed) Ajitesh Bhattacharya, special Jalpaiguri issue edited by Dr. A. G. Ghosh, 1394 B.S. p.141.

<sup>94</sup> Ghosh, A. G. – Uttarbange Brahma Samaj Andolan O Tar Parinati, (in Bengali) Maldoha Sanskriti O Bignyan parishad Mukhopatra, 1st year, no 12. 1984. p.36.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> JANAMAT – Different issues of 1944.

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<sup>97</sup> Subir Roy – Jalpaigurite Brahma Samaj, in Maldhuparni, Jalpaiguri District issue, edited by Ajitesh Bhattacharya and Issue editor Dr. A.G. Ghosh. 1394 B.S. p.143

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> West Bengal District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri, Barun Dey (ed), P. 316.

<sup>100</sup> Bandopadhyaya, Sekhar - Social protest and politics of Backwardness? The Namasudra Movement in Bengal, 1872, 1872-1911, in Basudab

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<sup>101</sup> Barman, Upendra Nath, *Rajbansi Kshatriya Jatir Itihash*, (3rd edition). 1388 B.S., Jalpaiguri, P. 56.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, P. 60.

<sup>103</sup> *Census of India, Report 1911*, p.445

<sup>104</sup> Barman, Upendra Nath – *Thakur Panchanan Barman Jiban Charita* (in Bengali) 2nd edition. 1387. B.S., Jalpaiguri pp.20-23.

<sup>105</sup> See the Resolution adopted by the Samiti in its different conferences.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>107</sup> Barman, Upendra Nath, *Op cit*, pp. 30-44.

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### EMERGENCE OF NORTH BENGAL QUESTION : NORTH BENGAL PRESS VIS-À-VIS CALCUTTA PRESS.

#### 7.1 BACKGROUND

The emergence of North Bengal Question is a unique issue of my present study. How and under what circumstances this North Bengal question came to be highlighted is difficult to explain. It is really a peculiar kind of question emerged in the canvas of undivided Bengal both in the colonial and post-colonial period. We find a particular geographical area both in the pre-partition and post-partition period which have been mentioned as North Bengal by a good number of scholars in different places. But in course of our study it is very difficult to trace the origin, growth and development of the North Bengal question both in the intellectual arena and in the politico-social life of Bengal. Nay the west, it is stated that initially it was started as a geographical question, i.e., question of identification of a particular area within the jurisdiction of whole Bengal. It means, the area which indicated the geographical location of a specific area of the Bengal presidency region. But with the passage of time the geographical identification of the area (place) was gradually emerging in the first step as a cultural question and subsequently as a total identity question, in respect of ethnicity, language, culture, socio-economic condition and so many things. But one interesting fact that has to be mentioned, 'this identity' does not mean a political separation. Throughout the period of our study, we find a uniform tendency though there emerged several tribal upsurges, exploitation of Zaminders and money lenders, acquisition of land by the administration for plantation of forest etc. moreover class conflict between the zamindar and the peasants in which the two sides belong to the opposite communities does not qualify any communal riot or social tension.

Recently it is found that North Bengal as a particular geographical area has attracted the attention of so many scholars for their study on different aspects. But it is surprising that those scholars remained almost silent about the

geo-historical profile of present North Bengal. In this context they just like to point out North Bengal as an area comprising five (presently six) districts of the northern part of West Bengal. In the course of a historical study like us we cannot treat the issue so simply. It seems to us that it is really an unprecedented event (issue) in the history of the sub-continent. Because a region which have no any recognized geographical identity, political existence, historical past in the name of North Bengal, administrative unit and overall official recognition, it is a question rather a big question in both the pre-colonial and post-colonial Bengal. In such a situation it is firmly believed by some Scholars that barring certain other factors the 'PRESS', i.e., the print and electronic medias have played in the past and are playing in the present a significant role. If we meticulously observe the proficiency of the metropolitan press vis-à-vis the mofussil press (rural press), we will find a peculiar symmetry. Considering this issue it is found that both are hammering on the issue of introducing the northern part of Bengal as analyse as 'North Bengal' in English and 'Uttorbanga' in Bengali. In support of this view even a layman can have the experience about the use of the term North Bengal and Uttarbanga in everyday life. What is interesting is that sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously and sometimes sub-consciously the administration of the government also introducing this region as 'North Bengal' or 'Uttarbanga'. When we are going to justify this North Bengal question, or identify this region, we must have to point out another issue. It has to be noted that in the pre-partition period this area was administratively known as Rajshahi Division and in the post-partition period as Jalpaiguri Division. But what is funny is that neither the administration of the government nor the medias have never introduced this region as Jalpaiguri Division today and Rajshahi Division yesterday.

## **7.2 EMERGENCE OF NORTH BENGAL QUESTION**

In our daily life we see that the term 'NORTH BENGAL' has become inevitable and essential to some extent. Knowingly or unknowingly this term

(North Bengal) are being used by many people for different purposes in course of their activities. Naturally, it is a major issue for our study that how and under what circumstances it was emerged as a North Bengal question. It is fact that though we understand the background of the application of this terminology of North Bengal or Uttarbanga, but it is difficult to get a clear idea on the emergence of North Bengal question. It may be like that ordinarily it was simply a geographical location and this geographical location in the long run has given the birth of North Bengal question. Of course, there were some other factors linked up with this geographical location and created a situation for the emergence of North Bengal as a question. In this connection it would be worthwhile if we study the pre-colonial history of Bengal, we will find that the region known as North Bengal today was the political epicentre of North Bengal. (See chapter 1) But with the Mughal conquest of Bengal the epicentre was shifted from North Bengal to Dhaka, to Murshidabad and finally from Murshidabad to Calcutta. This shifting of political epicentre from North Bengal to other places (mentioned earlier) had far reaching consequences. It is stated by some local historians who were the son of this region that North Bengal have been set down by the Mughal conquest of Bengal (1576).<sup>1</sup> As a result it is found that since the shift of Bengal from Murshidabad to Calcutta, North Bengal became a distant part from the Capital Region i.e., Calcutta till the introduction of the 'Northern Bengal State Railway'.<sup>2</sup> It was only after the introduction of the Railways in this region, the communicational disadvantage was partially removed. But at the same time it is also to be noted that since the shifting of the capital from Gour, Pandua, Tanda and Rajmahal to Dhaka the region was gradually becoming an un-inhabited area. Many factors were responsible for this, which are not required to be studied here. But it is a fact that the natural calamities as well as the dreaded diseases were partially responsible for the depopulation of the region as well as inaccessible of the area to the outsiders. It is believed that during this time the region was known to the people of the outside region as 'PANDAB BARJITA DESH'. It was also believed that, North Bengal was a land of jungles, forests and inhabited by

some uncivilised tribes. This feeling of the outside people was gradually becoming widespread in the pre-Railways period. The introduction of the railways during 1878 onwards has partly removed this misconception about North Bengal.<sup>3</sup> After the introduction of Railways in this region, the outsiders were becoming interested with this region and sometimes they used to visit this area for different purposes. But incidentally it was a short-lived affair. Within a few decades, so many developments have taken place in our national life as a result of which many people and places of our country had to suffer due to the situation created by the great partition of 1947. In this regard North Bengal is one of the fittest examples for its worst condition in all respect.

After the great partition of 1947 as well as independence of our country, the communication system of North Bengal with outside was again drastically dislocated. The creation of two independent countries viz., India and Pakistan and the geographical boundary of North Bengal again shattered this region from the rest of Bengal.<sup>4</sup> It appears that after the partition, North Bengal again became a more distant place from the capital city and it had been called a distant Bengal.<sup>5</sup> During those days, if a person of Jalpaiguri used to visit Calcutta in the post-independence period, it was the most tedious Journey. It was taken more than 35 (thirty-five) hours in the course of journey from Jalpaiguri to Calcutta. This communicational disadvantage during the post-independence period has laid the foundation of North Bengal question. The communicational disadvantage which was lessened by the introduction of railways in this region, again revived and the people of this area felt humiliated and the North Bengal question was coming into existence with a legitimate ground. Somebody may argue and defend in favour of the Radcliff Award, which was an issue of national interest. But arguments cannot rescue the inhabitants of this region from the worst sufferings. This situation (distance between North Bengal and Calcutta, the capital city of West Bengal) was continued up to the construction of 'FARAKKA BRIDGE' (1970).

It is true that the construction of the Farakka Bridge have made a bridge between North Bengal and the rest of Bengal. But the fact is that during this two decades (from partition to the construction of Farakka Bridge) North Bengal really remained as a distant Bengal from the capital region, Calcutta. In fact during this two decades i.e., from partition to Farakka Bridge, the print media of the metropolis vis-à-vis mofussil have constantly highlighted the problems of North Bengal.<sup>6</sup> If we go through the contemporary newspapers from both metropolis and mofossail North Bengal, it will be evident that both the print medias published so many articles and news related with the pertaining problems of North Bengal.<sup>7</sup> These medias, no doubt had a positive role and impact on public opinion. As a result it is found that medias have primarily contributed to bring the North Bengal issues to limelight. Quite naturally it can be said that the medias got the credit to laid the foundation stone of North Bengal as a question.

For the purpose of our study (North Bengal question) let us now turn our eyes on the post-colonial North Bengal. Immediately after the independence of our country, so many problems throughout the country have emerged. If we look into the problems of West Bengal in particular, we will see that automatically some questions raised which were confined within the geographical jurisdiction of North Bengal. It is really a matter of great surprise that in post colonial period most of the vital problems of West Bengal were originated in North Bengal. It was to some extent inevitable due to the situation came out for the partition of 1947. Some problems which originated in North Bengal were the question of merger of the Cooch Behar princely state with the Indian union, i.e., West Bengal, the Berubari question located in the district of Jalpaiguri, the Naxalite Movement in Darjeeling district and some other political movements of the hill people in the Darjeeling district. If we consider the character and importance of these movements, we will see that the whole country either got interested or became tensed for the far-reaching consequences of this socio-political situation. Considering the gravity of the situation, North Bengal became a place of attraction to the outsiders. For

instance we can say that the Naxalite Movement started at Naxalbari, near Siliguri in the district of Darjeeling ceased the attention of the whole country. The Cooch Behar merger question and the Berubari question also took an international shape. The questions arose out of these situation were not confined within the jurisdiction of our country only, but an international question. For all these incidents the name and fame of North Bengal was taken into account in the national and international atlas. In indicating the location of Berubari and Naxalbari, the print medias both from the metropolis and mofussil used the term North Bengal frequently. If we look at the newspapers of the contemporary period, we will see that regarding these issues the area known as North Bengal came to be known both in the national and international levels.<sup>8</sup>

We have mentioned that from the post partition period North Bengal for the second time was delinked from the capital city. It is true that the construction of the Farakka Bridge had made a physical bridge between the metropolis of Calcutta and mofussil of North Bengal. But this physical bridge (Farakka Bridge) could not succeed in making a mental bridge between the metropolis and mofussil of North Bengal. In spite of the removal of communicational disadvantage, the common people of both Calcutta and North Bengal remained unchanged for long time. Physical bridge to some extent failed to change the psychological and mental set up of the people which were prevailing since long. In this context we can refer one example. Professor Nirmal Basu, the former minister, Government of West Bengal, and front-ranking intellectual of North Bengal once lamented that, despite the construction of Farakka Bridge, the Uttar Dakshin psychological distance was not reduced.<sup>9</sup> The statement made by Professor Nirmal Basu was the expression of his realization which he gathered from practical experiences as a political worker. Similarly, Sri Debesh Roy, an eminent literary personality (Academy Awardee) of West Bengal also echoed the same voice.<sup>10</sup> His experience in the cultural field enabled him to realize the psychological distance between the metropolis and the mofussil area of North Bengal. North Bengal as a particular geographical area had to undergo with a series of

circumstances which prepared the background of a mental distance among the people of this region. As a result it is found that the gap or distance between Uttar and Dakshin was inherent among the people of both the region in the sphere of their life. Out of these circumstances so many socio-cultural dimensions have developed and still they are in existence. In such a situation it is very difficult to say anything about it precisely. The issue of this North Bengal question is so complicated and sensitive that it is very difficult to explain. At the same time it is more difficult to reject the issue.

Considering the above situation we are to some extent confused to deal with the problem properly. Within the framework of our study we find North Bengal like a magnetic place due to so many political issue which became national and sometimes international issues. But the North Bengal question was not at all a sudden development. It was a long time process as a result of which a psychological background was already in existence. This psychological background was promoted in course of time and issues. In this respect the medias and association as a vehicle and instrument have sensitised the people of North Bengal and subsequently the issue became so crucial out of which the North Bengal question started to be emerged with some identity question. However, let us have some examples from historical evidences for the growth and development of North Bengal concept.

### **7.3 DEVELOPMENT OF NOTRH BENGAL WITH GEOGRAPHICAL IDENTITY**

In our previous discussion (Chapter-1) we have come to know that during ancient and medieval period North Bengal was known by different names. But during the early colonial period this region came to be known as Northern Bengal or North Bengal simply because, geographically it was the northern part of Bengal.<sup>11</sup> But during the subsequent years, this geographical identity of North Bengal took the shape of a cultural identity which were being started to be used by the intellectuals and academic institutions. Again, in the post colonial period it is found that the geographical identity of North Bengal

started to be used both as geographical and cultural identity.<sup>12</sup> Somehow, the people of this North Bengal region were more interested to identify or represent themselves by using the name North Bengal or Uttarbanga in various ways. In this respect we have huge number of examples irrespective of caste, creed, race, community, etc. Quite naturally the question arises, how and under what circumstances this development came to be emerged. In this connection, we don't have any scope to explain the background of this development in details. For our study we will just mention some references about the use of the name of North Bengal or Uttarbanga which is very much connected with our study.

It is very difficult to say anything about the use of the word North Bengal or Uttarbanga as a geographical identity in modern times. It is assumed that Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya in his article entitled, 'Banglar Itihash Sammandhye Kayekti Katha' (in Bengali) used the word 'UTTARBANGLA' in written form for the first time.<sup>13</sup> He used this word Uttarbanga in some other places also.<sup>14</sup> In his novel 'ANANDAMATH' and 'DEBI CHOUDHURANI' Bankim Chandra again used this word. But for the first time we find the use of the word 'UTTARBANGA' in a journal namely 'UTTARBANGA HITAIISHI' in 1887. It was published from Rangpur.<sup>15</sup> Similarly we find the mention of the word Uttarbanga (North Bengal) in a book of Nikhil Nath Roy. While giving a description about the torture of Debi Singha on his riots Nikhil Nath Roy used the term Uttarbanga.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyaya also used this term North Bengal. He wrote, "From the geographical position, Assam was practically an extension of North Bengal, so far as its speech and early history were concerned."<sup>17</sup> In the context of our study, the statement of this eminent literary personality had some remarkable significance. Apart from this, Dr. Hem Chandra Roychoudhary, the most outstanding historian of our country had significantly mentioned the term North Bengal. Dr. Roychoudhury wrote, "North of the main branch of the Ganges, now known as PADMA and west of the Brahmaputra lies the extensive region of NORTH BENGAL which embraces the modern Rajshahi Division and the State of CoochBehar."<sup>18</sup> This statement also identify a particular region, came to be known as North Bengal.

Bhagawati Charan Bondopadhyaya in his book also mentioned the term Northern Bengal in connection with the introduction of 'North Bengal State Railways.'<sup>19</sup> Referring the same Raja Jagadindra Deb Raikot also used the term North Bengal.<sup>20</sup> It was published from Jalpaiguri in the year 1883.

From our above discussion one thing is quite clear to us that on different occasions the use of the word North Bengal or Uttarbanga clearly identify a particular geographical identity which in the long run got some impact on public opinion. Thousands of examples may be referred which identify this particular geographical location. Even for the sake of any incident or information this term 'North Bengal or Uttarbanga' were used very popularly. The print medias like newspapers and journals used it for unlimited times. When during 1897, there occurred a famine in this region, it was reported by 'BAMABODHINI PATRIKA' as 'Famine of North Bengal.' (Uttarbanger Durviksha).<sup>21</sup> Ananda Bazar Patrika and Amrita Bazar Patrika in their news items referred the name of North Bengal so many times. Not only this the contemporary official reports also used the term of North Bengal to identify a particular geographical position. In this regard we just mention a statement of Andrew Frazer, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. He stated that, "Rangpur, Bagura and Pabna though technically belonging to North Bengal, have more in common with Eastern Bengal and could be best administered from Dacca."<sup>22</sup> The purpose of our study is not to show the use of the term North Bengal. In different perspectives this term has been used to initially for the identification of a particular geographical area. So we would not elaborate our study by presenting a long list about the use of this terminology (North Bengal).

While discussing about the North Bengal question, we must have to keep it in our mind that though it emerged as a geographical identity, in the long run so many factors were added with this issue. We have already mentioned some incidents which were to some extent responsible to raise the question of North Bengal. During the colonial rule we see that in addition to the political developments, some socio-cultural factors also contributed to set the question

in the mainstream. Now we will mention about some socio-cultural organizations and their activities which will make the Uttar-Dakshin question more clear.

#### **7.4 EMERGENCE OF NORTH BENGAL INSTITUTIONS OR ORGANISATIONS**

For the development of the concept of North Bengal during the pre-independence period we have mentioned some examples. From these references we get a clear picture that both the intellectuals and administrators used the word Uttarbanga or North Bengal very carefully. Historically it is evident that before the establishment of the colonial rule North Bengal was the centre-pot of political, commercial and cultural life of Bengal. But after the shifting of this importance from North Bengal to Calcutta some institutions were set up and a centralised tendency in the cultural and political activities were started. But it was a temporary matter which continued only for four decades. By this time some initiatives were taken for the cultivation of North Bengal study. It was Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, who consciously or unconsciously made the platform for the emergence of North Bengal Institutions or North Bengal studies. The name of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya comes to the forefront because of that he was probably the first Indian to formulate a nationalistic conception of history and chalked out the lines on which it should be written.<sup>23</sup> It was he who made research works in Bengali vernacular on certain aspects of Bengal history.

Notwithstanding Bankim Chandra's insistence on writing in Bengali, scholars in the field of historical research preferred to write in English. Naturally Bankim Chandra's dream was not materialized for a long time. After a few decades when the 'VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY' was founded in the year 1910, Bankim Chandra's dream of research in Bengali on certain aspects got a solid footing and research in vernacular language (Bengali) started. It was the Varendra Research Society, the richest Non-Government Institution in India which for the first time started to explore on regional

aspects of North Bengal and it was written and published in Bengali. Professor N.N. Bhattacharya of Calcutta University very nicely stated that, 'The Calcutta-based Scholars and Institutions-though they did not remain aloof from the nationalistic fervour-were not interested in writing in Bengali. The task was eventually taken up by a North Bengal Institution, the Varendra Research Society.'<sup>24</sup> At the same time professor Bhattacharya in his article also stated that, "It is painful to observe that such a glorious achievement was treated with absolute indifference by Calcutta-based Scholars and intellectuals. The foundation of the society and its museum-building did not find any coverage in the newspapers. Neither the Asiatic Society of Bengal nor the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat came to report the functioning of the Varendra Research Society in their respective organs notwithstanding numerous requests."<sup>25</sup>

It is surprising to all of us and we can't say anything about the reasons of their indifference and silence. But one thing which can easily be assumed that the Calcutta based Scholars in the early stage were not mentally prepared to recognize a separate Institution in North Bengal which had a separate cultural identity. It may be like that, for research works in different fields, there were already some Institutions like Asiatic Society of Bengal and Bangia Sahitya parisat and these institutions were very much sincere and active. So separate Institution for the same purpose were supposed to be unnecessary. Whatever may be the reasons for their indifference, but the reality was that some scholars of this region felt it urgent and accordingly they stepped forward and achieved something outstanding contribution which highlighted different aspects of North Bengal with its special cultural identity. So many unexplored aspects of history, archaeology and literature have come out and it attracted the attention of the scholars not only of Bengal but also the scholars of national level.

Apart from Varendra Research Society we must have to mention about another organization i.e., 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD'. This was the only organization which got the credit to popularise the concept of North

Bengal or Uttarbanga among the literate people of this region. The 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD' was established in the year 1905, and as its mouth organ a journal namely 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD PATRIKA' was published by this organization. About the objectives of this Rangpur Sahitya Parishad, it is said that, "As a Branch of BANGIYA SAHITYA PARISHAD this institution was inaugurated with the avowed object of (1) Making archaeological discoveries in North Bengal and Assam..."<sup>26</sup> (See chapter 6.5). From the objective of this organization it is clear to us that the parishad was very much interested with the studies of North Bengal on various aspects and published a series of books and articles. If we look at the contents of the Parishad Patrika, it will be evident that a good number of articles were published which mainly focused on the subjects like history, archaeology, literature and Folk culture of North Bengal.<sup>27</sup> The parishad patrika gave a special emphasis on the subjects confined within the geographical jurisdiction of North Bengal. As a result it is found that North Bengal study were gradually getting importance and institutional recognition. In this connection, one more thing requires to be mentioned here. Like Varendra Research Society and Rangpur Sahitya parishad some other institutions were also established in other parts of Bengal and Assam. During 1916 another institution namely 'RĀDH ANUSANDHAN SAMITI' (R.A.S.) in the Rādh region of South Bengal was established. 'KAMARUPA ANUSAHDHAN SAMITI' (K.A.S.) in Assam was also established. The organisers of the Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' were the main force behind the establishment of K.A.S. To some extent it was the credit of the organisers of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad that in addition to North Bengal they took a special initiative to form a separate organisation/ institution for cultural and literary practice of a particular region of Assam. In the subsequent years it was found that this Institution (KAMRUP ANUSANDHAN SAMITI) with its literary and cultural activities inspired the total Bengali community of North-East Assam and an atmosphere for literary and other cultural activities developed. The conferences of this Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti held at Gouripur and

Kamaksha were attended by a good number of interested persons from North Bengal.

Again, with the establishment of the 'RĀDH ANUSANDHAN SAMITI' in South Bengal some literary and cultural developments took place there, but the basic difference between the 'RĀDH ANUSANDHAN SAMITI' and the 'VARENDRA ANUSANDHAN SAMITI' was that the later was from the very beginning much aware with its geographical/regional identity. Due to this special geographical awareness the issues of North Bengal came into limelight and became so popular. Later on, some other factors (discussed earlier) raised (geo-historical, political, commercial, cultural) which have given it a new shape and so many questions came into existence. Naturally the question arises again, how and under what circumstances the Institutions of North Bengal got the credit of some remarkable activities? It can be justified simply because the background of North Bengal issue was so active and some psychological factors were also inherent as a result of which the North Bengal Institutions survive for long and the question of North Bengal identity or North Bengal question emerged. In this regard we must remember that since long back North Bengal always had a special regional, geographical and cultural background and it was always in the mainstream. At the beginning of this chapter we have already explained about its geographical, political and cultural importance. Quite naturally it is very much justified that the North Bengal institutions will remember their past, feel proud of it, expose their geo-historical identity and other related issues. If we meticulously observe the issue of North Bengal question we will find that it was a long drawn process and a psychological background have accelerated it as a result of which the question came to be prominent.

So long we have discussed about the North Bengal Institution like Varendra Anusandhan Samiti and the Rangpur Sahitya parishad. Now we will mention something about one more organisation of North Bengal which in its literary activities initiated North Bengal studies with a special care. The name

of this organisation was 'UTTARBANGA SAHITYA SAMMILAN', (North Bengal Literary conference). About this Literary conference we find the reference that, "It was in the 3rd year of Parishad's existence the first North Bengal literary conference met under the presidentship of Akshay Kumar Maitreya and Babu Surendra Chandra Roy Chowdhury, the Secretary of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad, has appointed as permanent secretary of North Bengal Literary conference."<sup>28</sup> From this statement two things are evident. Firstly, it appears that Babu Surendra Chandra Roy Chowdhury who was the secretary of Rangpur Sahitya Parishad, himself was appointed as the permanent secretary of this organisation. (North Bengal literary conference).<sup>29</sup> So there is no doubt that the Rangpur Sahitya Parishad itself was the initiator to form this new organisation. Secondly, it is evident that this 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' (North Bengal literary conference) was the first organisation which used the word 'Uttarbanga' with its name for the first time in the greater North Bengal, in undivided Bengal, before 1947.<sup>30</sup> In this connection, the formation of this organisation was very significant to raise the concept of North Bengal or some particular aspects.

However, it is found that after a long preparation, the first conference of the 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' was held in the Town Hall of Rangpur in 1908 and was presided over by Akshay Kumar Maitreya, the most illustrious son of North Bengal. In our discussion in Chapter 6, we have already mentioned about the Scholarship and specially his activities in the field of North Bengal studies. So many distinguished literary personalities attended and participated this literary conference with a view to give emphasis on literary practices in North Bengal. Though the conference held at Rangpur, it was found that the representatives to attend the conference came from almost all the districts of present North Bengal, Calcutta and even from Assam.<sup>31</sup> The conference started with a condolence in memory of Sj. Girish Chandra Lahiri, a literary personality of North Bengal.<sup>32</sup> If we look at the proceedings of this conference (Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan), it will be evident that from the presidential address, so many issues related with the identity of North Bengal

have emerged. The past glory of North Bengal, outstanding literary achievements of some writers and authors of North Bengal, even Ram Mohan's doings and Sayings while residing in North Bengal (Rangpur, mentioned earlier), all were pointed out in the presidential address of Akshay Kumar Maitreya.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the presidential address, the speech delivered by its secretary was also remarkable in the context of the North Bengal study. From both the addresses of the president and the secretary of the organisation it is very much evident that the tendency to elucidate the pride of North Bengal were always active. One of the organisers of this conference very categorically reminded the representatives present there that 'the place where you all have stepped down was once a land of glory. With the emergence of some periodicals like SAMACHAR DARPAN, PRABHAKAR etc. in Calcutta, 'RANGPUR BARTABAHA' also started its publication from Rangpur and consequently it (Rangpur Bartabaha) appeared in a competition with 'PRABHAKAR' in the context of literary activities.<sup>34</sup> So it can be said that this organisation (UBSS) from the very beginning had an intention to revive the past glory of North Bengal. One more thing may be mentioned that where as the 'Bangiya Sahitya Parishad' was already existing, what was the necessity of U.B.S.S. as a separate organisation? We don't have any definite argument to answer this question. But from our discussion one argument stands and that is love and emotion, which initiated the stalwarts of this region to bring the past glory of North Bengal to the notice of the people of this area. Not only this, some Awards and Felicitation were also given to some distinguished personalities. Among them, mention may be made that the Elite society of North Bengal honoured Sri Nagendra Nath Basu with the Award of 'PRACHYAVIDYA MAHARNAB'. Maha-Mahopadhyaya Pandit Jadabeswar Tarkaratna was honoured as 'the glory of North Bengal',<sup>35</sup> Kishori Mohan Chowdhury of Rajshahi and Maharaja Nripendra Narayan of CoochBehar state were honoured as the 'Grand old man of North Bengal' and 'the pillar of North Bengal' respectively.<sup>36</sup>

Another outstanding achievement of the 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' was to collect archaeological evidences, manuscripts and pūnthis related with folk literature and folk culture from all the districts of this region to reconstruct the history of North Bengal. For this purpose some representatives were appointed from some of the districts of North Bengal. Here, we are giving a list of the interested persons, appointed for this purpose.

Malda District – Sj. Pandit Rajani Kanta Chakroborty.

Sj. Pandit Radhesh Chandra Seth, B. L.

Sj. Pandit Tarakeshwar Bhattacharya, M. A.

Jalpaiguri District - Sj. Umagati Roy, B. L., Advocate

Sj. Gobinda Sankar Sarbbadhaksha, B.L.

CoochBehar Dist - Sj. Pandit Kokileswar Bidhyabhusan, M.A.

Sj. Amir Uddin Ahmed, (Advocate)

Sj. Mahendra Nath Adhikary, Kanungo.<sup>37</sup>

From this list, one thing is clear to us that the present North Bengal was very much interested and active with the literary activities of Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan. More interestingly it is noticed that the Sammilan adopted a resolution to build up a house in the name of 'UTTARBANGIA SARASWAT BHAWAN.' Among all these activities, one thing is being noticed that each and every efforts undertaken either by Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan or the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti very carefully and sincerely highlighted different aspects of North Bengal. Even the Particular word 'North Bengal' or 'Uttarbanga' were used very consciously which in the long run have become an instinct among the people of this region. So, in present days when we find the used of this word (North Bengal) in different perspectives, and both the print and electronic medias are using this word to identify a particular geographical area, it is expected that one should remember its background. In the course of our study (1869-1969) the popular use of this word and identification of a particular region as Uttarbanga does not mean anything unnatural and unreal.

Our discussion in this context are sufficient enough to justify our problem i.e., North Bengal question. We all know and agree that after the partition of 1947, officially there are no existence of North Bengal. The area over which our study is concerned is officially known as West Bengal. But the reality is something different, the background of which has already been discussed. During 1960s onwards it is found that a tendency has been grown up to use the word North Bengal or Uttarbanga by some small group of people with the name of some Regional political parties<sup>38</sup> which seems to be a psychological separatist tendency. But that is beyond the scope of our study.

## 7.5 NORTH BENGAL AND THE INTELLECTUALS

During the course of our study about the Uttarbanga Sahitya Parishad, it is found that so many aspects of North Bengal came into prominence and it gained much popularity among the common people of this region. Similarly, some intellectuals were also influenced by this concept of geographical identity. In this context we are to mention one example. During 1922, the Eighth conference of the 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' was held at Rajshahi and was presided over by 'PRAMATHA CHOWDHURY', a front ranking literary personality of Bengal.<sup>39</sup> In the course of his presidential address the words he uttered about North Bengal have added a new mark to the North Bengal study. A few words of his speech in Bengali are as follows;

"I cannot avoid the call of North Bengal. As my country, first of all, I consider this province (North Bengal)..... It will not be exaggeration, if I express my feeling about North Bengal as something fundamental. Because, on the soil of this region (North Bengal) I was born and brought up."<sup>40</sup> On the occasion of his presidentship on the session (Eighth conference of the Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan). Pramatha Chowdhury himself admitted that, "I could not exempt my self form this chance to be the group leader of the intellectuals of North Bengal the scope of which was provided with this occasion."<sup>41</sup> These words and expression of a person like Pramatha Chowdhury, a top ranking intellectual and literary personality of Bengal no doubt had some

distinction and the assemblage in the conference were highly pleased and proud of it. When a person like Pramatha Chowdhury have expressed his view about North Bengal with these words, more specifically as a province, naturally the geographical identity of this region gained more importance which had a far reaching impact during the later period. The initiative taken by Akshay Kumar Maitreya (already mentioned in chapter 6), Pramatha Chowdhury and others for the cause of North Bengal study have really awakened the so called elites and the literate persons of this region. Quite naturally it was found that so many unexplored fields of study related with history, archaeology, Folk culture and literature were coming into light. Due to this initiative (Process) so many unknown things of North Bengal came to the notice of the literate people and they really became proud for their birthplace (motherland). As soon as the new generation of this area came to know their glorious past, they became very much influenced by it and got encouraged for further study on different aspects of North Bengal. It can not be denied that the initiatives taken by Rangpur Sahitya Parishad, Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan and Varendra Anusandhan Samiti have got same significant contribution for the purpose of North Bengal study. In this connection it should be mentioned again that the 'RANGPUR SAHITYA PARISHAD PATRIKA', the spokesman of this organisation was the main key to popularise the word and concept of North Bengal among the inhabitants of this region as well as in whole Bengal.<sup>42</sup>

It has already been found from our discussion that the 'Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan' (USS) with its distinguish literary activities created an excitement among the people. The activities of this literary conference have got some wide spread circulation and the local newspapers of the other districts of North Bengal sincerely reported the functioning of the Sahitya Sammilan. For example, we just mention and quote one of the advertisement Published in 'TRISROTA' a weekly news-journal of Jalpaiguri, which had perhaps the best circulation in North Bengal. The advertisement about this Sahitya Sammlan, published in 'TRISROTA' of 22nd July, 1928, was as follows:

## UTTARBANGA SAHITYA SAMMILAN (USS)

“The eleventh conference of the Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammilan will be held at Rangpur Town Hall on 12th and 13th Sraban, (1335), 28th and 29th July, (1928).”

“To revive the name and fame of the literary practices of North Bengal and to make a success all kind of help and co-operation are Solicited.”

Sri Gopal Lal Roy.

President of the  
Reception Committee and  
Raja Bahdur Tajhat.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from this, a series of references may be mentioned in this context. But one thing we find that the outstanding credit for North Bengal study certainly goes to Akshay Kumar Maitreya, who throughout his life devoted himself very dynamically to establish the diversity and past glory of this region. Fazlul Haque, a renowned researcher of Bangladesh and the Biographer of Akshay Kumar Maitraya clearly wrote that, “It was Akshay Kumar Maitreya who firmly believed that Varendra Bhumi was the core place for the history of whole Bengal. Therefore he sincerely tried to place North Bengal as the centre-pot of the cultural history of Bengal.”<sup>44</sup> Though he did so many research works to explore and expose the past glorious history of North Bengal, at the same time throughout his life Akshay Kumar tried his best to establish North Bengal remarkably in the cultural life of whole Bengal. In this connection, one of the prominent personality attached with Varendra Anusandhan Saniti mentioned that, “In him North Bengal got a man of wide interest and versatile talent, a great scholar and a forceful writer and antiquarian of rare acumen and a lifelong inspirer of literary and research activities.”<sup>45</sup>

In this connection we can mention the words of Professor Gourinath Shastri, a renowned scholar of our country, Professor Shastri said;

“I am particularly happy to be with you in a university which is situated in a part of Bengal well-known for its tradition of learning. Varendramandala one of the twenty four Mandalas of Paundra-bhukti which was the ancient name of North Bengal, attained a cultural identity in the Pal-Sena period: in our times the intellectual urge of this parts of Bengal found its expression in the work of VARENDRA ANUSANDAN SAMITI which has made an outstanding contribution to an understanding of our civilisation.”<sup>46</sup>

For our discursion about the identification of North Bengal we have made an elaborate study. We know that presently North Bengal is nothing but a particular area of West Bengal. But one striking point is that why North Bengal or Uttarbanga are getting so importance? Why the question of North Bengal are used so popularly even today? To understand this questions we have to look at back for the proper understanding of this North Bengal question. In this regard we have referred a good number of examples which explained both the political, geographical and cultural background of this region. It has also to be noted that some other conferences were also held in the northern region of Bengal and they also used the term North Bengal. In 1919, a ‘Rayot Conference’ of North Bengal was held and Pramatha Chowdhury presided over this conference. In 1923, a ‘North Bengal Workers Conference’ was held at Jalpaiguri. Sri Shyamsundar Chakraborty of Jalpaiguri presided over this conference. Deshbandu Chittaranjan Das was present in the conference as the chief Guest.<sup>47</sup> In 1935, another conference i.e., “Uttarbanga Ahale Hadeesh Sammelan” was held at Rangpur. In 1944, a workshop in the name of “Uttarbanger Loke Samashya” was held at Jalpaiguri and Sri Amiya Kumar Chakraborty delivered a lecture in this workshop.<sup>48</sup> During the month of April, 1945 a students conference “Uttarbanga Chatra Sammilan” was held at Jalpaiguri and it was presided over by pandit Laxmikanta Maitreya. Sri Badal Sarkar was the secretary of the Reception committee of this conference.<sup>49</sup> JANAMAT a reputed newspaper published from Jalpaiguri have covered the proceedings of this students conference.<sup>50</sup> The news about the concluding part of this conference was reported by ‘JANAMAT’ as follows;-

“A conference of the pro-congress students was held on 15th and 16th April, in the Arya Natya Samaj, Jalpaiguri, S. Binoyendra Chowdhury, Principal of the Ashutosh College, Calcutta, presided over the conference.<sup>51</sup> In 1946 (June), Uttarbanga Congress Sammilan was held at Raiganj. Desh Netri Lila Roy presided over this Sammilan.<sup>52</sup> A Conference of the “Uttarbanga Chatra Congress” was held at Siliguri, during March, 1947. Ashru Kumar Sikdar and Anandamay Bhattacharya were the main organisers of this conference.<sup>53</sup> After a few months another conference of the students of North Bengal was held at Siliguri in Darjeeling District. Sri Sudhir Kumar Biswas was the President of the Reception committee. So many eminent personalities attended this conference, some of them were Arabinda Basu (cousin of Netaji Subshah Chandra Bose, Haridas Mitra, Bela Mitra, Nirmal Basu (later on a cabinet minister of West Bengal), Mukulesh Sanyal, Amar Ray Pradhan (Later on Member of Parliament), Rabi Biswas (Mantu Biswas) and some others.<sup>54</sup>

#### 7.6 PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, AND THE ROLE OF THE PRINT MEDIA.

From our discussion it is evident that a particular geographical area both in the pre-partition and post-partition period have been mentioned as ‘North Bengal or Uttarbanga’ by a good number of Scholars. In this connection, we have got an idea or picture about the origin, growth and development of the concept of North Bengal or Uttarbanga. Though North Bengal got some geographical identity and later on a total identity in respect of ethno-linguistic and cultural practices, but this identity never meant a political separation. But one interesting fact is that this concept of North Bengal is gradually getting so much importance. Though this region is situated within the geographical boundary of the present state of West Bengal, instead of that the term North Bengal are being used by the Government also. When we see that officially this concept of North Bengal is not recognised, in spite of this the government is using this term for different purposes. A good number of Government Institutions have been established which used this term ‘North Bengal’ in their

name. North Bengal state Transport Corporation, 1960, North Bengal University 1962, North Bengal Medical College 1967, North Bengal Agricultural University 2001, etc. are the best example of it. We know that there are thousands of Institutions or organisations which have denoted their names by using the term North Bengal the example of which are not required to be mentioned. In addition to those Non-Government organisations or Institutions when we see that the Government is also officially using this term 'North Bengal' it adds something new for our' thinking about the concept of North Bengal.

It has already been discussed that North Bengal (the area of our study) had a glorious past and from the beginning it was in the mainstream of history. But due to certain situations in different times, specially during the pre-partition and post-partition period this region became a victim due to some political decisions. Above all it can be said that with the emergence of the colonial rule North Bengal have lost its importance for its geographical location. Due to so many factors specially its distance from the capital city and geographical location. North Bengal became a place of disadvantage. Quite naturally North Bengal became a distant place to the outsiders. At the same time it has been noticed that being a distant and disadvantageous place North Bengal became to be deprived in all respect (communication, Education, Industrialization, Treatment, and over all development). In spite of all these developments, the psychological background which was inherent among the people of this region could not forget their past. In every occasion, this psychological background got the expression in different form. The print medias of both North Bengal (mofossail towns of North Bengal) and the Calcutta metropolis were the main force (power engine) to continue this expression of North Bengal issues.

It is quite natural that the print-media of North Bengal will have some interest to highlight the issues of North Bengal. From pre- partition period to the present days this tendency are being maintained by most of the newspaper and periodicals of this region. Janamat, Trisrota, Muktibani, Gourdoot,

Gourbarta and some other papers were the best example of it.<sup>55</sup> Even after independence, four paper were published from Jalpaiguri 'SAPTAHIK UTTABANGLA; edited by Sri Sudhir Kumar Biswas was first published from Jalpaiguri and later on it was published from Siliguri, in Darjeeling Dist. One peculiar thing we notice that more than two papers were published from Jalpaiguri in the same name, i.e., 'UTTARBANGA' in the year 1951 and 1961. In the year 1969, another paper was published from Jalpaiguri in the mane of 'UTTARBANGA PATRIKA'. The editor of this paper (literary journal) was Sri Debesh Roy an eminent literary personality of Bengal.<sup>56</sup> Apart from those more than a few hundred newspapers, periodicals and journals were publish from North Bengal who used the word 'UTTAR' or 'NORTH' in their names. If we go through some of the issues of these papers it will be evident that most of them always had a special attention on different issues of North Bengal. So as print media, when these papers of North Bengal were sincerely highlighting this region, naturally the North Bengal identity question comes to limelight.

So long we have explained the role of the print medias of North Bengal and we found some special attention of these papers for the cause of North Bengal. Simultaneously, the press published form Calcutta Metropolis also played an important role for the cause of North Bengal.<sup>57</sup> Let us have some examples from Calcutta press which covered some issues of North Bengal in course of different incidents. Even to report any incident of a particular North Bengal District, the Calcutta medias preferred to use the term North Bengal. On 31st July, 1964, a considerable portion of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar District became the victim of flood. 'DAINIK BASUMATI' a Bengali Daily Newspaper published form Calcutta covered this incident. The Patrika (D.B) wrote that, "Due to the over flow in most of the rivers, North Bengal have been drowned."<sup>58</sup> One article entitled "Uttarbanglar Shibratri o Shibmandir" was also published by Basumati.<sup>59</sup> During 1965, a severe food crisis was occurred in this region. D. B. reported it as, "Uttarbange Vayabaha Khadya Sankot".<sup>60</sup> About the administrative measures some news were also published in D. B. (Dainik Basumati). The Headline of news was, "Uttarbanger Prasashanik

Byabastha Dhalia Sajar Byabastha".<sup>61</sup> One more news was like "Uttarbangaer Katta."<sup>62</sup> From these references it is found that along with the North Bengal medias, D.B. a Bengali daily published from Calcutta also highlighted the North Bengal issues time to time.

'ANANDABAZAR PATRIKA', another front ranking Bengali Daily Newspaper published from Calcutta also paid due attention on some North Bengal issues. On several occasions Anandabazar Patrika (A.P.) published so many news and articles using the name of North Bengal. To stop the price-hike of rice and paddy, the West Bengal Government supplied it to some places of North Bengal. This measure of the government was reported by A. P. (Anandabazar Patrika).<sup>63</sup> During 1964, the agriculture and production of food-grains were hampered due to the drought. It was reported by A. P. and the news in Bengali was like, "PRACHANDA KHARA, UTTARBANGE CHAS-ABAD BARBAD".<sup>64</sup> "UTTARBANGER SIKSHABRATI DR. REBATI MOHAN LAHIRI"<sup>65</sup> and "UTTARBANGE BANYA"<sup>66</sup> these two Headlines containing news on respective issues were also published in A. P. These are only a few examples about the attitude of A.P. on the North Bengal issues. We can mention thousands of reference about North Bengal issues which were reported by A.P., a publication from Calcutta. It may also be mentioned that the A.P also treated the news of any particular district of this northern region as the issue of North Bengal. These could be mentioned by using the name of the concerned district. But the peculiar thing we notice that along with the North Bengal print medias, the medias of Calcutta also mentioned them as North Bengal issues.

'To understand the attitude of the Calcutta press about North Bengal we have referred some examples from D.B. and A.P. It should be remembered that before the construction of the 'Farakka Bridge', North Bengal was detached from the rest of West Bengal in true sense at least geographically. But after the construction of the Farakka Bridge, this communicational disadvantage was removed and the distance between North Bengal and the capital city was

shortened. In spite of this we find that North Bengal remained as a distant place. Though the geographical distance was shortened, the psychological distance between the two regions remained almost same. The psychological distance which was prevailing for long remained more or less even after the construction of the Farakka Bridge. In support of this statement we can refer one example from Ananda Bazaar Patrika. In 1983, Anandabazar Patrika published one Editorial entitled, "DURER BANGA UTTARBANGA."<sup>67</sup> This editorial published in A. P., was very much sensitive and at the same time significant. After the construction of the Farakka Bridge when the geographical distance was shortened, at that stage also we find that North Bengal remained as distant land to the medias of Calcutta.<sup>68</sup> The Anandabazar patrika in its publication used this term 'North Bengal' or 'Uttarbanga' for different purposes. It is found that in 1985, A.P. Published so many advertisement using the word Uttarnaga.<sup>69</sup> Not any Anandabazar Patrika some other medias of Calcutta also maintained this order to identify this region. For example we can mention that during 1985, Madhab Bhattacharya wrote an article entitled, "UTTARBANGER CHARITRA" and it was published by AJKAL, another leading Bengali daily published from Calcutta.<sup>70</sup> It is found that two years later, after the publication of an editorial, the A.P. wrote another editorial titled as, "UTTARBANGER UNNAYAN".<sup>71</sup> Perhaps it was the second editorial of A. P. which focused on the issue of North Bengal. In the same year, it is found that another editorial was published in A.P. The title of this editorial was "UTTARBANGER DABI."<sup>72</sup> The title itself is self explanatory. There is no difficulty to understand that some demands of the North Bengal people were reflected in this editorial of A.P. So many examples are there published in the Calcutta print medias which got some reflection on different issues of North Bengal. The local or regional papers published from North Bengal, i.e. North Bengal press for their own interest may highlight the issues of North Bengal. In this regard we have mentioned so many references earlier. For ready reference we can again mention that TRISROTA of Jalpaiguri covered so many issues of North Bengal.<sup>73</sup> But at the same time when the press of Calcutta are giving

special emphasis on the issues of North Bengal it indicate something, and it cannot be explained so simply. Even after the partition of 1947, when present North Bengal is essentially a geographical part of West Bengal, North Bengal is still maintaining a separate geographical identity. Along with the North Bengal press, the Calcutta press also consciously or unconsciously giving a special emphasis on the identity of North Bengal. Though we have used some reference of Calcutta press beyond the scope of our study (after 1969), this is just to understand our problem properly. In spite of all kinds of unity, commonness, administrative uniformity common law and order and over all one state jurisdiction (West Bengal), some differences are there. From pre-partition to post partition period, even to day some of these differences are prevailing. The print medias of both Calcutta and North Bengal certainly have some contribution to raise this North Bengal question. Though there are some historical background of North Bengal, but with the passage of time this North Bengal psychology could have been changed. But the reality is something different as a result of which the North Bengal question emerged. To point out all the factors for the emergence of North Bengal question further research are definitely required. It is not at all so simple job. But in spite of all these, it can be said that the print-medias of both North Bengal and Calcutta got some role to raise the North Bengal question.

## NOTES & REFERENCES

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**EMERGENCE OF ETHNIC, LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL  
IDENTITY QUESTION**

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The Identity question today, has become a very pertaining question in our socio-cultural life in respect of caste, creed, race, ethnicity and language. Even geo-historical identity questions have also got some importance today in the course of study of the social science. Identity has indeed become a crucial point of socio-political and historical research. In our last chapter (chapter 7), we have discussed on some aspects of North Bengal identity question which was to some extent an expression of historical background. In our present chapter we will attempt to make study on the emergence of ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity question, though it is not the main theme of our research. While studying about the role of the press and association in the context of socio-cultural and political movements it is found that some questions have been raised in this region which are quite related with some ethnic group and their language and culture. Quite naturally we have to focus some light on the issue as it is a bi-product of our study. So as an aftermath of our topic of research without any detail theoretical explanation, we will discuss the problem looking into its historical background. This is not simply a question of our area of study, but of our nationalist frame. Professor Sumit Sarkar in his book 'Beyond Nationalist Frames' have very categorically explained the problem. Sekhar Bandyopadhaya and Rajat Kanta Ray also provided us with much information on this issue. Professor Sarkar pointed out that the really new and crucial developments were linked, rather with the coming of print, and the associated rise of vernacular prose.<sup>1</sup> Through multiplying and cheapening the physical availability of printed texts, these enabled, over time the emergence of elements of a literary public sphere that was potentially open to groups previously excluded from scribal culture.<sup>2</sup>

## 8.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The most important and revolutionary element of identity is the demand that oppressed groups be recognized not in spite of their differences but specifically because of their differences. Identity politics is an important, and perhaps necessary, precursor to the current emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity in national politics. When we are to deal with our present problem, we see that since the early twentieth century some movements made identity politics so visible and a vast academic literature has sprang up. Thus it was barely as intellectuals started to systematically outline and defend the philosophical underpinnings of identity politics. Whatever may be the theoretical framework of identity question, it is a general perception that the thinkers agree that the notion of identity has become indispensable to contemporary socio-political and historical discourse. In this context there appears some widening gap between North and South of Bengal and working to further marginalize linguistic, cultural, ethnic or indigenous minorities. This differences and contradictions helps to explain one move that almost all intellectuals agree on identity politics must adopt a local focus.

The period taken for the present study is largely colonial and a significant portion being post-colonial. It is evident that this period has hardly anything similar to western notion of liberal ideology except the marginal introduction of western education system with rational ideological orientation. This leaves us to a dilemma in adhering to a specific theoretical plane on the question of identity and its formation. Apart from the liberal communitarian debate on the question of identity, we also have a host of culture centric approaches. Hence, prioritising a particular theoretical perspective in the analysis of the question cannot be amicably and convincingly settled. However, the triadic framework as developed by Dipankar Gupta, where he has tried to understand the primordial identities being determined significantly by state intervention.<sup>3</sup> However in our present context we shall explore the emergence and development of cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities in North Bengal with

special reference to the Gorkha identity in Darjeeling Hills and the Koch and Rajbansi identities in the terai region of North Bengal.

In the question of ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity of a particular region one thing is evident that as being socially constructed in itself conveys the fact that it uses a number of social conceptual variables in such constructions. Generally, among many others, social categories like culture, language and ethnicity are used as bases of such constructions of identity. This in turn leads to the fact that the identity itself therefore may manifest in multiple forms like the cultural identity, linguistic-ethnic identity and so on. Some forms of identity that we come across frequently in the Indian contexts include the cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities, which have been conceptually elaborated below.

In our Social structure in present day North Bengal we find so many inner currents and cross currents among different groups of people for which so many reasons may be there. General backwardness, underdevelopment or disproportionate development, discriminating measures adopted by both the government and other higher social groups got some responsibility for the identity consciousness among some social groups or community of North Bengal. In this connection ethno-lingual and cultural identity questions came into being with some particular demands which were in course of time received mass response. The regional vernacular press (literature) and some associations performed a significant role to highlight this ethno-lingual and cultural identity question of this region.

### 8.3 LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

The preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity is important for the society as a whole and for the individual. Language is an essential part of what defines a culture or civilization. The identity of an individual person is defined by its social affiliation. The language used in his social environment, transmitted to him by social and linguistic interactions, forms his linguistic identity. Linguistic identity means the identification with a language and its

speakers as well as the identification with linguistic varieties such as dialects or sociolects and their speakers.

#### 8.4 CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural identity is the identity of a group or culture, or of an individual as far as she or he is influenced by her/ his belonging to a group or culture. Cultural identity is a form of *Identity politics*. *Cultural identity* remarks upon place, gender, race, history, nationality and ethnicity. Some critics of cultural identity argue that the preservation of cultural identity, being based upon difference, is a divisive force in society, and that cosmopolitanism gives individuals a greater sense of shared citizenship. That is not to say that cultural identity must always be divisive. When considering practical association in international society, states may share an inherent part of their *make up* that gives common ground, and alternate means of identifying with each other.

#### 8.5 ETHNIC IDENTITY

The concept of ethnicity is a nebulous one due to various, if not contradictory, interpretations put forwarded by scholars from varied perspectives. Though the concept still lacks a standard definition, it is almost taken for granted that the process always involves in it the issue of identity as its core. Studies on ethnicity analysing the issue of group/community identity as their focal point can be broadly summarized under three headings: that the question of identity is a given phenomenon; that identity metaphor is a construction; and that the issue of identity can be discovered, if not imagined. Thus, in simple terms, Ethnic Identity refers to the extent to which one identifies with a particular ethnic group. It refers to one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behaviour that is due to ethnic group membership. The ethnic group tends to be one in which the individual claims heritage.<sup>4</sup> Ethnic identity is separate from one's personal identity as an individual, although the two may reciprocally influence each other. We may locate at least four major components of ethnic identity. They are, ethnic awareness, ethnic self-identification, ethnic attitudes

and ethnic behaviours. Hence, ethnic identity is the amalgam of conceptual and behavioural characteristics that are found in a group of people that set it apart from any other.

However, the ethnic identity itself is based on linguistic and cultural bonds that unify ethnic groups. Moreover, the question of identity as being socially constructed on differences moves and transforms because of the mutual interplay of differences and exclusions, even leading to their inclusion within differences. This has also been pointed out by Connolly as,

*"An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity."*<sup>5</sup>

The point is that, there are different maps and different procedures of identifying oneself. Thus, we argue that, a person can simultaneously have the identity of being say, an Indian, a Hillman, a Nepali, a Hindu, a member of a specific caste or tribe, or a Gorkha or a Rajbanshi. The possibility of such multiple identities is obvious enough but what is worth analysing is their varying context-dependence relevance.<sup>6</sup> This is what we experience in the question of identity in the area of our present study of North Bengal. This position will be further elucidated in course of our discussion on the emergence of identity question in Darjeeling Hills and the terai region of North Bengal in the upcoming sections.

## 8.6 EMERGENCE OF IDENTITY QUESTION IN DARJEELING HILLS

The basic object of the present endeavour is to analyse the emergence of the identity question in Darjeeling, more specifically the Gorkha identity transcending the multiple cultural identities prevailing in the Hills of Darjeeling, and ultimately (in a period beyond the scope of the present study) the mobilization, which successfully made the demand for a separate statehood, (that is, Gorkhaland). What is interesting to note is the fact that the very term 'Gorkha' is basically the name of a district in present day Nepal, and later the

term acquired a special meaning in British martial discourses. The crucial thing is that the term 'Gorkha' has got a community appellation in Darjeeling Hills transforming its culture- historical underpinnings into an ethno-political one.

The term cultural identity has been used in this essay to designate a social identity, which is based on a specific cultural configuration of a conscious nature. Construction of such an identity depended upon some socially constructed realities like history, language, dress and the like. The thrust of the present paper is to develop into the process of construction of cultural identity on the one hand and to locate the bases in the process of construction, on the other. For that purpose, the issue of the construction of Gorkha identity in Darjeeling hills has been viewed from two points view, that is, culture-historical and ethno-political. But it was a later phenomenon. Before 1980s the Gorkha identity question did not assert the Gorkha community as a whole.

A brief overview of the history of Darjeeling seems imperative before we dwell on the emergence (rather construction) of Gorkha identity in Darjeeling Hills. Darjeeling is a word derived from a combination of two Tibetan terms 'Dorje' meaning the mystic thunderbolt of the Lamaist religion and 'Ling', equivalent to land or place.<sup>7</sup> Darjeeling is the northernmost district of present day West Bengal. It has four sub-divisions -three in the hills, that is, Darjeeling Sadar, Kurseong, and Kalimpong, and one in the plains i.e., Siliguri. Today, Darjeeling occupies a strategic location with its borders touching Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal.

Darjeeling was ceded to British India after the Anglo-Nepal war in 1816 and was finally ceded to the British by the Maharaja of Sikkim in 1835. Kalimpong subdivision was under the control of Bhutan but it became a part of Darjeeling district in 1835. Darjeeling became a general district of Bengal in 1947. The region was initially inhabited by the lepchas. Darjeeling soon grew in to a summer resort and with the growth of tea gardens and tea business; it witnessed a huge inflow of people from different neighbouring areas,

especially the people of Nepali ethnic origin. The commercial activities in the Hill also attracted a large number of plainsmen like the Biharis and Marwaris. Bengalis, with their legendary intelligence and superior culture soon occupied upper echelons of administration under the Raj. The plainsmen although settled in the hills hardly felt any necessity to mix up culturally with the hill folk. Culturally they were more tied up with the plains. Even during late 19th and early 20th century it was found that they were the regular subscribers of newspapers and magazines published from Calcutta like *The Englishman*, *The Statesman*, *The Hindu Patriot*, *Sanjivani*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Bangabasi* etc.<sup>8</sup> The point is that despite living in the hills they well maintained their plainsman identity and virtually a separation from the hill people and also from their society and culture. In effect, there developed an ethnocentric notion in the minds of the plainsmen, especially the Bengalis, towards the society and culture of the hill men. The hill people, especially the educated well off urban Nepalese started branding the plainsmen as 'Madeshia'.<sup>9</sup> Thus the foundation stone of construction of identity has been laid down through the brandization and/or identification of the 'other', (the plainsmen, especially the Bengalis in this case). Moreover, the economic upward mobility of the plainsmen naturally infused in the hill people's sense of deprivation. The hills-men were united by the Nepali language, which became the lingua franca of the hill population and too acted as a symbol of hill peoples' (ethnic) consciousness.

However, it is also not to suggest that the emergence of Gorkha identity was an exclusive development, and that no other identity question emerged in the Hill areas of Darjeeling. As revealed from our assessment of the press and media on the one hand, and the associations on the other, it has been also revealed that there had been the emergences of miniscule identity questions within the smaller ethnic and linguistic communities. For instance, initially one could sense the resentment of the Lepchas and Bhutias against the Nepali migrants. Sometimes in 1941 a tripartite understanding was formed between the *Lhopas* (Bhutias), *Monpas* (Lepchas) and the *Tsongs* (Limbus) called the *Lo-Men Tsongzumt*<sup>10</sup> recognizing themselves as belonging to one

ethnic conglomerate, and hence, forming a distinct community as distinct from the other communities.<sup>11</sup> The association of the three communities pledged to fight the enemies who attempted to disturb the peace of the *Lo-Men-Tsong-Sum*. The treaty declared,

*"Lho-Men-Tsong-sum will have one destiny and one government. They will fight together with their foes and they will feast together with their friends. They will bring in the intelligence of others but they will never take out the secret of inside<sup>12</sup>."*

Thus a sense of fear was apparent in the leaders of the *Lho-Men-Tsong-Sum* that their culture, identity and peace may be at threat. However, in course of time, they knew they had to stay together and fight the exploitators from the South. Hence, such miniscule ideas of ethnic identities gave way to a pan-ethnic identity called the Gorkha identity.

Moreover, religious minorities like the Mohammedans also felt that their socio-cultural and religious identity needed to be kept out of the threat of assimilation and disappearance. Hence, as revealed from the previous section on associations, Anjuma-I-Islamia, an association to safeguard the interests of the Mohammedan community in the Hills, was formed in 1909.<sup>13</sup> Similar such associations came up in course of time to safeguard the identity and interest of smaller yet different religious, cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups in the entire of North Bengal, including the district of Darjeeling (see the section/chapter on Associations for details). Ultimately, however, all smaller identity claims came to be assimilated within the broader Gorkha identity as has been outlined in the sections that follow.

The identity movement in Darjeeling Hills, namely the Gorkhaland Movement has been harping on one single identity, that is Gorkha ethnic identity. Though in the 1980s the movement reached its zenith, the First urge to set up a separate administrative arrangement for the district of Darjeeling was placed before the colonial government by the 'leaders of the Hill people'-

in the form of a memorandum by the Hillmen's Association on the 8th of November in 1917. The distinct identity of Darjeeling as different from the rest of Bengal was cited by the Hillmen's Association in its 1917 memorandum addressed to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal as the basis for the creation of a separate unit of Government was based on historical, geographical, racial, cultural and linguistic arguments. The memorandum reads,

*"We live in an absolutely different world from the rest of the people of Bengal. Geographically no greater contrast is possible than that between the Mountainous Darjeeling District and the plains of Bengal. Racially there is an equal dissimilarity for the great mass of our population is Mongolian and akin to the peoples beyond the Himalayas rather than to those of India. Historically we have until recent years lived a life entirely a part...Linguistically we have no alliance with the rest of Bengal. Even the lingua franca of our course and schools is Hindi and not Bengali."*<sup>14</sup>

Yet at the other part, the memorandum stresses that the region also demands recognition of its identity as a separate administrative unit under health and educational considerations. The memorandum says that,

*"A further argument is favour of as separate Eastern Himalayan unit of government is based on health considerations. The plains are entirely unsuited to the hill people who are unwilling to go to the plains to live. This makes it essential for the future welfare of the district that it should be as far as possible self-contained. In the matter of education, to give one important illustration, we look forward to having our own colleges and other institutions for professional training. At present those are in the plains and this has acted as a great barrier to the higher education of our peoples."*<sup>15</sup>

This was followed by a series of such other developments like the memoranda of 1930 and 1934. The 1930 memorandum addressed to Honourable sir Samuel Hoare contained ten points programme for the social solidarity, welfare and identity of the Gorkhas. Similar contents are found in the memorandum of 1934 of the association. Hence, by 1947, the term Gorkha seemed to have represented the hill people as a homogeneous category. This becomes clear when we see that the Communist Party of India had submitted a memorandum on 6th April 1947 to the Constituent Assembly raising the demand for the establishment of a Gorkhastan.<sup>16</sup> The memorandum reads,

*"In the opinion of the Communist Party of India, the District of Darjeeling belongs to the Gorkhas and it is their homeland. Further it is the considered opinion of the Communist Party of India that the Gorkhas living in Darjeeling District... constitute a distinct nationality having a common language, a common culture and common historical tradition that date back to the days of Buddha and Ashoka.....Thus they are important minority whose legitimate interests must be safeguarded in the new constitution of India..."<sup>17</sup>*

Throughout the memorandum the term Gorkha has been used as an ethnic category to represent all hill communities.<sup>18</sup> With India's independence, Darjeeling became a district of West Bengal and *its* earlier status of 'partially excluded area' was declared null and void. Memoranda of All India Gorkha League in 1952 and the memoranda of the District Shramik Sangha in 1955, reveals that during this time, the Gorkha League was the sole platform in Darjeeling hills championing the cause of the Gorkhas. The Gorkha League, formed in 1943 initially demanded that district of Darjeeling and the Dooars section of Jalpaiguri be merged to the Province of Assam through a memorandum addressed to Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Ballavbhai Patel, the Congress High Command, the Cabinet Mission and the Constituent Assembly. Further, the Gorkha League, in a memorandum addressed to B. V. Keskar,

Honourable Deputy Foreign Minister suggested the creation of a separate Province comprising of the district of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri and the states of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, which would form a viable unit of administration within the Indian Union. Finally in its 1952 memorandum the League demanded that the district be a separate administrative unit directly administered by the centre; or that a separate province be set up comprising of the district of Darjeeling and the neighbouring areas.

Next in the series was the memorandum of the District Shramick Sangha dated 21 May 1955, addressed to the Chairman of the States reorganization Commission, Government of India. The Sangha claimed that since the Kochayas, Maches, Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalis and Rajbanshis are the origins of the district, whose customs, systems and traditions fundamentally differ from that of the rest of West Bengal; and since that originally North Bengal was separate from Bengal before its partition, a separate Part C state of North Bengal, inclusive of the district of Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri with a name of 'Shanker Pradesh' or 'Shanker State' was needed to be created under Part I Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution. In 1968, the District Congress Committee Darjeeling demanded through a Resolution dated 25 August 1968 the creation of an Autonomous Administrative Setup for the Hill Areas of the district of Darjeeling within the state of West Bengal.

These developments reveal the fact that the Hill region of West Bengal had felt a sense of socio-economic, political, cultural, linguistic and ethnic deprivation under the state of Bengal, leading to the emergence of the consciousness that it forms a separate nationality linguistically, culturally and racially, finally culminating in the emergence of a consolidated Gorkha identity, which is an amalgam of cultural, linguistic and racial identity of a people distinct from the ones in the plains. However, it also needs to be taken to stock that the identity of the people was sometimes claimed in terms of cultural distinctiveness, sometimes on ethnic differences and at other times on linguistic peculiarity, keeping aside the sense of economic deprivation that

catalysed the constructions of such identities. The nature of the constructions of identities has changed often as responses to the trends at different stages, finally reaching to the domain of the ethnic construction of Gorkha identity as an all-embracing category.

The consolidation of the term Gorkha as an ethnic category especially in Darjeeling Hills was possible due to several factors. The institutional form in the shape of a recruiting depot has been established there in the vicinity of the town. Moreover the British anthropo-administrative writers have eulogized reified Gorkha prowess, and thereby constructed the martial race theory that had deep seeded effect upon the Nepalese of Darjeeling Hills.

The movement became active as an identity movement based on distinctiveness of culture, language and ethnicity, although the sense of relative deprivation of the hill men vis-à-vis the plainsmen acted as a strong undercurrent catalysing its emergence in the form of an autonomy movement demanding separate statehood in the 1980s, which, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

From the above reading of the emergence of the Gorkha identity it is revealed that the evolution, development and transformation of the identity have owed to several forces and factors but the role of the print media and the associations have been significant. Different Resolutions and memoranda presented to different offices in ascertaining the uniqueness of the identity of the people of Darjeeling speak of the role of print media in the process. Moreover the newspapers and periodicals published during this period highlight the fact that they have contributed to the development of the identity consciousness of the people (see for example the chapter on the growth and development of non-Bengali press and associations in the non-Bengali dominated areas of North Bengal). However, all these were taken up by different organizations and associations like the political parties, and non-party political formations like the Hillmen's Association, Shramick Sangha etc.

Hence the argument as outlined in Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 stands tested partially through these findings.

## 8.7 EMERGENCE OF IDENTITY QUESTION IN THE PLAINS OF NORTH BENGAL

In this section we would like to trace the genesis of some identity based mass movements in some districts of North Bengal both in the pre-partition and post-partition period. During the pre-partition period there emerged a social reform movement among the Rajbansi community led by one Rajbansi intellectual, Panchanan Barman.<sup>19</sup> But after 1947, some political tension started in North Bengal with the issue of the merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union. At that time a mild protest movement was started by 'HITASADHANI SABHA' (H. S.), an organization of local people specially the Rajbansi and the local Muslim (Nashya Seikh) and it was led by Satish Singh Roy and Amanatulla Khan Chowdhury, Gajen Basunia and others.<sup>20</sup> With the activities of H.S. (Hitasadhani Sabha) and merger issue of Cooch Behar State with India union, there emerged a sharp difference between local people (DESHEES) and the migrated people or outsiders (BHATIAS) in Cooch Behar.<sup>21</sup> In the course of the activities of Hitasadhani Sabha the identity of a certain group of people come into prominence which in the subsequent period took another shape of some other movements like UTTARKHANDA DAL (UD).<sup>22</sup> However, there are two limitations under which we would like to address the question of the emergence of the identity in the region. First, that the movements only and exclusively between 1869 to 1969 (this is the period taken for the present study as has been justified in the introductory chapter); and secondly, since the movements were very significant in the region namely the 'Kshatriya Social Reform Movement' which have made significant changes in the nature of the North Bengal society and politics by way of development of identity community consciousness and bringing about transformations in the nature of identity of the people of the region have been taken for study. However other smaller movements scattered sporadically in the region within

the justified period of study have also been addressed although only by way of passing reference while dealing with these movements, we shall take stock of the developments in the field of press and media and their contributions to the emergence, rise and developments of the question of identity on the one hand and the corresponding associations that have been formed with similar impact on the question of identity formation and consciousness, on the other.

Some of the most important movements that have taken place in North Bengal which have focused on the question of identity include the 'Kshatriya Movement' (starting 1910),<sup>23</sup> the movement of the HITASADHAN SABHA, 1946, with the issue of the merger of Cooch Behar State,<sup>24</sup> with the Indian union. The UTTARKHANDA movement (1960s) was another one which in course of time emerged as a political party and contested the Assembly election of 1967.<sup>25</sup> As our study is confined up to the year 1969, we don't have any scope to deal with the other movements based on ethnicity, language and culture of this region. However, we shall deal with the Kshatriya Movements and some other movements in some detail in the present context as exemplary cases.

## 8.8 KSHATRIYA MOVEMENT

When one deals with the identity related stirrings in North Bengal, it is important to take in to cognizance the social reform movement called the Kshatriya Movement among the Rajbanshis in North Bengal.<sup>26</sup> This is because, as a result of the movement, a series of making and unmaking of the identities of the Rajbanshi community has taken place over the span of the movement. The primary reason for the emergence of the movement was the impact of the census operations (especially 1891) by the colonial administration placing each community belonging to the Hindu fold in to caste based social hierarchy.<sup>27</sup> The movement, which emerged initially in Rangpur (present day Bangladesh) centred on the question of the social identity of the Rajbanshis.<sup>28</sup>

The central claim of the Kshatriya Movement was that the Rajbanshi Hindus were the Kshatriyas of Aryan origin.<sup>29</sup> This claim of the Rajbanshis

began to get consolidated with the Census of 1891 as discussed above. The census "also claimed that the Koch and the Rajbanshi communities are one and the same."<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that the then District Magistrate of Rangpur F. A. Skyne called for the opinion of the intellectuals on the identity of the Rajbanshis. There was a consensus of opinion among the invited intellectuals that the Rajbanshis constituted the Brata Kshatriyas of the Hindu Aryan racial stock.<sup>31</sup>

However, the identity of the Rajbanshi Hindus conspicuously changed in the Census of 1901. They were regarded not as Bratya Kshatriyas as recognized earlier. To quote the then Magistrate of Rangpur,

*"On a recent reference to the superintendent of Census Operation, he has ordered that the man are to be classed Rajbanshis and not Bratya Kshatriyas. I therefore decline to reopen the matter"*<sup>32</sup>

It should be stated here that the movement had to face some opposition from certain sections within the community.<sup>33</sup> This insensitivity of the upper strata of Bengali intelligentsia antagonized this community and gave rise to a need for social regeneration among them under the leadership of Rai Saheb Panchanan Barman.<sup>34</sup> Panchanon Barman, a lawyer by profession from Rangpur district came out with a distinct vision for the upliftment of the Rajbanshi community.<sup>35</sup> With the help of the relevant clues from the Vedic Shastras and support of Brahmin Pandits from Kashi, Nabadwip, Methila, Kamrup he cited the different code of laws which reinforced their Kshatriya origin and legitimised the elevation of their ritual status into "Kshatriyas".<sup>36</sup>

But in the 1901 census, the Rajbanshis were enumerated as belonging to the lower *caste*.<sup>37</sup> They were mentioned as Rajbanshis and not as Bratya Kshatriyas unlike in the previous census report. The Rajbanshis were socially degraded in their position, which led to their frustration.<sup>38</sup> They were an aggrieved lot and, to exonerate them of their grievances pertaining to their social degradation one Rajbanshi intellectual Panchanan Barman, who was the

then advocate of the Rangpur Court, took the leadership of the Rajbanshi community in pursuit of their social identity in the upcoming census of 1911. Hence, an association was formed named Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti in 1910; attended by around 400 delegates from Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Assam and presided over by Madhusudan Ray, an advocate of Jalpaiguri.<sup>39</sup> The Samiti placed its charter of demands for the resolution of their identity and social position. The period in the aftermath of the 1911 census saw the publication of a report by the then superintendent of Census O' Mally in 1913 which said that the Koch and the Rajbanshis were separate communities. According to O' Mally,

*"The former request was granted without hesitation, as there is no doubt that at the present day, irrespective of any question of origin, the Rajbanshis and the Koch are separate Castes."*<sup>40</sup>

Sanskritisation, or the assimilation of tribal people into Hindu fold was not smooth. In terms of 'cultural approximation', the Koch-Rajbanshis being people of "little tradition" frame of reference as formulated by Robert Redfield had no access to cultural forms and styles of Great Hindu tradition, and so initially they took the risk of becoming Hindus even if it was only to accept a "barth" in the disadvantageous inferior rank of caste hierarchy. It is through Kshatriya movement that we find the Rajbanshis challenging the lower status assigned to them. While in 1891 the Rajbanshi's described themselves as Vratya Kshatriya, from 1911 they began to claim pure Kshatriya status legitimised by priests, genealogists and pundits. In order to gratify their ritual rank aspiration they began to imitate the values, practices and cultural styles of "twice born" castes who formed a part of Hindu Great tradition. Since 1912, a number of mass thread wearing ceremonies (Milan Kshetra) were organized in different districts by the "Kshatriya Samiti" where lakhs of Rajbanshi's donned the sacred thread as a mark of Kshatriya status. The immediate objective of the

"Kshatriya samiti" was to regain the lost social status of the Rajbanshi community in the Hindu social system.<sup>41</sup>

The Kshatriya samiti also had some other objectives to fulfil. It intended first, to separate the Koch and the Rajbanshi identity emphasizing the superior status of the *latter*. Second, to legitimise the demand to include the Rajbanshi's within the Kshatriya caste.<sup>42</sup> Third, to inculcate brahmanical values and practices among the Rajbansis.

The positive aspect of the social upliftment movement organized by the Rangpur Kshatriya Samiti was the creation, of the apparent caste solidarity, among the Rajbanshi's in general and an identity consciousness among the educated and well to do section of the community in particular.

The Rajbanshi attempted to eliminate the alienation of the community and emphasize the identity of the Rajbanshi's within the Hindu caste fold. They tried to elevate their status staying within the caste hierarchy but the nature of social relationship between the Rajbansis and the other "higher castes" and, the rules specifying this relationship remained more or less unaltered despite the Rajbansis attempt to persistently change their own identity.<sup>43</sup>

It is a fact that mere placing to a higher Varna category did not serve the Rajbansis to elevate their status in social hierarchy at the local level because there were enormous hindrances to implement their ideas of social upliftment and the acid test was experienced when the general Hindu community showed their attitude to this effect.<sup>44</sup> The caste Hindu opinion was in general against any upliftment of the Rajbansis in terms of social hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> For example, the caste Hindu zamindars and professionals protested strongly against the demand placed by the Rangpur Vratya Kshatriya Jatir Unnati Vidhayani Sabha to write Vratya Kshatriya as the caste before the Rajbansis.<sup>46</sup> In fact they put forward this protest to Mr. F. A. Skyne, the then District Magistrate of Rangpur. All the more when the community donned sacred thread on Feb 10, 1912 at Perolbani, Mr. J. S. Milligan, the then D.M. of Rangpur remained present with a group of armed constables let caste Hindu people might attempt to create disturbance

and frustrate the ceremony. In the given circumstances, it may be presumed that the Rajbansis were not treated at par with the respectable caste groups in spite of their attempt to Kshatriya mobility.<sup>47</sup> This may also be the background for a deliberate attempt to establish separate student hostels to board and lodge the Rajbansi students who were even victims of humiliation and social discrimination from their caste Hindu contemporaries.<sup>48</sup> At the same time donning of sacred thread, the symbolic justification of Kshatriya caste group, did not help them to be at par with the Brahmins who were to serve the upper caste Hindus. Thus social emulation only increased their distance from the social groups with whom they co-habited or lived for centuries.<sup>49</sup>

In course of time, the Kshatriyas, to assert their Kshatriyahood, decided to train the Rajbansi youths in their martial ability, which was successfully rendered during the First World War.<sup>50</sup> However, the assertion of the Rajbansis as the Kshatriyas which was opposed by the Bhatiyas (immigrant Bengalis) were I oppose to the Rajbansis obtaining the Kshatriya identity. Similarly the upper caste Bengalis in the Koch Behar Sate officialdom also opposed the movement of the Kshatriyas aimed at their recognition as Kshatriyas. On the whole, as pointed out by Das Gupta (1992) the Rajbansi quest for social identity was opposed by the upper caste Bengali Hindus who dominated over the Rajbansis in the region.<sup>51</sup> Thus the Kshatriya Movement, which aimed at providing the Hindu Rajbansi community its social status and identity was not an unrugged terrain, despite which the Rajbansis endeavoured to assert its identity in the region amidst domination by the upper caste Bengali Hindus.

#### 8.9. SOME DIFFERENCES OF IDENTITY QUESTION

##### BETWEEN DARJEELING HILL AREAS AND PLAINS OF NORTH BENGAL

In the course of our discussion we have already mentioned the major areas to which our investigation are concerned in respect of ethno-lingual and cultural identity question. In this connection, there is a basic difference between the identity question in Darjeeling Hill areas and the plains of present

North Bengal. In the case of Darjeeling it was found that, apart from ethnicity and culture, language was an issue of the identity question of the hill people. But in the plains of North Bengal we find it as a later phenomenon which started during 1990s and quite naturally it is beyond the scope of our study. In the course of Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement, language was never used as an issue of identity movement. The Hitasadhani Sabha, Uttarkhanda Dal, even UTJUS (Uttarbanga Tapshili Jati Upajati Samiti), though involved in separatist political activities, did not use the language issue for identity movement.<sup>52</sup> However, there were some other dimensions of identity question in the plains of North Bengal and it got some root from the issue of the merger of Cooch Behar princely state with the Indian union.<sup>53</sup>

#### 8.10. HITASADHANI SABHA

Regarding identity question, we can mention something about Hitasadhani Sabha of Cooch Behar princely state which was founded in the year 1946.<sup>54</sup> It was an organization/Association of the local people of Cooch Behar comprising the Rajbansis and the local Muslims (Nasya Sheikh). The question of power politics in the state administration was the crucial factor for the emergence of the Hitasadhani Sabha. In the activities of Hitasadhani Sabha, it is evident that the sharing of political power was becoming the most important issue in their movement. Consequently it was found that in the state council election of 1946, the Hitasadhani Sabha got sweeping majority.<sup>55</sup> In this connection one thing may be mentioned that so long the migrant Bengalis (BHATIAS) enjoyed the power and position in the state administrative structure. But the Council Election of 1946 has changed the situation by which the Hitasadhani Sabha captured all power in the administrative structure of Cooch Behar. As the Hitasadhani Sabha was an organization of the local people (Deshees), they got very much encouraged with this victory and became united against the Bhatias (immigrant Bengalis). Not only the Deshees of Cooch Behar State, the local people of other districts of undivided North Bengal like Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Rangpur also got encouraged with this

incident and to some extent became united against the immigrant Bengalis. Quite naturally polarization of Deshees and Bhatias began to be started at Cooch Behar.<sup>56</sup>

It is quit natural that as the Hitasadhani Sabha was the platform of the Deshees, they extended their support to this organization. H.S (Hitasadhani Sabha) also utilize this sentiment and as a reaction a psychological cold war came into being between the Deshees and the Bhatias in some parts of North Bengal. But this situation could not survive for long due to the new political situations i.e., Indian independence, partition, merger of Cooch Behar with Indian union etc. With the merger issue so many questions were raised by H.S. which are not the subject of our study. But when Cooch Behar was included with present West Bengal State, H. S. got frustrated, Khan Choudhury Amanatalla, a front ranking leader of H. S. could not admit it and he left Cooch Behar. Satish Singha Roy with some of his associates joined the Congress Party and became a State Minister in the Bidhan Roy Ministry. But Gojen Basunia was not prepared to change his stand and continued his activities of provocation towards anti Bhatia sentiment. Incidentally during 1951 an agitation against the Bhatias occurred at Baishguri of Mathabhanga in Cooch Behar for which Gajen Basunia and some other were arrested.<sup>57</sup> From these developments one thing is evident that an ethno-cultural movement was initiated by the H.S. in Cooch Behar which had some impact on the adjacent districts of North Bengal.<sup>58</sup>

#### 8.11. BACKGROUND FOR THE FORMATION OF UTTARKHANDA DAL

When the question of merger of Cooch Behar state was settled and Cooch Behar became a district West Bengal on and from 1st January, 1950, the H.S. got frustrated and for the time being the Deshee-Bhatia cold war became passive to some extent. At that time, the H. S. had no important political agenda and they involved themselves with Congress party. But when the Communist organization in North Bengal as well as at Cooch Behar were

getting popularity to some extent, the land reform movement started which was alarming to the Deshee jotedars. For their vested interest they were active to raise some issues so that a conflict between the Deshees and Bhatias can come into being. But the reality was that the poor people could not remain aloof from this land movement which was supposed to be their struggle for existence. Quite naturally it was found that the local people involved themselves with this land reform movement. During 1967, when the first Juktafront government was formed the Deshee jotedars of North Bengal became worried due to the new political situation. 'The Deshee-Bhatia conflict which was initiated by H.S., was utilized by the deshee jotedars and considering their future prospects in respect of power and property a new political dimension began to be stated in North Bengal.<sup>59</sup> In this situation, due to so many factors (which is beyond the scope of our study) a new regional political party namely 'UTTAR KHANDA DAL' was formed on 5th July, 1969, by some local people of North Bengal.<sup>60</sup> With the emergence of the Jukta front government in 1967 the left party activities, specially the land reform movement got a significant response. Quite naturally for their vested interest the jotedars of North Bengal got themselves involved in the formation of this regional political party (U. D.) and they became involved in separatist activities. Later on, it was found that the Uttarkhanda Dal became very much active in separatist politics. But as our period of study is confined up to to1969, we don't have any scope to find out the later developments.

Considering all these developments within the framework of our study it is found that some ethno-linguistic and cultural identity movements emerged in North Bengal. It has already been mentioned that along with ethnicity and culture, language was also an issue for the emergence of identity question in Darjeeling hill areas. But in the plains of North Bengal the picture was to some extent different. The Rajbansi Kshatriya movement was started as a caste reform and caste identity movement. But later on, starting from the movement of Hitasadhani Sabha, the identity movements in North Bengal have got a different shape. Though it did not directly use the language issue in the course

of movement, but Deshee-Bhatia stratification have indirectly tied up the language question which insisted the later developments which ultimately gave birth of regional political party KPP (Kamtapur People's Party). Whatever may be the background, it is evident that the later developments have made a sharp difference between the local people (Deshees) and the outsiders or Bhatias (immigrant Bengalis). In the subsequent period it was further evident that these identity questions have given the birth of separatist political attitude which require to be studied by further research.

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On the whole, the Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement represented and endeavour to find Social identity and status for fee Rajbansi Hindus in a situation of considerable flux and contained significant elements of dissent and opposition to upper caste domination.

- 29 Ibid. P.87.

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- 30 Barman, Upendranath.- op. cit. P.60.
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<sup>48</sup> Singha, Kshetramohan – Roy Shaheb Panchanan Barmar Jibani (in Bengali), published by Sri Nityananda Barma, Gaibandha, Rangpur, 1332, B.S., P. 20.

<sup>49</sup> Dasgupta, Ranjit. – Op. cit. P.91

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. PP. 90-91.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. P. 91.

<sup>52</sup> Dakua, Dinesh. – Kamtapuri Andoloner Asol uddyeshya (in Bengali) National Book Agency, Calcutta, 2001. P.13.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. PP. 12-13.

<sup>54</sup> Ghosh, A. G. – The Saga of Hitasadhani Sabha, 1946-1950: A case study of ethnic identity and power struggle in the erstwhile princely state of Cooch Behar. KARATOYA, North Bengal University of Journal of History, Vol. I. March 2007, PP. 72-73.

The exact date of its foundation is debatable. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal, an eminent political personality and editor of the Janamat Partika (a well circulated Bengali weekly), Jalpaiguri, has mentioned in one issue of the Patrika that the Hitasadhani Sabha was founded on 18th May, 1947. On the other hand Sree Parbananda Das, retired Headmaster and member of the Hitasadhani Sabha has stated that the Hitasahdani Sabha was founded on 19th May, 1946. The statement of Parbananda Das is more authentic one. Barring, there were certain other events which helped us to believe that the Hitasadhani Sabha was founded in 1946.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. P. 73.

Dakua, Dinesh. – Hitasadhani Theke Kamtapuri P. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Dakua, Dinesh. – Ibid, P.4

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. P.5

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Memorandum to Smt. Indira Gandhi, the honourable Prime Minister of India, on 24th August 1981, by the Uttarkhanda Dal

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## CONCLUSION

In the present study entitled *The Role of Press and Associations in the Socio-Cultural and Political Movements: A Case Study of North Bengal (1869-1969)*, we have presented an analysis of the role of socio-cultural transitions that have taken place in the present North Bengal Districts of West Bengal during 1869-1969 (however, a part of our universe of study may be out of the present North Bengal districts because we have taken the study from 1869 which is prior to independence, and hence, some parts of the territory have been merged with the present day Bangladesh) focusing primarily on the role of Press and Associations (Sabha-Samiti) as the creators and interpreters of the public opinion, contributing towards the socio-cultural transitions of the region. While doing so, we have begun with the geo-historical profile of North Bengal, background and the origin and development of Press and Associations, important associations and press publications and the role they played in the contemporary socio-cultural and political movements in the region, and finally, the emergence of the North Bengal question as a distinct geo-political entity, and tied with it, the emergence of demands for recognition of identities premised around ethnic, linguistic and cultural bases in the region, which impacts on the process of transition of the North Bengal society. This emergence of the two-pronged identity question, first, the identity of North Bengal as a distinct geo-historical and political entity on the one hand, and, secondly, the emergence of a multitude of identity based movements in North Bengal speak of not only the deprivation of the region from the benefits of development, but also the mis/non-recognition of the socio-political claims of a variety of ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups in the region, bringing in them a sense of relative deprivation vis-à-vis the dominant groups of the region. These have been amply illustrated by the emergence of Press and Associations in the region over the years. Thus the study strived to explore the issues like, that the forces of change, exploitation, and injustice under the British rule in North Bengal faced a reaction (as outlined in our First Hypothesis) from the North

Bengal intelligentsia through the media and associations; that the press and associations in North Bengal contributed towards the mobilization and aggregation of public opinion in favour of a distinct North Bengal, unidentical with the rest of West Bengal (Second Hypothesis); and that North Bengal, despite remaining as a neglected territory during the colonial rule, contributed significantly in India's struggle for freedom, a history, which, however, remains largely unexplored and unwritten (Third Hypothesis). However, our generalizations to this effect could not be overstretched due to the obvious limits of the present study. In the sections that follow, we have attempted to summarize the main contents of our study, point out the important findings of the present study, and present a set of concluding observations.

### **Summary of Chapters**

The present volume contains an '*Introduction*', eight chapters, and a *Conclusion* of the study. In the *Introduction*, we have introduced the problem under study, presented a brief overview of the existing literature on the subject to justify the necessity of the present research, designed our research questions and hypotheses, and explained our methodological orientations. The section also points out the significance of the present study and makes an honest confession on the major limitations of the study. The section, finally gives a bird's eye view of the organization of the entire thesis.

Chapter 1 bears a title *Geo-Historical Profile of North Bengal*, which is self explanatory of its contents. This Chapter has revealed that the North Bengal region has undergone a territorial-boundarial transformation in course of time. Even during the period taken for the present study (1869-1969), the geo-historical map of the region has changed owing to the circumstances created by the colonial rulers. Historically, it is seen that during the later Gupta period, and later on under *Sasanka*, North Bengal played a significant role not only in the history of Bengal, but also in the broader context of the history of North and North East India. From early medieval period to the advent of colonial rulers, North Bengal occupied a central position in the history of

Bengal, owing basically to the facts like, for instance, *Gour* being the administrative centre of the entire region on the one hand, and, because of the archaeological inscriptions like the *Mahasthanagarh* inscriptions which form the source of early medieval Indian history, on the other. North Bengal, at present a narrow strip of land at a short distance from the Chinese border connects the two divisions of India as a vital point in the bottom of the Himalayas. Its geographical proximity with Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the North, Assam and Bangladesh in the East, and Bangladesh, and the other parts of West Bengal and the state of Bihar in the South and West has provided her a special place of strategic importance. Since long past, North Bengal has been serving as the eastern gateway for the passage and communications of people, commodities and ideas between the Indian sub-continent in the West and the state of Assam, the countries like Burma, China and other parts of South-East Asia in the East. This area is situated in the centre of the network connecting different civilizations. Our explorations revealed that during the later Vedic Age, North Bengal was probably known as *Pragyotisha-Kamatapura*; and later on, *Paundra* or *Pundra. Gauda*, the chief town of *Pundravardhana* (the North Bengal region) seems to have a place of significance in the social, cultural, ethnic and economic history of the region. During the rule of Sasanka and the *Palas*, North Bengal played a vital role in the history and culture of the region. Following *Palas* came *Senas*, and then the *Muslim rullers*. The sultans of Bengal established several cities like *Gour* and *Pandua* (located in the present day Malda region). which brought about, under the influence of Islam, a transformation in the region, in all aspects of social life. However, it is seen that in the contemporary period, attempting a geo-historical profile of the region is rendered difficult for a multiplicity of reasons (elaborately discussed in the chapter). What is understood as being North Bengal today differs significantly from what it constituted before 1947. Today, it cannot more than simply a region: it implies an identity, an identity of a particular mosaic of socio-cultural and ethnic formations.

Chapter 2 entitled *Background of the Press Publications and Associations in North Bengal*. In this Chapter, while we saw that James Augustus Hicky has the credit of publishing the first newspaper (Calcutta Gazette) in India on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1780, yet in North Bengal press publication was a latecomer. This owed to several reasons, the prime one being the infrastructural disadvantages. The region was socio-culturally backward characterized by low literacy rate, lack of printing machinery, and absence of railway communication and institutions of higher learning. North Bengal also witnessed the wave of Bengal renaissance quite late. Under such conditions, it was quite unlikely that the people of North Bengal would develop any interest in press publications. In spite of these disadvantages, press publications began appearing in North Bengal (of undivided Bengal) by mid 1800s from Rangpur (sometimes in 1847) as Rangpur and Rajshahi were the cultural centres; and at the fag end of the 1800s (in the region which falls under the present day North Bengal) with the Publication of Darjeeling News in 1870. The growth of public organizations and associations in Bengal was closely related to the growth and development of Bengali vernacular press. Raja Rammohun Roy's 'Atmiya Sabha' founded in 1815 may rightly be regarded as the pioneer of truly Indian association of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequently a series of associations were founded mainly in Calcutta and its adjacent areas. Like as press publications, the people of North Bengal could not realize the importance of the associations. So any association of any kind either socio-cultural or political did not emerge in North Bengal before the last quarter of the 19th century. Associations of North Bengal founded in the early stage were located mainly in the region lying with Bangladesh (North Bengal of undivided Bengal). as for instance, Rajshahi Association (1878), Varendra Research Society, Rangpur Sahitya Parishad. North Bengal Zamindars Association, Rangpur, etc. In present North Bengal we find some associations and organizations (Sabha-Samiti), which were the branches of the socio-cultural organizations of Calcutta. To communicate their views and ideas to a broader section of population some branches of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Bangiyo Sahitya Parishad, Indian

Association were founded in North Bengal which are found in the present day North Bengal. Actually the people of this region did not have that awareness to establish any socio-cultural or political organization. Arya Natya Samaj of Jalpaiguri was the exception, which was founded in 1904 with a view of cultural practices. In the subsequent period so many organizations—social, cultural and political have emerged in different districts of present North Bengal.

Chapter 3 is given the title *Important Publications and Associations and their Role in the Contemporary Socio-Cultural and Political Movements*. The Chapter reveals to us that the publications and associations emerged from different places of North Bengal had initiated different issues, which had certain impact on the North Bengal society, culture and politics. Among them the associations and press publications from Jalpaiguri and Malda were most significant in terms of their vibrancy and activities. The press and associations of Cooch Behar and Darjeeling were significant contributors in terms of their literary activities and contributions to socio-cultural movements. The publications from Jalpaiguri like of *Trisruta Janamat* and *MuktiBani* were actively supportive of the activities of the Indian national Congress (INC). Similarly *Barendra* and *Deshbandhu* also made significant contributions to socio-political and cultural-literary awareness in the region. These apart, papers like *Ahvan*, *Nisan*, *Danpiteder Samachar*, *Amader Katha*, *Uttarpath*, *Nirapeksha* etc were published from Jalpaiguri and all these were concerned with the contemporary socio-cultural and political issues. The first Monthly periodical published from Malda was *Kusum* by Radhesh Chandra Seth (1890). Next he published *Gourbarta* and *Gourdoot*. The other important publications from Malda included *Malda Samachar* and *Malda Akhbar*. *Gourdoot* was a paper, which propagated messages against the colonial rule and exploitation. However, *Gambhira* was a paper that had mainly a socio-cultural theme and message. *Damru*, *Adhina*, *Minar* were the other publications coming from Malda. It was seen that in the context of the National Movement, *Gourdoot* as a media created a strong political awareness and mobilized the public opinion

against the exploitative rule of the British. Malda also witnessed the emergence of a few important associations during the said period. Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan, Branch of Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha, National Council of Education, Malda Muhammedan Association and the Malda Association are some important associations of Malda during the period taken for the present study. Apart from the Malda Muhammedan Association, all the other associations mentioned above were concerned with the cultural and literary development. Malda Zela Sahitya Sabha was the first literary organization in the North Bengal. Acharya Binoy Kumar Sarkar was the founder of the national Council of education in Malda, which was very active during the Swadeshi Movement. However, the central concern of the Malda Muhammedan Association was to promote the socio-economic wellbeing of the Muslim community. Voluntary organizations were also formed for the welfare of the weaker sections Relief Committee to help the flood victims etc. During our period of study Dinajpur did not as such have any important press publications. A few associations, however, were formed. Cooch Behar had a strong background of publications and literary activities. Famous literary figures of Bengal including Tagore used to contribute to the publications from Cooch Behar, some of which were even patronized by the maharajas of Cooch Behar. Being a separate Princely state with strict laws including the deportation law, Cooch Behar could conspicuously avoid the flowering of associations in general and anti- state/government associations in particular. A wide variety of press publications came during the period from Darjeeling district. A bulk of the publications was in Nepali and English and a few in Hindi, Bengali and Tibetan even. The themes of these publications ranged from the issues of socio-economic development to the literary-cultural issues to even issues of identity and nationhood. Similar was the magnitude and intensity of the emergence and activities respectively of the associations in the district.

Chapter 4 entitled *Growth and Development of Non Bengali Press and some Associations in the Non-Bengali dominated areas of North Bengal*, with an understanding that the Indian history and culture is multidimensional,

recognizes the North Bengal Region to be a mosaic of diverse socio-cultural formations. Hence, the Chapter explores the Non Bengali Press in the region and the role of the associations in the Non Bengali dominated region of North Bengal, particularly Darjeeling Hills. The chapter reveals that during the period taken for the present study, Darjeeling had its credit a large number of publications in Nepali, English, Bengali and Tibetan (at the fag end of the period under study), which owed to the contributions made by the British rulers and the missionaries by way of the establishment of schools and other institutions of learning. Several vernacular publications in the likes of *Gorkha Bharat Jiban* (1886- (Motiram Bhatt), *Gorkha Khabar Kagat* (1901-Ganga Prasad Pradhan) were published from Darjeeling, investigating different aspects of hill society and culture, propagation of the republican ideals and the condemnation of the social evils like child marriage (especially between 1912 and 1939) engaging basically in socio-cultural reform. The publications in Tibetan took place especially after the arrival of the Tibetan refugees to Darjeeling in the later part of the 1950s, and, most of their publications focus on the plight of the refugees, reflections on their religious and cultural traditions, their determination to free Tibet, and so on. Some Nepali novels (like *Noyo*) also focused on the story of the inhuman treatment meted to the Tibetans and the flight of the refugees from Tibet to India etc. As regards the associations, most of them were formed in for the assertion of the cultural and ethnic identity of the people of the hills (for instance, the NEBULA) barring some (like *Gorkha Dukkha Nibarak Sammelan- GDNS* and *Nepali Sahitya Sammelan*) which devoted to socio-cultural and literary endeavours.

In Chapter 5, we have discussed the *Contributions of the Regional Vernacular Press and Associations in Freedom Movement* contextualizing it in the location, locale and the sense of place of the emergence of the vernacular press and associations in the wider perspective of the national movement. The chapter brings to us the fact that the regional vernacular press and associations of North Bengal had a very strong contribution to the national movement in India, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The vernacular press publications

of North Bengal, more particularly of Jalpaiguri and Malda districts worked in the direction of generating and consolidating the public opinion against the unjust and exploitative rule of the British. This was possible because a host of the editors of these publications had some strong political background.

Chapter 6 deals with the *Contributions of regional Associations in the field of Socio-cultural Development up to 1969*. This chapter is basically a descriptive chapter which has explored the sabhas and samities in Bengal during 1869 to 1969 and their contributions to socio-cultural development in the region, as it is obvious from the title of the chapter itself.

Chapter 7 is entitled *Emergence of North Bengal Question: North Bengal Press vis-à-vis Calcutta Press*. North Bengal, geographically is simply a region situated in the northern part of Bengal. Even after 1947 the present North Bengal lies with the northern part of present West Bengal. But North Bengal question arises due to so many reasons. Firstly geographically and secondly psychologically this northern part of West Bengal got some importance. Both the people of north Bengal and the rest of Bengal used this term North Bengal. Geographically, socially, culturally, this region got some identity. Moreover ethnical and linguistic identity brought the question into limelight. In terms of some natural resource the term 'THREE T' have identified this area. Moreover the backwardness, social, political and economic low position and the changes took place under the British rule produced some impact on the people of North Bengal. As North Bengal remained alienated to some extent (Calcutta scholars did not highlight North Bengal in any respect). Some eminent scholars of North Bengal and some institutions took interest to explore North Bengal's social and cultural matters. Racial, cultural and ethnical identity gave the birth of a separate identity question of North Bengal. In colonial period some caste based social movements and later on some ethnical, cultural and political movements (Hitasadhani Sabha, Uttarakhanda Dal and Gorkha League) bring the North Bengal question. In recent times this North Bengal question got some important dimension in socio cultural aspect.

In the press of North Bengal this north Bengal term is highlighted. Even the Calcutta press also used this term in different way. Due to some geo-historical background and presently due to socio-cultural, linguistic and ethnical background the North Bengal question gradually emerged.

Chapter 8 is named *Emergence of Ethnic, Linguistic and Cultural Identity Question*. In this chapter we have basically explored the evolution and consolidation of the identity question: linguistic, ethnic and cultural. Since the dominant identity related movements have taken place in an organized form as protest movements outside the time frame of our study (for example, the Gorkhaland Movement, the Kamtapuri Movement, and even the Greater Cooch Behar Movement), the chapter has explored extensively only the Kshatriyas Movement as a movement for identity in North Bengal. The Movement has shown the dynamics of identity of a community. The chapter also takes stock of the forces and factors during the period up to 1969, which influenced the emergence of the identity, based movements like Gorkhaland and Kamtapuri movements in North Bengal.

### **Major Findings**

During the early stage, the press publications and the associations in North Bengal were engaged in several socio-cultural activities. However, with the spreading out of the National Movement in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the press and associations in North Bengal are seen to have played a significant role. It was during this time that the British government adopted several press ordinances as part of the repressive measures to curb the national movement. The press in North Bengal, particularly the vernacular press was unequivocal in condemning and criticizing the government policies and actions. The press, by highlighting on the injustice meted out to the Indians, and by covering the emotionally charged public speeches by the leadership in the National movement, generated a public opinion against the British rule. Such roles were played by many press publications of North Bengal notably the *Jamanat*, *Trisrota* and *Muktibani* in Jalpaiguri and *Gourdoot* in Malda (see chapter 5 for

details). Hence, one of the major findings of the present study is that press and associations in North Bengal acted as agencies of creation and consolidation of the public opinion against the British rule in India. This in turn played a significant role in transforming the social and political life of North Bengal. To elucidate, significant changes in social and political life were the growth of general awareness for their social and political position. Through press, they ventilated their discontent and grievances in respect of low social position, promotion of education and culture. With the help of publication, literary activities, so many renowned writers in different field emerged. Cooch-Bihar Sahitya Sabha Patrika, NEBULA, Dinajpur Bhattpara Unnatigadhani Sabha, Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan, Kshatria, (mouthpiece of Kshatriya Samiti) brought so many changes in the context of socio-cultural activities of North Bengal. Gourdoot of Malda made an atmosphere to arrange tripartite meeting (Bansis and Ghaiwalas, Communists and the administration) to increase the price of cocoons. Silk control order was challenged. Publications of Jalpaiguri generated a strong nationalist movement. Political activities and policy of the government were circulated through press which influenced the mass. After the formation of All India Political Party (Indian National Congress, Indian Association etc.) some branches were opened in North Bengal Districts. Representatives from North Bengal attended All India Conferences. Through associations and publications they raised their voice. Some intellectuals associated with Gourdoot raised voice in favour of the reelers and weavers of silk industry demanding justice in respect of wages. Indian Tea Planters' Association was formed with the aim of safeguarding their interests and ventilating their grievances to the government. During the partition of Bengal and Swadeshi movement an anti-partition movement started at Jalpaiguri and leadership and inspiration were provided by legal practitioners, teachers and planters. A large crowd led by Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, a leading planter walked barefoot through the town. A campaign was launched to boycott foreign goods. At Dinbazar, the market place of the town, propaganda for the boycott led to the arrest of three young men. Many anti-British activities were performed. The

North Bengal intelligentsia supported and highlighted these activities. Most of the associations of North Bengal were socio cultural and literary in character. Some of them got some indirect involvement with nationalist activities. Malda Zela Congress Committee, Jalpaiguri district Congress Committee, Darjeeling District committee did much for the freedom movement. Among the associations of North Bengal, some with the socio culture; activities generated a public opinion which ultimately became involved in the freedom movement. Some personalities engaged with some associations were nationalists. Krishak Samiti was formed in 1938, Gurudas Roy as secretary and Sachin Dasgupta as assistant secretary. Gurudas Roy had earlier been associated with Sree Sangha and Bengal volunteers the later organization being responsible for much of daring terrorist activities in early 1930s. Jalpaiguri District Congress Committee had a strong hold over the peasants and tea garden workers and they raised the voice of protest against the British government. In fact the association of Jalpaiguri regenerated a public consciousness which helped the nationalist movement at large. In the course of the freedom movement a publication of North Bengal played some active role. Among many publications, some from Jalpaiguri and Malda had a distinction in favour of the national freedom movement. In Malda district we see that Gourdoot was a mirror of the freedom movement during civil disobedience and the quit India movement. Due to strong nationalist background, Lal Behari Majumdar editor of Gourdoot strongly propagated in favour of the freedom movement on different issues. Similarly in Jalpaiguri, Trisrota, Janamat, Muktibani and Varendra were active supporter of the freedom movement. They were accused for seditious activities and were warned by the British government for their campaign in favour of freedom movement. Police case was filed against Muktibani and its editor Khagendra Nath Dasgupta was imprisoned.

In the perspective of our study North Bengal acquired importance in the like manner as the other parts of Bengal. No study in their regard has been done as yet. On tea plantation, socio-economic structure and on other fields a good number of works are completed. But the intellectual exercise and the

political activities in respect of our study have not been properly explored. The role of the press, their editors and organizers of different associations remained almost unknown and untouched. The study of different aspects of this regional history have not been properly studied. So the intellectuals, writers and authors, editors, nationalists and their supporters, organizers of associations were important people. Some contemporary incidents like price hike, dishonesty of businessmen, ordinance to stop vernacular press, warning the editors and printing press, imprisonment of journalists, public meeting against the government and campaign in favour of national movement were important which have not been properly explored. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, editor of Muktibani, (Jalpaiguri) after a long trial was imprisoned for one year. The case was filed due to violation of court order. The title of the case was Superintendent and Remembrance of the legal affairs Vs Kagendranath Dasgupta. Bhabaranjan Gangopadhyay, writer of an article entitled "Bichar" (in Muktibani) was also accused of seditious writings and was imprisoned for one year. Some important protest movement stirred the political life of Malda district. These movements were mostly stormed in Bhaluka, Harischandrapur, and Singabad. During the course of Quit India Movement Subodh Kumar Mishra was the President of District congress and he mobilized the people under the banner of I.N.C. The adjacent areas were also stirred with the political agitation which was reported by Gourdoot. Some movement also occurred in Balurghat. In Jalpaiguri also procession took place demanding liberation and the exemption of imprisonment of some nationalists. Picketing was shown in Jalpaiguri. Boycott movement also got good response. Geographically North Bengal is simply a region situated in the northern part of Bengal. Even after 1947 the present North Bengal lies with the northern part of present West Bengal. But North Bengal question arises due to so many reasons. Firstly geographically and secondly psychologically this northern part of West Bengal got some importance. Both the people of north Bengal and the rest of Bengal used this term North Bengal. Geographically, socially, culturally, this region got some identity. Moreover ethnical and linguistic identity brought the

question into limelight. Moreover the backwardness, social, political and economic low position and the changes took place under the British rule produced some impact on the people of North Bengal. As North Bengal remained alienated to some extent (Calcutta scholars did not highlight North Bengal in any respect). Some eminent scholars of North Bengal and some institutions took interest to explore North Bengal's social and cultural issues. Racial, cultural and ethnical identity gave the birth of a separate identity question of North Bengal. In colonial period some caste based social movements and later on some ethnical, cultural and political movements bring the North Bengal question. In recent times this North Bengal question got some important dimension in socio cultural aspect. In the press of North Bengal this north Bengal term is highlighted. Even the Calcutta press Also used this term in different way. Due to some geo-historical background and presently due to socio-cultural, linguistic and ethnical background the North Bengal question gradually emerged

Most important identity based movement of North Bengal was Rajbansi Kshatriya Movement. The Mohammedans of different districts of north Bengal also formed some associations for the cause of their community interests. Anjuman-i-islamia of Malda, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, and Darjeeling were also interested for the promotion of their community. Gorkha Dukkha Nibarak Sammelan, Hillman's association and NEBULA were interested for the socio-cultural development of hill communities. Gorkha Samiti, later on association served the purpose of Gorkha. For the general interest of their community and for their socio-cultural upliftment these associations were formed. Identity based movements/associations were formed for their general interests / promotion in respect of education, culture, upliftment of social positions, and to expose their grievances. Their aspirations were exposed through these associations. '*Kshatriya*'-mouthpiece of Kshatria Samiti. Nepali Sahitya Sammelan published Nepali Sahitya Sammelan Patrika. Gorkha Dukkha Nibarak Samity published '*Khoji*' by Rupnarayan Singh to ventilate their thoughts and ideas, to highlight their demands and problems.

The role of press has always been reflected in different socio-cultural movements. As present Dinajpur (NS) had no such important publication, the other districts of north Bengal witnesses a series of papers journals which initiated so many socio-cultural movements. In the case of Darjeeling most of the press publications were related with social-cultural movement. In Malda also press had an important role. Radhesh Chandra Seth and his Gourbarta, Gourdoot, and Malda Samachar contributed a lot for this purpose. Damru, Adhina, Minmar were also important. Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan was the product of its literary activities performed by these publications. Cooch Behar had a strong background in this regard. Paricharika etc. had a contribution in this regard. In Jalpaiguri also we see good number of publications created an atmosphere of cultural practice and core group of socio cultural activities emerged. In different political movements, press had a contribution. Though it was not equally felt in all districts of North Bengal especially in Jalpaiguri and Malda Districts, press played a role to propagate the spirit of nationalism/national movement.

The study therefore revealed that the press and associations played a significant role in the socio-political movements in North Bengal. However, our study revealed the fact that there were inter- district similarities as well as inter-district variations. The nature of and the reasons for such similarities and variations have been summarized below. In respect of the socio-cultural and political activities, Malda and Jalpaiguri had many similarities. Darjeeling and Cooch Behar had some similarities in terms of the literary activities of the press and associations. As Cooch Behar was a princely state unlike the other districts of present north Bengal, any anti-state activity either by publication or by association was not possible. On the other hand, Darjeeling was a non-regulation area because of which the political activities in the area was restricted. Jalpaiguri, Malda and Dinajpur shared similarities in terms of the status of administration. Sectional politics existed both in Jalpaiguri and in Malda. Hence, the analysis of the role of press and associations reveal some commonness in Jalpaiguri and Malda but differ even with what took place in

Darjeeling and Cooch Behar, because each one of these—Cooch Behar and Darjeeling enjoyed a unique status of its own. And, Dinajpur, despite belonging to the category as of Malda and Jalpaiguri, had no important association or press publication coming out of it which can claim to have equal importance as those in Jalpaiguri and Malda, for reasons which have been highlighted below. Between Malda and Jalpaiguri the press owners (editors) were mostly nationalists. Some of them were secretary to the District Congress Committee or active political worker. The congress organization were formed and got a mass support for the cause of national movement. Due to literary activities a social and political awareness emerged in both the districts. Naturally the publications and associations of Malda and Jalpaiguri in their socio cultural and political activities got some similarities. Moreover other than colonial rule no other restrictions remained their especially due to strong political background.- Lalbehari Majumdar (editor of Gourdoot), Jyotish Chandra Sanyal (editor of Jamanat), Suresh Ch. Paul (editor of Trisrota) and Khagendra Nath Dasgupta (editor of Muktibani), all these publications focused on the national political activities, reacted against illegal and unjustified activities of the British government.

The press and associations of Malda and Jalpaiguri were of different character from that of Darjeeling and Cooch Behar. In the perspective of national movement some publications of Malda and Jalpaiguri were identical to some extent. Cooch Behar had as such no associational activities due to the cause of being a native state. But in cultural and literary perspective Cooch Behar a significant contribution for the cultural development of North Bengal. Due to different linguistic and ethnical background Darjeeling was different from the rest of North Bengal. Press and Associations of Darjeeling were mainly engaged in socio-cultural and literary development of the hill communities. Local problems and demand serve generally focused by the publications from Darjeeling. There are variations among the districts of north Bengal in terms of the contributions made by press and associations. For instance, Dinajpur had no important publication or association whatsoever

which can be compared to those of other districts of north Bengal. Ethnic, linguistic and cultural variations among the districts of North Bengal are already mentioned earlier. Due to some administrative compulsion in Cooch Behar, it was not possible to organize political movement. Apart from this, Deportation Law was totally different from the rest of North Bengal which is explained. Due to some regulations and influence of European education they were busier with their own affairs than the political/national. Sub-nationalism (socio-cultural and political demands related with the local issues) was more dominant among the hill communities than the rest of north Bengal. Though Malda and Jalpaiguri were identical or similar to some extent, some variations also remained there. Jalpaiguri was more active in all respect (social, cultural, and political) than Malda. Among so many publications we find only Gourdoot as nationalist paper (JATIO-SAPTAHIK PATRIKA). Malda Zela Sahitya Sammelan was the first district wise literary conference in north Bengal. Due to Benoy Kr. Sarkar Swadeshi spirit was exposed in Malda through national council of education. Other than Malda no districts of North Bengal founded National Council of Education. Some other reasons for variations in respect of socio-cultural and political activities were there, which have already mentioned in the context of different questions.



# কোচবিহার পত্রিকা।

৩০শে আগস্ট শুক্রবার, ১৩৮৮ \* ইং ১৫ই আগস্ট, ১৯৪১।

শুক্রে দুই জনের মতো কোচ জিলায়, তাদের মতামত রাখেন না এমন লোকের মতামত গ্রহণ করা উচিত নয়, এই মতামত রাখা সংক্রান্ত যথেষ্ট সতর্কতা স্থানীয় ও সরকারীরা এ সম্বন্ধে সতর্ক হয়ে থাকবে, ততটা প্রতিকার প্রদান করা হবে।

কোচবিহারের মতামত সংক্রান্তে দুই জনের মতামত রাখেন না এমন লোকের মতামত গ্রহণ করা উচিত নয়, এই মতামত রাখা সংক্রান্ত যথেষ্ট সতর্কতা স্থানীয় ও সরকারীরা এ সম্বন্ধে সতর্ক হয়ে থাকবে, ততটা প্রতিকার প্রদান করা হবে।

কোচবিহারের মতামত সংক্রান্তে দুই জনের মতামত রাখেন না এমন লোকের মতামত গ্রহণ করা উচিত নয়, এই মতামত রাখা সংক্রান্ত যথেষ্ট সতর্কতা স্থানীয় ও সরকারীরা এ সম্বন্ধে সতর্ক হয়ে থাকবে, ততটা প্রতিকার প্রদান করা হবে।

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Front Page of 'COOCHBEHAR PATRIKA' of 15th August, 1941. Source : Cooch Behar State Library, Cooch Behar.





# APPENDIX - 2

D ASS & Co.  
Bankers & Share Dealers.  
JALPAIGURI.  
R. JALPAIGURI—MANAGER

দেশবন্ধু সংখ্যা 1

যদিও শনিবার নিত্যগী প্রতীতি—

দাশ এণ্ড কোং

কলকাতা

এখানে বিবিধ জাতি অফিস  
সেই কোম্পানীর কোম্পানীর  
বিক্রয় হয়।

সংগৃহীত সংবাদ পত্র।

REG. NO. C. 1380.



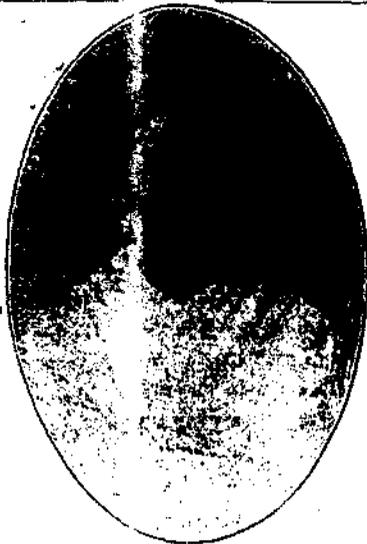
সংগৃহীত—স্বীকৃত পত্র, এন. এ. সি. এল।

৩৪ নং।

১৪ই জু. ১৯৩১, ৩১শে জুলাই ১৩৩০, বুধবার।

৩০শে সংখ্যা।

খাসি নামের বেশ  
জালখাসি— স্বাধীনতা।  
জালখাসি—একটি স্বাধীন  
চাষি আবার জমিদার  
সেই স্বাধিকার, নাহাত  
আমি নিজে বদলের  
শাসন নিজেই করতে  
পারি। উচ্চ মান অফ  
রাইস ইং—আমি সে  
অপরাধ স্বীকার করি।



## NOTICE

### SPECIAL OFFER FOR TEA GARDEN COOLIES.

The undersigned is prepared to help the Tea Gardens situated in Dooar and Terai with any number of short term coolies at a very cheap rate during the deplorable condition of present Tea Market. The rates of coolies will be Munchas, Chanas, Hantins, Kharis, Kooms, Kisan and etc. The coolies will be of mixed batches (male and female) and despatching of coolies can be commenced immediately. If Railway Credit Notes are supplied for despatching coolies, coolies can be sent on credit to bonafide Tea Gardens only. For terms and rates, please apply immediately to:

Recruiting Agent, J. K. Pattadar.  
RANCHE.

## BUY BEST TEA PLUCKING BASKETS

MADE BY WET.

SEASONED PACCA CANE FROM:—

Messrs. O. SINGH JOS & Co.  
JALPAIGURI.

কার এণ্ড চার্টার্ড।

সংগৃহীতকার চাইল, কলকাতা, সিন্ডিকেটের জন্ত আহ্বান।

## জয়করণ ইন্ড্রাজমল আগরওয়াল

ফার্ম।

বড় সওদাগরপট্টা, কলকাতা।

মুদ্রণ সকার বহু, মদন সকার কান্দা সকার, মদন, কল  
ও বেসকার মদন সকার বহু এই কোম্পানি পরিচালনা  
করে যদি সুবন্দোবস্ত করেন হয়।

পত্রিকা প্রার্থিত।

ইন্ড্রাজমল আগরওয়াল।

A cover page of 'TRISROTA', A Bengali National Weekly,  
published from Jalpaiguri, "Deshbandhu Sankhya".  
Source : Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Jalpaiguri.















# পাল্লী-মঙ্গল-সম্মেলন ।

জলপাইগুড়ি-১৯৪৩ ইং।

## উদ্দেশ্য ও কার্য প্রণালীর বিশ্লেষণ ।

শ্রদ্ধের সভাপতি মহাশয়, উপস্থিত মহিলা ও ভ্রম্মহোদয়গণ  
এবং পল্লী-প্রতিনিধিবৃন্দ :—

বেশের এই স্বাক্ষর দুর্দিনে জীবনযরণের সন্ধিক্ষেপে আমরা সকলে আজ  
এখানে মনবেত হয়েছি—আত্মরক্ষার নিমিত্ত, নিহেদের অস্তিত্ব রক্ষার  
নিমিত্ত এবং সংগঠনের নিমিত্ত। বিগত ১৭ মাস কাল বাংলার বুকে  
যে কি অতি ভীষণ দুর্ভিক্ষের তাণ্ডবলীলা চলিয়াছে, তাহার বর্ণনা  
নিশ্চয়রূপে, কারণ আপনারা সকলেই এতৎ-সম্পর্কে সম্যক অবহিত  
আছেন। এই স্বাক্ষর দুর্ভিক্ষের কবলে পতিত হইয়া বাংলার কত  
লোক যে অনাহারে, অনিদ্রায়, অর্চিকিৎসার পথে ঘাটে পড়িয়া  
বৃত্যবরণ করিয়াছে, তাহার সংখ্যা নির্ণয় করা দুর্কঠিন। এখনও  
কত শত সহস্র লোক অর্ধনয় বা পূর্ণনয় অবস্থায় দুর্ভিক্ষের প্রেতমূর্তি  
মাকিয়া ছায়ে ছায়ে সুইয়া বেড়াইতেছে, তাহাদেরই বা সংখ্যা  
নির্ণয় করিতে কে ?

সহস্র গুণ্ডাশেষ্ট ও সহস্র বেষবাসিন্দগণ আর্জ্রাণের নিমিত্ত  
বিশ্বশক্তি জেটা করিয়াছেন ও করিতেছেন বটে, কিন্তু ঐয়োজন্যের  
কুপনায় এ সাহায্য অত্যন্ত অকিঞ্চিৎকর; সম্পূর্ণ হ্রঃব দুর্দশা মোচনের  
কমতা কাহারও নাই।

A leaflet published from Jalpaiguri in 1943, highlighting some news of  
'PALLI MONGAL SAMMELAN' of Jalpaiguri.

Source : Personal collection of Dr. A. G. Ghosh, Jalpaiguri.

# मुक्तिबान

खगेंद्रनाथ

खगेंद्रनाथ दशगुप्त सम्पादित मुक्तिबान

A front page of 'MUKTIBANI', edited by Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, Jalpaiguri.  
Source : Azad Hind Pathagar, Jalpaiguri.

# BARENDRA

JALPAIGURI

= 1925 =

A weekly news paper published every Thursday  
of the week.

Jyotish Chandra Sanyal—Editor-in-chief.

Vol. 1-3	The 15th October 1925.	Thursday.
<b>Annual Subscription—</b>		Single Copy
District edition ... .. Rs. 4/-		nine pies.
Town edition ... .. Rs. 3/-		Back number two annas.

### 'Sarba Jaraline'

Is a Wonderful Specific for  
Malaria and Other Fevers and  
Enlargement of Liver and  
Spleen

**Sarba Jaraline**  
has given New Life to hundreds.  
Thousands—Millions !!

Why don't you try and get  
**Permanent Relief??**  
Sold everywhere.

Regd.



Trade

Mark.

### 'Goitreline'

Sure Cure for

Goitre

Tried by Millions with  
**Success.**

**Sole Agent—Druggist's Hall, Jalpaiguri.**

Managing Proprietor—Dr. S. C. Gupta, L.M.P. ; M.B.S.

(Govt. Medallist.)

সর্বাচারালিনে

A cover page of 'BARENDRA' published from Jalpaiguri, edited by Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, 1925.

Source : Sri Manik Sanyal, Political Activist, Jalpaiguri.

# ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନାଟ୍ୟ ସମାଜ

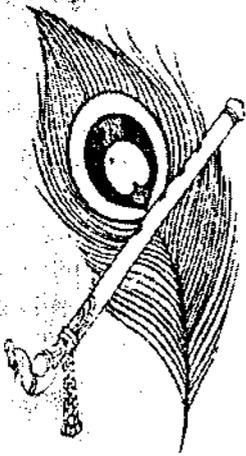
• (ବିଭୀନ୍ଦ୍ର ଢବନ) •

ଜଳପାହିଣ୍ଡି

୧୯୦୮-୨୦୦୮



॥ शतवर्ष पूर्ति उत्सव ॥



ସ୍ଥାନ : ବିଭୀନ୍ଦ୍ର ଢବନ

ଜଳପାହିଣ୍ଡି



Cover page of the centenary souvenir of Arya Natya Samaj, Jalpaiguri.  
Source : Sri Kamaksha Prasad Chakraborty, vice president, Arya Natya Samaj.

# APPENDIX - 3

EXCOMM: DARJEELING

COMPENDIUM OF DOCUMENTS

## Memoranda of the Hillmen's Association 25.10.1930

The Right Honorable Sir Samuel Hoare, P.C., G.B.E., C.M.G.  
Secretary of State of India, London.

The humble Memorial of the Gurkhas settled and domiciled in British India.

Most Respectfully Sheweth :-

1. That the Gurkhas domiciled in British India consisting of Military pensioners, Government Servants, Traders, Farmers, and Plantation Labourers are about 3 million, most of whom are settled at Darjeeling (in Bengal), Shillong (in Assam) Dehra-Dun (in United Provinces) and in Burma and the rest are scattered all over British India.
2. That the Gurkhas although in minority in the Provinces of British India are not a negligible element and in view of their services to Government in Military, Civil and other departments of Government they (Gurkhas) have played no mean part in the preservation of the solidarity of the British Empire.
3. The Gurkhas although domiciled in British India still cherish the customs and traditions of their ancestors and are quite a distinctive social unit, and are jealously preserving up till now their won social solidarity in spite of the fact that they are in such a minority in British India.
4. That with the advent of the new constitution, which is being framed the Gurkhas are apprehensive that their claims may be ignored and that eventually they may have to be merged with the rest of India, for causes beyond their control.
5. That so far the Gurkhas have been able to evolve on their own lines of civilization under the protection of the British Government but unless some special reservations are made for the Gurkhas in the new constitution it would be extremely difficult for them to preserve their social solidarity with the consequent loss to the British Government for once the Gurkhas are forced by circumstances beyond their control to make a common cause with the Indian the British will undoubtedly lose one of their best supporters and comrades in arm.
6. That it is with a view to avoid this contingency something must be done for the preservation of the social solidarity of Gurkhas under the

---

Memoranda of Hillmen's Association.  
Dated : 25.10.1930  
Source : S. Moktan, North Point, Darjeeling.

# Letter of Subhas Chandra Bose to Dambar Singh Gurung 1938

ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad

38-2 Elgin Road,  
Calcutta, 8th August, 1938

Dear Mr. Gurung,

I was very glad to have a discussion with you regarding the grievances of the Hill people of the Dist. of Darjeeling. The grievances as jotted down by you are just the legitimate, and I think it is the duty of the Government to remedy them. So far as the Congress Party is concerned, I can assure you that we will do our very best to remove these grievances as early as possible. As you are aware that the Congress Party represents the opinion of the masses. It is therefore, our duty to serve the masses and to redress their just and legitimate grievances. Most of the grievances you have mentioned are common to the masses in the rest of Bengal. It is our firm belief that not only should these grievances be redressed, but we should also give special attention to the Hillmen in the District of Darjeeling, who form a small minority in the province and who have been suffering from various disabilities and not only will it undertake that work as speedily as possible but it will also see that a special Committee is appointed to investigate the special problems of the Hillmen and report as to how these problem should be solved. In the light of the above remarks, I hope you will have no difficulty in appreciating the attitude of the Congress towards the special problems and grievances of the Hill men in your District.

**Nomenclature of :**

**SENCHAL**

Yours sincerely,

*Shin-shel-hlo, Skin, cloud and mist-enveloped, shel, to be wet or dank; and hlo, a mountain, "the damp misty hill". This is Dr. Waddell's interpretation, and to the habitue's of Darjeeling no name could be more appropriate for the highest hill near the station.*

[156]

Letter of Subhas Chandra Bose to Dambar Singh Gurung, 1938.  
Source : St. Josephs College, Darjeeling

## Sri Dambar Singh Gurung in Constituent Assembly Debates: 1946

Mr. Chairman;

Sir, in the list of the names of the Advisory Committee proposed by Mr. K.M. Munshi, I do not find any name of a Gurkha representative here. I do not want to refer to the terms of clause 20 of the Cabinet Mission's Statement of May 16, but I must pointedly draw the attention of the House to the Resolution an objective moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and passed by this House a few days ago. Paragraph 6 of that Resolution says -

**"Where adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, Backward and Tribal Areas and Depressed and other Backward Classes."**

It is the function of the Advisory Committee to give advice to the Constituent Assembly as to the manner in which the safeguards for the minorities, backward and tribal peoples are to be provided. Presumably, the Advisory Committee, there must be representatives of all these classes of people. Now, Sir, if there is no Gurkha on the Advisory Committee, who will speak for them and how will their interests and rights to be safeguarded? It is a fact that the Gurkhas form a distinct minority group and no one can deny the fact that they are the most backward people in India. If Gurkhas as much are not represented, they are yet to be represented here as people living in the Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas, because, Darjeeling District, where there are more than 3 lakhs of Gurkhas, is partially excluded area and even as tribals, because, the Gurkhas have been classed as tribal in the Census Report of 1941 in Bengal. If the Gorkhas are not represented in the only body that has been provided for devising means to safeguard in the interests of oppressed and backward people. I, as a Gurkha, do not see any advantage in my being a member of the Constituent Assembly. The other day President Kripalani told me that the Gurkhas would fight with their swords. I quite agree. The Gurkhas fought with their swords for the rulers of India, but now the Gurkhas have decided to fight for the freedom of India and will fight for free India, but at the same time I must appeal the House that their case also must be considered, as they are very backward educationally and economically and as the Advisory Committee is the only Committee where all these things can be brought up and discussed. I appeal to the House to consider this point.

[Vol. I Page : 341]

Memorandum of  
All India Gorkha League

29.04.1952

The Hon'ble Sree Jawaharlal Nehru  
Prime Minister of India

Camp : Kalimpong

- 1 This memorandum summarises the demands made at different times during the last 45 years, firstly by local organisations of the Hill people including the Hillmen's Association of which the Lepchas and the Bhutias were enthusiastic supporters, and, in recent years, by the All India Gorkha League.

HISTORY OF THE DEMANDS

- 2 (a) As long ago as 1907 before the Morley-Minto Reforms, the then leaders of the Hill people of Darjeeling submitted a memorial to the British Government demanding a separate administrative set-up for the District of Darjeeling.
- (b) In 1917, a deputation of Hillmen of the district waited on Mr. Montague, the then Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chemsford, the then Viceroy, and pressed the demand that "in laying down the plans for the future, the Government should aim at the creation of a separate unit comprising the present Darjeeling District with the portion of Jalpaiguri district which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865." The possibility of the creation of a still wider North Eastern Frontier Province to include, in addition to this, the Assam Dooms and the Hill territories which lie to the East of Bhutan whose people have affinity with the Hill people of Darjeeling was strongly emphasised by the deputation as not being beyond the scope of practical politics and urged for its explorations.
- (c) This demand was reiterated when the Simon Commission visited India in 1929.

Memorandum of All India Gorkha League, Dated : 29.04.1952.

Source : SIKKIM : DARJEELING COMPENDIUM OF DOCUMENTS, Preserved in the St. Josephs college, Darjeeling.

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- (d) Before the Govt. of India Act of 1935 was passed, on 6th August, 1934, the Hillmen's Association of Darjeeling submitted under the signature of Late Sardar Bahadur S.W. Ladenia, its President, a memorial to Sir Samuel Hoare, the then Secretary of State for India demanding... "that the District of Darjeeling should be totally excluded from Bengal and an independent administrative unit created with an administrator at the head of the area, assisted by the executive in Council." Memorials making a demand of the same nature were submitted at that time and later on too by Rai Saheb Hari Prasad Pradhan on behalf of the people of the District of Darjeeling.

- (e) During the years of the Second Great War when Mr. G.R. Casey was the Governor of Bengal, a Memorial was submitted through the Governor of Bengal and the Viceroy of India to Lord Patrick Lawrence, the then Secretary of State for India, by Sri R.N. Sinha, the then President of the Hillmen's Association, and other prominent members of different communities in which they urged the Government to exclude Darjeeling from the Province of Bengal and to create it as a separate administrative unit under a Chief Commissioner.
- (f) The All India Gorkha League which was organised in 1943 took what it considered to be a more statesman-like view and demanded that the District of Darjeeling together with the Dooms section of Jalpaiguri be included in the province of Assam. This demand was made through Memorials submitted to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar B. Patel, the Congress High Command, the Cabinet Mission and the Constituent Assembly through the Sub-Committee. Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas.
- (g) In a Memorandum submitted at Gangtok to Hon'ble Dr. B.V. Keskar, Deputy Foreign Minister, the All India Gorkha League suggested, as an alternative to their demand for the inclusion of Darjeeling and Dooms in Assam, the creation of a separate province comprising of the district of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri and the States of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, which would form a viable unit within the Indian Union.
- (h) On the 30th October, 1949, leaders of different parties of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Sikkim and Darjeeling met in

# HIMALAYAN OBSERVER

VOICE OF THE HILL PEOPLE

REGD. NO. WADL 1 R.N. 19136/69  
VOL. 17 NO. 7 50 P. NOV. 6, 1982

## NEORA SCHEME TO BE EXECUTED

— Jyoti Basu

BY A REPORTER

Sri Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister arrived here on Friday eve at the Durpin Chelipad, where he was received by Govt. officials, distinguished members of the public including Z. Parishad Chairman, PR Pradhan, MLA: Subba, PL. Subba, RE. Ali, TP. Hishay, C.M. Missioner, Kalimpong Municipality and others.

Later speaking to Zilla Parishad Chairman, Sri PR Pradhan and others at the Circuit House, the CM said that the Centre had agreed to give green signal to the Neora water project for Kalimpong. He said he would explore all possibilities to expedite the scheme in consultation with the Army.

Among other issues discussed with the CM were representation to the Hill Dev. Council from Kalimpong, the need for developing tourist infrastructure in Kalimpong, unemployment among youths, house-building fund for hillmen, concessional finance and

## Police Arrest Foodgrain Dealers

By A Reporter

Kalimpong: The Police arrested 10 food grain dealers here on 19/10/82 under the Essential Commodities Act of 1955 and also under 406/408 IPC when the sub-divisional food supply controller Sri Pradip Kumar Bhattacharya and Sub-Divisional Police Officer Sri KPP Rao visited the firm's premises M/S Chhognal Sital on stock verification.

The shop is owned and managed by Ramnivas a rapeseed oil dealer. Cash memos and stock registers were checked and physical verification of the rapeseed oil stock was made. The stock shown was 200 tins of oil on 19/10/82. On stock checking only 150 full tins and 1 empty tin were found.

When the dealer was asked to explain the deficit he stated under Ramnivas Agarwal's signature. Agarwal produced a statement and gave an explanation that Ramnivas Agarwal had fled from the area to evade the law.

Later on 21/10/82, another 10 dealers on 19/10/82 were arrested for the same offence.



SAHITYA SAMMELAN BHAWAN  
(See Supplement inside)

exemption of excise duty and Sales Tax for establishing manufacturing units in Kalimpong, the need for draught relief programme in the hills, capital grant from Hill budget to schools to open +2 streams. \*

## ST. GEORGE'S ANNUAL SPORT

Pedong: On Oct 24, 1982, the annual sports of St. George's High School was held here. Sri PT Sherpa BDO II inaugurated the meet and Sri M Pradhan, manager, G. Ganga Plantation, gave away the prizes.

The School children put up an impressive drill display at the conclusion of the function. Hundreds of people from the surrounding area enjoyed a feat of sports event. The Late Tibetan Buddhist Cultural Institute, Kalimpong, provided a lively fare of Val and Song dance at the sports arena to the delight of the audience.

Sonam Gyatsno, a seniority of the school maintained his record in 1500 mtrs. race. In the event, George Tamang was the best sports man among boys and Chhima among girls.

was drawn in the name of one MR dealer Paradutt Sharma of Lingsay shop no. 51 who had the alleged intention to defraud the Govt. and make good the deficit in stock of oil. Hence the case was instituted against RN. Agarwal, Rabindra Agarwal and M/S Chhognal Sital for shortage of 24 sealed tins of Rapeseed oil and attempt to defraud the Govt.

In another case filed by Paradutt Sharma, the owner of Lingsay shop No. 51, it was stated that the dealer was arrested in the above raid was conducted at the house of the dealer. It is further alleged that Chhognal Agarwal of Chhognal Sital shop snatched away the log book from the complainant near the fire brigade with the alleged motive of manipulating the accounts. A receipt of the complainant Police Station in a case no. 445/379 against Chhognal Sital, Ingramal Agarwal. These are cases being investigated. Much interest has been expressed by the general public in these cases as they are food grain dealers of essential commodities and people living in the hill areas are often dependent on these commodities of sugar, oil and other essential commodities.

A cover page of 'HIMALAYAN OBSERVER', the voice of the Hill people showing the picture of

'SAHITYA SAMMELAN BHAWAN' at Darjeeling

Source : Dr. P. Nepal, Sr. Lecturer in political science, St. Joseph's college, Darjeeling.

“ভ্যাপনন্ পব্ৰং বনন্”



ত্রৈমাসিক পত্র

বঙ্গাব্দ ১৩২১

শ্রীকৃষ্ণচরণ সরকার

সহকারী ও প্রকাশক

কালগ্রাম, মানদহ

প্রতি বর্ষে তিনবার এক টাকা মাত্র।

Printed by A. BANERJEE at the BANERJEE PRINTING WORKS,  
34, Bechra Bazar Street, Calcutta.

The cover page of 'GAMBHIRA', a Bengali literary journal preserved in the Bharati Bhaban Pathagar, Chanchole, Malda.



# গৌড়দূত

## জাতীয় সাপ্তাহিক পত্রিকা

প্রধান সম্পাদক—শ্রীমানবিহারী মজুমদার।

সম্পাদক—শ্রীকৃষ্ণাচরণ মজুমদার।

সংস্কৃত মুদ্রা প্রতি সংখ্যা-০০ আনা।

বন্দে মাতরম  
সংস্কৃত মুদ্রা প্রতি সংখ্যা-০০ আনা।

মন্ত্রণ আগে মন্ত্রন না,

—ভাই, মন্ত্রন না!

সংস্কৃত মুদ্রা প্রতি সংখ্যা-০০ আনা।

A rare copy of the front page of 'GOURDOOT'; A National Bengali weekly newspaper of 1st May, 1947 collected from Sri Asim Sarkar, Deptt of History, Malda College.

গেড়েদুত

বীরসিংহ ধংগর  
কর্তব্য

বঙ্গীয় ল্যান্ডস পলিটিক্যাল (অর্থাৎ ভূমি)  
উপনির্বাচনে

কংগ্রেস মনোনীত প্রা

নির্বাচিত একমুঠ কলী

—কন্সনক-প্রজা—

বীরসিংহ ধংগরকে

(বীরসিংহ নামকে) ভোটে দিন।

স্বদেশের উন্নয়নের  
কাজে একেবারে উঠবে। ভাটসংসদ  
কেন্দ্রের পক্ষেই। —  
বীরসিংহ ধংগরকে  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —

—কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —

—কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —

—কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —

—কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —  
কংগ্রেস মনোনীত  
করুন। —

নির্বাচন মনে করুন। বেঙ্গল  
সামাদের 'মনে করুন।' এমত মনে  
—ভেদ্যর বর্ষ নাথিকসংসদ  
এক ডাল-ডাল লোকট এই মত  
পোষণ এবং প্রকাশ করিতেছেন।

যে ইংরেজেরা এই দেশের  
কাজ সব একটা যুগে করে  
দাঁড়িয়ে, তাহারা ডাল-ডাল এবং  
কর্তব্যকর্তব্যের বোঝাইবস্তু, এ  
কল্পনা তুল। —গরজে ১১১ সমস্ত  
পাঠেও ধান খায়, এই ব।

এখনই পালিখানামের  
পর বড় বড় মেথার যুগে  
ছেন,—"রাষ্ট্রীয় ব্যাপারে  
সৈন্য, ক্রিয়া উৎসাহ পশ্চিম  
দেশেরা চলিবেনা, তাহাতে  
একমাত্র রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রতিষ্ঠান,  
সহিত বক্ষা নিশ্চিন্তি চলিবে  
—অসম্ভব, সহজেই অসম্ভব।

—স্বদেশের পুষ্টি  
দেশ রাষ্ট্রীয় শক্তির  
স্বদেশ-সুখের লাভ এবং  
পরিবেশ।

সেরূপ হলে, স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশ এই সমস্তের  
সমস্ত তেমন-বৈষম্য তুলি  
ব-সিদ্ধি একই" স্বদেশের

সমস্তের বর্ষ এক  
শক্তিমতীর লোকেরা  
বিশ্বব্যব উৎসাহের  
কখন শৈব। জাভাইয়া  
মতে কন্যার সহিত  
স্বদেশ, কেবল ইংরেজ  
বাকি পরিবেশ  
স্বদেশের স্বদেশেরা

উচিত,—স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশ, 'স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশের স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশের স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশের স্বদেশের  
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—স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশের স্বদেশের  
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—স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশের স্বদেশের  
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স্বদেশের স্বদেশের  
স্বদেশের স্বদেশের

A page of 'GOURDOOT' highlighting the candidature of Birsa Dhangar in the Bengal Legislative council, collected from Sri Asim Sarkar, Dept of History, Malda College.



উত্তরবঙ্গ-

# সাহিত্য-সম্মিলন

পঞ্চম অধিবেশন

স্থান—গোহাটী কাদাখাধ্যায়

উপস্থিত ব্যক্তিগণের নাম

শ্রীহট্ট

- শ্রীকৃষ্ণ শরচ্চন্দ্র চৌধুরী বি, এ
- ” রত্নমীরঙ্গন দেব বি, এ
- ” রত্নেশচন্দ্র সাহিত্য-সরস্বতী
- ” হোগেন্দ্রকুমার গায়
- ” নবীনচন্দ্র গোস্বামী
- ” দ্বিজেন্দ্রচন্দ্র চৌধুরী
- ” বিনোদবিহারী গুপ্ত

কোচবিহার

মৌলবী অলানত উর. আহাম্মদ চৌধুরী

কোচবিহার স্টেট কলেজের বঙ্গ

মৌলবী মোহাম্মদ আহাম্মদ

A leaflet containing the list of dignitaries attended in the 'UTTAR BANGA SAHITYA SAMMILAN', 5th session, Gouhati.  
Source : Dr. A.G. Ghosh, Jalpaiguri.

## North Bengal Literary Conference

Sittings of the North Bengal Conference with date	Place	Name of Presidents	Name of Presidents of Reception Committee & Secretary
First Sitting Date 27th June, 1908	Rangpur	Akshayakumar Maitreya. B.L.	Pandit Bhawan: Prasanna Lahiri Kavya Vyakarantirtha. Surendra Chandra Roy Chowdhury
Second Sitting Date 31st Jan. & 1st Feb. 1909	Bogura	Mahamahopadhaya Panditraj Jadavesware Tarkaratna. Rangpur	Benimadha Chaki. B.L., Suresh Chandra Dasgupta. M.A. B.L.
Third Sitting Date 22nd & 23rd Jan 1910	Gouripur. Assam	Pandit Padmananth Vidyabinode Tatwa Saraswati. M.A. Sylhet	The Hon'ble Raja Probhat Chandra Barua. Dwijesh Chandra Chakraborty . M.A.B.L.
Fourth. Sitting Date 9th & 10th Jan. 1912	Malda	Professor Jadunath Sarker, M.A. P.R.S. Rajshahi	Krishna Lal Chowdhury. Zeminder, Radhes Chandra Seth, B.L.
Fifth. Sitting Date 6th & 7th April. 1913	Gauhati Assam	Sasadhar Roy, M.A., B.L. Pabna	Kali Charan Sen. B.L.
Sixth. Sitting Date 14th June 1913	Dinapore	The Hon'ble Justice Ashutosh Chowdhury B.A. (Contab) Bar - at law Pabna	Maharaja Girma Nari Roy Behar. Legendra Chandra Chakraborty M.A. B.L.

A copy of the schedule of North Bengal Literary Conference.  
(UTTARBANGA SAHITYA SAMMELAN).

Source : Dr. A.G. Ghosh, Jalpaiguri.

উত্তরবঙ্গ সাহিত্য - সম্মিলন

প্রথম অধিবেশন

স্থান - 'টাউনহল' গৃহ, রঙপুর

শনিবার ১৩ই আষাঢ় ; ১৩১৫ বঙ্গাব্দ, ২৭শে জুন ১৯০৮

সভাপতি - অক্ষয় কুমার মৈত্রেয়

যারা সহানুভূতি জানিয়ে পত্র দিয়েছিলেন :-

১। শ্রীযুক্ত রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

২। রাজা প্রভাত চন্দ্র বড়ুয়া বাহাদুর, গৌরীপুর (আসাম)

৩। রায় কালিকান্দাস দত্ত বাহাদুর, সি.আই.ই. (কোচবিহার)

৪। কুমার শরৎ কুমার রায়, এম.এ. দিঘাপতিয়া

উত্তরবঙ্গের প্রাচীন সাহিত্যিক শ্রীযুক্ত গিরীশচন্দ্র লাহিড়ী মহাশয়ের মৃত্যুতে শোক প্রস্তাব। নাটোর রাজের অধীনে চাকুরী করতেন।

বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ থেকে শ্রীযুক্ত বোমকেশ মুস্তাফী উপহিত ছিলেন।

উত্তরবঙ্গের প্রাচীন সাহিত্য ইতিহাস সম্পর্কে তথ্য সংগ্রহের ভার বিভিন্ন জেলায় যাদের দেওয়া হয়েছিল :-

মালদহ জেলা -

শ্রীযুক্ত পণ্ডিত রজনীকান্ত চক্রবর্তী

শ্রীযুক্ত রাধেশ চন্দ্র শেঠ, বি.এল.

শ্রীযুক্ত তারকেশ্বর ভট্টাচার্য, এম.এ.

জলপাইগুড়ি জেলা

শ্রীযুক্ত উমাগতি রায়, বি.এল. উকিল

শ্রীযুক্ত জগদীন্দ্রনব রায়কত

শ্রীযুক্ত গোবিন্দশঙ্কর সরকার, বি.এল.

কোচবিহার জেলা

শ্রীযুক্ত পণ্ডিত কোকিলহর বিদ্যাভূষণ, এম.এ.

শ্রীযুক্ত আমির উদ্দীন আহম্মদ, উকিল

শ্রীযুক্ত মহেন্দ্রনাথ অধিকারী, কান্দুনগো

উত্তরবঙ্গীয় সারসংগ্রহ ভবনের প্রতিষ্ঠার কথা প্রস্তাব ছিল

\* সংক্ষিপ্ত

List of the distinguish persons interested with the Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan and sent messages on the occassion of its first session in 1908.

Source : Dr. A.G. Ghosh, Jalpaiguri.

উত্তরবঙ্গ সাহিত্য সম্মিলন, চতুর্থ অধিবেশন।



মালদহ, পাতুয়া আদিরা সম্মিলনে কতিপয় বাহিন্দিক।

১৮৮৭

উত্তরবঙ্গ হিতৈষী

পত্রিকা

প্রকাশিত হলেটির বহির্গত, রংপুর থেকে। ১৩৮

দ্বিতীয় অধিবেশন প্রথম বাংলাদেশের সংবাদ - ১৯১২

(১৯১২-১৩) প্রথম বার - মনতস্কীর্ণ

১৯১২-১৩ বাংলা একাডেমী

A photocopy of the photograph of the persons attended in the Fourth Session of the Uttarabanga Sahitya Sammilan at Malda.

Source : Proceeding of the Uttarabanga Sahitya Sammelan. 1912.

১৯১৪ সালে রাজশাহীতে অনুষ্ঠিত উত্তরবঙ্গ সাহিত্য সম্মিলনে প্রমথ চৌধুরীর  
ভাষণের অংশ বিশেষ :

স্মৃতিভাষণ

মূল বক্তব্যের নাম: স্মৃতিভাষণ  
বিষয়বস্তু: বিহীনতা

আমাদের মনে প্রতিদিনের মতো প্রথম বিহীনতার মনোভাব বহুদিনের  
সাধক হয়।

অতএব অন্য কারণভাবেও অস্তিত্ব হ্রাসের জন্যও উত্তরবঙ্গের বিদ্যমানগোষ্ঠীর  
গোষ্ঠীপতি হইবার পোত সম্ভবত আমি সংকল্প করিতে পারিতাম না।

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কিন্তু এ ক্ষেত্রে আমার বিশেষ করিয়া একটি নিষ্কম্প কারণ আছে, বাহার দরুন  
আমি স্বেচ্ছায় এবং স্বচ্ছন্দচিত্তে এ আসন গ্রহণ করিতে স্বীকৃত হইয়াছি। এ  
স্থলে কোনোরূপ বিনয়ের অভিনয় করা আমার অভিপ্রায় নয়। অযোগ্য ব্যক্তিকে  
উচ্চপদস্থ করা যে তাহাকে অপদস্থ করিবার অতি সহজ উপায়, এ জ্ঞান আমার  
আছে। এ সত্ত্বেও আমি যে আপনাদের সম্মুখে সশরীরে উপস্থিত হইতে সাহসী  
হইয়াছি তাহার কারণ উত্তরবঙ্গের আহ্বান আমি উপেক্ষা করিতে পারি না।  
আমার দেশ বলিতে আমি প্রথমত এই প্রদেশই বুঝি। বারেন্দ্র সমাজের সহিত আমার  
নাড়ির যোগ আছে, বরেন্দ্রভূমির প্রতি আমার রক্তের টান আছে। উত্তরবঙ্গের প্রতি  
আমার অনুরাগের এক হিসাবে মৌলিক বলিলেও অত্যাধিক হয় না; কেননা এই  
দেশের মাটিতেই এ দেশ গঠিত। আমার বিশ্বাস, কলকাতার প্রতি মনুষ্যমাত্রেরই  
যে স্বাভাবিক টান আছে, সেই আদিম মনোভাবের অটল ভিত্তির উপরেই সভ্য  
মানবের স্বদেশবাসেন্দা প্রতিষ্ঠিত। অতীত-অন্যায়ের এই মিলনক্ষেত্রেই আমরা  
আমাদের অস্তিত্বের সহিত আমাদের পূর্বপুরুষদিগের আত্মার বান্ধব সম্পর্কের  
পরিচয় পাই। এই কাশ্মীরীভূমি ক্রমে প্রসারলাভ করিয়া স্বদেশপ্রীতিতে পরিণত  
হয়। সত্যতঃ যে দেশের যে ভূভাগ আমাদের পূর্বপুরুষদিগের স্বাতির সহিত  
একান্ত জড়িত, সে প্রদেশের প্রতি অস্তরের টান থাকে মানুষের পক্ষে নিতান্ত  
স্বাভাবিক। আমার পারিবারিক পূর্বকাহিনী এই বরেন্দ্রমণ্ডলের চতুঃসীমার  
ধর্মোই অবশ্যই সে সীমা লঙ্ঘন করিয়া আমার জাতীর পূর্বজন্মের স্বাতি,  
আধিকার সত্ত্বেও, অন্যভুক্তিও গিয়া পৌছায় না। সত্যতঃ বরেন্দ্রভূমির প্রতি  
আমার যে প্রাণের অনুরাগ আছে সে কথা আমি মুহূর্তকাল স্বীকার করিতে প্রস্তুত।  
এবং সেই মনোভাবের প্রীতিবশতই উত্তরবঙ্গ-সাহিত্যপরিষৎ যে পুরুষের আমায়  
মন্ত্রণে নমস্কার করিয়াছেন, আমি তাহা বিনা অপত্তির নতদৃষ্টিতে গ্রহণ করিয়াছি।

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এই প্রদেশে আমি পূর্বপুরুষ প্রচলিত সাহিত্যসভার সারকর্তা সমাজে না কেহ  
কথা বলি যেমন প্রদেশে করি। কাহারো কাহারো মত এই পূর্বপুরুষের  
পরিষদের পক্ষেই সাহিত্যসমাজের প্রাথমিকভাবে স্থাপিত করা হয়। অতীত  
যোগে আমরা প্রতি অনাচার হ্রাসের জন্যে পূর্বপুরুষের স্বাতি

Some portion of the Address of Pramatha Chowdhury, a front ranking literary  
personality of Bengali literature in the Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan,  
held at Rajshahi in 1914.

Source : Proceedings of the Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan. 1914.

রাজশাহী এসোসিয়েশন

# সাহিত্য পত্রিকা

বি. বন্দে আনী মিত্রা জন্মশতবর্ষ (১৮৭২-১৯৭২)



রাজশাহী এসোসিয়েশন

প্রতিষ্ঠা ১৮৭২

Cover page of 'SAHITYA PATRIKA' the mouth organ of 'Rajshahi Association', established - 1872  
Source : Rajshahi Association, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.



ADHIKARY SAMITI  
1st conference, 1909, at Gouripur, Goalpara (Assam).

APPENDIX - 6

Police Code, D. S. No. 1493

From,

W. M. C. Plowden, Esq.,  
DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE

Rangpur

Distt.

The 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1910.

To The Manager,

Banga Janani, Bhotmari,

Rangpur.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Paper Banga Janani No. 3 for the week 30th Baishak corresponding to the 15th of May 1910 has not yet been received in this office in order to request that a couple of copies of the issue may be sent as usual without delay.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

W. M. C. Plowden

Rangpur

A copy of the letter from district superintendent of police. Rangpur Dated May, 1910 to the Manager of Banga Janani. Bhotmari Rangpur  
Source : Janamat office. Jalpaiguri.

ব্যাংক

ত্রিযুক্ত রংপুর জেলার উত্তর সদর সার্কেলের সার্কেল-অফিসার  
মহোদয় সমীপে-

সংক্রান্ত

সংক্রান্ত

রংপুর জেলার অর্থাৎ বোম্বাই প্রদেশ হইতে প্রকাশিত "বঙ্গ জননী" নামক বাংলা ভাষায় প্রকাশিত পত্রিকাটির  
অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই  
কালের বাক্যই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই  
পত্রিকা নামে প্রকাশিত হইবে।

বিনীত প্রার্থনা এই যে— মহোদয় অধিকাংশ বিতরণ পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই  
নিমিত্ত মহোদয় অধিকাংশ বিতরণ পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই  
বিনয় বোধে মহোদয় অধিকাংশ বিতরণ পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই উক্ত পত্রিকাটির অধিকাংশ অংশই  
প্রার্থনা হয়। শ্রদ্ধা সহকারে।

স্বাক্ষর  
স্বাক্ষর  
স্বাক্ষর

স্বাক্ষর

স্বাক্ষর

স্বাক্ষর

A copy of the letter from the editor of 'BANGA JANANI', Bhotmari, Rangpur, dated 1st March, 1933  
to the circle officer, Uttar Sadar Circle, Rangpur.  
Source : Dr. A. G. Ghosh, Jalpaiguri.



দৈনিক বসুমতী

## উত্তরবঙ্গে ভয়াবহ খাদ্য সঙ্কট

(৯ই মার্চ, ১৯৬৫)

মার্চ মাস সবে শুরু হইয়াছে—ইহার মধ্যেই উত্তরবঙ্গের বিশেষ করিয়া জলপাইগুড়ি ও কুচবিহার জেলার অধিকাংশ স্থান হইতে উদ্বেগজনক খাদ্য সঙ্কটের সংবাদ আসিয়া পৌঁছিতেছে। বিরোধী পক্ষ এবং কংগ্রেস দলের উত্তরবঙ্গের অধিকাংশ জন-প্রতিনিধিই এই সংবাদের সমর্থন করেন।

গত সপ্তাহের প্রথম দিকে শ্রীননী ভট্টাচার্য্য আশিপুরামুন্সীরের তথা সমগ্র জেলার খাদ্যসঙ্কটের কথা বিধানসভায় উত্থাপন করিয়াছিলেন। সোমবারও বিধানসভায় ঐ প্রসঙ্গ উত্থাপন করিয়া শ্রীভট্টাচার্য্য ময়নাগুড়িতে বিকোডকারীদের উপর গুলী চালনার কথা উল্লেখ করেন। কম্যুনিষ্ট ব্লকের শ্রীর্শনোরঞ্জন রায় এবং ফরোয়ার্ড ব্লকের শ্রীকমল গুহ তাঁহাকে সমর্থন করেন। শ্রীভট্টাচার্য্য অভিযোগ করেন, কেথাও সরকার নির্দিষ্ট পরে চাউল পাওয়া যায় না। খুচরা দোকানদারদের অভিযোগ—বাবসায়ীরা বেশী দর পাইয়া কম দামের রসিদ দেয়। শ্রীভট্টাচার্য্য অবিলম্বে রেশন ব্যবস্থা চালু করিয়া ত্যাগশিক রেশনের দোকানে চাউল ও আটা পাওয়া যায় না বলিয়া অভিযোগ করেন।

### দ্রুত খাদ্যসত্তার প্রেরণের সিদ্ধান্ত

বিরোধী সদস্যদের উদ্বেগজনক প্রশ্নের কোন উত্তর বিধানসভায় দেওয়া না হইলেও বিশ্বস্ত সূত্রে জানা গিয়াছে, সোমবার মন্ত্রিসভায় উত্তরবঙ্গের খাদ্যসঙ্কট সম্পর্কে আলোচনার পর উত্তরবঙ্গে দ্রুত খাদ্যসত্তার প্রেরণের সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হইয়াছে। স্থির হইয়াছে, সম্ভ্রতি যে ৫ লক্ষ মার্কিন গম আসিয়াছে তাহা সরকারি উত্তরবঙ্গে পাঠান হইবে। চাউল পাঠানর সম্পর্কেও সিদ্ধান্ত গৃহীত হইয়াছে।

সোমবার মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে রাজ্যের বাসীর অবস্থা আলোচিত হয়। উত্তরবঙ্গ দাতীত অন্য সব জায়গার অবস্থা ভাল।

# যুবতরঙ্গ

আয়োজিত

উত্তরবঙ্গ সাহিত্য সম্মেলন

কার্যালয় : হেমকুমাৰী (হলদিবাড়ী) কোচবিহার । পঃ ৬০।



স্থান—

কুষ্মাণ্ডক জুনিয়র বেসিক স্কুল

হলদিবাড়ী — কোচবিহার

তারিখ — ১৮ই জুন রবিবার, ১৯৯৫

A leaflet announcing the news of a recent Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan, organised by YUVATARANGA, Coochbehar, 1995.

Source: Sri Joan De Tufanganj, Coochbehar

দৈনিক বসুমতী, ১৫ সেপ্টেম্বর, ১৯৯৬ [সাত]

২৩ সেপ্টেম্বর

উত্তরবঙ্গ

বন্ধের ডাক

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা : আগামি ২৩ সেপ্টেম্বর ১২ ঘণ্টার জন্য উত্তরবঙ্গ বন্ধের ডাক দিল সি পি আই (এম এল)। শনিবার এক সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে কমিটির জেলা সম্পাদক শ্রীধর ঘুখার্জি এ খবর দেন। তিনি বলেন, উত্তরবঙ্গের সার্বিক উন্নয়নের স্বার্থে ৭ দফা দাবির ভিত্তিতে এই বন্ধ ডাকা হয়েছে। তিনি রাজ্য সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ করে বলেন, উত্তরবঙ্গের উন্নয়নের নামে শুধু সভা-সমিতি ও মিছিলই হয়েছে বা হচ্ছে। গোর্খাল্যান্ডের দাবি সম্পর্কে মন্তব্য করতে গিয়ে তিনি বলেন, পাহাড়ের ঘানুষের পৃথক রাজ্যের দাবিকে আমরা এর আগেও সমর্থন জানিয়েছি, আজও সমর্থন করি। সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে দলের জেলা সদস্য পাণ্ডুর রাও-ও উপস্থিত ছিলেন।

A news of North Bengal Bandh, demanding a total development of this region.

DAINIK BASUMATI, 15th September, 1996.

Source : DAINIK BASUMATI, Calcutta.

# The Telegraph

MONDAY 8 JUNE 1998 VOL. XVI NO. 332

METROPOLITAN

## North Bengal language bandh called

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Alipurduar, June 7: The All Kamtapur Students' Union has called a 24-hour north Bengal bandh on June 22 to protest the non-implementation of its 13-point charter of demands, which includes the demand for recognition of the Kamtapuri language.

AKU activists organised several campaign rallies in Siliguri subdivision to mobilise public support for the bandh-call.

The language issue has gathered fresh momentum with the recent publication of the *Bhagavad Gita* in Kamtapuri.

Also in the pipeline are a Kamtapuri dictionary and a translation of the 16th century Hindu classic in verse, *Chandi*. A Kamtapuri grammar book has already been published by a retired headmaster from Toofanguri.

At least 600 Kamtapur supporters attended a function to mark the Buddha Purnima at Shibpurandir, near North Bengal University, the nerve-centre of the movement.

At the function, Kamtapur activists reportedly resolved to file an immediate memorandum to be NBU vice-chancellor demanding recognition of the language.

The translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* in Kamtapuri is appreciated by north Bengal PM leaders as well as a section of intellectuals, including NBU vice-

chancellor. Kanju-gopal Mukherjee, has encouraged those fighting for the cause.

Rajbanshi hardliners, under the Kamtapur People's Party banner, demanding a separate Kamtapur state, for the first time won a few gram panchayat seats in the polls. The victory of another Rajbanshi party, the Uttarkhand Dal has also helped the cause.

Concerned over the development on Kamtapuri language, the Left Front government has convened a three-day long cross-cultural meeting at Siliguri's Dinabandhu Mancha on June 26, June 27 and June 28 to cope with this ethno-political problem in north Bengal. State Information and cultural minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, is reportedly keen on attending it.

Shyamal Sengupta, joint director of the information and cultural department, arrived in Siliguri on Tuesday at Bhattacharya's emissary to chalk out programmes for the meeting.

Samajwadi Post: Vijay Upadhyay, chief of Samajwadi Party's Calcutta-Howrah Provincial Committee, has been made a permanent invitee for the party's national executive.

Samajwadi Party all-India general secretary and state minister for Fisheries Kiranmoy Nanda has confirmed this in a letter to Upadhyay.

A news by 'The Telegraph' of 8th June, 1998, announcing North Bengal language bandh  
Source : The Telegraph, Calcutta.

# || উত্তরাঞ্চল ভাষাকৃষ্টি সেমিনার ||

স্থান :- বিধান মঞ্চ, রায়গঞ্জ, উত্তর দিনাজপুর  
তারিখ :- ২১শে মার্চ (৬ই চৈত্র) রবিবার, ১৯৬১ খ্রিঃ

## সাফল্যমণ্ডিত করার আবেদন

শ্রদ্ধ বন্ধুগণ,

নানা ভাষাকৃষ্টির সমন্বয়ে ভারত একটি বৈচিত্র পূর্ণ দেশ। ভাষার ভিত্তি  
ভারত সংস্কৃতির বিধ - বিধান, অধিকাংশ ভাষাকৃষ্টিগুলিরই উৎস  
হয় নাই। রাষ্ট্রীয় পূরণোত্তর অভাবে বহু ভাষাকৃষ্টি বিধেব করে পিছিয়ে  
পড়া জনগোষ্ঠীর ভাষাকৃষ্টি গুলি অবলুপ্ত হতে চলেছে। ভাষা ও সংস্কৃতির  
সংক্রান্ত সমস্যার সমাধানের উদ্দেশ্যে বিশাল একটি জনগোষ্ঠী উপস্থিত হলে  
শান্ত হলে আসবে। উত্তরাঞ্চল উন্নয়ন মানে এই অঞ্চলের সংস্কৃতির উন্নয়নের  
উন্নয়ন বা বিকাশকে বোঝায়। কোন জনগোষ্ঠীর সার্বিক উন্নয়ন করতে  
হলে, সেই জনগোষ্ঠীর ভাষা ও সংস্কৃতির উন্নয়ন একান্ত অপরিহার্য।  
ভাষার বিকাশ ভাষাকৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে মৌলিক অধিকারের অধিকার পড়ে। এবং  
এই মাথে কোন জনগোষ্ঠীর প্রতিষ্ঠা ও সম্মান অধিকার আছে।

উত্তর পূর্বাঞ্চলের এক বিশাল ভৌগোলিক এলাকার "কামতাপুরি" ভাষা-  
গোষ্ঠী মানুষের বাস। হিন্দু-মুসলমান, খৃষ্টিয়ান, বৌদ্ধধর্মী, কোচ, খেন - নানা  
পরিচয়ে বিভক্ত, এই জনগোষ্ঠীর আত্মিকতা বা আত্মপরিচয় অত্যন্ত সংকটের  
স্থখে। এই বিশাল জনগোষ্ঠীর ভাষা ও সংস্কৃতির বিকাশ নিয়ে নানা বিভক্ত  
সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। এই অসংগত ও বিভক্তগুলিকে বহু বৎসর যুগে নানা উন্নয়ন  
বিবিধতা বা বৈচিত্র্যপূর্ণ ভারতীয় সমাজের সার্বিক উন্নয়নের দৃষ্টি-  
কোণে বিচার করা প্রয়োজন।

উপবিভক্ত দৃষ্টিকোণে আগামী ২১শে মার্চ রায়গঞ্জ বিধান মঞ্চে উত্তরাঞ্চলের  
ভাষাকৃষ্টি সহ "উত্তর পূর্বাঞ্চলের জনগোষ্ঠীর ভাষা ও সংস্কৃতির বিকাশ"  
বিষয়ে এক আলোচনা চক্র অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। এই আলোচনা চক্রে বিভিন্ন  
বাংলাদেশি ও ভারতীয়রা যাক্ষিপণ বক্তৃতা রাখবেন। এই অধ্যয়নকে সফল  
করার জন্য সকল দেশীয় মানুষের উপস্থিতি ও সহযোগিতা কামনা করি।

ভাষা উন্নয়ন আন্দোলন কমিটির

সভাপতি

শ্রী চিত্ত বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

সহসভাপতি

উত্তরাঞ্চল ভাষা সৃষ্টি উন্নয়ন কমিটি  
উত্তর দিনাজপুর।



SKETCH MAP OF NORTH BENGAL IN UNDIVIDED BENGAL (BEFORE 1947). DENOTING SOME AREAS OF STUDY.



SKETCH MAP OF PRESENT NORTH BENGAL .  
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Desh (Congress Satabarsha Sankhya)

Dinajpur Patrika

Itihas Anusandhan

Itihasa

Kiratbhumi

Koch Behar Darpan

Korak Sahitya Patrika

Kshatriya

Lokosruti

Madhuparni

Maitrayani

Mansai

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Paricarika

Paschimbanga

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2. Sri Kamaksha Prasad Chakraborty, Race Course, Jalpaiguri, Vice President  
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3. Sri Jiban Dey, Ex-Member of the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal  
(C.P.I.), Tufanganj, Cooch Behar, Age 85.
4. Sri Pratul Jha, A Free Lancer and Gandhite Social Worker, Malda, Age 82.

5. Sri Radha Mohan Mahanta, A freedom fighter and Editor of Atrayee, Balurghat, South Dinajpur, Age 82.
6. Late Nripen Basu, A free Lancer and C. P. I. Activist, Siliguri, Darjeeling, Age 76.
7. Sri Ambar Pradhan, Correspondent of Amrita Bazar Patrika, Karseong, Darjeeling, Age 72.