

Chapter – 1

Undivided Bengal: Strayed Scenario up to Quit India Movement

One of the key features of Bengal politics was the revolutionary movement, which started from Swadeshi Movement with several revolutionary groups. Anusilan Samity was established by Pramathanath Mitra who conferred leadership of the Dhaka branch to Pulin Bihari Das, which conversely ended due to tussle among them. The Dhaka branch of the Samity then turned out to be the foremost branch. For the leadership of Calcutta branch of Anusilan Samity, Aurobindo Ghosh inducted Jatin Banerjee who afterwards detached himself from the organisation due to clash with Barin Ghosh. Since then Barin Ghosh, was in charge of the Jugantar Dal, the branch away from Anusilan Samity. Individually both groups tried to organise armed revolution during First World War, but failed in their attempts. At the end of the war, they were released from jail and became followers of C.R. Das. Pulin Das did not believe in Gandhi's commitment of bringing '*Swaraj*' within a year, failing of which would mean Gandhi's acceptance of the leadership of Das, according to an unwritten agreement between Gandhi and C.R.Das,. Das moved for it. With enormous support, the proposal was passed in Nagpur Congress on 1920, and was supported by Jugantar Dal. It caused severance of Anusilan Samity.¹

Tanika Sarkar wrote that Bengal Congress leaders did not take interest in rural movements.² Both Anusilan Samity and Jugantar Dal were submissive towards political persona. Even when the groups had a common policy, the tendency of Bengal politics was group rivalry. In the Rajsahi jail at the end of August 1942, Jugantar leaders considered themselves in danger from the F.

B. prisoners.³ Pulin Das and Anusilan Samity were up deady against Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Gandhi and backed by Jugantar Dal. It however failed to achieve 'Swaraj' within a year. Opposing the British Govt from and within Legislative Assembly, the scheme of C.R.Das was not supported by Gandhi. Hence, it compelled Das to form 'Swarajya Dal' within the Congress. A segment of Anusilan Samity led by Pratul Ganguly joined 'Swarajya Dal'. Therefore the Gandhian concept of 'Satyagraha' and monolithic leadership were the establishment of Swarajya Party cemented both challenged in Bengal by C.R.Das. During the days of strong political command of Gandhi, his influence over Bengal was limited and scattered.⁴ The party disbanded after the death of C.R.Das and at the same time the attempt to resolve unification between Jugantar and Anusilan also failed. Youth Congress and Jugantar Dal brawled in Harish Park, Calcutta. The group Mukti Sangha of Hemchandra Ghosh was established at the same time with Anusilan Samity and was renamed 'Sri Sangha' after Anil and Lila Roy joined it. During 1928-29, they departed from Hemchandra Ghosh's group Sri Sangha.⁵ Jugantar Dal attached with many groups, adhered to use the term 'Swadhinata' (Independence) as a replacement for Gandhi's 'Swaraj', in spite of their opposition to Anusilan Samity. Violence in Bengal politics was quite naturally opposed to the Gandhian thought of non-violence.

Gandhian Politics and Bengal

Bengal's opposition to Gandhism started since the advent of the Calcutta session of special Congress and continued on. After the demise of C.R.Das, Gandhi tried to strengthen his position by Jatindramohan Sengupta and Birendranath Shasmal. The voice of Marwari Business community then grew stronger and influenced the course of action of Bengal Congress.⁶ Subhash Chandra Bose however failed to swing over the goal of Congress from dominion status to total independence. Subhash Chandra Bose however failed to swing over the goal of Congress from dominion status to total

independence. In 1927, Gandhi nominated Sengupta as the President of B.P.C.C, which he continued in his capacity up to 1933 until his demise. Bose was insulted in 1928 Calcutta Congress when he was told to congregate volunteers while Sengupta and Bidhan Chandra Roy got hold of the important posts in Congress. In-house clashes of Congress were prevalent among the members for the power of the Calcutta Corporation, Bengal Congress, and Bengal Council. The Competition for 'three crown' between Subhas Chandra Bose and Jatindramohan Sengupta,⁷ which divided B.P.C.C, constituted two groups. Bose wanted to defend 'the conspiracy of Delhi'.⁸ Sengupta was at last gifted the 'three crown' and Bose was marooned from Congress. Watson, the Editor of Statesman was pre-disposed the clash between Bose and Sengupta. The sudden demise of Sengupta and Shasmal and the expulsion and departure of Subhash Chandra Bose empowered inefficient 'Big Five'⁹ viz Sarat Chandra Bose, Tulsi Goswami, Nirmal Chanda Chandar, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Bidhan Chandra Roy, in association with Kiran Sankar Roy and Dr.Prafulla Chandra Ghosh. These leaders had no organised political base. These leaders retired from the politics when Gandhi launched any movement and again became active when election came nearer.¹⁰ Nehru wrote to Gandhi that when they were jailed during C.D. Movement, Nalini Sarkar was pleased to invite the administrators and Home-members.¹¹

Groups of B.P.C.C grudgingly declared the schedules when Gandhi announced to start the C. D. Movement. Communal Award sharply divided Bengal politics into communal groups. However, both the groups of B.P.C treated it. That Hindu '*Bhadroloks*', rejected the Pune Accord of Gandhi-Ambedkar, since it was 'worse than the award.'¹² Ambedkar unhappily threatened to convert into Muslim or Buddhist religion.¹³ Thereafter disagreement with Congress High Command was the foremost subject of B.P.C.C. From 1927 onwards, Bose's group went on its own way as it disagreed completely with Congress High Command. They used the

Communal Award and the Pune Accord as reasons to congregate a large section of Bengali people. In 1931, Gandhi-Arwin Pact was accepted in the Karachi Conference of Congress though Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose politically disregarded the pact. Some economic proposals were taken to stem the agitations of the leftists. It was not a socialist move and simply ignored the twenty proposals including the abolition of Zamindari system or the pressure of loan in the rural areas. Even after Gandhi's withdrawal of C.D Movement, Congress Socialist Party (Formed in 1934, October) seek out for proposals that would be accepted by Congress. Socialists and Communists from 1930 onwards depended upon Nehru and Bose for an alternative agenda. When the Socialists, Nationalists, and Communists formed Krisak Sabha in 1936, Congress included some socialist proposals in Faizabad conference in 1936 like reducing land tax, crop tax, end of labour without wages, illegal taxes of Zamindars and rural credit and arrear taxes. They also wanted to abolish the rigid laws against Zamindars' efforts to uproot peasants.

B.P.C.C was divided again, when the Nationalist Party was formed in 1934. Bidhan Chandra Roy took the position of Sengupta, joined K.S.Roy and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar detached himself from the Basu Group. Sarat Bose's proposal to start movement in and outside of Legislative Assembly, which was rejected by Congress High Command, was indeed supported by both K.S.Roy and Bidhan Chandra Roy. Central and State Congress confronted each other, before elections with the question of Communal Award and the Pune Accord. After reaching a compromise between the Congress Working Committee and the Nationalists, Sarat Bose won the Congress Parliamentary Board election against Bidhan Chandra Roy and tried to organise Congress on the leftist secular way.

The confrontation of two camps i.e. District Committee and the political party of Bengal Legislative Assembly used leadership and power to organise

nationalist movements. Bengal District Congress Committee recognised by All India Congress Committee rejected Zillah Congress Committee led by Bose's followers and they formed Ad-hoc Zillah Congress Committee. Bose's followers of Zillah Congress Committee were engaged with their normal political works. Though Bose followers, Bengal District Congress committee and Khadi group of Gandhi followers were all ready to join any kind of Gandhian Movement official Congress leadership led by Kiran Sankar Roy was not at all interested. The followers of K.S.Roy and members of the Janata Party were found to be 'waverers.'¹⁴The conflict between Bose and his followers with central Congress leadership started from about 1939-40. After the expulsion of Bose brothers from the Congress, Gandhi put in charge Bidhan Roy to reorganise the Congress.¹⁵ Bose group, the secular and radical section was banished from Congress. It is well known about Subhash Bose's expulsion from Congress. In the year 1938, Gandhi, like Nehru, nominated him to invite him within the Gandhian line. The policy did not work and at last in the Tripuri session of Congress in 1939, finally the two leaders were detached. Patel group worked on the forefront while Gandhi was the master mind who worked behind the scene. Kiran Sankar Roy wrote Rajendra Prasad that the revolt of Bose Brothers caused to weaver the base of Bengal Congress and he left the party in Bengal with a lot of disturbance.¹⁶

Reallocation of the Political Scenario

The main subject of discussion since 1930 was rural area and the issues regarding the reasons behind metropolitan region losing its importance. Moreover, Indian Administration Act of 1935 undid much leeway of rural politics. For example, 66 seats of the Hindus and 111 seats of the Muslims were reserved for rural areas out of 78 and 117 respectively. So to acquire power in the Legislative Assembly, political parties had to win in the rural areas. Congress had no rural base or relation with the Muslim peasantry of Bengal. Nirad C. Choudhury wrote –

I, however, noticed a peculiar indifference in Sarat Babu towards the agrarian question of Bengal. He did not possess landed property, and did not have much knowledge of the land laws. The great majority of the Congress members of the legislature were, however, lawyers or landowners. But they were the very men to whom.... Sarat Babu did not feel very much attracted personally. Certainly, the political interests of the Bengali Hindus suffered from this indifference to the land question, which in its turn prevented a clean formulation of policy in regard to tenure on the part of the Bengal Congress.¹⁷

We have to look at the establishment of All Bengal Praja Samity in 1929 in this changing state of affairs, through which men like Fazlul Haq, Tajuddin Khan and Akram Khan made an effort to establish themselves as peasant leaders. Later the Samity was divided. Fazlul Haq established K.P.P and the remaining part of the Samity re-organised themselves by forming Bengal United Muslim Party. The President, Vice-President, and the General Secretary of the B.U.M.P were Nawab Habibullah of Dhaka, Nawab Mussaraf Hussain of Jalpaiguri and Shaheed Suhrawardy respectively.¹⁸ Haq criticised them with these words -How can they pretend to be able to give relief to the 'ryots' of Bengal when they appear to be utterly unable to give relief to their own 'ryots'.¹⁹ At last, the leaders of the B.U.M.P decided to join the Muslim League, and abolished their own party.²⁰ Jinnah and League tried best to unite with K.P.P, but failed. After the division between K.P.P and Muslim League in 1936, Fazlul Haq said:

-from this day onwards begins the grim fight between Zamindars and capitalists on one side and poor people on the other. It is not at all a civil war in the Muslim community but it is a fight where people are divided on a purely economic issue.²¹

Haq announced in front of the students of Dhaka University that he would not

allow the future of Bengal to be in the grasp of non-Bengali, aristocrats and rich businessperson of the Muslim community.²² Just before the election, Congress Working Committee announced that Congress did not plan to confiscate the private property without reparation. Congress was deadly against confiscation or class struggle.²³ This was not the sole reason for the break up between the Congress and the K.P.P. K.P.P was clear in its design of not sending the message to the League that it had no sympathy with the Muslim community. So, just before the elections K.P.P, which was a party of the Muslims, did not deliberately select any Schedule Caste candidate to contest from the party.

Parliamentary Politics

Muslims dominated Chief Ministers of Bengal during 1926-36 and their Ministries for every span.²⁴ So, the tendency for Muslim ascendancy was the solitary feature during this time as per the Bengal parliamentary politics was concerned. After 1935, the Govt. of India Act diarchy put to an end in the provinces the Govt. with self-administrative power where elected legislatures stepped forward the administration through the Governor and had the supremacy to take action if required. Although Congress showed antipathy towards the reforms of 1935, they took part in the election of January 1937. Nehru stated that since there was no choice but to contest the election, Congress at least would be able to place its proposals to the voters and non-voters too. On the other hand, there was no proposal against private property in the election manifesto of Muslim League. At the end of 1936, Congress started election campaign. The wealthy class, from which the candidates mostly availed from, donated party fund.

The interesting point of the election of 1937 was its application of the Communal Award of 1932. After Pune Accord between Gandhi and Ambedkar, lower caste Hindus first time participated in their reserved seats in

Bengal along with other parts of India. Lower caste Hindus got the right to contest in the 67 seats out of which 20 were from Bengal. That means if 25 European members supported in or outside of the Legislative Assembly to the 119 Muslim members or at least 8 to 10 of lower caste Hindus supported the Muslim members, the hegemony of the upper caste Hindus would come to an end. In Bengal out of 250 seats Congress obtained 54, independent Muslims 42, K.P.P 40, Muslim League 39 and independent Hindus 37. The result of Muslim League was not as expected for the League like other parts of India. Not having the absolute majority in Bengal Legislative Council, Congress refused to form coalition ministry in Bengal. Hence, Congress yearned for the release of the political prisoners, whereas leaders of K. P. P were keen on giving importance to the peasant issue. Fazlul Haq the leader of K.P. P was invited by the Governor to form the Ministry with Muslim League. Men like Sarat Chandra Bose who was fond of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President also disapproved the proposal of a coalition. As Amallesh Tripathi estimated that if Congress supported the K.P.P from outside the Legislative Assembly, League-Haq coalition would not be possible. Tripathi commented that if Bengali Hindus were, responsible for their own disaster, Haq too brought the evil on himself.²⁵ Haq was not a man to exercise political ideology from the opposition. He was eager to obtain power and optimise the agendas as estimated by Harun-Al-Rashid that this should be kept in mind that '*opportunist*' or '*realistic*' whatever may be he estimated, he was not a revolutionary but a reformist leader²⁶ Jinnah –

... encouraged Fazlul Haq of Bengal to support the peasants of that province against the Zamindars not an economic but on communal basis, and Fazlul Haq agreed to do this after failing to secure a coalition with the Congress.²⁷

According to the analysis of Rahman, Azad Congress refused to form ministry since they had one and a half more seats than K.P.P and indeed did not agree to be with a system capable of withstanding Zamindari system.²⁸ League then enhanced its power in Bengal. In-house clashes started within K.P.P.

League got only three seats in the Ministry of Bengal, and K.P.P got two. Nawab Mussaraf Hussain of Jalpaiguri was included in the Ministry in the place of Samsuddin Ahmed, the Secretary of K.P.P who formed a Krisak Praja Assembly party on August 1937 against Haq's liaison with Zamindars. In the year 1938, Tamizuddin Khan formed Independent Praja Party and departed from K.P.P. According to Tripathi, Mussaraf Hussain and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar (left the Congress) were the negotiators between League and Congress.²⁹ Nehru was annoyed and wrote to Gandhi – Might not the dominant part of the Bengal Congress be called today the society for the advancement of Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarkar' and the other part probably a similar society for a similar loudable object? ³⁰ There were nine Zamindars among eleven in the Haq ministry and six were elected on reserved seats. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was rejected on communal grounds.³¹ Haq had no way to join the League in October 1937. Though Haq was not able to adjust with his new party, K.P.P expressed its willingness to work with the National Congress. Indeed the venture failed. In the year 1938, the meeting between Subhash Chandra Bose and Jinnah and Gandhi and K.P.P failed.³²

Haq agreed to help the British in Second World War in all respects while League wanted to pressurise the Govt with some demands. League was so indifferent on Haq's allegation against the Mahasava that it was forced to show the Hindus more in number than Muslims in the census of 1941 in the various districts of Bengal. Riots also took place in some places of Dhaka and elsewhere. League took the advantage of this position and wanted to celebrate Pakistan Day that was opposed by Haq. Meanwhile Haq did everything in favour of League including the famous '*Pakisthan Proposal*' and strengthened the popularity of League among the Muslim masses along with Pakistan Demand. Abul Hashim found his independence as a Muslim and Bengali amidst Haq's Pakistan proposal in the Lahore Conference of Muslim League.³³ Haq publicised in Lucknow conference (1937) of Muslim League that

if Congress misbehaved with Muslims outside Bengal, he would not vacillate to revenge against Hindus in Bengal. Khalikuzzaman informs that Haq said that he would kill two in Bengal instead of one Muslim killed outside Bengal.³⁴ But Haq's vow to his community did not continued, since he did not capitulate to the non- Bengali Muslims. Haq at last departed from the League for his attempt to form a non-communal League and included himself in the national defense council against the will of the League. '*Sher-e-Bangla*' became the '*Gaddar-e-Bangla*.'³⁵ Nawab Mussaraf Hussain announced that he was ready to spend all his money to throw out Haq.³⁶ Muslim League enhanced its political strength, seeking political advantage by the coalition politics. When tussle between Haq and Mukherjee reached its climax, Haq challenged Mukherjee to give concrete instances of Hindu oppression. Mukherjee produced 17 examples, which were defended by Haq. Bengali Hindu intelligentsia including Rabindranath Tagore opposed the Madhyamik Education Bill proposed in the Legislative Assembly and thought it to be communal. After the decline of Fazlul Haq ministry (1941, 7th Oct) parties like Nationalist Party, Scheduled Caste Party and Peasant party of Haq tied up, which was also supported by Congress. Upendranath Barman wrote about the foreboding advancement of the Japanese aggression towards Assam and Subhash Chandra Bose's advancement to Manipur. Herbert, European party and Muslim League tried their best to change the ministry but in reality failed to do so. At last the Governor invited Haq, to form the Ministry.³⁷ Haq intended to destroy the hegemony of the non-Bengalis in the politics and Marwaris in the economy of Bengal.³⁸ At that time three Communist members of the Ministry Bankim Mukherjee, Abdur Razzak and Bhupesh Gupta tried to tie up with League in opposition to the Ministry, but failed.³⁹ Abdullah Rasul estimated that it was the leftist part of K.P.P with which Krisak Sabha wanted to be in contact but was against the ministry -loving group of K.P.P.⁴⁰ N.C. Chatterjee of Mahasava had praised saying that the ministry of Haq and Mukherjee, effectively paralysed the communalists, whose policy led to the grouping of the Hindus and Muslims into two warring hostile forces.⁴¹

Congress after Congress after winning election in six states with absolute majority released the political prisoners. Leage-K.P.P ministry in Bengal remained silent about it. Rabindranath Tagore was the President and Soumendranath Tagore was the Secretary of '*Andaman Political Prisoner Helping Samity*', formed with the objective to release the prisoners. The movement to release the prisoners continued up to 1941 and became stronger after Subhash Chandra Bose's participation. Haq was compelled to remove the monument of Holwell due to the movement organised by Subhash Chandra Bose. Haq- Nazimuddin Ministry decided in July 1938 that except the prisoners with life sentences all other political prisoners would be released.⁴² Nonetheless, Congress was also divided into two groups, one of which led by Sarat Chandra Bose, agreed to support Haq with the condition that political prisoners would be released⁴³ If Congress joined the ministry and accepted the home portfolio, Governor Herbert was anxious about the possibility of disclosing the information of the secret files to probable home minister Sarat Bose who would jeopardise the effort to catch Subhash Bose. This being the reason Sarat Bose was arrested before the formation of the Ministry.⁴⁴

By this time, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose captured Manipur, Hervert took Denial and Removal Policy to prevent the feasible advancement of the Japanese. All ships and bullock carts from North Bengal to Sundarban were destroyed. Civil administration wrongly portrayed to the people that if steps were not taken, Japanese would treat them as slaves, tie them to their boats and throws them before the enemies. This policy of denial of 66,500 boats brought to an end of the earnings of many peasants, oarsmen and fishermen. Gandhi mentioned that the hands and legs of the Bengal peasants were cut off.⁴⁵ In the meantime, British soldiers raped many women, which was brought up in the meeting of Congress Working Committee on 28th April of 1942.⁴⁶ These steps of Herbert under Self-Administration Act no 52 made the Ministry a puppet. Chief minister A.K. Fazlul Haq made a general statement,

about reviewing the situation in the Bengal Province since April last in the Bengal Legislative Assembly. On September 15, he touched upon the problems connected with civic defence application of the 'Denial Policy', evacuation of certain areas in the coastal belt of the province, the supply and the price of the necessities of life and detailed the various measures taken by the Govt in this connection. The Chief Minister said:

- Apart from hartals and few demonstrations, instances have occurred in several districts of tampering with or damage done to the permanent way rolling stock of railway with interruption of railway communications and destruction of instruments. Members are aware of the persistent interference with tramway service at Calcutta and with the damage done to public utility services: the attack on A.R.P depots and wardens posts which have occurred can not have any other result than giving assistance to the enemy. There had been sporadic cuttings of telegraph wires in many districts and in certain areas post office have been attacked and looted. In present condition when the enemy threat to our province has been by no means removed and when it is essential that communications should be kept in order that military dispositions may be maintained and no obstacle placed in the way of the troop concentration for any purpose be it offensive or defensive, interference the railways, telegraph and postal communications are very serious matters. Collective fines have had to be imposed upon the inhabitants where such acts of sabotage occur and where there is reason to believe that the local inhabitants are concerned in those offences or are harbouring the offenders or failing to give proper assistance in apprehending the culprits and bringing them to book. District Magistrates have been directed to convey a warning to the inhabitants of all areas through which any line of communications passes that they are charged with the specific duty of maintaining the sector passing through their area and protecting it from damage and that they will be held accountable if outrages occur.⁴⁷

On 13 August 1942, a meeting of the Progressive Assembly Party was held in the residence of Fazlul Haq, where all the members including Upendranath

Barman decided that they would stand by Mr. Haq..⁴⁸ The Bengal Premier, Fazlul Haq sent an appeal to the Viceroy to be forwarded to the British Prime Minister, President Roosevelt, M.Stalin and Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek stressing that - the permanent interest of the world peace and freedom requires an immediate settlement with India.⁴⁹ To describe the situation of Bengal, Haq gave the statement :

In Bengal although the disturbances have not fortunately spread over a wide area, it will be idle to ignore that whatever has happened is serious enough and unless it is immediately controlled. It may well lead to disastrous consequences affecting the peace, tranquility and the fair name of the entire province.⁵⁰

Janajuddha, perhaps the widely disseminated bulletin in North Bengal mulled over the arrest of Congress leaders as a dangerous path treaded by them since they backed away from the responsibility to thwart the fascist bureaucracy. Downbeat stride of the Congress was not capable to connect Congress and League, to form national government and to organise national defence for the protection of the country.⁵¹ Some criticised the Congress for supporting the bureaucracy; Roy group insisted that suppression was necessary. Sikander Hayat said that coward Congress betrayed the country. Vultures are moving forward to snatch the flesh at a time when Congress and Congressmen are tied in hands.⁵² So it was the duty of the Communists to fight in favour of the national unity and nationalist movement stabbed in the back and also against the attempt to form an anti-Congress front.⁵³ The uppermost question that thumped the Congressmen was about the unity between Congress and the League. They were worried about the possibility of forming a National Government. Since an answer was hard to come by, tramlines, wires were destroyed, a provocation to the defence of the country to do at least something.⁵⁴

Economic Mayhem

Congress lost control in the rural areas of Bengal, as it was not capable to withstand the demand of the tenants for two-third as a replacement for half of the crop. This led to the rise of the Nikhil Banga Praja Party (later on Haq's Krisak Praja Party). Haq's realisation that '*Politics of Bengal is the economics of Bengal*' echoed on his slogan in the election of 1937. Besides he too demanded abolishing Zamindari system, which was the basic or '*Dal-rice*' demand of his election campaign. According to Paul Greenough, quantity of food cut down for the Bengalis for the period between 1936 and 1942 were for two reasons, Firstly, rice became a commodity and its supply was reduced in accordance with population.⁵⁵ According to an official report during 1935, 77 percent of rural families were involved in (Preliminary report of the Board of Economic Enquiry on rural in debtness, para-8, Jan 1935, Calcutta Gazette supplement, 24.01.35) debt. The feature of agriculture was depressing in Bengal in the first four decades of 20th century, the trend of production was – 66% per year.⁵⁶ The cost of rice increased from 7 to 17 rupee per mon in Calcutta. Syama Prasad Mukherjee observed that the production of Aush paddy during 1942 and Aman on 1942-43 was not hopeful.⁵⁷

Shortage of food grains and irregular supplies aggravated the condition of Bengal. During 1940-41, Bengal was at the acme of the estimated rice production and hence some factors were not supportive for it. Moneylenders impeded to grant loans in fear of Bengal Tenancy Act. Conversely, Banks in Bengal had not enough money to provide agrarian loans. There were only five banks in Bengal (Madras-111, Bombay-15, Madhya Pradesh-21, Punjab-10) that had full capital amount of only five lakh five thousand rupees for four crore rural people. When total amount of agrarian loan in Bengal was more than 100 crores, banks distributed only one lakh twenty three thousand

rupees all through 1937-38. During 1938-39, Banks of Madras distributed loans that amounted to 59 lakh 44 thousand, whilst for the same period Banks of Bengal provided only 74 thousand rupees.⁵⁸ Bengal was not however self-sufficient in the production of rice and imported rice from Burma to fulfil the gap. When Japan captured Burma in April 1942 the supply of rice was stopped. One of the points of Linlithgow's estimates, to find the cause of the famine of 1943, was the poor production of Aman rice in the winter of 1942 in Midnapur, Barisal, Mymensingh and Rangpur. However the export of rice for the soldiers of South Africa, Iran, Ceylon and other areas was intentionally ignored. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, the minister of Education, Health and lands said on Feb 18, 1942, "The important problem of keeping India's fighting forces fully supplied with the best of food in order to sustain their health and spirits."⁵⁹

Reserve of rice or paddy was purchased by Govt Agents and stored for extra profit. Govt officially stored 40,000-ton rice.⁶⁰ Suppressing the fact Nalini Ranjan Sarkar said on 6 April 1942 -Owing to the extension of rice cultivation in areas released from jute, and favourable weather, the rice deficit in Bengal has been converted into a large surplus of 13^{1/2} lakh tons. Even in Aug 1943 Azizul Haq, then food member of the Govt of India said -The rice crop of 1941 was a surplus crop in Bengal by about 1^{1/2} million tons over the normal average, thus providing a fair carry over for the following year.⁶¹ Food scarcity was common in Bengal long before; a British officer observed –

*It may well be asked why in the circumstances..... a famine did not take place earlier? The reply to this is that though there was no actual 'famine' as it is usually understood, quite a large section of the people were habitually living in a semi-starved condition for many years*⁶²

Prices of rice and clothes doubled in 1941 .In comparison the rates of these basic amenities were considerably low before war. Rice catapulted to 4 to 7

rupees per mon and cloth from 1 to 3 rupees.⁶³ Seventeen districts of Bengal did not get food as per their population. However, Amartya Sen did not agree with the analysis of FAD (Food Availability decline). According to him it was 'exchange entitlement' that caused the scarcity and rise in prices of food grain. He said the situation of 1941 benefited some men, mainly Calcuttans who took advantage of the war. They supplied essential commodities, purchased food grain by the money, printed by Govt for the inflation caused by the war.⁶⁴ Kalicharan Ghosh thinks that the crisis started from 1939, because from October 1939 to September 1942, there were six price control conferences held in Delhi. Food Advisory council was formed in April 1942.⁶⁵ According to a monthly report of the struggle for independence in Bengal (Aug-September, 1942) the economic crisis -

By flooding the market with paper notes, the Govt is meeting its abnormal war expenditure due to inflation; the prices of commodities are swelling up by leaps and bounds. The prices of essential necessities of life such as food, clothing etc have already risen by more than 300 percent. Food shortage has also been enhanced by the export of foodgrains to the Middle East and African soil for war purposes. As a result, disaffection and discontent are spread over every hearth and home.⁶⁶

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee resigned, protesting the British policy in Nov 16 1942. He held the hoarder's predictability of low production of rice in the winter and the war situation responsible for the scarcity. The Haq ministry accepted that despite sufficient stock, the hoarders made the crisis.⁶⁷ The act of 1928 was not hopeful for bargadars. By the end of 1940, Land revenue commission wrote that the condition of the tenants -free transferability had tended and must tend to facilitate the transfer of raiyati lands into the hands of mahajan and non-agriculturists- that resulted in the increase of rack rented bargadars and under-raiyats by leaps and bounds.⁶⁸ Alongside there was an increasing pressure on people for cut down in wages as well as on the land.

De-industrialisation decreased the agricultural wages and at the same time there was rise in the price of rice.

It is clear from the table that the rate of price rise of rice during 1842-1910 was less than the growth rate of wages so that agricultural labour gained in income. But the picture changed in 1922 when price rise was eight times in comparison to the rise in wages that was four to six times. This trend continued more or less until 1943 when the price of rice rose 10 times over 1939 with the devastating consequence of Bengal Famine.⁶⁹ The Central Govt and the Governor were responsible for boat and rice Denial Policy. Sir John Herbert, the then Governor of Bengal explained the Denial Policy with these words in the Bengal Legislative Assembly on April 2, 1942:

There is no intention on the part of the Government to burn villages, or to remove the stocks of grain from villagers' houses. Should, however, in the case of an invasion surplus stocks fall into the hands of the enemies, it has been decided to take measures to remove surplus stocks of grain from the districts concerned, but it is not intended to remove any paddy or other food grains, which are needed for the normal requirements of the people.

The other form of denial of facilities to the enemy that is intended in the districts is to prevent any means of transport from falling into his hands. If it should ever happen that, in view of the military authorities, the invasion of any district in Bengal is imminent all forms of transport, whether by land or water, would have to be removed.⁷⁰

Haq criticised the denial policy in his letter to Herbert on Aug 2, 1942 –

You gave him (joint secretary) orders to take up the work of removal at once, without caring to find out the exact position regarding the excess of rice and paddy in different areas and the best means of removal and the cheapest method of carrying out the scheme... At the present moment we

are faced with a rice famine in Bengal mainly in consequence of an uncalled for interference on your part, and of hasty action on the part of the Joint Secretary.

Then I come to the boat removal policy... The most outstanding instance of blunder which has been committed by the permanent officials, apparently with your knowledge and concurrence, has been the case of the prevention of boats from going out into the bay of Bengal for the purpose of cultivation of the lands in the various islands lying at the mouth of the delta.⁷¹

Sales tax was imposed on the lower income groups too by the Ministry. So, loan-bonded middle class was in the same condition as of the peasants.⁷² Haq ministry tried to regulate jute production, so as to protect estimated over production. In the year 1940 a total of one crore fifty five-lakh (Bel) jute was produced in Bengal including thirty lakh (Bel) of the previous year. In the year 1941 the estimated jute (Bel) production was probably ninety lakh more. But the jute cultivation ministry overlooked the necessity to regulate and fix the last price of jute.⁷³ Haq ministry ignored some facts:

- Errors in the land records were not corrected.
- It was not legal for a peasant to change the land seasonally.
- No scope to cultivate crop as an alternative to jute.
- No right to cultivate the lands, useful only for jute.
- Necessity of exemption (for jute cultivation) needed for those who had only one- acre land.
- Need of reducing taxes for infertile lands.
- Need of storage for jute and fix up lower rate.

It is clear that the scheme of regulating jute production benefited those, who had large acres of land i.e. the rich peasants. Peasants' wanted an assurance

from the Govt. of cultivating at least three Bigha. But rather the ministry endowed to cultivate double lands in the year next resulting in overproduction of one crore sixty lakh (Bel) jute which brought down the price.⁷⁴ At the same time scarcity of salt was also a problem for Bengal. Gandhi-Arwin pact restricted Bengal to import 35-40 lakh mon of salt .The crisis was mentioned as 'salt famine.'⁷⁵ The Ministry's lame excuse was that salt was a subject of Central Govt. From December 42 to March 43 three procurement scheme of Haq Ministry failed.⁷⁶

Closing Down Zamindari System

Fazlul Haq and his Peasant Party were seeking attention for the abolishment of the Zamindari system, without reparation.⁷⁷ Krisak Sabha after its formation in 1936-37 took the radical slogan of abolition of Zamindari system. Since most of the Zamindars in Bengal were Hindus while the peasants belonged to Muslim religion, the assessment idea was thought to be communal. Muslim League agreed to support K.P.P to abolish Zamindari system however with reparation.⁷⁸ The Nikhil Banga Praja Samity, formed in 1929 led by Haq, was open for both communities but its majority members were Muslim Joteders, rich Muslim peasants. They were for the most part active in North and East Bengal. In the conference of Dhaka in 1936, the Samity was renamed as the Krisak Praja Party and Haq was elected as the President.⁷⁹ The effort of abolishing Zamindari system was related to the rise of rich peasants. The new rich peasants dominated K. P. P. So no movement was organised to stop the land tax that may have been harmful for the rich peasants. Some important points in the election manifesto of KPP were – (1) Abolition of Zamindari system without any compensation. (2) Reduction of rate of rent. (3) Abolition of Zamindar's right of nazar salami right of pre-emption. Rights of the Zamindars dwindled in many respect by Bengal Tenancy Bill (revised) of 1937, September. Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act of 1935 created Board for loan settlement, which discouraged the repayment. License was compulsory

for the moneylenders at the rate of 8% after the introduction of Bengal Moneylenders Act. Land Revenue Commission which was established in 1938, completed its work in 1940, advised Bengal Govt to take into custody the entire land and the middle right of the Zamindars with reparation. Since the Second World War started then, the plan was not put into effect, despite the fact that Haq's surrender to the Muslim League gradually ruined the ideological base of K.P.P., which buckled with its ideology to abolish Zamindari system.

Congress on the Peasantry of Bengal

Congress was in a dilemma to support the peasantry when the election of 1937 was knocking at the door. If it did not support the peasantry, its electoral mass support would be hampered. On the contrary, support may reason to loose its economic base in the rural areas. According to the resolutions of the Lucknow Congress on the agrarian problem of Bengal, Panchnan Saha, Secretary of the Agrarian Sub-Committee of B.P.C.C finished his duty by sending some recommendations to the districts of Bengal on 20th Nov 1936. Those were:

1. Bengal and Her Agriculture:

1. Proper measures for irrigation should be undertaken throughout the country after a careful survey.
2. Resuscitation of dead rivers, clearance of old water channels that have been chocked up, revival of old tanks and wells and opening up of embankments at suitable places.
3. Water rate for irrigation channels should be helved.
4. Provisions for good seeds and manure by easy methods.
5. Marketing facilities for agricultural products.
6. To increase the purchasing power of the agriculturists by fixing minimum

price for jute and rice.

7. Credit facilities at a rate of interest not higher than $6\frac{1}{4}\%$.
8. To fix the minimum living wages, way two and help anna per day of eight hours labour for agriculturist labourers.

2. Land and Zamindari System:

1. Zamindari system in its present form must be abolished on payment of some sort of compensation on equitable basis, the nature of which should be decided upon by state.
2. The different grade of intermediaries between the revenue paying proprietor and the cultivating ryot should be completely done away with. Subinfeudation, which might have been a policy of necessity in the past with the big landholders, had been carried too far with a corresponding increase in the incidents of rent of the cultivating ryot.
3. Revenue and rent should be substantially reduced. Rent should be regarded as a portion of the produce and should be fixed with a difference to the estimate price of the portion. It might be fixed one-sixth of the produce.
4. No rent should be taken from uneconomic holdings, tenants earning Rs 250/- as an annual income, should be exempted from rents.
5. Arrears of rents are to be paid by easy instalments free from all interest charges thereon. Remission of arrear in case of such peasants, after enquiry, as can not make any profit from produce of land.
6. Ejectments, confiscation of properties, attachment of oxen and agricultural implements for arrears of rents should be stopped by law.
7. All illegal exactions such as Nazrana, mahat, etc should be completely stopped by law. Proper receipts for payment of rents, interests, etc should be issued and non-compliance should be punished by law..
8. Rate of interest on loan advanced and on rent in arrear should not in any case exceed $6\frac{1}{4}\%$, No compound interest should be charged.
9. Fallow and cultivatable lands should be reclaimed by the state and provision be made for landless at reasonable rate of rent with a view to remove the rural unemployment.
10. Revision of the present Bengal Tenancy Act in the interest of the peasants

particularly in respect of mutation of name, Zamindari's right of nazar and salami's, right of pre-emption occupancy, right of ryot and enhancement of rents.

11. Land should be set apart for common pasturage for which no rent should be charged.
12. In villages near jungles, people should be allowed to collect free wood for their household purposes.

3. Rural Indebtedness:

There are two sides of the whole problem of indebtedness, one relating to debt standing against the peasant and other method for improving his conditions by increasing his purchasing powers.

Debt:

1. All hereditary debts are to be cancelled.
2. Accumulated interests on all debts are to be wiped off.
3. A moratorium is to be declared for all debts so long the present law of agricultural price rule.
4. An immediate enquiry committee should be appointed to go into the question of rural indebtedness and scale it down in a manner of equitable adjustments between the creditors and debtors. In the meanwhile, old debts standing over two years should be suspended pending enquiry and no 'Julum' should be made for the realisation of the same. Debts standing less than two years may be so adjusted for payment on long term so that it would not affect those peasants whose income for agricultural produce would not suffice for his bare maintenance⁸⁰

An attached questionnaire by Saha to collect the evidence, stressed on how far the peasants and labourers were at liberty to organise themselves. District Committees however were ignorant about those problems. Whereas from the mid 30's Gandhi began to call himself a different type of socialist. From then, he believed in a moral type of socialism based on non-violence.⁸¹ This was obviously an important departure from his earlier position. He did not hesitate

to say -Land and all property in his who will work it.⁸² In an interview in Calcutta in April 1938 Gandhi cleared his position regarding the relationship between Kissan Sabha and the Congress –

-My opinion is clear-cut, having worked among the kisans and labour all my life. There is nothing constitutionally wrong in the Congress allowing the Kisan Sabhas to work independently nor in allowing the office bearers of the Kisan Sabhas to be office bearers of the Congress, for they will come in the usual way. But my study of separate kisan organisations had led me definitely to the conclusion that they are not working for the interests of the kisans, but are organised with a view to capturing the Congress organisation. They can do even this by leading the kisans along the right channels, but I am afraid they are misleading them. If the kisans and their leaders capture the Congress by doing nothing by authorised Congress work, there is no harm. But if they do so by making false registers, storming meetings and so on, it would be something like fascism.

But the main question is whether you want the Kisan Sabha to strengthen the Congress or to weaken it, to use the kisan organisation to capture the Congress or to serve the kisans, whether the sabha is to be the rival organisation working apparently in the name of the Congress or one carrying out the Congress programme and policy. If it is really a rival organisation and Congress organisation only in name, its strength and energy will be utilised in resisting the kisan Sabha, with the result that poor kisans will be ground between the two mill stones. ⁸³

Despite this attitude towards Kisan Sabhas Gandhi was more radical in his expectations about the role the peasants would play in his forthcoming Quit India Movement, he explained to Louis Fischer, an American journalist–

Gandhi – In the villages the peasants will stop paying taxes. They

will make salt despite official prohibition. This seems a small matter; the salt tax yields only a paltry sum to the British Government. But refusal to pay it will give the peasants the courage to think that they are capable of independent action. Their next step will be to seize the land.

L.F – With violence?

Gandhi –There may be violence, but then again the landlords may co-operate.

L.F – You are an optimist.

Gandhi –They might co-operate by feeling.

L.F – Or, they might organise violent resistance.

Gandhi- There may be fifteen day of chaos. But I think we could soon bring that under control.

L.F- You feel then that it must be confiscation without compensation?

Gandhi – Of course, it would be financially impossible for anybody to compensate the landlords.⁸⁴

So Gandhi here departed from his earlier position when he said that appropriate compensation should be paid to the Zamindar if his land was taken.⁸⁵ At the same time in Bengal force and value of B.P.K.S increased.

Gandhi's Musing to Start the Movement

Gandhian Satyagraha as a policy cannot be ignored. At least it made the masses fearless to take part in the movements launched by Gandhi.⁸⁶

Personal Satyagraha was a preparatory stage in 1941 as introduced by Gandhi and was not effective in Bengal. Police did not bother to arrest the persons following personal Satyagraha. Amritalal Chaudhury from Sewagram criticised the effort on 27 February 1941 in the following words-

I am very much pained to find that amongst the names submitted Dr, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and B.P.C.C and approved by Mahatmaji, there

were many who do not really fulfil the conditions of Satyagraha as laid down by Gandhi, I have several letters in my possession from some prominent Congress workers of Bengal to substantiate my finding... Mahatmaji has repeatedly warned and is still warning and guarding with his eagle eye and untiring energy against any impurity creeping into the present movement, which he thinks to be, perhaps the best one of his life. So it will be a national calamity and a suicidal move if we disagree the movement by introducing corruption into it. But my humble appeal is meant, especially, for the Bengal Satyagrahis and those who are at the helm of the affair there. ⁸⁷

Two unhappy incidents are responsible for a change in Gandhi's mind; the failure of Cripp's Mission and the possibility of Japanese advancement to India. It was clear from the success of the Japanese in Malay, Singapore, Burma and Andaman-Nicobar Island that the British would not be able to protect India if needed. Earlier Gandhi was not interested to start a mass movement during the war. But then he wanted to drive out the British from India. It was clear from the articles he wrote in 'Harijan' from April 1942 onwards and from the interviews, he conferred.⁸⁸ In article in 'Harijan' on 26 April he considered the only way to protect both the British and India was British extraction from India. On 3rd May and 10th May, he wrote that it was the British presence that provoked Japanese to attack India. If British quit India there would be in- chaos that will be more acceptable to him. Gandhi cautioned Jawaharlal that movement would be started without him, since he did not want to make any obstacle to the war against Fascism.⁸⁹ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Asaf Ali, Bhulabhai Desai and Raja Gopalachari also opposed Gandhi's plan of starting a movement. Gandhi ordered Azad and Nehru to resign as the President of the Congress and as a member of the working committee. He was firm on his way –If you just come my way, you will become an obstacle to me. And as for yourself, you will find yourself no more.⁹⁰ Gandhi told Satish Dasgupta (who was in charge of the Satyagraha

Movement in Bengal) that earlier he was criticised for his negative attitude and now he was told to be an 'extremist and revolutionary'.⁹¹ He confirmed about mass support and hence was ready to start a movement whether working committee admired it or not. At one stage, his sole admirer Khadi Group only supported him. Not just to Quit India, Wardha Proposal stressed on the political rights and powers to peasants, workers and women.⁹² C.S.P, R.S.P, F.B and other political parties supported Wardha Proposal too. R.S.Ruikar of F.B wrote to Hemanta Kumar Basu in Calcutta that Mahatma was at last following the way of Subhash Chandra Bose. In a press conference, Ruikar stated that though Bose was defeated at Tripuri, paradoxically it was the success of Bose's stance that was accepted in Wardha. ⁹³

Congress Brand of Nationalism and Alternative Politics

It was the Congress brand of nationalism as League depicted and had some contradictions performing the August Movement. The movement did not undertake other political ideas then in motion in the land.⁹⁴ It was the 'germ of decay' that was in the contradictions of the nationalist movement as said by Ali Akbar.⁹⁵ Provincialism and Communalism were the corollaries that hampered the smooth development of Nationalism. Provincialism played an effective role to upset the nationalist movement more effectively than Communalism after passing of the Govt of India Act of 1935 by the British Parliament. Ali Akbar thus ends with this remark-

If nationalism decides to fight effectively communalism and provincialism, it will have to fight itself and destroy its own basis. That is the crisis of Indian Nationalism. ⁹⁶

Communal question in the 40's was related with the agrarian question in

Bengal. It was the clash of interest in landed property between the rising Hindu middle class and the Muslim tenants; an issue of Muslim separatist leaders. In this productive ground of communal politics, Swarajya Party voted in favour of Muslim leaders. Success of Fazlul Haq and K.P.P was based on the polarisation between Zamindars and peasants. Hindu members of the Legislative Assembly and 'Hindu newspapers', 1933 opposed Bengal Tenancy Act 1928, Bengal Rural Primary Education Bill, 1930, Bengal Municipal Act Amendment Bill, 1932, Bengal Money Lenders Bill, 1932 and Bengal Agricultural Debtors Bill.⁹⁷ It was the shake-up of Muslim League on the subject of the effort of the Congress to introduce Hindi, instead of Urdu, ludicrous issue for Bengali speaking Muslims. The census of 1941 had links with communal award. It recorded the highest increase in the rate of Population than previous years. There was about 22% total increase in population with Hindus overtaking the Muslims, an opposite feature than previous censuses. Hindus and Muslims both tried to prove that the census was wrongly estimated. Communal Award and the policy of the Haq Ministry also touched the lower strata of the Hindu caste, the Namasudras. Namasudra-Muslim combination played an important role in Bengal politics from 1930 onwards. This combination caused the decrease of the mass support of the Congress in the forties. They won the first victory with the passing of Bengal Debt Cancellation Act and Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act in 1938. However; Zamindar-merchant section in K.P.P, League and Congress restricted the move towards the interest of the peasants. League published the '*Pirpur Report*' and '*Haq Report*' on the subject of persecution to the Muslim community in those states Congress forms the ministry. Thereafter it was easier for League to widen its communal propaganda. About this Haq wrote in a confidential report on 22.01.42 –

In course of my tours, I have found that the most objectionable speeches came from Sir Nazim, Mr Shaheed Suhrawardy, Maulana Akram Khan Bahadur, Abdul Momin and local people..... the speeches are bound to

inflame communal feeling against the present ministers should be reported ⁹⁸

Except the Northwestern province, Muslims in general remained passive in the struggle of 1942.⁹⁹ League ministry of K. Nazimuddin was with the imperialist and took backward-looking attitude towards the national movement.¹⁰⁰ League ministry of K. Nazimuddin was with the imperialist and took backward-looking attitude towards the national movement. Anita Inder Singh generalised that no riot took place during Quit India Movement and Muslims did not strongly oppose the Congress.¹⁰¹ Before Wardha, when Gandhi proposed for Quit India, Nazimuddin asked Sir Toamen, Governor of Madhya Pradesh and Berar that whether it would be possible to use the Muslims against the probable mass movement of the Congress.¹⁰² Toamen did not find anything hopeful in the proposal.

Jinnah thought that Quit India was a new formula of Gandhi to form the '*Hindu Raj*'. He estimated Gandhi trying to prove to the British that they should presume that India means Congress and Congress means Gandhi whose endeavour was to seize the power from British including the right of the Muslims and lower castes.¹⁰³ The party line of Quit India, according to Jinnah, was '*angered and desperate mentality*' and he questioned whether it was the highest contribution of Gandhi to India at the fag end of his life?¹⁰⁴ Jinnah said—

We only asked the Muslims to keep aloof from this movement. Let them fight it out. This is one of those cases where neutrality is the most effective policy in our part. ¹⁰⁵

So, leaders of the League along with European group supported the measures to suppress the Quit India Movement in Bengal.¹⁰⁶ According to Bipan Chandra moderate communalism ended in 1937 and from then extreme communalism started its way.¹⁰⁷ Both Hindus and Muslims were

strengthening themselves by forming 'Akhra's and Self-Defensive Volunteers. Gandhi was not in favour of the efforts and remarked that 'Akhra's would not pave the way for nationalist movement. If the preparation were made with the defensive object at the time of riots, to create suspicion and annoyance between the two communities, it would fail to solve the problems.¹⁰⁸ Hindu Mahasava at that time tried to increase its strength in some Muslim oriented districts of Bengal where they tried to use the anxiety of the Hindus. After the riot of 1941, Mahasava and Congress came closer.¹⁰⁹ Mahasava, despite communal disturbance was not much troubled for British presence in India. Home Ministry reported that the endeavor of R.S.S.S was objectionable, and scattered since they did not support the threat of civil disobedience (Quit India). There was no reason to give importance to their efforts.¹¹⁰ Home Ministry was ensured to observe that at the time of '*Congress disturbances*' the leaders of the R.S.S instructed their cadres to be away from the '*Movement of the Congress*' and the cadres were following their instructions.¹¹¹ During the 40's, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee accused the Congress that they were misleading the countrymen by saying that they would not allow the division of the country.¹¹² Savarkar instructed to the members of the Hindu Mahasava that they did have to resign from the working committee of the Viceroy. On September 1942 his instruction from Bombay to all members of the Mahasava that those belonging to the Municipality, local administration, Legislative Assembly, or those working in the Army, Navy, Air Force or arms factory must perform their works accordingly.¹¹³ Overall, the Sangha was aloof to participate in the Quit India Movement. Report of the Bombay Home Ministry said the following words

- the Sangha has scrupulously kept itself within the law, and in particular, has refrained from taking part in the disturbances that broke out in August 1942.¹¹⁴

Essence of the Movement in Bengal

The news of the arrest of Gandhi and all the members of the working committee and other principal leaders appeared in the extra-ordinary issues of the Calcutta dailies. But no programme outlined by the A.I.C.C. Bengal workers were waiting for the return of the A.I.C.C members from whom it was expected that the programme would be procured. To their great surprise, most of those members were incarcerated stealthily by the usurper administration and no news of their arrest was given due publicity in the columns of the newspapers owing to the restrictions imposed by the press advisor. Bengal could not make an admirable start as the prominent leaders and workers of F.B and other political parties yielded to the octopus clutches of the Defence of India rules long before the struggle for India's independence launched by Gandhi. Various restrictions were also imposed on the movements of the prominent workers of the districts.¹¹⁵ When Sadiq Ali informed K.S. Roy about the A.I.C.C instruction, Roy did not believe that working committee, in the presence of Gandhi had permitted all the plans including destruction of the communication of roads and rails.¹¹⁶ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad informed K.S. Roy that Gandhi and Nehru were unable to ascribe the necessity to start a Movement. At the same time campaigns against the Second World War by Dr. Prafulla Ghosh and the Gandhi follower Khadi group annoyed K.S.Roy and his followers. Azad assured them not to join with Khadi group in anti-war campaigning and not to prepare for a probable political movement.¹¹⁷ K.S.Roy group was fretful that Khadi group would take the lead if the movement started. Prafulla Ghosh and Khadi group organised and informed district Congress President and secretaries to prepare for the forth-coming movement.

Jugantar Dal, a section of the anti-movement Ad-Hoc District Congress committee also agreed to start a movement. The party as an opportunity of seizing power welcomed it.¹¹⁸ One of the party members Jyotish Bhounik

wished that every district in Bengal should properly organise the destructive measures to disrupt the communication. Another member Sudhir Ghosh planned for an organised guerrilla war, in this juncture. All the subversive groups in Bengal took advantage of the Congress Movement. Along with anti-war orientation, the groups and parties like Forward Block, Revolutionary socialist party, Labour party and Sri Sangha had no restraint to jump on the bandwagon.¹¹⁹ . Except C.P.I all the leftist parties participated in the movement.¹²⁰ Even as Congress was not in a position to start an anti-Govt movement, it would be hurt Fascism and Nazism, and possibly would be converted to a communal riot in the present organisation of the Congress. So, at the Ramgarh Conference in 1940, Congress decided to start C.D. Movement after reorganising herself. Before the outbreak of the Quit India Movement, two separate Congress Committees and Bengal Congress committee that were recognised by All India Congress Committee and Forward Block were engaged in different political actions. Swaraji's were moved away from their position of Hindu-Muslim unity.¹²¹ . Annanda Choudhury of the Khadi group, Niharendu Dutta Majumdar, and Makhan Lal Sen of the Congress directed the movement. F.B. and Jugantar Party were linked with the plan.¹²² C.L.I. and Jugantar were also linked with it. In October Jugantar Dal, Sukhendu Bikash Dutta's group, F.B and Khadi group agreed to work together. On 23 August 1942, Congress M.L.A and M.L.C's met and decided that members of Legislatures would not resign. According to K.S. Roy, this decision was not approved in the Congress Working Committee due to a difference of opinion. K.S.Roy thought it to be a separate development and sabotage by Sadiq Ali, a true follower of Rammohan Lohia of C.S.P, not a Congressman who had sent a secret circular after 9th August, resulting in violence and disruption. So this was a C.S. P circular not by Congress..¹²³ Bidhan Chandra Roy at the same time helped the British and did not participate in the Quit India Movement.¹²⁴ Nalini Sarkar and M.S.Aney agreed to suppress Quit India Movement brutally in the meeting of the Executive Council of Viceroy on 16th July and 8th August.

When Gandhi launched the movement it was an expected report from the Congress –

In the present struggle for our independence, our Mohammedan brethren in general are not participating actively, but there is no use gainsaying the fact that they are doing nothing prejudicial to the successful prosecution of our war. Jamiat-ul-Ulema and other nationalist Muslims are fighting hand with us. Press reports from Chittagang show that many Mohammedans have been incarcerated by this time, though there is no aggressive movement. Then again, in Sylhet, the police as a result of their participation in the national struggle has arrested a great number of Maulavies. But it is a deplorable fact that some Mohammedans betrayed their communal spirit and played into the hands of the British imperialists at Bhangra(Faridpur) and at Contai and Tamruk(Midnapore). Besides these, information has been received from Vikrampur(Dhaka) to the effect that the high Govt officials are trying to sabotage the intensive movement there by rousing the communal feeling among the Muslims. The Radical Democratic Party, vile betrayer of the cause of the country, are on the other hand, inciting the unsophisticated Muslim masses of the locality against our national soldiers. As a result, the communal spirit runs high there. ¹²⁵

Observations

The Revolutionary group's vain attempt for armed revolution engrossed them towards Gandhi's commitment. The clash of the groups continued in favour of C.R.Das and later on in favour of Subhash Bose. The groups hesitated to participate in Gandhian schemes. But the scenario was different after the death of Das. Bengal Congress was truly divided into two groups, Jugantar Dal and Congress cadres who were with Bose. On the other hand, Anusilan Samity, Khadi Prathisthan, Abhay Ashram and non-violence convictional cadres were with Sengupta. Subhash Bose thought that Sengupta's followers were tiny minorities. Bengal Congress from the beginning shifted from the Gandhian Congress. Congress Govt had glided away and neglected the duty

of political education and organisation. Conflicting forces were active within the Congress. Bengal Congress tried to share power with backward classes but did not agree to come to terms with K.P.P as a whole for its Muslim orientation. This wrong step of Congress paved the way for League's future hegemony. On the other hand, Congress was unable to approach the rural Muslim peasantry of Bengal, to use them in the future movements. It was not that the production of rice trimmed down in the winter of 1942 and it was an exceptional case that the mass faced. 'Dal rice' was the slogan used by K.P.P to win the election of 1937. During 40's in spite of its weak rural base, socialist ideology affected the minds of the leaders of the first strata of the Congress. Gandhi's mind also changed before launching Quit India movement. Despite some exceptions, Quit India Movement almost in all districts of Bengal, organised by the revolutionary groups, changed their forms to be leftist parties. Plans were not of Gandhian prototyped. On the other hand, the movement was not only, opposed by Mahasava or League but some important members of the Bengal Congress were also denied to take the responsibility of the movement. League enhanced its power in rural Bengal with Haq, who shifted his loyalty to the League. So, except some loyal Muslims of the Congress platform, Muslims in general were aloof from the movement.

Notes and References

¹ Gupta Pabitra (ed) *Revolt- An Autobiographical Writing by Panchanan Chakroborty*, 1995, Calcutta, p-3.

² Sarkar Tanika - *Bengal 1928-1934, The Politics of Protest*, New Delhi 1987, Introduction.

³ Chopra P.N(ed). *Quit India Movement: British Secret Report*, Thompson Press, (India) Limited, Faridabad, 1976, p -380.

⁴ Sarkar Tanika, *op.cit.*,.

⁵ Gupta Pabitra(ed) *Revolt, op., cit.* p-11.

⁶ Bandyopadhyay Gitasree - *Constraints in Bengal Politics 1921-41, Gandhian Leadership*, Sarat Book House, Calcutta, 1984, p -346.

- ⁷ Chatterjee Jaya - *Bengal Divided 1932-1947*, (English edition, Cambridge University Press, 1994) Bengali version, L. Alma pub, 2003, pp-26-27.
- ⁸ Bose said the term to Panchanan Chakroborty, Gupta Pabitra(ed) *Revolt*, op.cit., 1995, Calcutta, p-28.
- ⁹ Palit Chittabrata & Roy Ujjal- *Bengal Before and After Partition (1947): Changing Profile Of A Province*, Corpus Research Institute, Cal, 2004, 2nd Edition (2005), pp-10-11.
- ¹⁰ See Chapter-2 for fractions and group politics between these leaders of Calcutta and the district leaders of North Bengal.
- ¹¹ Ghosh Suniti Kumar- *Bangla Bibhajaner Arthaniti O Rajniti*, New Horizon, 2001, Calcutta, p-197.
- ¹² N.N.Mitra *Indian Annual Register, 1933, Part-1, Jan to June*, p-3.
- ¹³ Walliullah Md - *Amader Muktisangram*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1978, p -301.
- ¹⁴ P.N.Chopra(ed)- *British Secret Report*, pp - 228- 229.
- ¹⁵ Thomas K.P-Dr. B.C. Roy, Calcutta, 1955, p -192.
- ¹⁶ Ray Surya Sankar- *Disastrous Devide*, *The Statesman*, 31 Aug 1997.
- ¹⁷ Choudhury Nirad C - *Thy Hand Great Anarch*, India, 1921-1951, London, 1987, p-470.
- ¹⁸ Ahmed Kamruddin - *Social History of the East Pakistan*, Dhaka, Second edition, 1967, p -30.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, p-34.
- ²⁰ Ahmed Abdul Mansur- *Amar Dheha Rajnitir Panchas Bachar*, Dhaka, second edition, 1970, p -115
- ²¹ *Confidential Report D.I.G, I.B, September 1936 1st half*.
- ²² Ahmed Kamruddin - op.cit., p -115.
- ²³ Majumdar Satyendranath - *Congress O Communist*, *Janajuddha*, 22.09.42.
- ²⁴ Satyabrata Dutta - *Banglar Bidhan Sabhar Akso Bachar (Rajanugatya Theke Ganatantra)*, Progressive Pub, 2002, p- 146.
- ²⁵ Tripathi Amalesh - *Swadhinata Sangrame Bharater Jatio Congress*, Ananda Pub, Cal, 1397 B.S, p-234.
- ²⁶ Harun-Al-Rashid's article *Bangio Mantrisava, 1937-1947 in Islam Sirajul - Bangladesher Itihas*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1993, p -383.
- ²⁷ Gopal .S - *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol-1*, London, 1976, p-240
- ²⁸ Rahman Aatur and Azad Lenin - *Bhasa Andoloner Arthanaitik Patabhumi*, University press, Dhaka, 1990. pp-23-24.
- ²⁹ Sarkar was the member of the executive council of viceroy during 1941-42 and resigned from the post with protest of Gandhi's arrest. Sarkar said that he played the role of Umichand (In Plassy 1757) in his life, that's why he was praised within Congress. Sen Shila - *Muslim Politics in Bengal. 1937-47*, Delhi, 1976, p -93.
- ³⁰ *Nehru to Gandhi*, 30th March 1937, *Nehru a bunch of old letters*, 2nd year, p-117.
- ³¹ Tripathi Amalesh, op.cit., p-234.
- ³² Ghosh Suniti Kumar, op.cit., p-222 & Chattopadhyay Bhabani Prasad - *Deshbibhag Paschat O Nepathya Kahini*, Ananda Pub, Cal, 1993, second edition, 2002, p-34.
- ³³ Hasim Abdul- Amar Jiban O Bibhag Purba Banglar Rajniti, 1978, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Chirayata Publication, Calcutta (Indian edition), p-30.
- ³⁴ Bandopadhyay Sailesh - *Jinnah, Pakistan O Natun Bhabna*, Calcutta, 1398 B.S, p-123.

- ³⁵ Ahmed Abdul Mansur-Amar Dheha Rajnitir Panchas Bachar, Dhaka, second edition, 1970, pp -230-232.
- ³⁶ Banerjee Sachitananda-Fazlul Haq-Jiban O Rajniti, Progressive, 2001, Calcutta, p -31.
- ³⁷ Barman Upendranath – Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jiban Smriti, Durga Press, Jal, 1392 B.C, First edition, pp – 81—84.
- ³⁸ Sen Shila, op.cit., p -272.
- ³⁹ Hasim Abdul, op.cit., p-39.
- ⁴⁰ Rasul Abdullah – Krisak Sabhar Itihas, Nabajatak Pub, Cal, 1376 B.S, 1980(second edition) p-75.
- ⁴¹ N.C.Chatterjee, Presidential Address, Chatmohar, Pabna, 14th March, 1942.
- ⁴² Chatterjee Goutam- Swadhinata Sangrame Banglar Chatrasamaj, Charuprakash, Calcutta, 1980, pp-38-39 & p -40.
- ⁴³ Walliullaha Md ,op.cit., 1978,p -301
- ⁴⁴ Barman Upendranath, op.cit., p– 81.
- ⁴⁵ Roy Amuradha- Sekaler Marxio Sanaskriti Andolan, Progressive Pub, Calcutta, May, 2000, p -32.
- ⁴⁶ Roy Choudhury Ladlimohan(ed)- Quit India movement 1942 – A Collection Documents, Vol-1, Govt of W.B, 1994.p-4.
- ⁴⁷ Hindusthan Standared, 11th September, 1942.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid. 15th August 1942.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid. 19th August, 1942.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. 12th August 1942.
- ⁵² Ibid. 19th August 1942.
- ⁵³ Ibid. 19th August 1942.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid. 2nd September 1942.
- ⁵⁵ Greenough Paul. R.—Adunik Bangla – Samridhi O Daridra (Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal: The Famine of 1943 –44), ISBS, Delhi, 1997.p– 60.
- ⁵⁶ Majumdar Asok –Peasant Protest in Indian Politics, NIB Pub, Delhi, 1993, p -26.
- ⁵⁷ Mukherjee Shyama Pprasad – Rashtrasangram O Panchaser Mannantar, Mitra & Ghosh, 1405 B.S, Calcutta, p-19.
- ⁵⁸ Byabsa O Banijya, June, 1941, p -29.
- ⁵⁹ Ghosh Kalicharan – Famines in Bengal, 1770-1943, National Council of Education, Cal , 1994, second edition 1987, p -29.

Following chart shows that as per as the availability of food grains and rice according to the balance between export and import, was concern 1942-43 was the crucial year of negative balance-

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF ALL FOODGRAINS BY SEA AND THE NET BALANCE
Excess(+) and Deficit (-)

Years	Imports(tons)	Exports(tons)	Balance(tons)
1937-38	1,596,138	966,834	+624,304

1938-39	1,871,693	827,991	+1,043,702
1939-40	2,713,632	492,714	+2,220,018
1940-41	1,549,182	556,267	+992,915
1941-42	1,202,149	770,997	+431,152
1942-43	18,541	379,170	-360,622

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF RICE(AND PADDY) BY SEA AND THE NET BALANCE

Excess(+) and Deficit (-)

<i>Years</i>	<i>Imports(tons)</i>	<i>Exports(tons)</i>	<i>Balance(tons)</i>
1937-38	1,421,798	256,726	+1,165,072
1938-39	1,561,855	308,757	+1,235,098
1939-40	2,428,059	289,759	+2,138,600
1940-41	1,374,888	277,690	+1,097,198
1941-42	1,066,074	342,969	+723,105
1942-43	18,132	276,816	-258,684

Source: Ghosh Kalicharan – Famines in Bengal, 1770-1943, National Council of Education, Bengal, Cal , 1994, Second edition 1987, p -30.

⁶⁰ Roy Anuradha- Sekaler, *op. cit.*, p-32.

⁶¹ Ghosh Kalicharan *op. cit.*, p -16.

⁶² Greenough Paul. R., *op. cit.*, p- 84.

⁶³ Byabsa O Banijya, June, 1941, p -29.

⁶⁴ Sen Amartya-Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation, Oxford University Press, London, 1983.

⁶⁵ Ghosh Kalicharan, *op. cit.*, p -15.

⁶⁶ Congress-Reports of the Struggle for Independence in Bengal, Home (Pol) Confidential File No 253/43. The shortage of food grains resulted in a rise of the price of food grains and in agricultural wages –As shows the following table1:

*Table-1
Agricultural prices and wages in Bengal 1939-45
(Index Base Year 1939)*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Price of the food grain</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Agricultural wages</i>
1939	93	1939-1940	100

1940	100	1940-1941	110
1941	109	1941-1942	115
1942	160	1942-1943	125
1943	385	1943-1944 1st half 2nd half	130 200-300
1944 (first seven months)	280	1944-1945 1st half	400-500

Source: Government of India, *The famine enquiry commission, Final report, 1945.*

⁶⁷ Mukherjee Shyama Prasad, *op.cit.*, p - 28.

⁶⁸ *Report of the Land Revenue Commission (1940), Vol-3, p-228.*

⁶⁹ Majumdar Asok, *op.cit.*, p -27.

Following table2 shows the trend of the price rise of rice:

Table-2

Wage Rate and Price of Rice

Year	1842	1852	1862	1872	1911	1922	1925	1939	1943
<i>Wage Rate of Agr. Labour in annas</i>	1 100	11/2 150	2 200	3 300	4 400	4-6 400-600	10 1000	33/4 375	16 1600
<i>Price of Rice(per mound)in Rs</i>	1 100	11/2 135	11/2 150	19/11 182	22/3 266	8 800	7 700	31/2 350	35 3500

Wage Rate 1842 =100

Price of Rice (per mound) 1842 =100

Source: Santiprio Basu –*Banglar Chasi, Bishwabharati, 1351B.S, reprinted 1356 B.S, p-59. Also in Majumdar Asok op.cit., p -27.*

⁷⁰ Ghosh Kalicharan, *op.cit.*, p-51.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p -52.

⁷² Byabsa O Banijya, *October, 1941, p -427.*

⁷³ *Ibid*, June, 1941, pp-14-17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, October, 1941, p-462.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, June, 1941, p-26.

⁷⁶ Roy Anuradha , *op.cit.*, p -35.

- ⁷⁷ Broomfield Joan.H. – *Elite Conflict in Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal* (Barkley university of California, 1968),p-291.
- ⁷⁸ Abdul Mansur Ahmed , *op.cit.*, p- 148.
- ⁷⁹ Bhatyacharya Dipankar – *Peasant Movements in Bengal and Bihar, Rabindra Bharati University, Cal, 1992,First edition, p –23.*
- ⁸⁰ I.B File 696 – 34(2)(Dup), Part –7,Revival of the Swarajya Party of the B.P.C.C, North Bengal.
- ⁸¹ Chatterjee Tapan Kumar – *Gandhi and the Indian Peasantry, Progressive, Cal, 2003,p -260.*
- ⁸² *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol-64, p-192.*
- ⁸³ *Ibid, vol-67, p-23-24.*
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid, vol-Appendix, pp-445- 46.*
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid, vol-58, p-251.*
- ⁸⁶ *Bhattacharya Buddhadev- Satyagrahas in Bengal, 1921-39, Minerva Pub, Cal, 1977,p -323.*
- ⁸⁷ *Satyagraha Movement, Home political confidential file no 934⁴⁰.*
- ⁸⁸ *Banerjee Kallol —Calcutta Mahanagari O Tatsannihita Anchale Bharot Charo Andolan, Progressive Publishers, June, 2003,p -2.*
- ⁸⁹ *Gopal. S,op.cit.,p -292.*
- ⁹⁰ *Chopra P.N (ed),op.cit.,pp-220-21.*
- ⁹¹ *Ibid, p-223.*
- ⁹² *Roy Choudhury Ladlimohan(ed),op.cit.,pp5-7.*
- ⁹³ *Chopra P.N (ed),op.cit., pp-253-54.*
- ⁹⁴ *Dutta Abhijit – Muslim Festivals Muslim Mind and The Morning News, Readers Service, Cal, 2005, pp-60-61.*
- ⁹⁵ *The crisis of Indian Natioanalism, Ali Akbar, Morning News, Eed Supliment, 6th September, 1945-cited in Dutta Abhijit, op.cit.,*
- ⁹⁶ *Dutta Abhijit,op.cit.,p -62.*
- ⁹⁷ *Sen Shila ,op.cit.,pp-71-72.*
- ⁹⁸ *Communal situation – Prevention of further deterioration in question of adequacy of staff for reporting speeches in opposition and/or Muslim League meetings all over the country, Home Political Confidential File no 15/42.*
- ⁹⁹ *Roy Annadashankar-Swadhinatar Purbabhash,Shaibba Pub,Cal,1386 B.S,P-124.*
- ¹⁰⁰ *Palit Chittabrata & Roy Ujjal,op.cit., p-15.*
- ¹⁰¹ *Anita Inder Singh –The Origins of The Partition of India: 1936-1947, OUP, 1987,p -89.*
- ¹⁰² *Chattopadhyay Bhabani Prasad ,op.cit.,p -34.*
- ¹⁰³ *Home (Political) File No 17.02.42.*
- ¹⁰⁴ *Linlithgow Papers, Rill No20, cited in Chattopadhyay Mrinal Kanti – Jatiatabadi Jinnah: Chintar Cromabibartan, Progressive, Calcutta, Jan 2001,p -116 ,141*
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ahmmad Jamaluddin (ed) –Speeches and Writings of Mr.Jinnah, Vol-1, Lahore, 1952, p-456.*
- ¹⁰⁶ *Banerjee Sachitananda,op.cit., p-74.*
- ¹⁰⁷ *Chandra Bipan –Jinnah, Goalkar O Kattar Samprodaikata in Bipan Chandra & others(ed) Bharater Swadhinata Sangram, Bengali version, 1994,Calcutta, p-364.*

-
- ¹⁰⁸ Pyarelal – Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase, Ahmedabad, p-440; Tendulkar G.D – Mahatma, Vol-3, Bombay, 1945, pp-130-34.
- ¹⁰⁹ Chatterjee Jaya-Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-47, First Indian Edition, 1995, Cambridge University Press, pp-130-49.
- ¹¹⁰ Note of the Home Ministry, Signed by A.S 7th August 1942.
- ¹¹¹ Home Pol, Proceedings F, 28.08.42, Pol (1)).
- ¹¹² Basu Rita-Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and the Alternative Politics in Bengal, Progressive Pub, Calcutta, 2002, p-119.
- ¹¹³ Roy Goutam – R.S.S O Hindu Samprodaikatar Bibartaner Dhara, Vol-1, National Book Agency, 2002, Calcutta, p-84-85.
- ¹¹⁴ Govt of India, Home Political File (1) No 28.03.43.
- ¹¹⁵ Congress-Reports of the Struggle for Independence in Bengal, Home (Pol) confidential file no 253/43.
- ¹¹⁶ Chopra P.N(ed), op.cit., p-275.
- ¹¹⁷ G.B. Home (Political) Confidential, File No –339/42.
- ¹¹⁸ Chopra. P.N. (ed), op.cit., p– 378.
- ¹¹⁹ Chatterje Pranab - Struggle and Strife in Urban Bengal 1937—47, , Das Gupta and Co, Cal, 1991, p– 114
- ¹²⁰ De Amalendu-Banglae Bharat Charo Andolan, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, Calcutta, 2003, pp-235-43.
- ¹²¹ Dutta Satyabrata– Banglar Bidhan Sabhar Akso Bachar (Rajanugatya Theke Ganatantra), Progressive Pub, 2002, p– 110.
- ¹²² P.N.Chopra(ed)op.cit., p – 379.
- ¹²³ Ibid, pp-276-77.
- ¹²⁴ Thomas K.P-Dr. B.C. Roy, Calcutta, 1955, p -192.
- ¹²⁵ .Congress-Reports of the Struggle for Independence in Bengal, Home (Pol) Confidential File no 253/43.