

# Introduction

The present research is an intense effort to reveal the past glories of Northern Bengal and also to highlight an unexplored area of nationalist movement in socio—economic perspectives. There has been a tendency in modern researches to highlight some areas like Midnapore, Nadia and above all Calcutta as case studies on Quit India Movement of Bengal. As John Broomfield remarked, researches on socio-economic and cultural movements of rural Bengal is impeded by the scholar's tendency to focus upon Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> Scholars are not comfortable in taking up a subject like political movements of North Bengal. This may have emanated from the fact that district Gazetteers do not give much information regarding those movements. For example, Darjeeling District Gazetteer did not afford a single line about Siliguri<sup>2</sup>. But there are many instances about the movement in Siliguri and it should be mentioned that Quit India Movement in North Bengal started first in Darjeeling on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1942, though according to some local authors, the movement started on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1942. Likewise the movement of Kumargramduar was totally ignored by all Gazetteers<sup>3</sup> and contemporary newspapers but some recent researches show that the Rava(Mech), the Rajbansi peasant and tea garden workers did have a relationship with the nationalists of Kumargramduar (Duarse Sramik Pratibad( 1890 – 1947 by Ranajit Dasgupta, Madhuparni, Jalpaiguri zillah Sankha. How towns incorporated rural segment in Kumargramduar and Balurghat is a subject of reasearch work by itself.

## Area of Study

Geographically the research work is restricted to the northern part according to the map of Bengal in 1942, including Rangpur, East Dinajpur, Bogra, Pabna, Rajshahi or the districts now in Bangladesh along with the districts northern West Bengal i.e Darjeeling. Jalppaiguri, Malda, West Dinajpur, but not totally excluding Cooch

Behar, a native state affected by the movement disclosing the impact of the nationalist movement in an outside area, which merged later with India. In short northern districts of undivided Bengal, which were situated on the northern side of the river Ganga and eastern side of the river Brahmaputra were taken into consideration.

## Span of Study

I choose the topic, the regional history of a movement launched by Gandhi in August 1942 and ended near about February 1943. It means that the movement, continued for seven months only. But to understand and appreciate the actual mood of the movement I have to start from the end of 40's and also find its impact on the partition and the inclusion of Cooch Behar State in India. Otherwise, the actual appetite of the movement could not comprehend. It should be mentioned also that somewhere if required the mentioned span of the study. It is exceptional only to realise the mindset of a person who took part in the movement.

## An Overview of Literature

On the study of Quit India Movement all relevant works i.e., from Amba Prasad<sup>4</sup> to the volume edited by Chopra<sup>5</sup> mostly ignored Bengal sans Midnapore. This tendency contaminated on Gyanendra Pandey<sup>6</sup> and the book based on I.B files by Pranab Kumar Chatterjee<sup>7</sup> considered Midnapore to be only place of the movement. The reason why Midnapore was favoured by the scholars was the glory of the momentary Government established in Midnapore. Published research work of Ph.D Degree Kalyan Kumar Sarkar<sup>8</sup> and Kallol Banerjee<sup>9</sup> were those works, which preferred to treat the patterns of the movement in selected districts. These works or articles on some other districts were however confined on southern part of Bengal.

So, it is clear that works with reference to Quit India Movement have overlooked the movements of Northern Bengal. However, Malaysankar Bhattacharya offered a brief but instructive analysis of Quit India Movement in Northern Bengal in his unpublished research.<sup>10</sup> Bhattacharya used contemporary journals of Northern Bengal and some esteemed newspapers like 'The Statesman' in this study. Dealing with the task of making a history of hundred years, Bhattacharya assembled facts as much possible in the huge periphery of nationalist movement, profiled, and explained chronologically. The topic of Quit India Movement was the last chapter of his thesis. Manasi Sengupta extended the chapter into a dissertation for M.Phil degree in N .B .U (1993) titled "A profile of Quit India Movement in North Bengal". The researcher has done a highly rich work and she has contributed fundamental elements in the newly explored field. She view to make used of district wise survey according to the map of modern west Bengal. Two good academic research works had chosen Jalpaiguri as the area of study. Ranajit Dasgupta<sup>11</sup> dealt with the political condition of the district along with socio – economic changes from the formation of the district to the independence or partition of India. Dasgupta was a Marxist historian. He however did not find anything hopeful in the nationalist movements. He did not even spend a single paragraph on Quit India Movement of Jalpaiguri. Left directed mass movements appeared to him as of primary importance. Subhajyoti Ray<sup>12</sup> on the other hand is a profound and high-class research work, which elucidates the evolution of socio–economic scenario, cementing the political climate. This work, though covering a long span of time, did not overlook the nationalist movement. Yet, the movements of Dinajpur, Malda and Balurghat did not receive adequate attention in the work. An article by Biren de Sarkar <sup>13</sup> narrates the significant experience of his part in that movement. These kinds of experiences have been described in some Bengali autobiographical writings like "Jiban Prabha–Smriti Charan"---by Kamalendu Chakroborty, "Ekti Janapader Kahini"(Jalpaiguri, 1990) by Prodyot Kumar Basu. "Dinajpur Zillar Rajnaitik Itihas"(Balurghat, 1985) written by Biswanath Chakroborty, described

the response of a district against colonial suppression. Radhagobinda Ghosh edited "Swadhinata Sangrame Maldaher Abadan"(Malda, 1991) is the amalgamation of essays on history of the nationalist movement with some autobiographical memories, sectioned differently.

Prominence on caste and tribal movement in some works is supportive for the topic in the course of discussion. For example, the political movements of the Rajbansis are interestingly framed in Nirmal Chandra Choudhury's "Swadhinata Sangrame Rajbansi Sampraday"(Jalpaiguri, 1984) and Upendranath Barman's "Rajbansi Khatriya Jatir itihas"(3rd Edition, Jalpaiguri, 1981), Rajbansi Khatriya Jatir Itihas, Jalpaiguri (B.S 1361,1988,3rd edition). Swaraj Basu's<sup>14</sup> analyses in last few chapters that why Rajbansis were not interested to take part in the nationalist movement. The occasional papers presented by Dyutish Chakroborty, Manas Dasgupta and Ananda Gopal Ghosh at the C.H.S, N.B.U. These works were careful to analyse the Gorkha mindset during the 40's.<sup>15</sup>

Some books published from Bangladesh made an attempt to estimate the Muslim mind and politics.<sup>16</sup> To study the Gandhian concept on peasantry and politics of Bengal it is useful to consult major publications on Gandhi and Gandhian movement in Bengal.<sup>17</sup> Some books on Marxist viewpoint also merit careful study since review of the movement in north Bengal from Marxist viewpoint is necessary for the study.<sup>18</sup> The books reviewed the situation of 40's in Dinajpur. Lahiri however praised communist policy against Quit India Movement; the book should be considered the best outlook from the eye of a communist.

From the aforementioned overview of literature, it is clear that a relevant study on Quit India Movement of Northern Bengal from a socio-economic perspective has not yet been done.

## Research Questions

The subsequent research queries will be examined and evaluated by the proposed work.

- Ideological brain waves that worked in the wake of the movement.
- The socio- economic background of Northern Bengal lined the way of the movement.
- The comment by which the Quit India Movement of Northern Bengal is linked with rural and urban politics.
- From which category of people the movement was organised and how the leadership came forward.
- To verdict out the nature of rural and urban involvement in the movement.
- The strategies of the Hindu Mahasava, R.S.S, Muslim League, Communists, Rajbansis' and Gorkhas' in opposition to the movement.
- Appraisals of the women commitment in the formation of the movement.
- Act in response to the nationalist movement by different castes, tribes, and communities.

## Methodology

In this research work, various primary (unpublished autobiographical memory, memorial writings, police, I.B, and Home political files etc.) and secondary data have been used to fill up the gaps in the writings of the ancestors who have worked on the relation between rural and urban movement in two zones, economic as well as agrarian unrest of the contemporary people, linkage between nationalist movement and municipal or rural politics. Nature of the rural and urban politics discloses the ultimate nature of nationalist movement. Ideological inspirations at the deep root of the common people are reflected by their motivation when they participated in the movement. Rural and urban politics has been properly judged both with primary and secondary sources in the research work, avoid as far as the emotions of the local writers. On the contrary, preference is given to the criticism and analysis. I was careful of not to be influenced by the local historical writings that do not stand on primary or reliable sources. These writings, while help developing our views, cannot be considered as primary sources. Political, District officers chronicle of events of disturbances was the primary source in which date wise happenings of the movement were categorised according to the districts. The unpublished autobiography of Piyush Kanti Mukherjee, M.L.A (W.B) 1952- 72, and Deputy Speaker 1971-72 is one of the vital primary sources of our research. There are some other biographical writing on Nalinimohan Pakrashi (Duars Gandhi) by his son Abanimohan Pakrashi and memorial writing by Sourindramohan Mishra. The unpublished and published private documents used in this work are mostly untouched till date. Municipal records of Jalpaiguri and English Bazar have been used to show the connection between municipal and mainstream politics. Contemporary newspapers and journals have supplied some important facts. Regional newspapers throw light on some important facts, which are naturally not available in national newspapers. During the year, 1943 when cases regarding the movements began to be reported, the newspapers of that time provide some interesting facts of different dimensions.

Recent local journals are also helpful since these provide some memorial recap of the insurgents. Madhuparni, Dadhichi, Nonai etc are used when authentic sources were found. I.B and Home Political, confidential files are the most important primary source of my information. An administrative hazard to collect the information of the I.B files or the permission from the authority was a long lasting process. But after the right to information act, introduced by the government permission was not necessary to collect the data before 1947. On the other hand, several I.B files were released by I.B department to the state archives. The files that were used in this research work were mostly these newly released files. One of the great advantages to use these files is that these preserved letters, pamphlets, leaflets, resolutions, booklets of the political conferences etc. There was also an English translation available in the I.B files. But it was also a problem to anyone that the lucrative files are endless, then where to stop. One of the great difficulties to handle the I.B files was year of a file does not be a sign that information will be found inside the file must be of the mentioned year. One can find the incidents of 1958 in a file of 1942. I found so many files almost empty with interesting headline on the top of the file. Home political confidential files though carries information's of the mentioned year on the top of the file and also supplies some interesting relevant information. The records of the Thana's were almost destroyed. I also wish to go to the districts of Bangladesh. Before going to a foreign country I was informed from the relevant sources that the documents of the freedom struggle was not important in the research field of Bangladesh. Hence, they did not preserve it. Some researchers who are doing works on the freedom struggle of the districts of Bangladesh have it in mind to use the I.B and home political files of India. Therefore, I depend on the sources available here and this satisfied me.

Notwithstanding Jagannath Biswas and Asoka Mukherjee of Alipurduar I could not be able to take interview of the persons who took part in the movement directly. When I interviewed Asoka Mukherjee, she was not in a condition to

tell anything, regardless of few words. So I have to depend on the interview took by Sipra Sen Dhar. Other partakers died before I started the work. Therefore, I interviewed the persons who were at least at such an age during 1942 to memorise the incidents. I also did fieldwork in Kumargramduar, Harishchandrapur, Balurghat, Malda, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri and Darjeeling. I have tried my best to find the files of the district collectorates, without however much avail. Reflection of the movement in novel and short story is an interesting part of my study particularly in the fifth chapter. Here I have stressed on real historical characters and episode that appear in the novel and short story by changing name and place.

I tried to depend mainly on the primary sources for all the Chapters. First three chapters are designed according to the tendency of the contemporary politics of downward mobilisation. Brief scenario of Bengal politics helps us to know the pattern of the politics of north Bengal. Both were necessary to understand the actual mood and nature of the movement. This is also in consideration of the politics of oppositions, their interests and views. Order of the several main and sub headings of any chapter is designed to form an idea and to reach the conclusion. The research is not a nationalist work, Marxist criticism or subaltern study. Nor do I want to look at the research from the top or from the below. I intend to put the focus from different positions as far as possible to reveal the actual picture of a movement in the particular region.

## Chapterisation

I started the research with a tentative chapterisation and ended up with some nominal changes. The mood of the research work changed time to time and it affected the chapterisation. Collected source materials have a positive effect on chapterisation. Moreover, it was kept in mind that all chapters are to be correlated with each other. It is mentioned almost in every chapter to go through

one subject in detail to another chapter. Except the first chapter, all chapters are based on primary sources.

Chapter 1 named as 'The scenario before the Quit India Movement in Bengal' is the preliminary chapter. The purpose of the chapter is to make an outline of the background and essence of the movement in Bengal and to reveal the contradiction and conflict within the movement. Gandhian politics changed the pattern of Bengal politics and the rise and decline of Krisak Praja Party up to Quit India Movement was made possible. The hegemony of Muslim league over the rural peasantry of Bengal was highlighted in the chapter. Economic mayhem of the year 1942 was given importance over which the movement was launched. The main purpose of the chapter is to find the objects of the Bengal politics that directly or indirectly affected the political pattern of Northern Bengal.

Chapter 2 deals with the background politics of North Bengal, before the movement was launched. In this chapter, it is shown that the group clashes and conflict within the Congress became wider concerning the election of 1937. The class division within the Congress deprived some active workers. Even Bose brothers, who were warmly accepted among the rural masses, did not realise their grievances. And the work of leftist parties at last strengthened its rural base to organise No-Toll Movement and Haat- Tola Movement.

Chapter 3 one of the prime chapters of the research has questioned the tendency of district-based survey and stressed on the various tendencies of the movement. How Contemporary regional politics affected the nature of the movement is one of the final themes of the chapter. It analyses the mentality of the leadership and the commitment of the women. In other words, this chapter totally tries to disclose the actual mindset of the movement.

Chapter 4 is designed to review the Quit India Movement of Northern Bengal from the angle of five trends of alternative politics i.e Hindu Mahasava, Muslim League, Communists, caste politics of the Rajbansis and Gorkha politics in the hill areas. Gorkha and Rajbansi politics had an interest of the sons of the soil. Others have had an international and national standpoint; accordingly, the party members are active in various districts of north Bengal. This politics of anti-Quit India Movement consequently aggravated the enthusiasm of the masses to join the movement.

Chapter 5 is the last chapter describes the end and effect of the movement. Other than inner contradiction within the movement, British Policy of Suppression Management was ipso-facto responsible for the end of the movement. On the other hand, the movement had an effect on the native state of Cooch Behar and further politics of north Bengal. The movement was also reproduced in Bengali literature with nationalist zeal.

## Hypothesis

To explore the regional mood of the Quit India Movement in Northern Bengal the depiction of sequential events is being avoided in this work; however, some event left untold erstwhile will be mentioned herewith. Ideologically conscious and geographically secluded as well as militarily important the area of northern Bengal expressed its antagonism in diverse local frame of mind, constructed by the relationship between Jotdars and peasants or particular temperament of the Ravas, Rajbansis, Santals etc. The far-flung region reacted quite late naturally by the strong shoulders of some 'spot' leaders who established themselves in tiny margin. Though formally it was a movement initiated by Gandhi, people were stimulated by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and yet amazingly followed the way of some Gandhian leaders. The most important problem that the present work wants to deal with is the economic condition and social stagnation of the contemporary people, which laid the



foundation of the movement. Ideological inspiration also played an important role over this kind of sensible condition. In this way, a special character of the movement in the Northern region of Bengal was divulged. Now the research objectives are classified here:

1. One thing common in different regions is the inclination of the movement of the urban quarters to merge with the rural segments for which in some places the movement was carried straightforwardly (For example Saroj Ranjan Chatterjee led the movement of the village 'Tapan'). While, the harsh course of action by Piyush Kanti Mukherjee was to embark upon Kumargramduar.
2. The work is also designed to search for the roots to find out the nature of the leadership that guided the movement.
3. It attempts to explore further and reconstruct the sources by which Quit India movement in Northern Bengal could be linked with the dichotomy of urban and rural politics.
4. The present work above all underlines the contributions of some local leaders, otherwise restrained in local magazines or unpublished autobiographical works preserved by interested local persons. Their socio-economic origin and ideological basis mostly ignored till date, are highlighted in the work.
5. Apart from the nationalist feeling to some extent, the movement was forced by the British policy towards the tribes and castes of Northern Bengal, particularly in the district of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri District. But hostility was much in Malda, Dinajpore and Rangpur and so the nature of the movement was different in the two zones.
6. The research is also a review from the eyes of the alternative politicians, also as well as its effect on contemporary politics and its aftermath.

## Notes and References

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