

## **CHAPTER- VII**

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The period between 1937 to 1947 is described as the decade of destiny in the history of the Indian freedom movement. Some momentous decisions and momental declarations were made during this period that determined the course of national movement, the inevitable document of which was both triumph and tragedy for the people of the Subcontinent. The British Government wanted to introduce the Fedaration of India in 1935 to the Princely States. Viceroy Linlithgo said to the Rajas and Maharajas of Princely State that “when I last had the honour of addressing your Highness, I referred to the steps which I had taken to assist the individual Rulers in reading a decision in regard to the Federation of India. It has taken longer than I could have noted to clear the ground and to examine the numerous points, points of varying importance, rose by the individual Rulers in one connection or another with the Federal offer. But that work is now completed. The points advanced for consideration by the Rulers of the Indian states, with out exception, been examined, and the Federal offer, framed in the light of a close and objection examination of those points has now been drawn up and communicated to the States.....I am content now to await the verdict of the Rulers”.<sup>1</sup>

In the mean time, the British Government took a liberal policy and to invite the

rulers of princely State to join the Federal Legislature. The British Government declared the political and administrative reforms of princely States “As your Highness have lately been assured, the paramount power stands ready to support the princes in the fulfilment of its treaty obligations. That does not, I need not say, for a moment mean the princes themselves are not the primary custodians of their ancient and illustrious heritages. How often has it not been impressed on the princes of India by those who have had their best interests at heart that they should sink their differences and stand shoulder to shoulder for the good of their States and for their own happiness and peace of mind?.....In no case is the need for co-operation and combination more patent, more pronounced, and more immediate than in the case of the smaller states”.<sup>2</sup> Jawaharlal Neheru opposed the British policy to princely States and he said to the ‘All India States Peoples Conference’ “we are told now of the so-called independence of the States and their treaties with the paramount power, which are sacrosanct and inviolable and apparently must go on for ever and ever”.<sup>3</sup>

The mentality had changed when the scheme of Federation with British India materialised. Though unlimited powers were reserved to the Indian Rulers in the proposed scheme of federation, the times had so much changed that it would not be possible for any ruler to exercise these powers. The public opinion had great force and willingly or unwillingly the authorities had to reject it.<sup>4</sup> According to Bhulabhai Desai, “we next turned to the present Act of 1935 and to the question of Federation. I pointed out to him that if particularly nullified even a small

measure of responsible government in the provinces and that as those who lead the democratic party would have very limited scope for measures of public good or advancement and that as even in that limited sphere the princes, representatives were bound to be a serious obstacle, we were rightly opposed to the Federation as contemplated. The only thing he the viceroy had to say in favour of the Federation was that it would be an act of kindness, if not duty, towards the subjects of the Indian states to have federation, because it was the only way by which the personal autocratic rule would, with our much effort and loss of time, be replaced by better conditions in the states".<sup>5</sup>

In 1939-1940, Maharaja of Cooch Behar, Jagaddipendra Narayan attended so many Conferences organized by Chamber of Princes and the subject was to discuss the State joint Federal of India. One of the important facts was that the Maharaja of Cooch Behar always wanted to maintain good relation with the British Government. The outbreak of the Second World War was another occasion to override normal political authority of State. Bound contractually, the Maharaja had the need to prove His loyalty in the historic task. As soon as His Majesty's Government was in war with Germany on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, the Maharaja placed his personal services and the entire resources of the State and its disposal. Towards the years 1939-40 the State's involvement was to the monetary donations to the war purposes Fund. The Durbar's war contributions during the year to the various Funds were as follows.<sup>6</sup>

1. His Excellency the viceroy's war Fund – -----30000
2. Indian Red Cross Society-----5000
3. St. John's Ambulance Association-----5000
4. St. Dunstan's Association-----5000

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**Total = 45000**

On September 2, 1939 'The Cooch Behar Registration of Foreigners order' was promulgated and issued in the State of Cooch Behar. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September, Government declared Emergency over the State, 6<sup>th</sup> September, "Defence of India Ordinance" was declared. Notification of Viceroy of India about war situation, the State of Cooch Behar spread the notification over the State --"In these days when the whole of cvilisation is threatened, the widespread attachment of India to the cause in which we have taken up arms has been a source of deep satisfaction to me. I also value most highly the mony and generous offers of assistance made to me by the princes and people of India. I am confident that in the struggle upon which my people and I have now entered we can count on sympathy and support from every quarter of the Indian continent in the face of the common ddanger. Britain is fighting for no selfish ends but for the maintence of a principle vital to the future of mankind-the principle that relations between civilized states must be regulated not by force but by reason and law, so that men may live free from the terror of war to pursue the happiness and well-being which should be the destiny

of mankind. Signed. George, R I".<sup>7</sup>

The Maharaja of Cooch Behar notified to form "Village 'Defence party' to protect of the internal affairs of the State on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1940. The main activity of the Defence party was- 1) to assist the local police generally in the protection of the civil population against *goondaism* and out break of crime as a sequel to war conditions. For this purpose the party took some measures as under:

a) To organise according to necessity night and also day patrols in the populated localities, *hats* and *bundars* and communicate with the local police if anything suspicious was found. b) To attend Railway stations, ferry ghats, etc to detect arrivals of suspicious persons and foreigners and when any was detected, to inform the police forth with c) To rest to an event of an alarm or out break of fire they should immediately proceed in a body to the spot and render necessary help d) To arrest criminals when they found them in the actual Commission of crime and pursue escaping criminals to fix their identity and residence. 2) To assist in every way possible all efforts in furtherance of successful prosecution of the war and maintenance of internal peace and tranquility. Such assistance would include. (a) helping in the circulation of accurate war news (b) by their own calm bearing to allay public panic caused by rumours (c) counteracting any effort of unscrupulous or designing persons to disseminate disloyalty or stir up communal discord".<sup>8</sup>

In the mean time, Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan passed the Cooch Behar Legislative Council Act 1941. The Legislative Council was consisted of-

1. His Highness the Maharaja of Bhup Bahadur as the President.
2. Ex-officio Members, viz-the Ministers of the State including the Chief Minister.

**3. Elected Members viz-**

- a) Two non-official Members (one Hindu and one Mahomedan elected by the Jotedars of the State)
- b) One Member elected by the Members of the legal profession of the State
- c) Five non-official Members elected-one by each of the five sub-divisions of the State, namely -Sadar, Dinjata, Mathabhanga, Mekhliganj and Tufanganj

**4) Nominated members viz-**

- a) One to represent the *Rajgunj* of the State;
- b) One to represent commerce and industry in the State;
- c) Additional Members not exceeding five in numbers appointed by His Highness the Maharaja.<sup>9</sup>

It is right to say that the reign of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan (1922-1949), maintained good relation with the Paramount power. After the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> world war, the political scenario began to change radically and Naval Mutiny was started in 1946. In this situation, British Prime Minister Clement Atlee sent Cabinet Mission to discuss the planning of British India and Indian States. The

Cabinet Mission's plan was to form federation with British India and Princely States. They also promised "there was no intention of making proposals for the entry of States into the Indian set up on any basis, other than that of negotiations".<sup>10</sup> The Mission was more emphatic on the independent character of Indian Princely States—"the rights of the States flowed from their relationships with the Crown, and would no longer exist, and that the rights surrendered by the States to the paramount power would revert to them. It was optional for the States to enter into any kind of relationship with the successor Government or Governments in British India, or to make an arrangement between themselves".<sup>11</sup>

In the post Second World War period, there was a rapid change of the political scenario of India and Bengal. A Cabinet Mission formed by British Prime Minister, Clement Atlee under the leadership of Lord Pathic Lowrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander planned to form a Federal State along with the Native States on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1946 inaction to the reformation of the Wavel's policy of 1945.<sup>12</sup> Lord Wavel, the Viceroy of India declared India to allow equal representation of the main communities to the Executive Committee. But the doubt arose among the communities in the policy of Bi-racial programme of Lord Wavel. The policy was about to rouse the separate feeling of the Hindus and the Muslims. Mharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan understood his own position in the changing situation along with other kings of Native States. The British authority was thinking at this period to transfer power to India.<sup>13</sup>

The Hitasadhani Sabha was established in Cooch Behar State in 1946, though the Maharaja was not the president of the Hitasadhani Sabha. According to the convention and practice of the Princely State, the King or Queen would be the Head or president of every organization. But it is noteworthy that the encouragement and sympathy of the king was indirectly expressed in favour of the Cooch Behar Hitasadhani Sabha.<sup>14</sup> The *Hitasadhani Sabha* was more emphatic on the development of the inhabitant of Cooch Behar or Sons of the soil or *Cooch Beharies*. The first concrete historical evidence was the Election of 1946 of the Cooch Behar State. The Hitasadhani Sabha had participated in both the elections and got thumping majority in the legislative Council of the Cooch Behar State.<sup>15</sup>

Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan was truly the well wisher of the Native inhabitants. He was busy for making the people conscious of the developmental works of the kingdom. In the mean time H.J. Tod, Resident of Eastern Estates advised King Jagaddipendra Narayan to form a separate administrative structure of independent Cooch Behar on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1947.<sup>16</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1947 the British Govt. declared the decision of power to India by dividing India and making another State named Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Mnister optnioned to connect the Native States with the neighbouring big Provinces. As a result, the grievances of the Native States began to accrue; Cooch Behar king was also thoughtful of the situation.

The State of Cooch Behar was fully independent State upto 1949; the State did not join both India and Pakistan. But after Maharaja was interested to join in

India on 28<sup>th</sup> of August, 1949, an Agreement was signed between the Governor General of India and His Highness, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, which came to be known as the Cooch Behar Merger Agreement. In this famous merger agreement, His Highness, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar ceded to the Dominion Government (Government of India) “full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of the State” and agreed “to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1949”.<sup>18</sup> Finally Cooch Behar State became the (1<sup>st</sup> January, 1950) district of West Bengal.<sup>19</sup> This is another interesting episode, the Cooch Behar State and this is being sidelined because it is not within the purview of the present dissertation.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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