

CHAPTER - II

THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT IN
NORTHERN BENGAL

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We have already discussed how a section of the people in Northern Bengal came in contact with the foreigners and also availed themselves of the opportunities provided by the introduction of English system of education and the development of the means of communication in the late nineteenth century.

All these factors gave rise to a sort of national consciousness which was manifest in the events like the controversy over the continuation of the old Malda Municipality, the formation of the Malda Association and the publication of the newspaper titled Gourdut.

Thus in certain areas of Northern Bengal the stage was set for further and steady growth of national consciousness. The incipient growth of national awakening was given a fillip by the Swadeshi Movement that followed the partition of Bengal in 1905.

Its however, not within our purview to analyse in details the chain of events that led to the historic partition. What we are concerned with is the tremendous proliferation of the Swadeshi Movement in some Sub-regions of Northern Bengal during the Post-partition period.

The idea that the size of the vast Bengal Presidency should be reduced in order to ensure better administration was originated after the devastating Orissa famine of 1866¹. It was suggested first by Sir Stafford Northcote², the secretary of states for India.

1. Sarkar Sumit, The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1905-08, p. 9, New Delhi, 1973.

2. Ibid.

Thereafter in 1874 Assam was made a Chief commissioner's province that was to include Sylhet, a district in which the Bengali speaking people were in a majority.³ In course of a few more years some other proposals came which were aimed at further reduction of the area of this presidency.

But the partition of Bengal Scheme was decidedly given a definite and clearcut shape by Herbert Hope Risely, the secretary to the Government of India, Home Department and Andrew Fraser⁴ who was at that time the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces. Their belief that the separation of Eastern Bengal from the rest of the presidency would be convenient from the point of view of administration⁵ carried considerable importance. However, Lord Curson on administrative grounds advocated the partition scheme⁶ and is held ultimately responsible for the partition of the province.*

From the very beginning the partition scheme had to face opposition from several corners.

Even the European owned Newspapers like the Englishman regarded the partition scheme as an undesirable one.⁷ The Tribune called the

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid, p. 10.

5. Ibid, p. 12.

6. Ghosh, K.C., Jagaran O Bisphoran, Vol-I, p. 74, Calcutta, 1972.

7. The Englishman, December 23, 1903.

* Behind the administrative necessity which was given out as a reason for partition there might have been lurking the motive of reducing the importance of Bengal which was the nursery of Indian nationalism.

Scheme harmful,⁸ while the Bengali Newspaper 'Charumihir' called it beneficial rather ironically, which would have the effect of uniting all classes of people whose interests would be evenly jeopardised under the baneful partition scheme.⁹

The nationalists of Bengal vociferously resented the partition scheme. But Lord Curson's administration did not respond to the sentimental outburst. Soon the agitation was set off and the province of Bengal seethed with revolutionary ferment. The people of Calcutta as well as the districts protested against the partition scheme. Nationalists in the mufassil districts arranged for meetings in which leaders from Calcutta spoke on nationalistic subjects.¹⁰ In the districts of Malda and Jalpaiguri also such meetings¹¹ were held which had definitely influenced public opinion to a considerable extent as was evident in the proliferation of the movement and peoples' participation in it in the subsequent days.

/ In 1905 the first occasion of burning of foreign clothes took place at Dinbasar area of Jalpaiguri town.¹² To disperse the mob the local police resorted to Lathi charge and arrested some people.¹³ Durgadas Chakraborty, Adyanath Misra and Ananda Biswas were among

8. The Tribune, January 16, 1904.

9. Charumihir, January 12, 1904.

10. Mukherjee, Haridas, Benoy Sarkarer Baithake, p. 312, Calcutta, vol II 1942; Palit Haridas, Maldaher Radheshchandra, p. 14, Calcutta, 1318 P.S.

11. Sengupta, J.O., West Bengal District Gazetters, Malda, p. 61, Calcutta, 1969.

12. De, Barun et al., West Bengal District Gazetters, Jalpaiguri, p. 64, Calcutta, 1981.

13. Ibid .

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the arrested.¹⁴ Two weeks after when they were released a group of youngmen led by Jogesh Chandra Ghosh came to receive them at the Jailgate.¹⁵ Thus was reflected the determination of a section of the people to uphold the banner of Swadeshi.

In Darjeeling also the movement advanced to a degree. It was reported in the Amritabasar Patrika of August 1, 1906 that the 'Swadeshi Spirit' had 'penetrated into the hearts of the Nepalese of the remote interior'. A young enthusiast named Khagendranath Roy had opened a co-operative store¹⁶ in which were sold indigenous goods. In the same report the spread of the movement to different tea estates was attributed to Roy's enterprise without much detailing.

An important aspect of the movement was the disrespect shown by the people toward state machinery as well as high officials. The Lt. Governor of the newly formed province of Eastern Bengal and Assam had to experience dismal reception during his visit to Northern Bengal. When Sir Bampfylde Fuller arrived at Malda only a few hundred ordinary people collected at the landing Ghat.¹⁷ The mob was mostly composed of Muslims¹⁸, a section of which community believed that the partition of Bengal as well as the creation of the new province would be beneficial to them.¹⁹

14. Ibid.

15. Sanyal, Mukulesh, 'Swadhinata Andolane Jalpaiguri', (Article in) Jalpaiguri District Centenary Souvenir, p. 322.

16. The Amritabasar Patrika, August 1, 1906.

17. The Amritabasar Patrika, July 21, 1906.

18. Ibid.

19. Sarkar, Sumit, Modern India (1885-1947), p. 121, New Delhi, 1984.

The attitude of the local gentry towards Sir Bamfylde's visit was all the more pronounced when a 'curious piece of document' not in the form of an address and devoid of 'any expression of welcome' was presented to him by the Chairman of the Englishbasar Municipality.²⁰ The controversial document, mentioned some problems faced by the municipality and the people.²¹ Sir Bamfylde however, received it as an address and it was given out to the public as an address presented in the name of the Municipal Commissioners.²²

The fact that at English bazar a section of the local gentry was altogether averse to Sir Bamfylde Fuller's visit was once again expressed in their disapproval of the arrangements made by the Head Master of Malda Zilla School to please the Lt. Governor.^{23*}

Thus nationalist sentiments ran very high during the years following the partition of Bengal. The spirit of nationalism was generated through Social work, physical culture and miscellaneous other activities. The Malda Association formed earlier by the pioneer nationalist of Malda Radheshchandra Seth began to raise a fund²⁴ for relieving the famine stricken people of Faridpur and Barisal districts. The local students also joined such activities with great zeal.²⁵ At Jalpaiguri the members of the Raikut club, an organisation devoted to Social service, physical culture etc.,

20. The Amritabasar Patrika, August 7, 1906

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid, July 24, 1906.

24. Ibid, July 7, 1906.

25. Ibid.

* Elaborate preparations were made by the school authorities to receive the Lt. Governor on the occasion of his visit to the school.

observed the first day of August 1906 as the National College day.²⁶ The club drew up a colourful programme²⁷ for the day. It included a friendly football match with the Local Shivaji Club, races, sword fencing etc., Munshi Januraddin Ahmed, the field captain of the Club displayed dextrous feats of fencing. There was great enthusiasm of the people who shouted 'Bande Mataram' when the programme came to a close.²⁸

Such was the environment when a section of the educated people in Northern Bengal held promotion of Swadeshi as the prime objective of their life. Already in 1906 nationalists like Prankrishna Bhaduri of Malda who detested British education had sent their children to national school of Calcutta. Jatindra Krishna, son of Pran Krishna Bhaduri topped the list of successful candidates in the seventh standard examination while Amarendra Krishna, a brother of Jatindra Krishna stood third in the fifth standard examination in the same year.²⁹ Success of these two students of a backward region presumably encouraged many others to emulate their example.

The native state of Coochbehar also was hit by the Swadeshi wave. Kalimohun Ghosh, a student of the Victoria College, left his college and participated in the programme of the Anti-circular society which campaigned in favour of boycott of British education.³⁰

26. Ibid, August 6, 1906.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid, August 7, 1906.

30. Roychoudhury, J.C., letter to Editor Desh, June 15, 1985.

In this way however, was prepared the background of National Education which may be regarded as the noblest fruit of Swadeshi in Northern Bengal. 

NATIONAL EDUCATION

The passing of the Indian Universities Act on March 21, 1904 was regarded by the nationalists of Bengal as a reactionary measure that would render higher education very costly thereby making it impossible for many brilliant Indian students to receive higher education.³¹ The element of enhanced official control, it was thought, would reduce the influence of Indians in the sphere of education.³² Furthermore, the enhancement of the qualifying marks in English from 33 to 37 percent for the entrance examination as envisaged by the act would adversely affect the students.³³ It was apprehended that there would be significant reduction in the percentage of success in the Entrance Examination which will have the effect of depleting the colleges where there would only be a few pupils, seeking admission.³⁴ It was also feared that this would obviously lead to the closure of many private colleges.³⁵

The nationalist sentiments shocked by the passing of Indian Universities Act was hurt by the formal proclamation of partition on

31. Mukherjee, H. and U, The Origins of the National Education Movement, p. 15, Calcutta, 1957.

32. Ibid, p. 16.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid, p. 17.

35. Ibid.

September 1, 1905. On October 16, the province of Bengal was partitioned.

The injured sentiments had already found expression in the formal declaration of the boycott and Swadeshi movement in an overcrowded meeting held in the Town Hall of Calcutta under the presidency of Manindra Chandra Nandy.³⁶ The date of this fateful event was August 7, 1905.

Meanwhile the idea of Swadeshi and boycott occupied the minds of some brilliant youngmen who were very much under the direct influence of Satischandra Mukherjee, one of the greatest Leaders of the movement.³⁷ These youngmen were Rabindranarayan Ghosh, the best M.A. candidate of the year, Nripendra Chandra Banerjee, another brilliant MA Student, Radhakumud Mukherjee, a candidate for the PRS examination and Benoy Kumar Sarkar of Malda, who topped the list of successful candidates in the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University in 1901 appearing from the Malda Zilla School and got the Ishan Scholarship at the B.A. Examination studying in the Presidency College of Calcutta.³⁸ Radhakumud, Rabindra Narayan and Benoy Kumar were members of the Dawn Society of which Satischandra was the founder and lived together with Satischandra and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, the editor of the nationalist periodical 'Sandhya.'³⁹

36. Ibid.

37. Banerjee, N.C., At the Crossroads, p. 55, Calcutta 1974.

38. Ibid, Mukherjee, H and U, p. 19 ff; Pal, P., Mahamanishi Benoy Kumar Sarkar, p. 8, Calcutta, 1971.

39. Mukherjee H., Benoy Sarkar's Baithake, Vol-I, p. 285, Calcutta 1942.

The youngmen mentioned above started campaigning in favour of a boycott of the MA and PRS examinations to be held in November-December 1905.⁴⁰ In the meanwhile numerous meetings of the people protested against the partition and anti-partition propaganda continued with full vigour.

In such a situation came the Carlyle circular which was published in various newspapers including the nationalist daily Amritabasar Patrika under the caption 'extra ordinary Official Circular'.⁴¹ The circular urged the School and College authorities to dissuade the students from participating in political activities pertaining to the Swadeshi Movement. If the school and college authorities failed to comply with, the circular threatened to forfeit the Grants-in-Aid they received and also the privilege enjoyed by the students of competing for scholarships. It was also stated that if a school or college authority disobeyed the circular the University may be asked to disaffiliate the institution concerned.⁴² A copy of this circular was served to each school and college by the district Magistrates.⁴³

There was sharp reaction against the circular. The Amritabasa Patrika voiced the nationalist sentiment branding it as 'Anti-Swadeshi circular'.⁴⁴

40. Banerjee, N.C., OP. Cit., p. 58.

41. The Amritabasar Patrika, October 23, 1905.

42. Ibid.

43. Mukherjee, H and U, OP. Cit., p. 23.

44. The Amritabasar Patrika, October 25-26, 1905.

In 1905 the District Magistrate of Malda also issued a circular⁴⁵ which prohibited the students from taking part in political activities. But the circular failed to achieve desired results. Sir Bampfylde Fuller during his visit to Malda delivered a speech with a view to courting a section of the people. But his attempt largely proved to be abortive since the Hindus and the Muslims alike agitated against the partition and a number of anti-partition meetings were presided over by the eminent nationalist leader of Malda Moulvi Nur Bux. Large number of Muslims participated in these anti-partition meetings.⁴⁶

Meanwhile the students of Rangpur Zilla School following the instance of different educational institutions of Calcutta participated in public meetings defying a circular⁴⁷ issued by the Head master of their school on October 31, 1905 which wanted their dissociation from political activities relating to the boycott and Swadeshi Movement. The students of Rangpur Zilla School who were joined in their activities by the students of the local technical school⁴⁸ were fined Rs. 5/- each and not allowed to attend classes until the fines were paid.⁴⁹ As a result the guardians of the students were so incensed that they refused to pay their fines and also did not allow the students to attend their schools any longer.⁵⁰

45. Sengupta, J.C., OP. Cit., p. 61.

46. Ibid, Kabiraj Narahari, Swadhinatar Sangrame Bangla, p. 174, Calcutta, 1961.

47. Mukherjee, H and U, OP. Cit., p. 27.

48. Ibid, p. 28.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid, p. 28 ff.

So serious was their commitment that most of the students of the Zilla School and all the students of the technical school dropped out.⁵¹

Under such circumstances the citizens of Rangpur organised a conference⁵² in which decisions were taken to establish the Rangpur National School which came into being on November 8, 1905.⁵³ At the first phase the local pleaders volunteered to work as teachers of the school.⁵⁴ Thus was born the first National School of Bengal.

The District of Rangpur, now in Bangladesh is adjacent to our area of study. Because of this geographical proximity, the developments at Rangpur presumably influenced the course of events at Jalpaiguri and Malda.

However, in Calcutta on November 16 a conference⁵⁵ was held which was attended by stalwarts like Satischandra Mukherjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Gooroodas Banerjee, Subodh Chandra Mallick, Brajendranath Seal, Motilal Ghosh, Ramendrasundar Trivedi, Chittaranjan Das, Bhupendranath Basu, Surendranath Banerjee, Bepin Chandra Pal, Ashutosh Choudhury, Abdul Rasul etc. The conference resolved to establish a National Council of Education which was to

51. Ibid.

52. Banerjee, N.C., OP. Cit., p. 58; Mukherjee H and U, OP. Cit., p. 30.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid, p. 37.

organise Literary, Scientific and technical education on national lines.⁵⁶ Eventually on March 11, 1906 the National Council of Education came into existence and on August 15, 1906. The Bengal National College was formally inaugurated.⁵⁷

In Northern Bengal the movement advanced a step forward when in May 1907 a national school was started at Jalpaiguri.⁵⁸ Although run by a set of paid teachers⁵⁹ the school did not have a very bright prospect. The nationalist daily Amritabazar Patrika while reporting the foundation of the National School at Jalpaiguri pointed out the necessity of 'sound financial footing' without which the Jalpaiguri National School would not be able to continue for a long time and cope with the high standard of education that was contemplated by the National Council of Education.⁶⁰

In Malda on June 6, 1907 the Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti⁶¹ was started. Initially this organisation was not affiliated to the National Council of Education founded in Calcutta on March 11, 1906. But the Samiti in Malda despite its independent growth followed the principles laid down by the N.C.E., upholding the same spirit and fervour of national consciousness.⁶²

The elected District Council of Education comprising 45 members included men of importance from villages and towns. An executive

56. Ibid.

57. Sarkar, Sumit, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, p. 167, New Delhi, 1973.

58. *The Amritabazar Patrika*, June 1, 1907.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Dasgupta, B.N., 'The National Schools of Benoy Sarkar' (Article in) Banerjee, D. (ed), *Social and Economic Ideas of Benoy Sarkar* p. 199, Calcutta, 1940.

committee was also elected from among the members of the council which was to look after the general administration. The President and Secretary were honorary office bearers and the latter was in control of the financial infrastructure of the organisation including the fund-raising activities.⁶³ Prankrishna Bhaduri and Bepin Behari Ghosh were respectively the President and the Secretary of the organisation while both Radheshchandra Seth and Moulvi Md. Nur Bux served as Vice-Presidents.⁶⁴

From the very beginning the Samiti enlisted the support of the people of higher independent professions. Prankrishna, Bepin Behari, Radheshchandra and Nur Bux were all legal practitioners.

We should not fail to mention that the Malda Samiti was a genuinely representative body which included the representatives of the municipalities of the district and men from rural areas as well.⁶⁵ This gave the organisation a democratic character which helped it securing peoples' support for its projects.

The Samiti at Malda since its inception had emphasised the importance of mass education⁶⁶ in which point it actually differed, rather advanced a step further from the National Council of Education, the latter being devoted to the cause of secondary and higher education.⁶⁷ The establishment of a number of primary

63. Ibid, Sarkar Benoy Kumar, 'The National Council of Education and the National School at Malda in Bengal', (Article in) The Dawn and Dawn Society's Magazine, August 1907, Calcutta.

64. Mukherjee, H. & U, OP. Cit., p. 122.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid, p. 124.

67. Ibid; Gambhira, (Ed.), K. Sarkar, p. 53, Asada, 1321 B.S. Vol-I, No. 2.

schools and the night schools of Kutubpur, Dharampur, Kaligram etc.⁶⁸ may be referred to as concrete examples of the Samiti's endeavour to spread education among the masses of people.

Within a short period the District council of Education succeeded in establishing a number of schools scattered over a large area which included regions even beyond the boundaries of the district. The schools at Sanihatī in the district of Dacca were founded by Benoy Kumar Sarkar and placed under the District Council of Education, Malda.⁶⁹

The following table* shows the location of the schools as well as their distance from the Headquarters, status of each school, their respective years of establishment and roll strengths as on 31.12.12.

68. Ibid, Pousha, 1321 B.S., p. 221, Vol-I, No. 5.

69. Mukherjee, H & U, OP. Cit., p. 123.

* The table has been prepared on the basis of the data provided by the reports of Kaligram National School for 1315, 1316 and 1317 B.S. and the report of the District Council of Education 1912.

Table I

Location	Status/ Standard	Year of Estab- lishment	Roll Stre- ngth	Distance from H.Q.
Malda		1907	120	nil
Malda (Kutubpur)	Night School	1908	20	nil
Kaligram		1908	125	64 k.m. (North)
Kaligram	Girls' School	1908	40	"
Kaligram ⁺	Night School	1910	50/60	"
Dharampur		1908	158	11 k.m. (South)
Dharampur	Girls' School	1912	8	"
Dharampur	Night School	1912	15	"
Paranpur		1908	80	29 k.m. (North/West)
Jadupur		1908	50	19 k.m. (West)
Narottampur		1909	70	24 k.m. (South/West)
Malatipur		1908	45	56 k.m. (North)
Sanihati		1907-08	70	Not Available
Sanihati	Girls' School	N.A	27	Not Available

⁺The exact year of foundation of the night school is not available in the Reports of Kaligram National School. It also did not survive till the end of 1912.

Financial Organisation⁷⁰

The organisers in Malda District were well aware of the necessity of a sound financial footing and drew up an elaborate plan to ensure it. There were for this purpose five 'items of collection' as Benoy Kumar Sarkar describes. The items were as follows :

(a) Contribution of gentlemen of higher independent professions (a day's income per mensem was to be contributed by an individual).

(b) Contribution of tradesmen. This item included contributions from shopkeepers, silk and cloth merchants gold smiths and brass smiths and even the money lenders and brokers. Some of the shopkeepers had gone to the extent of imposing an Iswar Vritti or 'gifts to God' on their wholesale purchases which was to be increased keeping pace with higher amount of purchases by any individual shopkeeper who had volunteered to join the league of Tradesmen eager to contribute to the Samiti's fund.

(c) Contribution of students from time to time there being no minimum or maximum limit imposed on it. The students had volunteered to give up luxuries and content themselves with the minimum thereby saving regularly for the cause of the fund.

70. Sarkar, Benoy Kumar, The National Council of Educations and and the National School at Malda - in Bengal (Article in) Bangsvar Dass (Ed.) Social and Economic Ideas of Benoy Sarkar, p. 464 ff. Calcutta, 1940.

(d) Contribution of people in the form of 'Musti-bhiksha' or 'Alms in handfuls'. The organisers, active in various wards of the town of English bazar, where the first national school was set up under the aegis of the District council of Education, requested the inhabitants to keep an earthen pot in every house-hold where they would deposit a small amount of rice abstracted from the amount taken to be cooked every time. On every earthen pot distributed by the organisers the slogan 'Bande Mataram' was prominently written. All these made the process of collection easy and also it did not prove to be burdensome to individual contributors since the amount kept apart from every day's quota was very small.

This item of collection was very important as has been referred to in the annual report of 1315 B.S.* of the Kaligram national school. On the first Sunday of the month of Agrahayana in 1314 B.S. started in Kaligram the collection of 'Alms in handfuls'. Within six months and seven days time the organizers there had collected 20 mounds of rice which cost Rs. 80/-. Thereafter under the supervision of Bepin Bihari Ghosh, the Secretary of the Malda District Council of Education, the Kaligram National School was founded on 12th of Jaistha 1315 B.S.

Thus the item of 'Musti-Bhiksha' proved to be most important literally providing the Kaligram National School with the fund it needed for its establishment.

*First Annual Report of the Kaligram National School, p. 2, 1315 B.S. (Unpublished).

(e) Contributions made regularly by the householders of the town in coins which had no minimum or maximum limit. The only condition for contributions under this item was that it had to be made regularly however small might be the amount so donated.

The process of collection as described above led to greater amount of involvement of the masses with the programmes of the Samiti. The door to door collection invariably communicated the message of the movement to people irrespective of caste creed and social station.

We have already mentioned the secretary's responsibilities relating to the fund raising activities. To assist him in this respect there was a group of people including the students who volunteered to work for the Samiti. The band of selfless and trusted workers always co-ordinated among themselves. For outstanding service the volunteers were entitled to medals and other distinctions at the end of the year. It should also be noted here that except the teachers who received subsistence allowance from the council the volunteers did not receive any remuneration. Initially there was a proposal to remunerate the volunteers after achieving a stable financial position in course of a few years.*

*Table II gives an idea of the expenditure incurred by the District Council of Education in 1913 (Vide Dasgupta, B.N., OP. Cit., p. 204).

Table II

Yearly Establishment	Rs. 9,780.00
Buildings	Rs. 700.00
Hostels	Rs. 350.00
Scholarships	Rs. 275.00
Prizes	Rs. 280.00
Library, Laboratory and Workshops	Rs. 240.00
Aids to the Mofussil Schools	Rs. 300.00
Tours and Inspections	Rs. 842.00
Research Department	Rs. 650.00
Training of Teachers and Maintenance of Poor Boys	Rs. 4,000.00
	<u>Total Rs.17,000.00</u>

Object of the Samiti⁷¹ and achievements.

We get an interesting account of the object of 'Samiti' in the biography of Radheshohandra Seth. Among the principal objects of the Samiti were :

(a) The spread of education through various ways. For this purpose primary education was to be made free in as many cases as possible. Despite financial hardships the Samiti, it appears, tried much to implement this object. The third annual Report* of the Kaligram National School affiliated to the Malda District Council of Education

71. Palit, Haridas, Maldaher Radheshohandra (Vijnapan), Calcutta 1318 B.S.

* Third Annual Report of Kaligram National School, p. 11, 1317 B.S. (Unpublished).

mentions that there were 27 students enjoying 'half free' and 'full free' in primary and secondary levels. The following table shows the distribution of the students in different classes.

Table III

Class/ Standard	No. of Students enjoying full free	No. of Students enjoying half free
Secondary 3rd stnd.	1	nil
2nd "	6	1
1st "	6	3
Primary 4th year	1	3
3rd "	2	nil
2nd "	2	1
1st(a)	nil	1
<u>Total</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>9</u>

Establishment of Night schools and libraries was deemed essential and Womens' education was emphasized.⁷² Many libraries were established within a short period. The Library at Kaligram had in 1317 B.S. in its collection 16 books in Sanskrit, 190 in Bengali and 39 in English. In the same library there were no less than 51 books on Sciences, 46 on mathematics, 50 on history and several other books on other subjects.⁷³

72. Palit H, OP. Cit., (Vijnapan).

73. Third Annual Report of Kaligram National School, p. 11, 1317 B.S.

The District Council of Education in its endeavour to spread mass education had succeeded in setting up some night schools.^{74*} One of these schools was situated at Kutubpur while the two others were founded at Kaligram and Dharampur. This experiment of adult education was destined to face numerous hindrances.

The third annual Report of the Kaligram National School refers to the night school at Kaligram where 50 or 60 labourers were offered education. But this night school was opposed by the village people who thought it would be impossible for them to find people to be engaged in manual labour if they were offered education.⁷⁵ Ultimately the school was done away with. In the report of 1912 we do not get any reference to Kaligram night school. The other two schools however, survived the initial hazards.⁷⁶

As regards women's education the Samiti's endeavour was initially successful. Girls' schools were set up at Kaligram and Dharampur both of which were away from the Headquarters. The Girls' school at Kaligram was started in the month of Falguna 1316 B.S.,⁷⁷ when the roll strength stood at 54. But soon the figure came down to 40 and when the third Annual Report was prepared there were only 12 girls left.⁷⁸ The people it appears, did not appreciate the idea

74. Gambhira, Pousha 1321 B.S., p. 210.

75. Third Annual Report of Kaligram National School, p. 17.

76. Report of the Dist. Council of Education, 1912.

77. Second Annual Report of the Kaligram National School, 1316 B.S., p. 7.

78. The Third Annual Report of the Kaligram National School, 1317 B.S., p. 17

* Chiefly due to the efforts of Radhakamal Mukhopadhyay, Vide, Gambhira 1321 B.S. (Pousha) p. 210.

of female education. Conservative opposition of a backward people combined with the important factors of early marriage of the girls and their preoccupation with household duties invariably affected the growth of female education in Northern Bengal during the period.

(b) Proper training of teachers⁷⁹ engaged in imparting education was held as very important. For this purpose the teachers were to be introduced to various centres of learning located in different places and scholars engaged in research in various disciplines.⁸⁰ The Samiti thought it necessary to organise study tours under the supervision of experts which would facilitate scientific and historical researches.⁸¹ The achievements of the Scholars, students and other members of the Samiti we have dealt at length under the sub-heading 'Literary Research Department' and also under other sub-headings. The teachers, however, were also urged to acquire knowledge of administration and curriculum of schools located in different areas.⁸² The laboratories and libraries of the schools affiliated with the Samiti were to be improved to facilitate researches.⁸³ Prominent scholars were to be invited from whom instructions and advice could be received.⁸⁴

The teachers of the schools were expected to write books in vernacular which would enrich the literature and also solve the problem of scarcity of text books.⁸⁵

79. Palit, Haridas, OP. Cit., Vijnapan.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

(c) For the moral and ethical development of the students the Samiti envisaged their participation in the programmes for the spread of education and also other social activities with a humanitarian bias.⁸⁶

(d) The Samiti and its father figures, opposed to casteism as is well known, worked a good deal in establishing communal amity and had among the students boys from various Hindu castes as well as the Muslims.

The school at Kaligram offers us an example of this communal harmony. The following table which shows the distribution of students from different communities, is prepared on one basis of the data provided by the second annual report of the National School at Kaligram.

Table IV

<u>Communities</u>	<u>No. of Students</u>
<u>Mohomedan</u>	7
<u>Tili</u>	110
<u>Brahmin</u>	13
<u>Vaishnava</u>	4
<u>Kaivarta</u>	3
<u>Kangsavanik</u>	2
<u>Gandhavanik</u>	1
<u>Tior</u>	2
<u>Hari</u>	1
<u>Kuerol</u>	2
<u>Batri</u>	2
<u>Mahandar</u>	2
<u>Narasundar</u>	4
<u>Nagarbala</u>	1
	<u>154</u>

86. Ibid.

The response of the Muslim community was not at all negligible as is evident from the above table.⁸⁷

We have already referred to Moulvi Mohammed Nur Bux as one of the leaders of the movement who served as the Vice President of the District Council of Education and presided over many swadeshi meetings. The general people of the community also sympathised with the movement and sent their children to the national schools which we have already noticed.

It is worthwhile to mention briefly the national awakening of the Muslim community of Northern Bengal. An organisation namely Mussalman Shiksha Samity was formed during the period which held its first conference⁸⁸ in Malda in 1321 B.S. (1914 A.D.) amidst much enthusiasm. The nationalist literary journal 'Gambhira' published from Kaligram, Malda, informs us that speakers from other communities also participated in the conference and were invited to speak.⁸⁹ This indeed indicated communal harmony during the period following the partition of Bengal. Nalinikanta Basu was one among the speakers in the conference who read an essay in which he encouraged the Muslims alluding to their Arab forefathers and glorious past.⁹⁰

87. The Second Annual Report of the Kaligram National School (1317 B.S.), p. 6.

88. Gambhira, Bhadra 1321 B.S., p. 96 ff.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

Among the common people too the awakening was evident. Some village poets like Muhammed Safi composed 'Gambhira'* songs with nationalist overtones⁹¹ which became very popular in those days.

Now we should refer to the fact that the syllabus or curriculum introduced by the National Council of Education combined in it *the* education that could serve the requirements of the land and its people irrespective of caste, creed or religion with the modern tenets of education. The system of Education introduced by the N.C.E. had three departments viz. Literary Scientific and Technical.⁹² But there was acute dearth of text books⁹³ which could suit the syllabus offered by the N.C.E. As a matter of fact the teachers of these schools had to do much out of their head. The organisers of Northern Bengal too had to face similar problems. The Scholars in Malda worked very labouriously to overcome this problem. Scholars like Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Haridas Palit wrote numerous books to suit the requirements of National Education.⁹⁴

Literary Research Department

With a view to providing a solution to the problem mentioned above commendable team work was done by the Literary Research

91. Ibid, Baisakh 1321 B.S., p. 55-6.

92. Mukherjee H & U, OP. Cit., p. 45.

93. Ibid, p. 86

94. Ibid.

* Gambhira is a sort of folk drama in which lord shiva is the central figure. During swadeshi days many Gambira songs expressed nationalist sentiments.

Department formed by the members of Malda Samiti in 1911. A large number of Scholars and Litterateurs were associated with it. It had some special members chosen from among the scholars. Radhesh Chandra Seth, Adityanath Maitra, Atulchandra Gupta, Bidhusekar Sastri, Kumudnath Lahiri, Haridas Palit, Monindramohun Basu and Radhakumud Mukhopadhyay were all its special members while Bepin Behari Ghosh was the member Secretary of the organisation.⁹⁵ The LRD kept contact with the luminaries like Rabindranath Tagore, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, Brojendranath Seal, Satischandra Mukherjee, Dineshchandra Sen, Hirendranath Dutta, Narendranath Law etc.^{96*}

The LRD since its inception patronised the folkculture of the region. The Bolbai cultural group of Mukhdumpur at Malda which performed Gambhira was awarded a silver medal by the LRD.⁹⁷

The LRD wanted to compile a history of the Gambhira. For this purpose a prize was announced and Haridas Palit submitted a comprehensive dissertation titled 'Adyer Gambhira'. The 'Bangiya Sahitya Parishad' examined and published it in its journal.⁹⁸ About a thousand handwritten manuscripts were collected by the LRD.⁹⁹ These manuscripts were of considerable antiquity. A catalogue describing some of them was presented in a literary conference held

95. Palit, Haridas, OP. Cit., Vijnapan.

96. Mukherjee H & U, OP. Cit., p. 125.

97. Palit, Haridas, OP. Cit., Vijnapan.

98. Ibid.

99. Palit, Haridas, OP. Cit., Vijnapan.

* For this purpose an advertisement was inserted in the Maldaha Samachar in response to which Palit submitted his voluminous work. (Vide Mukherjee H, et al., Benovsarkarer Baithake Vol-II, p. 369, Calcutta 1945).

at Bhagalpur. In the same conference a report of archaeological explorations conducted by the LRD was read and copies of the report were distributed among the participants.¹⁰⁰

NORTH BENGAL LITERARY CONFERENCE

It is worthwhile to mention that during the period a great institution was brought into existence in Northern Bengal.* This was North Bengal Literary conference. It held its first session in Rangpur in the month of Asada 1315 B.S.¹⁰¹ (July, 1907 A.D.). Almost all the Scholars and Litterateurs of Northern Bengal were associated with it. Among its leaders were nationalists like Akshoy Kumar Maitreya, the eminent archaeologist.

The fourth session of the North Bengal Literary conference¹⁰² was held at Malda in the winter of 1317 B.S. (1911 A.D.). On the occasion eminent men like Rakhaldas Bandopadhyay, Charuchandra Mitra etc., visited Malda and the adjoining archaeological sites like Gauda and Pandua.¹⁰³ All these aroused great enthusiasm. The Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti entrusted its members, teachers and students with the task of entertaining the guests. The Samiti workers proved to be very good organisers.¹⁰⁴ When the conference

100. Ibid.

101. Maitreya, Akshoykumar, Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan, Bangadarshan, Sravana, 1315 B.S.

102. Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan, Maldaha Adhibeshan, 1317 B.S.; Mukherjee, H. et al., Benoy Sarkar Baithake, p. 161, Calcutta 1945.

103. Mitra, Charuchandra, Gour-Pandua, p. 2, Calcutta 1329 B.S.

104. Palit, H., OP. Cit., Vijnapan.

* The literary activities of Northern Bengal were a part of the mainstream of literary activities of the province.

was in session Haridas Palit presented to the members his handbook to the antiquities of Gauda and Pandua titled 'Gauda Pandua pradarshika'.¹⁰⁵

The conference envisaged manifold activities among which was the formation of a committee¹⁰⁶ which would carry out historical and archaeological researches. The members of this committee were Krishnalal Chowdhury, a Zamindar of Malda and a patron of historical researches and literary activities, Radhesh Chandra Seth, Abid Ali Khan, Govt. Overseer by profession and the author of 'Memoirs of Gour and Pandua' the celebrated archaeological treatise, Moulvi Abdul Gani, a prominent legal practitioner, Rajanikanta Chakraborty, the Scholarly sanskrit teacher of Malda Zilla School, who wrote a number of books including the famous 'Gourer Itihas' and Nagendranath Bandopadhyay, a prominent local gentleman. In 1907 Rajanikanta Chakraborty had publicised the first volume of his 'Gourer Itihas' which dealt with the ancient history of Bengal. In 1909 was brought out the second volume of the same title that dealt with the Muhammedan rule in Bengal. Both these volumes, immediately after their publication, became prescribed textbooks of history in the National schools. Abid Ali Khan and Radheshchandra Seth did painstaking fieldwork and researches and the latter contributed to various journals and periodicals.

105. Ibid.

106. Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan, Maldaha Adhiveshan, p. 54-55, 1317 B.S.

Benoy Kumar Sarkar in his paper titled 'Sahitya Sevi' that he read in the session, very nicely summarised the significance of the conference.¹⁰⁷

"So there has been a Literary conference at Malda also. In this way through literary, industrial and political movements our small and backward places are being made parts of a great whole. A new national life is thus created superseding the old communal life of the village"

One more literary conference¹⁰⁸ namely the Maldaha Sahitya Sammelan' held its sessions at Kaligram in 1320 B.S. This was presided over by Amulya Charan Vidya Bhushan, a noted intellectual of the period and attended by litterateurs like Charuchandra Mitra etc. Here also the enthusiasm was great. Once again the teachers and the students of national schools played a key role in organising the conference.¹⁰⁹

Also in the field of technical education and vocational training the Samiti at Malda worked successfully. Many national schools had laboratories and also craftsmen appointed as teachers.¹¹⁰ The school at Kaligram, it is interesting to note, had a small

107. The Modern Review, April, 1911, Calcutta.

108. Mitra Charuchandra, OP. Cit., p. 1.

109. Ibid.

110. The second Annual Report of the Kaligram National School, 1316 B.S., p. 7 (Unpublished).

workshop for which equipments worth Rs. 187/- were purchased. The students were taught woodcraft, clay modelling etc.¹¹¹

In course of a few years of its establishment a number of youngmen were sent to foreign states by the National Council of Education for receiving higher education in the fields of science and technology and arts.¹¹² Benoy Kumar Sarkar played a pivotal role in this respect.¹¹³ It was mainly through his initiative that a number of students from Northern Bengal and other regions left for foreign countries.

The table below shows the names of the Northern Bengal students, the respective years of their departure for foreign countries and the respective Universities and disciplines they joined.

Table V

Name	University	Subject	Year of departure from India	District
Bejoy Kumar Sarkar	Harvard	Economics	1910	Malda
Dhirendra Kumar Sarkar	Yale	Applied Chemistry	1910	"
Panesvar Dass	Illinois State	Chemical Engineering	1911	"
Ragendranarayan Chowdhury	Ohio State	Agriculture	1911	"
Khagendra Narayan Mitra	Wisconsin State	Biology	1911	"
Nabin Chandra Das	Wisconsin State	Sociology & Pedagogics	1911	"
Birendranath Dasgupta	Purdue	Electrical Engineering	1911	"

111. Ibid.

112. The Report of the District Council of Education, 1912; Palit Haridas, OP. Cit., Vijnapan; Dasgupta, B.N., OP. Cit., p. 210-1.

113. Ibid.

During their stay in the U.S.A. the Scholars mentioned in the chart sent detailed reports of their performance to Benoy Kumar Sarkar. Many of these reports were published in the collegian, a journal of repute in 1912-14.¹¹⁴ In those days the American system of education was not much known in India. The reports of the Scholars familiarised the American system of education to the Indian intelligentsia to a certain extent.

Those scholars afterwards engaged themselves in various professions.* Bejoy Kumar and Khagendra Narayan became University teachers in Calcutta. Dharendra Kumar lived in England looking after his business. Birendra Nath set up his own business in Calcutta. Banerjee joined the Jadavpur engineering college as a teacher while Rajendranarayan went back to his home in Malda and looked after his farm.¹¹⁵

The organisers at Jalpaiguri also tried their level best for the promotion of technical education.¹¹⁶ Jajneswar Sanyal was sent to Japan for receiving training in textile technology. On his return he joined the Swadeshi Textile Mill founded by the nationalists of Jalpaiguri. For working in the mill weavers were brought from Madras.¹¹⁷ Despite their effort the mill ran at a loss and was eventually sold to Mohini Mills of Kushtia.¹¹⁸

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.

116. De Barun et al., OP. Cit., p. 64.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

* We have no evidence to suggest that these scholars indulged in any noteworthy political activities in Northern Bengal or elsewhere in the subsequent years.

In this way a process of social regeneration was introduced in our area of study. The spirit of national awakening that grew during the Swadeshi years lasted for a long period of time providing a sound base for future movements. Despite the fact that many of the institutions founded by the early nationalists did not survive, the impact they left on the psychological mainspring of the national movement was immensely valuable.