

## Chapter-4

### Nationalist Movement of 1942: Review in Perspective of Alternative Politics in Northern Bengal

Alternative politics by the Hindu Mahasava, Muslim League, C.P.I, and the leftists had a common characteristic that they did not officially support the Quit India Movement. Congress did not include the demands of the lower castes within its agenda and ignored the regional demand of the Gorkhas. Mahasava tried to enrich their mass support involved with the Rajbansi peasants, tribals' social uplift, and the Communists supported the Pakistan Proposal or the demand of the Gorkha League in the forties.

#### Hindu Mahasava and Asiatic Nationalism

V.D. Savarkar of Hindu Mahasava wanted Japan to be victorious in the Sino-Japanese war. The British wanted otherwise since they were keen on a Japanese empire near British India. Savarkar thought that war between British and Japan would result in the freedom of India.<sup>1</sup> In the year 1939, provincial conference of Hindu Mahasava the Presidential address, stated Japan as the friend of India. Similarities of two countries in respect of Buddhism was found out, an effort to accomplish the sympathy of Japan. Savarkar wrote to Rasbihari Bose to gain the sympathy of Japan on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1939<sup>2</sup>. Rasbihari Bose instructed Asutosh Lahiri to translate all the publication of Hindu Mahasava into Japanese version. He informed that he had already translated

Bhagawat Gita into Japanese version and sends it to V.D.Savarkar. V.D. Savarkar opined to give a deputation to both China and Japan, expressing the religious and cultural similarities. According to a secret report, it was decided that Chiang-Kai-Shaik would liaison with Japanese and throw the British and French away<sup>3</sup>. The outlook towards China and Japan of Mahasava however affected the outlook of the Indian Muslims, who favoured the Arabs of Palestine, an exertion of pan-Islamism. According to Savarkar, British invasion of Iran was the instruction from the Muslim League. Dr. Gokhal Chand Narang, ex-minister of Local Self Government said in October 1945 that Mahasava was not against 'Quit India' rather it went further to raise the slogan of 'Quit Asia'. The reasons he raised were imperialist power had already much exploited the wealth of India and other Asiatic countries. Mahasava would not allow any one to destroy the Hindu nations as false slogans of freedom<sup>4</sup>.

Mahasava the Hindu based organization was supported by Nepal the Hindu country. In return, Mahasava suggested that since Nepal served the British Government with the efficient Gorkha soldiers, the British should return Nepal Government, large sums of money, Darjeeling and a part of Bihar province, which the British Government had annexed, from the Nepal Government,<sup>5</sup>. Likewise, Amalendu Bagchi, a Mahasava member stressed the importance of the Hindus being close to culturally and politically of Nepal. Bagchi suggested to return the prisoners of Nepal and to send a Hindu students mission to Nepal to bring about a political and military unity. Anusilan Samity during the 40's attracted towards the enriched financial fund of Mahasava opposed to help Pratul Ganguly and Ramesh Acharya if they did agree to change the platform. Mahasava was not ready to lose the financial patronage of Nepal at any cost<sup>6</sup>.

## Mahasava on Congress and Quit India Movement

Mahasava criticised the Congress policy of non-cooperation, its occasional withdrawal from legislatures and refusal to capture power. It had allowed the

existing state machinery, both legislative and administrative, with all their imperfections, to oppress and suppress the Hindus almost in all parts of India. Its failure to oppose the Communal Award, both inside and outside the legislatures in order to appease a section of Muslims, was a monumental folly as Mahasava observes<sup>7</sup>. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in the session of Hindu Mahasava at Burdwan said that from the beginning, Congress had followed the policy of appeasement. Some Muslims came forward and joined the Congress, but the Hindus who formed the majority in the Congress, did not raise any voice of objection during the Communal Award. Congress according to Mukherjee also made another mistake of appending the Khilafat movement with the C.D Movement in 1920 and from that time, the Muslims started to dream of Pakistan in India. From all sides Mukherjee presumed that the Hindus especially of Bengal and Punjab were being oppressed. According to Shyama Prasad's observation, it was a blunder on the part of Congress by to not to form a coalition Government with Fazlul Haq. Mukherjee described Mahasava's goal of the independence of India was different from the League's intention against it.<sup>8</sup>

Shyama Prasad analysed that after the arrest of the Congress leaders in Bombay there were disturbances of a 'unique character' throughout India. The vast majority of the people who suffered were Hindus. The penalties affected Hindus mentioned as a community. Gandhi started his fast while he was a prisoner at Pune. During this period, Mr. Raja Gopalachari having resigned from the Congress was denouncing the movement and preparing a scheme with the objective of surrender to Jinnah.<sup>9</sup> Hence, according to Shyama Prasad, the Muslim League was given a free hand by the agents of the British Government and was directly influencing the country's administration much to the detriment of the interests of the Hindus. During his fast, without consulting anybody, Gandhi secretly approved of the formula prepared by RajaGopalachari conceding to Jinnah the principle of partition of India. This according to Shyama Prasad was a most unholy surrender to communal

fanaticism during a period when Gandhi the author of August Resolution, was himself a prisoner and thousands of Congressmen, were rotting inside the jails<sup>10</sup>. Thereafter, followed Gandhi's visit to Jinnah, the very idea of partition of India which was a sin and a horror to all nationalists in India was quietly swallowed by many and given a new found application of territorial self-determination. Mahasava estimates that self-determination of India as such vanished and Quit India was transferred by a marginal process into split India. Jinnah got a new bargaining counter on which to stand and put forward fresh demands for the vivisection of India.<sup>11</sup> Symaprasad, however, did not oppose the Quit India movement officially. On the other hand, he did not criticize the oppression of the British to stop the movement. According to Herbert, Shyama Prasad was trying to put the light on himself to get the sympathy of the Hindus. Nevertheless, his authority was declining; because the Congress led mass movement had lost its pace.<sup>12</sup>

After the release of Gandhi, he and other leaders of the Congress tried to prove with their feverish activities that the Congress had not started any movement at all in 1942. Crude legalistic interpretations were attempted to make and the very acts of violence, which were applauded by the Congress leaders as deeds of heroism and valour, were repudiated openly. People, who had been hounded and hunted by C.I.D men, were asked to surrender to create a peaceful atmosphere.

### Scenario of Northern Bengal

Communal sensation already was an ipso-facto in almost all parts of Bengal. R.S.S.S had small organisations in Malda, Pabna, Mymensingha and Rangpur. Police and I.B were concerned in the 40's about the activities of R.S.S.S in the districts of Northern Bengal. In the year 1940 General Secretary of Hindu Mahasava and some R.S.S.S, members travelled in some districts of

North Bengal including Malda. A student member wrote in a letter (October, 1942) that he would participate in the non-violence movement of the Congress. According to the R.S.S.S rule, one could associate himself with any political party by not using Sangha's name, not a political party at all<sup>13</sup>. Goalkar in a statement on 14 July, 1942 had expressed to the 'local leaders' to be away from the 'disturbances of the Congress.'<sup>14</sup> Members of Malda attended the meeting of Nagpur from 4 May to 8 June 1942. R.S.S.S established its branch on Calcutta in the year 1939 and tried to influence the districts as per orders from its center Nagpur. Santosh Mukherjee attempted to organise a branch of R.S.S.S in Pabna in 1941 with the help of Umakanta Apte, V.R. Patke and Rabindranath Bhattacharya of Pabna as supporters. Then Mukherjee tried to extend the organization in different districts of North Bengal. At the same time, Mukherjee with Rabindranath Bhattacharya travelled to Pabna town and was hopeful about Sangha's extension in the different districts. Rabindra Bhattacharya was the Vice President of the district Congress committee; Pabna organized a hartal in Pabna town on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1942. Bhattacharya also organized meetings in Lahirimohanpur, Ullapara and Pabna and led the student movement of Edward College, Radhanagar H.S. School and Gopal Chandra Institution Pabna.<sup>15</sup> Bhattacharya was arrested for taking part in the Quit India movement and jailed from August 1942 to August 1944. In the year, 1941 Mahasava allowed the F.B members in some areas of North Bengal to use their Akhra's for exercise.<sup>16</sup> Sangha's method to extend its influence by the volunteers came from different districts of North Bengal and trained in the camp of Nagpur. After establishing, its branch in Calcutta, Sangha was able to impinge on the districts of North Bengal.<sup>17</sup> Kamalendu Chakroborty took active part in the movement of Balurghat as a member of the Hindu Mahasava<sup>18</sup>. Satish Chandra Guha an active Congress worker of Bogra of Congress had regular correspondence with Asutosh Lahiri, secretary of B.P.H.M. Atul Kumar who was requested repeatedly to take part in the Quit India Movement of Malda by Sourindra Mohan Mishra, however denied was an active member of Hindu

Mahasava and also associated with Asutosh Lahiri of Mahasava.<sup>19</sup> Leaflets distributed on and before the conference of Mahasava in Chatmohar, Pabna, showed attention to the downfall of the Hindus and urging them to unite under the leadership of Savarkar. Three resolutions of the fourteenth conference of Mahasava in Chatmohar Pabna, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1942 was important enough to create the communal sensation of Pabna just before the Quit India Movement. Desertion of Hindu temples at Ullipur, in the district of Rangpur was condemned as well the allegations against Pabna District Board was that it was not supplying wells in the place of the conference of Hindu Mahasava. Resolution was also passed in support of the Hindu participation in the Debt Settlement Board and as a whole to the people of Bengal to grow more food.<sup>20</sup> Asutosh Lahiri addressed to the Hindu inhabitants of Pabna about the depressing condition of their religious life, Hindus being attacked by fanatic Muslims, destruction of temples, attacks in the religious ceremonies, boycott of Haat and Bazars of the Hindus was a daily phenomena. Moreover indifferent attitude of the ministers of the Haq ministry and Hindu-malice attitude of the Muslim leaders of the League towards this problem caused anxiety among the Hindus. Therefore, Lahiri's suggestion to the Hindus was to participate in the elections of Union Board, Municipality, District Board and Legislative Assembly and with this kind of activities, Mahasava would be reorganised to prove herself the sole representative institution of the Hindus.<sup>21</sup> From 1940 onwards, permission was needed from the authority to immerse the Hindu deities in the rivers particularly in the Muslim populated areas like Dinajpur. But the communal tension existing at the end of 1941 stopped the authorities from giving Hindus the permission of immersion of the deities. Manmathan Nath Mukherjee, Home Minister of Bengal though made an effort to come to a solution, but failed.<sup>22</sup> Mahasava announced hartal against the 'created' immersion problem on October 1941. Communalism was in a violent form in Bengal then. It was just opposite to the situation of Bengal enjoyed in the year 1937.<sup>23</sup>

After the expulsion of Bose group from Congress, Hindu lobbies were strong. Some Zamindars detached themselves from the Congress and joined Hindu Mahasabha that was established in 27<sup>th</sup> December 1939 in Calcutta. A meeting of Hindu Mahasabha was held in the house of Zamindar Bhairabendra Narayan Roy of Singhabad, Malda.<sup>24</sup> Saradindu Roy, a Zamindar of Balurghat participated in a meeting of Mahasava at Burdwan on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1941<sup>25</sup>. Communists were unable to organise sharecroppers of Malda, though the district was adjacent to Dinajpur and Rangpur during Tebhaga movement, due to the activities of Hindu Mahasabha in the 40's.

### Self-Strengthening: Preparation Against Internal Enemy

Communally tensed atmosphere and instances of communal riots paved the way of Mahasava's self-strengthening plan. Hindu Mahasava tried to recruit Rural Defence Corps in association with Congress on honourable terms in some areas where negotiation was possible and separately where it was not possible. Particularly this effort of Mahasava was welcomed and encouraged by the administration<sup>26</sup>. Mahasava wanted to assist with the administration by organizing home guards in the rural areas in the preservation of peace and order. It would help to instil confidence in public mind and remove panic. Mahasava were expected to render help to evacuees or refugees and should on occasion demand would be called upon to maintain the distribution of food supplies and engage in other responsible work.<sup>27</sup> Mahasava applied to recruit liaison officers for the reason. Though they claimed themselves non-communal and political, they recruited as many Hindus as possible and preferably as many members of the Hindu Mahasava.<sup>28</sup> Muslim League on the other hand formed a separate group named Muslim National Volunteers and in Bogra and Pabna they rejected the Hindu oriented Home Guard Organization.<sup>29</sup>

During the 40's, Hindu Mahasava was able to establish its organizations in the districts like Malda, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Pabna where Muslims were majority in number. Professor of Calcutta University, Hari Charan Ghosh delivered lecture in front of 250 members of Mahasava. He said that the Muslims being the majority in number were running the Government on the strength of Communal Award. This Government according to him was pursuing a ruinous and destructive policy and deliberately designed to take away from them their ancient culture, education, and supremacy by enacting laws like the Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act, Bengal Moneylenders Bill, Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act and the Secondary Education Bill etc. This according to him was encroachment on the rights of the Hindus and an attempt to reduce their rights. Satish Chandra Lahiri who was the pioneer of the establishment of Mahasava in Jalpaiguri was annoyed with the Congress for accepting Communal Award. Hindu Sabha of Jalpaiguri became the branch of Hindu Mahasava in 1927 and as a result, Muslims formed Muslim Samity in 1931<sup>30</sup>. N. C. Chatterjee who campaigned in favour of Asutosh Lahiri at Rajsahi stated that Mahasava did not believe in the creed of non-violent, non-cooperation, but believed in the ideology of resistance and would follow this creed since Congress had not do any good for the country.<sup>31</sup> By this time, Surendra Chandra Sen was elected as the President of the branch of Mahasava at Rangpur with hundred members. Simultaneously, at the end of 1941 Shibendra Sekhar Roy, secretary of Hindu Mahasava Malda urged to take training lathi and dagger exercises for self-defence, and also to see that the correct number of Hindus were recorded in the ensuing census<sup>32</sup>

## Caste Politics in Northern Bengal and the Nationalist Movement

From the very beginning, ancient period of India was depicted by the Hindu nationalists as their ideological inspiration. It seemed to the lower strata of the Hindu society as the revival of the age-old caste system. It was linked with the claim of Rajbansis who originated from Khatriya community. Rajbansis of

Northern Bengal living in the districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and the princely states of Cooch Behar, enhanced their economic and religious status during the first three decades of 19th century. Cultivating Jute in the fertile lands of North Bengal helped a section of them to grow rich. This was linked with their claim of originating from the Khatriya community, and so they formed a caste association in 1891. Rajbansi Jotedars of Duars organized by 'Jotedar Sabha' on 1941-42 and Tarai Mangal Samity also stressed on the socio-aesthetic development of the Rajbansis.<sup>33</sup>

Both the Communal Award and Pune Accord in the truncated Bengal affected her Northern counterpart. The schedule castes and the Rajbansis of North Bengal were away from the mainstream politics.<sup>34</sup> Rajbansis and Namasudras treated the Communal Award of 1942 as- a political advantage unprecedented and unparalleled in the constitutional history of India.<sup>35</sup> It was according to them a 'political blunder' of Dr. Ambedkar. In spite of a separate electorate it – ultimately led ... to the political death of millions of people at the hands of the so-called caste Hindus.<sup>36</sup> Namasudras dominated schedule caste politics in colonial Bengal and Rajbansis. Rajbansis were in Legislative Council continuously after the Reform Act of 1919 and 1923 onwards they won each election of Rangpur, defeated the candidates of Hindu higher castes, likewise in the local board too. Twentieth century onwards, Rajbansis demanded separate representation in the legislature, representation of jobs in public services and seats in educational institutions. In the election of 1937, Namasudras and Rajbansis rejected Congress and Hindu Mahasava leaders and elected their own caste leaders in all the schedule caste reserved constituencies. Bengal branch was started in the same year (1942) Dr. Ambedkar formed the schedule caste federation.<sup>37</sup> 'Suddhi' movement of the Mahasava also spread among the Rajbansis. Mahasava and Rajbansis were closed after the Syma-Haq ministry formed in December 1941 with the support of the schedule caste legislatures. Some Rajbansi leaders gave importance to certain 'other' factors during the

forties. Rajbansi leaders were more interested to be in alliance with powerful lobbies to execute their personal aspirations.<sup>38</sup>

It was the estrangement between the upper class leaders and the Rajbansis that compelled the later to be loyal to the British.<sup>39</sup> Upper caste leaders did not think their representation was necessary for the struggle for freedom. So, the lower caste Rajbansis had to fight against the upper caste political leadership of the Congress to obtain power. Rajbansi Khatriya Samity thus expressed its loyalty to the British Raj.<sup>40</sup> Rajbansis lost the control of the society of their homeland to the upper caste Hindu leaders. They supported the British to regain the control of the society.<sup>41</sup> The other factor of their extrication to the nationalist movement was the Mahasava's attentiveness to the schedule caste population in the rural areas.<sup>42</sup>

The census of 1931 intended to show the adivasis as animists. Then tea garden merchant Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, lawyer Srinath Hore and Ayurvedic Doctor Satish Chandra Lahiri resigned from the Congress and joined the Hindu Mahasava. Quoting from the Hindu texts they tried to prove that adivasis are Hindus not animists. Contemporary newspaper Trisrota wrote-

...For this we beg to pray you that men living in the tea garden and adjacent slums areas must be enrolled as Hindu in the forthcoming census. Steps must be taken to fulfill the goal...Do not write Oraon, Munda, Saontal at the end of your first name. Please remember that you are a Hindu and this is your duty. It is the duty of a Hindu to rescue men of dalit castes religiously. We do believe that men of the tea gardens and adjacent slum areas will be guided according to this principle to include them in the forthcoming census and inform us about their counting.<sup>43</sup>

Mahasava then launched '*Suddhi*' movement of North Bengal. It was an effort to prevent coolie's intake of wine and beef. <sup>44</sup> Suddhi movements was an opposition from the part of the Hindu Mahasava oriented Congress members.

Birendranath Kadam of Jalpaiguri Hindu Mahasava along with some famous 'Hindu' Congress party worker of that time viz. Nalini Pakrashi (Part taker in the Quit India Movement in Duars), Upendranath Chakroborty, Ramani Mohan Chakroborty, Jitendranath Moulik had converted 87 Saontals by a 'Suddhi Puja'.<sup>45</sup> Mahasava arranged Satyanarayan Puja on 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1941 at Nagrakata in the house of Lotan Sarkar, attended by the coolies of tea gardens. Here too money and rice were collected for Mahasava Fund. According to police, report the Puja was a camouflage, as the real object was to bring the coolies of tea gardens of Jalpaiguri District under Hindu Mahasava.<sup>46</sup> Bharat Sebashram of Jalpaiguri by this time stresses on the merits and demerits of Hindu religion, caste system, widow remarriage, mass worship and the removal of untouchables. Here people urged to protect Hindu women from oppression and molestation by goondas. They also encouraged mass prayer and to organize a volunteer corps to protect Hindu women and temples. During the 40's the Rava, Hajong and Dhimals, the tribes of the North Bengal were also engaged in Mahasava influenced *Hinduization*.<sup>47</sup>

Comparison of the tribal participation in the Duars in the Gandhian Satyagraha disclosed that before and after the census of 1931 and the interference of the Mahasava into the tribals, there were enough instances of the participation of the adivasis in the Gandhian Satyagraha. According to the report of Trisrota Ram Oraon Ganga, Soma Bhagat and Gatharu Bhagat were arrested for picketing against the British goods.<sup>48</sup> Gandhian charismatic rumour widespread among the women of Dhupguri, that drought was because of not following the Gandhian path.<sup>49</sup> However, after the census, intervention by Mahasava, shifted the adivasis from nationalist movement to purely religious issues. Mahasava saved the Kali temple of Ramjhora Tea Garden.<sup>50</sup> Jogesh Chadra Dutta of Mahasava established Sukhani Basti for the adivasis in 1941 and strengthened Mahasava's organization there.<sup>51</sup> Both Congress and Mahasava did not bother about the economic oppression such as the grievances of the Rajbansis and adivasis for the tax imposed on them in

Khasmahal area after the resettlement<sup>52</sup>, or the application of denial policy by registration of cycles by the Deputy Commissioner Palmer,<sup>53</sup> or the imposed tax for the war<sup>54</sup>. Jaya Chatterjee was right to observe that -The caste consolidation programmes of the late thirties were part of a broader campaign to create a united and self-conscious Hindu political community in Bengal.<sup>55</sup>

We find no instances of the participation of the adivasis in the Gandhian movement after the census to Quit India movement. Nevertheless, the scenario was different in Panchbibi, Bogra where Jatindra Mohan Dutta, a Mahasava leader guesstimate Santals as animist though of Hindu religion.<sup>56</sup> Hindu Mahasabha workers insisted on tribal labour and sharecroppers and Santal, Rajbansi, Turi and other communities disagreed to work under Muslim Jotedars, influential in Malda of North Bengal.<sup>57</sup> Mahasava helped the Santals, provided education and arrows for their bows. Charuchandra Sidup Soren of Dhanaikusla village led the Santal rebels in Bogra. He was popular among them and the follower of '*Satyam Sibam Sundaram*', a sect established by the pleader Kashiswar Chakroborty to spread Hinduism among the Santals.<sup>58</sup> In August'42 Soren organized Santals and they refused to pay tax. Soren was wounded by the police and organised the movement when bedridden<sup>59</sup>

During the 40's, period of communal tension the Rajbansi oriented areas of northern Bengal were relatively free of communal trouble. Rajbansis were influenced by the contemporary Hindu communal discourse in which Muslims were treated as a threat to the prestige of the community as they violated of their women. So, during the time Mahila Atmarasha Samity were formed in the various districts of Northern Bengal. Mahasava were engaged in the transformation of the Rajbansis to be Khatriyas. Consequently, the failure of the Congress to mobilize the masses against the British rule was because they had no programme for the backward classes. In the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Khatriya Samity when some Congress leaders appealed to the mass to join the Congress against the British Raj, the Rajbansi leaders Panchanan Barma

and others opposed directly and told the mass to be loyal to the British. The economic freedom the Rajbansis dreamt of under the British Raj was limited because of the rising upper class of the Rajbansi society.<sup>60</sup> Rajbansis and other depressed class were outside the political agenda of the Congress. When 'Swaraj' was the one and only goal of the Congress, it was the Zamindari system, which according to the Rajbansis was more oppressive than the British Raj. Congress, even Gandhi did not get over the feeling that Congress was the only national organization. However, despite Gandhi, Congress had another political character, which justified the fear of the domination of the schedule caste leaders. Despite that, some political leaders of the Rajbansi community maintained good relations with the Congress. Participation of some upper caste leaders of the Congress in the 'Suddhi' Puja to change the status of the Rajbansis, and the perceived threat of the Muslims oppressed them in some areas of North Bengal. That is why a section of the Rajbansis were fond of Nationalist Movement. Swaraj Basu is right to observe that –The official line of the Khatriya Samity did not necessarily reflect the major mindset of the majority of the community.<sup>61</sup> It was true that the participation of the Rajbansis in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement were guided by the demands, subject of their caste concern. But the massive participation of the Rajbansi community in the rural areas of north Bengal went beyond the control of the Congress leadership. Nevertheless, as in the case of the Quit India Movement Rajbansi participation was quite low in respect of previous Gandhian movements because of two reasons. Firstly, there was no burning caste issues then and secondly, large section of the Rajbansi peasants were kept in low-key level in the rural areas of north Bengal by the Communists

## Changing Profile of Communist Ideology

Britain joined the war, when Germany attacked Poland. India was declared as a country that too joined war against Germany. According to the D.I.O Viceroy

got the absolute power. At the time the Communists were against war and announced 'Na ek pai, na ek bhai' – means not one paise for the expense of war or a brother to fight in the war. At the time, both C.P.I and F.B were ready to take the opportunity of war to organise a mass movement. However, when Subhash Chandra Bose allied with Axis powers and Hitler attacked Russia, Communists announced their policy of 'People's War'. Communists then shifted ideologically by estimating the Asian colonies as 'multinational entities' from their previous stand of 'Single Nationality'.<sup>62</sup> Before announcing people's war, C.P.I was against the reactionary role of the Muslim League. It was mentioned in the newsletter of C.P.I central committee –

We oppose Pakistan not because we are opposed to the right of the Muslim people to full freedom to develop their own culture, and languages, and practice their own religion. We oppose Pakistan because it is a slogan to mislead the Muslim masses, to split them away from national struggle and to perpetuate the role of imperialism. In fact, those who promise in Pakistan freedom to the Muslim masses are cheating them. They are selling them to their own enemies.<sup>63</sup>

Ideological change was not only for India, but also all over Asia, Communists supported the objective of the racial elements against the central authority. In the year of the Quit India Movement, Communists officially declared India as a multinational country. A party resolution of July, 1942 questioned –

What can be the basis of our national unity ? Recognition of the principle of self-determination including the right of separation, for all the nationalities that inhabit our great sub-continent.<sup>64</sup>

Thereafter the resolution of the plenary meeting of the central committee elaborate it as –

...Every section of the Indian people, which has a contiguous territory as its homeland, common historical tradition, common language, culture, psychological make-up and common economic life would be recognized as a distinct nationality with the right to exist as an autonomous state within the free Indian Union or federation and will have the right to secede from it, if it may desire. Thus free India of tomorrow would be a federation or union of autonomous states of various nationalities such as the Pathans, Western Punjabis, dominantly Muslims, Sikhs, Sindhis, Rajasthanis, Bengalis, Tamils, Karnatakis, Maharashtrians, Keralas etc.<sup>65</sup>

The right of the Muslim to separate from India by forming an independent country in other words the demand of Pakistan was justified by the resolution.

This would give to the Muslims wherever they are in overwhelming a majority in a contiguous territory, which is their homeland, the right to form their autonomous states and even to separate if they so desire.<sup>66</sup>

Dr K. M. Ashroff a renowned Communist of the 40's openly supported the demand of Pakistan, as he considered Muslim separatism as a revolutionary step.<sup>67</sup> The Communist party was decided to concentrate on a three fold plan of firstly, organizing a country wide campaign of persistent political explanation among peasants, students and workers showing how the present struggle led to destruction and anarchy and thirdly continued to spread propaganda among Hindu and Muslim masses for Congress-League unity.<sup>68</sup> C.P.I invited League for a united Anti-Fascist Alliance. Under the shadow of the Government patronage, the Communist Party and the Radical Democratic Party distributed leaflets and pamphlets among all sections of the people in order to poison the ears of the fellow citizens and were strong in their tirade against the Congress. 'Janata' and Janajuddha were the official organs of those two parties.<sup>69</sup>

## Communists Role in the Quit India Movement

The Communists viz K.M. Ashroff, Sajjad Zaheer and S.G. Sardesai moved three amendments among several of the historical resolution of the AICC on 8th August. Their view was that the direct struggle against British Imperialism was not relevant with their line-up of 'Anti-Fascist People's War'. Hence, the three amendments were rejected.<sup>70</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> August when Gandhi and other leaders were arrested, P.C. Joshi said in a statement to the party workers that-

The Government is the provocateur, it has let loose forces of anarchy, and in its utter blindness, it seeks to create an anti-national anti- Congress front. He also demanded the unconditional release of the nationalist leaders and immediate negotiations for National Govt and Indian freedom.<sup>71</sup>

Joshi analysed Quit India movement as 'national suicide'.<sup>72</sup> In the rural areas, all their workers were directed to pass off the Hartals peacefully. Party advised the workers 'argue with the local Congress leadership not to go in for law breaking and defiance of bans'.<sup>73</sup> According to Janajuddha the Communist party organ, Gandhi's do or die is the 'last play a trick of a Gambler' that inspires anti revolutionary politics of Mahasava, F.B, Roy group etc.<sup>74</sup> Communists presumes that the movement had caused internal disturbances. Schools were bombed which forced the students and guardians to be part and partisans of strikes. C.P.I and R.D.P had severed the student movement of Bengal.<sup>75</sup>

Communist students were advised not to stand aside or condemn the strikes. Nevertheless, the criticism and opposition of the C.P.I was also shifted from 'soft opposition' to 'harsh opposition' after few months.<sup>76</sup> The assessment of 'national suicide' was later viewed by C.P.I as 'National Crisis'. The partakers of the movement from Congress organization were described by C.P.I as 'misguided patriots'. Congress, Mahasava and the League – three

organizations according to them were patriotic forces. Mahasava and League were opponents of the struggle and so they were perceived as patriotic by the C.P.I. As Janajuddha claimed 17 days after Gandhi's demand to Quit India that the gist of Pakistan may be achieved by League if it formed the united anti fascist front to save the country.<sup>77</sup> Janajuddha described goonda's and dacoits were attacking the Thana and looting food grains from the peasants in the Haats. This way they thought the nationalist movement became an internal chaos.<sup>78</sup> The attack on Thana or Government offices put a delusion to a freedom fighter the revolution had started. Bureaucracy would be lying low if wires were cut or rail lines were uprooted. But in reality bureaucracy destroyed the link to stop mass movement. As a whole, the nuisance would be helpful for Japanese invasion.<sup>79</sup> This nuisance according to P.C.Joshi, the then secretary of the C.P.I was not organised by the National Congress, but the socialist group of Joy Prakash Narayan who forged the name of Congress as it would be helpful for the fascists.<sup>80</sup> All non-C.P.I leftist forces were described by C.P.I with terms like 'Fascist agents', 'Japanese Agents', 'quislings', 'fifth columnists', 'worst saboteurs' etc. On the contrary C.P.I was treated by Congress and non-C.P.I leftists as 'traitors', 'betrayers', 'collaborators with British imperialism', 'British agents', 'Soviet agents' and so on.

## Communist's Role in Northern Bengal

Krisak Samity gradually slipped out of the Congress Socialist Party as the Communists before C.P.I's announcement of People's War influenced it. But it was able to increase its membership after the announcement, as the Govt withdrew the ban as well as it became lenient over its activities. The members of the Krisak Samity attacked the Congress and characterised Subhash Bose, Gandhi and Jawaharlal as supporters of capitalism and hostile to the interests of the peasants. According to them Congress as an institution was supporter of capitalism.<sup>81</sup> During the economic depression, the peasants demanded for the suspension of the realization of rent in Rangpur and in one of the places,

they independently suspended the payment of rent. Both League and Communists propagated there to strengthen their organization. On the other hand, speeches of Fazlul Haq were given wide publicity.<sup>82</sup> Communist Manikrishna Sen and Sudhir Mukherjee took active part in the relief work of the flood in Rangpur during 1938.<sup>83</sup> Congress at the same time was not interested to participate in relief work; and hence, this ultimately led to the strengthening of the Communist's organization in Rangpur. Communists celebrated the Swadeshi Day and expressed their views in the meeting that created some sort of disturbances in the minds of the local Congress people.<sup>84</sup> Bankim Mukherjee warned the Congress that unless the right wing realised the importance of the Krisak movement, the support of the masses would never be obtained. Bankim Mukherjee and Ali Hossain Sarkar organized meetings regularly in Rangpur and peasants who responded with enthusiasm. The money-lending peasants eyed for the power in the local peasant committee. It was an effort of the lower peasantry to overpower them.<sup>85</sup> Ali Hossain Sarkar said in the first Zillah Krisak Conference at Rangpur that Mahasava and League could not fulfill the demands of the peasants, since they were communal organisations, synchronised by the rich or Zamindars and were based on religious principles. Congress in spite of being a non-communal organization was an assembly of different group vis-à-vis the rich, Zamindars, middle class, peasants and labours. Her ambition was to uproot the foreign hegemony which would take time, hence some traditional Congress leaders were worried to see the peasants unified, implied by some of them to asphyxiate the organization. Therefore, Sarkar advised to stand with the Congress but in future, it would be possible upon the work plan of the Congress.<sup>86</sup> However, C.P.I had no clear-cut stand on some points. Bankim Mukherjee pointed out before the Land Commission that he thought –it would be possible to stop subletting by legislation. While he said to Khan Bahadur Musharraff Hossain that he would –prefer to abolish bargadari system but if a tenant gave land to a bargadar he would give the first choice to a tenant to cultivate the land, and if he refuses his right go to the bargadar.<sup>87</sup>

Communists persuaded the peasants of Rangpur that the August Movement was an attempt on the part of the Congress to pressurise the Government; it was not a freedom struggle to bring the independence.<sup>88</sup> Middle class sections of Rangpur town, not dependent on land, were not contented with the people's war ideology of the C.P.I.<sup>89</sup> Some Anusilan members of Rajsahi also opposed the ideology. Brawl between C.P.I and F.B members was observed in Rangpur.<sup>90</sup> The distinguishable feature of the politics of Rangpur was the unification of Congress-League and Communists. Though after few years the unification was praised in the '*Rangpur Report*' of a meeting of the provincial C.P.I, it was clear that the exceptional unification was stand-alone by the party. A part of the Rangpur district led by Janab Ali Hossian Sarkar was with the united platform for some time. President of the Rangpur district Congress opposed the united platform. Congress or League did not always arrange meeting for unification. In the meetings arrange by C.P.I they (Congress and League) were louder for the unification, otherwise they followed the party line. Muslim League tried to cash in Communists influence over the lower strata of the peasantry. Bagchi was offered by League to co-operate with in the meeting in connections with the Tenancy Act. Bagchi was also advised by Satya Chatterjee, Secretary of B.P.K.S to co-operate with the League. Since League hoodwinked many in the name of religion, Communists tried to exercise influence over them.<sup>91</sup> M.N.Roy by this time wanted to form a left wing Muslim League, though he did not succeed.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, in the rural areas of Bengal, Muslim peasants were mobilized either by the Maulabis of the League or by the Communists. During the 40's Communist were able to influence the Muslim peasants of the Pabna against the 'Barga problem'. Pabna group of H.S.R.A inspired by Gandhi's work among the Harijans resolved to present a purse to him. Meanwhile men like Sachin Banerjee, Prafulla Guha or Loknath Banerjee became Communists and gave up extremist activities. Anusilan members of Pabna, Rajsahi, Malda

and other districts of North Bengal shifted towards communism.<sup>93</sup> There were two branches of Communists in Rajsahi and Natore, working under the direction of the C.S.P. First branch stuck posters on the house of Rabindranath Tagore in Rajsahi against the educational tariff imposed on the peasants.<sup>94</sup> Rajsahi branch was engaged to circulate the literature received from Calcutta, while Natore branch was against the Reform Act of 1935.<sup>95</sup>

Communists however found different ways of mass organization with some whole-timers such as men as Abani Lahiri came from Calcutta to organise the peasants against the Jotedar-authority alliance in Dinajpur. The tiny success of Haat-Tola Movement<sup>96</sup> was their inspiration. When Quit India Movement was launched in August 1942, its timing did not match with the peasant mentality of Thakurgaon sub-division. They were marooned, lost their mental strength and fear gripped them because of years of oppression by the authority. Peasant agitation of the day of Haat-Tola Movement ended while Jotedars slandered peasant leaders. They accused Satyen Roy of buying a Zamindari and Danesh for hoarding lakhs of rupees. Even Jotedars rumoured parody against the Communist leaders. It was the period of camouflage for the Communists, just before the Quit India Movement i.e. from 1941 to June 1942. They had two political undertones. Firstly, to live and eat with them, speak their languages and feel their day-to-day problems. Secondly, to wait and prepare the plan until they were compelled to go for a movement.<sup>97</sup> However, they did not use the Quit India Movement as a platform of peasant movement. Lahiri analyses –

This time i.e. from the middle of 1942-middle of 1943 –We welcomed or not – the urban Bengali society were forceful with the August movement. On 9<sup>th</sup> August Quit India movement was started. More or less, it affected the peasants of Midnapur, Hoogly, Burdwan. But the North and East Bengal was not much affected by the movement. On the entire Dinajpur district –where we spend those days –only heard about the movement of Balurghat and Gangarampur.<sup>98</sup>

As Lahiri estimated that, the movement of Balurghat was organised by R.S.P with some Congress members. Nevertheless, as a whole, peasant did not participate in the movement in North and East Bengal. According to Lahiri for the peasants, Jotedars were of utmost importance as they stored the paddies in their storages. Using the situation of the war, a section of Jotedars became Majutdars. Scarcity of food was the topmost problem the peasants wanted to solve rather than to participate in a nationwide movement. During August – September paddy (Aman) disappeared from market, including all food grains. During that time the peasants of Dinajpur picketed to the storerooms of the Jotedars and compelled them to give food grains by an informal procedure, i.e. they listed the name of the recipients on condition that food grains would be refunded later on. If Jotedar reported to the police or disagreed to give food grains, the peasants distributed the food grains among themselves and listed the name of the recipients. In both cases, copies of the recipients were given to the Jotedars. Peasant did not favour the looting of food grains, which was an important feature of the movement of Balurghat in 1942. As Lahiri an active member of the Communist Party of the time estimated that Krisak Samity or Communist Party were unable to convince the peasants for not looting the food grains or to make it a class struggle, since their aim was to form an anti-fascist front with the Zamindars and Jotedars.<sup>99</sup> Hence, according to Lahiri during the movement of 1942 in Balurghat or Gangarampur other leftist parties like R.S.P too did not agree with the way of looting.<sup>100</sup>

It should be mentioned that despite of some pocket areas Congress – Communist conflict was not of long distances in the districts of North Bengal. Sumit Sarkar have opined that Quit India Movement and I.N.A had not affected the rural area of North Bengal as it did on Calcutta and Midnapur. So, the policy of People's War had no adverse effect on North Bengal.<sup>101</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> August, the day after Congress took resolution to Quit India Movement a Communist procession advanced from Khanpur, Patigram, Kaigram of Dinajpur towards Royganj. The procession comprised of some peasants of Hili

and Balurghat and some villagers of Kushmundi who were uprooted from their homes. This procession was started with the intention of extending the influence of Communist movement. The protesters halted for the night near the border of Rayganj where Congress workers came to meet them. Congress leader Dwarika Das Agarwala told Communist worker Jiban De about the news of the arrest of Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and others.<sup>102</sup> De wrote-

Whatever so, next day in the conference of 10<sup>th</sup> August our demand should be immediate release of the Congress leaders and to prevent the probable fascist attack to our country. Sri Agarwala and other Congress leaders urged us.<sup>103</sup>

Jiban De however great respect over Gandhi as he wrote-

Shops, Schools, Colleges were closed on 10<sup>th</sup> Aug, when I was delivering my speeches, I saw two huge sacks filled with Muri (parching rice on hot sand) and two large heaps of molasses are stored behind me for the hungry mob. 10<sup>th</sup> August 1942 was the day for self-defence and preparation for camouflage.<sup>104</sup>

Janajuddha admitted that Rangpur 'disturbances' in the Haats were for the sudden rise in the prices. Police prohibited anti-Fascist meetings in Rangpur and arrested the Communists.<sup>105</sup> Why, during Quit India Movement, anti-Fascist meetings though helpful for British interests were restricted in the various districts of North Bengal? It was not that the Government did not want to cash in from the anti-Fascist speeches against the Gandhian movement. Tottenham, Secretary of the Home Department from Delhi wrote to Blair about 'the need for strong propaganda to counter Gandhi's move'. He advised to use the volunteers of A.I.S.F for counter propaganda and took necessary actions regarding this. He also wanted to apply the policy of counter attack already successful in Orissa by Griffiths with the help of National war front members.<sup>106</sup> Hence, Chief Secretary of Government of Bengal J.R. Blair was worried about the weakness of the administration of Rangpur. In Rajsahi,

Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri anti-fascist speeches were growing in number. These lectures, though fulfilling British aspirations, sometime went beyond expectations. Anti-fascist speeches in the Boda, Pachagarh P.S area of Jalpaiguri by the C.P.I, F.B and student federation members were helpful to restricting Gandhian movement in those areas. But men as Birendra Kumar Neogi were unable to restrain his anti-British and pro-revolutionary views. S.P of Jalpaiguri cautioned Neogi to limit the speeches with anti-Fascist feelings and not to speak against the Government. S.P. considered the speeches of 31<sup>st</sup> May and 3<sup>rd</sup> June were objectionable in comparison with the speeches of 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June 1942.<sup>107</sup> The local Communist leaders of Rangpur said to the commissioner of Rajsahi A.J. Das that it was the local officers' duty to give them every license and facility. They were however under no obligation to encourage war efforts or cooperate with the Government. They were also merely called upon to make speeches for stimulating anti-Japanese feelings beyond and that they had no further intention of instigating the Govt. Therefore Das's suggestion was that the Government should have no track with the Communist leaders and the policy of using them was 'ridiculous'.<sup>108</sup> British Govt, however, was satisfied by the Anti-Fascist activities of the members of the C.P.I, Bengal Labour Party, Radical Democratic Party and the Students Federation. The British Govt was happy because the groups were successful in achieving some positive political results for them. Satisfied Govt wished to provide fullest facilities to those who inculcated Anti-Fascist and anti-enemy sentiment in favour of British Empire.<sup>109</sup>

### League Politics: Shadow on Nationalist Movement

It was well known that after the Legislative Election of 1937, K.P.P gradually weakened and Haq shifted to the Muslim League. K.P.P was unable to fulfill its aim of abolishing Zamindari system.<sup>110</sup> Though League was said to be the organisation of the rich Zamindars, in the rural areas of Bengal, Maulabis propagated against Zamindari system. So, it was quite an accepted slogan in

the rural areas of Dinajpur '*Haq Ministry Zindabad*' and '*Muslim League Zindabad*'. Muslim peasants of Rajsahi did not agree to sell milk to the Hindu milkmen or to pay Chaukidari Tax. It was proposed in a meeting of the League in Rangpur to take 55% Muslims in various services. They also criticized the activities of Hindu Mahasava.<sup>111</sup> An interesting leaflet circulated at Rangpur, stated that nor the Hindus or Congress but the British were responsible for the purge of the Muslims. It appealed Muslim clerics to insist Muslims to join the Congress that was of very little effect. Ahsanul Haq Afendi's endeavour to start a Krisak movement in Rangpur to abolish Zamindari system was totally opposite to the Congress pattern of movement. Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish was a person who travelled to the various districts of North Bengal and propagated to abolish Zamindari system and oppose the Choukidari Tax. In his speeches in Rajsahi and Pabna he was dead against Hindus and said that the Hindus believed trees and cows to be Gods. He depicted God Krishna as a licentious man and a debauchee who could be judged, from his actions in pictures and his love intrigue with his aunt Radha. He said that no Muslim had so far written a book entitled '*Rangila Rasul*' in which Rasul and his family was described in obscene language.<sup>112</sup> Tarkabagish stated that the Congress Government of Bombay had allowed the Hindi version of the Bengali book to be published. He condemned that Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Munjee and Savarkar were united in their efforts to drive the Muslims from India. According to him, Mahajans and Zamindars opposed the Muslims.<sup>113</sup> R.P. Sanyal of Mahasava reported against Tarkabagish that the Maulabi calling himself as Brahmin-Maulabi was attacking Hindus and Hindu religion in most objectionable language in the rural areas of Sirajganj Pabna.<sup>114</sup> The tussle between the Santosh estate Zamindari and the Muslim tenants was at last became the fight of Mahasava and the League.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, Maulana Maniruddin Anwari an invited leader of Dinajpur said in a conference of Rangpur to start a peasant movement against the Zamindari System, because it was the main root of the deplorable condition of the peasants. League leaders stressed on the oppression of the Muslims by the

Congress and Hindus similar to the lecture of Abdul Rahid which he delivered on March 1939 on Pabna. Oppression of the Muslims and lower caste Hindus was a sympathetic topic in Nator (Rajsahi) sub-divisional conference of Muslim League. The League leaders said that Congress, the institution of the higher caste Hindus was engaged to knock down the influential ministers of and so were seeking to include Muslims within who were influential. Conferences of the League praised the steps taken by Haq ministry in favour of the tenants in Rajsahi, Bogra, Pabna and other districts of North Bengal and grouped Congress, Hindu and Zamindari system. Together as the reason for the setback, Maulabis urged the peasants of the district to boycott the Hindu Bazars, Shops and Cinemas.<sup>116</sup> This continuous propaganda among the Muslim peasants of North Bengal, at last convinced them not to be misled by Congress promises, as Khwaja Habibulla Bahadur of Dhaka versioned in Bogra on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> January 1939.<sup>117</sup> Hindu students of Rajsahi College opposed the slaughter of cows in the college compound on Bakr Id and tension continued for some time.<sup>118</sup> Muslim student leader Abdul Wasek criticised Fazlul Haq and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in a conference on 19.01.42 on Rajsahi by saying that the leaders intended to throw out the Muslims from India to the kingdom of palms, Arab and Jeddah. He reminded them the words of Muhammad Maulana Ali – When Islam calls, I am a Muslim first, Muslim Second and Muslim third, nothing but a Muslim.<sup>119</sup> Later on, the Muslim students of Rajsahi College were very reluctant to take part in the Quit India Movement. Muslim students of Jalpaiguri demanded in a memorandum to stop Saraswati Puja in the compound of Medical School.<sup>120</sup> A sonnet widely circulated in the Sirajganj sub-divisional Muslim League Conference on February, 1939; chose the subject of Congress opposition to reorganise the Muslim masses –

The Muslims of India are no more unconscious in slumber. Yet Workers of the Muslim League, play on your harp in the tune of Jinnah. Support the Muslim League in all provinces of India in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Sindh and Punjab the trumpet of the Muslim League is being blown in U.P, Karachi, Central Provinces and Assam making a vibration on all sides. All the Nawabs

and the rulers of India the Krisak Prajas and the peasantry of Muslim Bengal have embraced Muslim League. Come, Ye. Muslim in lords, rally rounded the banner of Muslim League, shouting Allah-ho-Akbar, you followers of the prophet. There is no politics or religion without League. The administration department and the Education Policy are the organization of the Muslim League. All the sects of India the Domes, the Chandals, the sweepers etc are demanding the machinery of the state and the throne. At present the Congress has captured the all of out of 11 provinces in India, and the remaining four Bengal, Assam, The Punjab, and Sindh were the under the control of Muslim League. Allah Box, the chief minister of Sindh, who was selected by the Muslim League, has made a pact with the Congress. What is the present situation of the Muslim League? Sindh has gone out of its hand. The ministry of Sir Sidulla in Assam also fell through. The miserable plight of the Muslims in Bihar and Orissa arouses pain in one's mind. Muslims there are sacrificing their lives. In Bihar, Orissa, C.P and Karachi there are Congress ministers. The Swarajist ministers of the Congress are full of jealousy and animosity. In Orissa all the ministers are Hindus and there is no place for the Muslims there. There is saying in all ages that that the hinder part of the Hanuman (monkey) was made red. That Lakshman fell unconsciously by the fatal shell of Lanka (cyclone). Muslim religion is being repressed and cow killing is being suppressed. In educational institutions, Hindu religion is taught and Bandemataram is sung. Urdu language has been abolished and Hindi is being taught in its place. This has been passed in the councils through mal administration of the Hindus. They offer sacrifices of human beings before their Goddesses Durga and Kali. They stain each others with colours during the Holi festival and eat ham. Remember the slaughter at Gorrakpur and the heinous incident of Sitapur. The Hindus stops the Muharam processions. One Akul Khan of Jaynagar P.S, sub-division Tilkari, Dist Hazaribagh purchased meat in the market on the occation of his daughter's marriage. He was inhumanly oppressed by the Hindus who were friends of the Congress Raj on the plea that Akul Khan killed a calf belonging to them. They were not satisfied only by looting house of Akul Khan but they killed a pig and forcibly rubbed on the mouth of Akul khan who was made to drink it. The Hindus of the said district violated the chastity of the Muslim women. The

Star of India published an account of the incidents. The police department being under the control of the Hindus had suppressed all these facts. At Hazaribagh Sadar, the Commissioner, however, got information and published the real fact. All the accused persons were Hindus. This is how the Islam is meeting danger at the hands of the oppressive majority of the attainment of Swaraj is only a hoax. The Hindus will become the rulers of India. The Muslims are nothing but ignorant peasants and are eternal slumber. The Congress of the Hindus has spread a trap in order to net others. Pro Congress friends have not yet opened their eyes, On the pretext of independence of India; the crooked minded Hindus are making Muslim Congress men sing Bandemataram. The policy of the Hindus is all sham only to deceive the Muslims. The key position of India will be held by the Hindus. This is all about the origin of the Muslim League – it owes its origin to the great Nawabs of Dacca. Nawab Bahadur Salimulla, the Savor of the degenerated Bengal is the father of the Muslim League, and opened it at his own house at his own cost. Members from all parts of India were visited and thus the League comes into existence. After sometime, the Nawab Sahib breathed his last and the balky boat of the League gave way. There is the western part of India, Mr. Jinnah, the noble soul got hold of its reins in the remote city of Bombay and he is now at its helm. The boat of Jinnah will cross the ferry with pennant raised by the Muslims. Muslim League is the jewel of our heads and it is the diamond mine of India. The fourteen points of Jinnah must be supported by all the Muslims of India. In the Round Table Conference of London, Swaraj was drowned in the water of the Ganges. Self-goal was accorded by the Prime Minister Mr. Macdonald. The Hindus denuded a campaign to enjoy everything in the field of politics and education to the exclusion of the light of the Islam. Fazlul Haq, the tiger of Bengal, became the chief minister. Let us sing the victorious song of the Muslim League and the ministers, the friends of the tenants who are all satisfied with amendment of the Tenancy Act, whereas Zamindars are all dissatisfied. The ministers of Bengal have fulfilled their pledges. Sekendar Hayat Khan, the chief ministers and the other ministers of the Punjab belong to the Muslim League and the victorious flag of the League is soaring high. Politics of other anti League organizations of the infidels of India are adding insult to injury.

Bengal is the place of the origin of the League and its clarion call is being resounded in all other provinces. It is the mandate of Khoda (God), the dictates of the Koran (Muslim religious book) and the will of the prophet that all brothers in faith should organize with in the League and establish its victorious throne in Bihar and Orissa. The victorious flag of the League is flying high throughout the length and breadth of India and sending its clarion call repeatedly organize under it. Conse Ye : all the members of the council – let us start a campaign and rally round the banner of League. The Sirajganj conference shouts victory to the League. Mr. Surawardy, the minister of the labour is the president of the conference. He is the minister for working class. I cordially thank .....who have graced the conference by their presence which has inspired an impetus in the minds of the villagers.<sup>121</sup>

Table given below shows how Muslim League enhanced its strength in the various districts of North Bengal before Quit India movement.

Table –1

District	Year 1939	Year 1940	Year 1941	S.P's comment
Rajsahi	3079	4908	5681	League's propaganda during census of 40-41
Jalpaiguri	6000	7000	8000	do
Malda	---	29000	43000	Number given by the president of the League, may not be correct.
Pabna	12783	13904	14572	Do
Dinajpur	1382	5087	6186	Propaganda by League
Rangpur	4879	7649	10701	do

Source: I. B report on Muslim League Membership, Government of Bengal, File No 147-38(A) Part -1

From mid-thirties, Muslims were unbeatable. They used the elections in the Zillah's where they were minority in number. League held its position tight in North Bengal; obtained 5 seats out of 7 in Rangpur. In 1936, they got hold of half seats in the local board of Malda.<sup>122</sup> Congress obtained only 7 seats after the elections in Jalpaiguri Municipality in the year 1939 though one non-aligned candidate supported it. Members of the Muslim League with Government nominees stood as the opposition. A meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1946 was adjourned as a mark of protest against the recklessness in the streets of Bombay by the police and the military. On 29<sup>th</sup> August 1942, after the adjournment, Roy Bahadur Bipulendranath Banerjee who voted against the arrest of Congressmen was honoured as a member of British Empire.<sup>123</sup> At the same time, an effort was taken by Habibullah, Nawab of Dhaka and 'United Muslim party' to contest in the election, to take the void of Bengal Muslim League. The President of B.M.L was Habibullah while its Vice-president was Nawab Mossaraf Hossain of Jalpaiguri.<sup>124</sup> Hossain received the courtesy title 'Nawab' in the year 1926 by the British. In 1924 he was elected at Bengal Legislative Assembly, in the reserved seat for Muslims from Jalpaiguri-Malda. It then had no relation with Muslim League, but later developed later on when Md. Zinnah went on to unite Muslim League and United Muslim Party. With the condition the parties were united to induct A.F.Rahman of United Muslim party to the League Parliamentary Board.<sup>125</sup> Muslim votes were the cause of Nawab Musharraff Hossian's success in Jalpaiguri.<sup>126</sup> Nawab was dead against the K.P.P of Fajlul Haq who had started to divert rural people. Nawab was not in favour of the C.D. Movement and besides opposing it he also suppressed it.<sup>127</sup> Nawab who was also against Quit India Movement was able to influence a large section of Muslim masses who deferred from the movement. Earlier he did not allow to hold the Jalpaiguri Provincial Conference on the grounds of his estate. Despite Hossian, it was the migrant Muslims from Noakhali-Kumilla, who presented the

rigid Islamic model, which was supported by some local political Muslim person of Jalpaiguri.<sup>128</sup>

From 1940, onwards-Muslim League enjoyed the political gain of the K.P.P and League imposed its decisions to the Haq Government. Persons, who were convicted in communal cases were demanded to be released or their pending cases asked to be withdrawn. This was considered by W.J.Palmer, then Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri as detrimental to the maintenance of law and order in the province. He wrote - ...I do not consider that communal harmony would be in any way promoted by the release of those very persons who have been most concerned in creating communal disharmony.<sup>129</sup> District officer, Malda S.B. Hatch Barnwell held the same opinion

-In my opinion the communal rioting of 1941 was not so much a case of rioting on general religious principles after the beginning, but a glorious opportunity taken by the potentially criminal classes for licence and plunder at the expenses of decent law abiding people of both communities, and appeasement in such cases is not, in my opinion, called for.<sup>130</sup>

## Gorkha Sub-Nationalism in Respect of Nationalist Movement

Gorkha Sub-Nationalism originated when the British decided to maintain the status of the district (Darjeeling) by a special status with a change in its form. It was a Scheduled District from 1874 to 1919 while it was change to backward tract and excluded area from 1919 to 1935 and finally it was politically excluded area under the 1935 Act.<sup>131</sup> The concept of Non-Regulated region was what the British implied to the tribal or *Adivasi* oriented districts. It was –

For simple peoples as simple a system of administration as possible must be devised which would bring them closely into touch with British officers and would conform with the spirit but not with the letter of the Bengal Regulations. Arrangements were made according whereby the peoples of annexed

territories or of tracts inhabited by aboriginal tribes were governed under a non-regulation system.<sup>132</sup>

Deputy Commissioner of the District had the right to compel anyone to leave the district within 24 hours. Sibaprasad Chatterjee defined the non-regulated region as –The district treated as non-regulated area, means no general rules or regulations were applicable to this area. Special laws and Regulations framed by the Government were only applicable here.<sup>133</sup> According to the Government of India Act of 1935; Darjeeling was treated as ‘Partially excluded area’. The European Association and Planters Association had an important role in the demand for a Schedule District. The European tea planters wanted to keep the district outside the sphere of reforms.<sup>134</sup> West Bengal Government memorandum to states denoted –

...It should be remembered that practically all the tea garden in the area were until very recently either owned or controlled by the British merchants. The Government of the time therefore did their best to exclude the area from the normal administration and political set up in Bengal. Since this state of affairs could be maintained only by segregating the local people from the people of the plains, the Government did their best to keep alive the movement for a Nepali Homeland.<sup>135</sup>

Dambar Singh Gurung was elected from the reserved seat of Darjeeling in the election of 1937. Indeed, hill people were fully aware of the fact about the numerical insignificance of the Gorkhas in Bengal Assembly as a pressure group. Hillman’s association said on 11 Dec 1938 –...their welfare is now dependent on the exigencies of party politics in the Bengal Assembly and their utter helplessness to their voice heard...<sup>136</sup> It was Bengali oriented nationalism that seemed to the Gorkha’s of Darjeeling as Bengali hegemony that ignored their aspirations as if it was not connected with the mainstream movement which was in Bengal dominated by the Bengalis. Contemporary Communist party member of Darjeeling district Satyendra Narayan Majumder observes-

The post world war upsurge of the national liberation movement in the plains of India did have its impact on the minds of the Gorkha masses. They began to be conscious of their right to exist as a district entity within the Indian body politic and the right to administer their own affairs. The Gorkha League tried to act as symbol and mouthpiece due to certain historical reasons the leadership of the Gorkha League could not take a clear anti-imperialist stand. Its outlook was clouded with chauvinism, against the plain people, particularly against the Bengalis.<sup>137</sup>

English education and European planters life style influenced the Gorkhas and as a result, a nucleus of English educated intelligentsia, contractors and petty traders developed among the Gorkha urban population. Chhanda Chakroborty highlighted another aspect that the Bengalis dominated the socio-cultural life of the natives. The Raja of Burdwan, Raja of Cooch Behar and some other Zamindars along with other upper class professionals formed an exclusive social circle.<sup>138</sup> The Gorkha emerging middle class was looking for professional services who were earlier confined within Bengali baboos.<sup>139</sup> Hillman's Association suggested in 1930 that –The services of this area should be independent of the province of Bengal and separate from it and should be recruited from local people.<sup>140</sup> In 1934 the demand of the association was –So far, all culturable land has remained an exclusive reserve for the hill people. Newly emerged contractors, traders, and timber merchants wanted the share of the economy of the hill areas from the grip of the Marwari and Bihari's. So, the H.A demanded – reserving Government contract and excise settlement for hill people and in the appointments in the hills. It was the hegemony of the Bengali legal practitioners, medical persons and the persons holding municipal body.<sup>141</sup> It was quite natural for the Hillmans Association to demand special '*safeguards*' for the Nepali's of Darjeeling. It was written in their memorandum –We live in an absolutely different world from the rest of the people of Bengal. Geographical, racial, historical, religious and linguistic factors they stressed as the reason of the difference. They were not '*discontent*' or '*dissatisfied*' with the present system of Government. Their plea to the Chief Secretary of Bengal that –

-the district should be excluded from them and that the evolution of our political life should be towards a district local Government of our own on such lines as may be approved by the British Government.<sup>142</sup>

However, in spite of being within the same Non-Regulated Region they were from the facilities the people in the plains enjoyed. It seems to Prodyot Basu the cause of the financial decline of the Tarai region was the management of the Haats and Bazars by D.I fund. Once the British felt the need to establish some Haats in Siliguri, Matigara, Bagdogra, Naxalbari, Kharibari, Fansideoa and other regions. The D.I fund was to develop Darjeeling town and to extend and reconstruct Darjeeling hill station. Administrator of the D.I fund was Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, S.D.O and local administrator. Tolls collected from those Haats and Bazars were deposited in the D.I fund. According to Prodyut Bose the huge money that was exacted from the Tarai region were spent to develop those Bazars and Haats, but to develop Darjeeling town. Bose wrote -This oppression from a long past could be stopped by the united protest of the people of Tarai region and this will surely helpful for the Tarai people.<sup>143</sup> Later on, the tussle between Siliguri and Darjeeling District Congress Committee was linked with economic dissimilarities. Tarai Jotedar's association, found that interest of the Jotedars, not matched with the tea planters.

Gorkhas demanded for their national identity in between 1917-1940 and at last in the early forties the Gorkha League was formed. From then Gorkha's demanded separate land for them. Establishment of Gorkha League drifted the Gorkhas from the nationalist movement and focused on their special demand for Gorkha identity. By this time, they vacillated between the demands of a separated state and merged with Assam. Gorkha Leagues plea to viceroy Linlithgow on 12 August 1943 clears their stand during the forties –

-That the Gorkhas who are domiciled in India, or their fathers or grand fathers, came out of Nepal in order to serve the British to conquer India and

Burma, and have been the mainstay of the British Government in preserving peace of the country. They have been true to the salt, and amidst all the political disturbances, they have remained steadfastly loyal to the British and have done their duty and obeyed orders. For their loyalty and devotion to the British cause during the mutiny of 1857-58, during the last war, and during all these years of political disturbances of 1942, they have been named butchers and not soldiers<sup>144</sup> by different sections of the people of India; they have earned hatred and odium, but they have remained steadfastly loyal to the British cause and have done their duty and obeyed orders. Their services in this war on the African front, and particularly in Burma, are known to nearest private of the British battalions that were engaged.

But in spite of their long and loyal services, they have not been recognized as a community in India. In spite of their long and loyal services, they have consistently been ignored. The Montague- Chemsford reforms of 1919 made no mention of the British Gorkhas; the Government of India act of 1935 recognized the right of every small community but the three million Gorkhas in India and Burma were ignored. The Gorkhas were not represented in central legislature and even in provinces like Assam, Bengal, United Provinces, the Punjab, and Burma, where the Gorkhas have settled in large numbers for generations, having in many cases, cleared the lands first, no seat is reserved for them in the provincial legislatures.<sup>145</sup>

Gorkhas wanted to be recognized by the British to save their native culture and language and authorise their political status. Their recognition as a minor community of India to safeguard their interest by the Cripps Mission seems to them more important than any other popular political demand. At the same time, Communists supported the popular demand of 'Gorkhasthan' and Gorkha autonomy. The active Communist like Ratanlal Brahman or Charu Majumder voiced their support. These demands during the forties were able to strengthen, the organization of the Communists in the hill areas of Bengal. Communists also wanted to include Nepal and Sikkim within the periphery of Gorkhasthan.<sup>146</sup> Communists were different in their approach of claiming

Gorkhasthan. They opposed the British imperialist plan of excluding the district of Darjeeling from the rest of India. The plan of H.A was to establish Darjeeling and into a separate chief commissioners province. In December 1941 it submitted in its memorial to Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State of India. Communists considered the H.A as the local agents of the British imperialism.<sup>147</sup>

## Observations

In the 40's, sub-nationalist movement in some districts of Northern Bengal and alternative politics, affected by religious minded people were the forces that hindered or changed the pace and stability of the nationalist movement. In this chapter, the hypothesis will be the realisation of those movements and politics that may not have been helpful for the mainstream nationalist movement but that divulged the various currents and cross-current politics running simultaneously with the nationalist movement. India's wide alternative politics of Mahasava, League and Communists were also linked with the regional interest of the Rajbansis and Gorkhas. This interest was nothing but the special demands that were not taken into consideration within the Congress agenda. In other words, ideologically or in reality Congress was not a party, which could absorb those demands within its agenda. Gandhi was not able to launch the Quit India Movement addressed to the local issues. Hence, a large section of the Rajbansi and Gorkha's were indifferent to the movement.

## Notes and References

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<sup>1</sup> I.B File No 169/38 Hindu Mahasava, Bengal Provincial.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> I.B report 27.01.42.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>7</sup> *Mahasava on Coming Elections – Shyama Prasad Mukherjee – The Nationalist (Anniversary Supplement), Oct 26, 1945.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Copy of the lecture of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in the 10<sup>th</sup> session of Mahasava at Burdwan, 31.11.41.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Letter of Herbert to Linlithgow Nov, 1942, Home Political, Confidential, File no 31, Collection –2.*
- <sup>13</sup> *I.B file No 505/42 – R.S.S.S – A Hindu National Volunteer Corps founded in 1925 at Nagpur.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *I.B File No 167-38(1) Dup.*
- <sup>16</sup> *Letter from Calcutta Intelligence Branch to the Director of the Intelligence Branch, 27.01.1942.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Report on 11.07.42. I.B file No 505/42.*
- <sup>18</sup> *I.B File No 169/38 Hindu Mahasava, Bengal Provincial.*
- <sup>19</sup> *I.B File No 169/38 Hindu Mahasava, Bengal Provincial.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Resolution of the conference of Hindu Mahasava Chatmohar, Pabna, 15.03.42.*
- <sup>21</sup> *Copy of the lecture of Asutosh Lahiri in the conference, Chatmohar, Pabna, 14-15 March, 1942, Modern India press, Calcutta.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Hindusthan Standered, 9.11.41.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> *G.B.S.B 'PEH' series File no501/39.*
- <sup>25</sup> *I.B File 169/38 Hindu Mahasava, Bengal Provincial.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Letter from D.I.B, Pabna to Special Superintendent I.B.21.05.1942.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Circular of Hindu Mahasava, 03.06.42.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> *Proceedings of the Commissioner's Conference in Governments House on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1942, Government of West Bengal, Home Political, Confidential, File No 350/42.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Ghosh Ananda Gopal – Jalpaiguri Sahare Pragati Andolan Gare Othar Gorar Katha, Sourashikha, 14<sup>th</sup> edition, Dec 31.12.88,p-2.*
- <sup>31</sup> *I.B File 169/38 Hindu Mahasava, Bengal Provincial.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> *Prodyot Kumar Basu- Ekti Janapader Kahini, memories of a lawyer, Hoogly, Uma Basu Pub, 1990,pp-54-55.*
- <sup>34</sup> *Jaya Chatterjee. Bengal Divided 1932-1947, (English edition, Cembridge University Press, 1994) Bengali version, L. Alma pub, 2003, p-40.*
- <sup>35</sup> *Bandopadhyay Sekhar – Changing Borders, Shifting Loyalties: Religion, Caste and The Partition of Bengal 1947, Asian studies Institute Working Paper, 1998,p-2.*
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid, P-2.*
- <sup>37</sup> *Bandopadhyay Sekhar, op.cit.,p-2.*
- <sup>38</sup> *Basu Swaraj --- Dynamics Of a Caste Movement -- The Rajbansis of North Bengal, 1910 – 1947, Manohar pub, Delhi, 2003,pp-99-100.*
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.p-101.*

- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p-102
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p-102.
- <sup>42</sup> *Bandopadhyay Sekhar, op.cit., p-2.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Trisrota, 18.1.31.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Report of the Division Commissioner of Rajsahi LOFCR, First, Feb 1941, G.B HCPB File No – 13/41.*
- <sup>45</sup> *Trisrota, 07.8.31.*
- <sup>46</sup> *I.B File 169/38 Hindu Mahasava, Bengal Provincial.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Barman Rup Kumar -Contested Regionalism, Abhijit Publication, Delhi, 2007,p –107.*
- <sup>48</sup> *Trisrota, 6/7,30/8, 1930.*
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid, 30.08.30.*
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid, 23.3.32.*
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid, 6.7.41.*
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid, 16.8.41.*
- <sup>53</sup> *See Appendix-7.*
- <sup>54</sup> *See Chapter-3 for Prodyot Bose's role to collect the tax in War-fair of Siliguri.*
- <sup>55</sup> *Chatterjee Jaya-Bengal Divided: Hindu communalism and Partition, 1932-47, First Indian edition, 1995, Cembriidge University Press.p-192.*
- <sup>56</sup> *I.B report 12.12.41.*
- <sup>57</sup> *Letter No – 1360/54-40, from S.P Malda to Special Assistant I.B 21<sup>st</sup> August 1940, G.B S.P 'PH' Series, File No-522/38.*
- <sup>58</sup> *Jitu Santal of Malda influenced by this sect, fought against the British during 1932-33, and died. Soren was inspired by Jitu, both was within same disciple.*
- <sup>59</sup> *Soren thus failed and after partition, he stayed at East Pakistan, Baske Dhirendranath-Bialliser Andolane Santal Janagoshthi, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, Jan, 2003, p-38.*
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- <sup>74</sup> *Janajuddha*, 12th August 1942.
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- <sup>77</sup> *Janajuddha*, 26<sup>th</sup> September 1942.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec, 1942.
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1942.
- <sup>80</sup> *Sengupta Amalendu – Uttal Challis – Asamapta Biplab, Prativas, Calcutta*, 2006,p-42.
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- <sup>82</sup> *Letter from Sudhir Mukherjee to the Secretary, R.D.K.S, Rangpur, 05.09.1938.*
- <sup>83</sup> *I.B file No 1389 –34 Part 1, Krisak Samity of Rangpur.*
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- <sup>96</sup> *See detail in Chapter-2.*
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- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p-85-86.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid*,p-86.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid*,p-17.
- <sup>102</sup> *De Jiban – Ganabhipray, Autobiographical Memory, Tufanganj, A publication by the author, 2006,P-14. Jiban De (A Communist active on Kurigram, Rangpur and Dinajpur area was expelled from school when at class nine for political activities. From then, he was an active Communist worker of the mentioned area.*
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid*.p-20
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>105</sup> *Janajuddha*, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1942.
- <sup>106</sup> *File No 396/42 Home Political Confidential, Communal Disturbances Case of Dacca and Rural Areas – Their Review.*
- <sup>107</sup> *Extracted from D.O No 2366/68 –41 dated 7.7.42 from the superintendent of police, Jalpaiguri, File No 396/42 Home Political Confidential, Communal disturbances case of Dacca and rural areas – there review.*
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- <sup>110</sup> *For detail, see Chapter-1.*
- <sup>111</sup> *I.B File No 116/39 Mohammedan Affairs.*
- <sup>112</sup> *Rangila Rasul' was a novel written in 1928, caused riot between two communities and the author was killed by the Muslims.*
- <sup>113</sup> *I.B File No 116/39 Mohammedan Affairs.*
- <sup>114</sup> *Home Political Confidential, File No 238/40.*
- <sup>115</sup> *I.B File No 116/39, Mohammedan Affairs.*
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*
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- <sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*
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- <sup>120</sup> *Trisrota, 19.1.41.*
- <sup>121</sup> *English version of the sonnet, unchanged, written by famous League poet Munsii Abbas Ali, I.B File No-2 116/39 Mohammedan Affairs.*
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- <sup>134</sup> *Chakroborty Dyutish, op.cit., p-16.*

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- <sup>135</sup> Cited in Chakroborty Dyutish, *op.cit.*, p-16.
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- <sup>143</sup> Basu Prodyot Kumar - *Ekti Janapader Kahini, Memories of a Lawyer, Hoogly, Uma Basu Pub, 1990, p-257.*
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