

CHAPTER - II

I. Brief Reference to the position before Independence:

The Government of India Act 1935 brought a new political development in the British India. According to the new constitution of 1935 Dyarchy was abolished and the responsibility of the state administration was vested on the elected representatives of the state Legislative Assembly's. Thus the Act of 1935 went a step further in providing Provincial Autonomy. Most of the work of the state administration was to be in hands of the Indian ministers, though the Governors also empowered certain important and discretionary powers and they were not bound to follow the advice of their ministers. The legislature of Bengal and few other states were composed of two parts - Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. The new constitution decided that the members of the both the legislative wings would be elected through restricted franchise.

Meanwhile Mahatma Gandhi's non-co-operation movement was completed in the 1934 and its influences was not faded away at that time. So, the Congress was in a dilemma in making decision of joining in the election process according to the new constitution and the issue of joining election became the Central point of discussion of the annual session of the Congress Party in the April 1936.

Earlier, Congress vehemently condemned the 1935 constitution and its then President Nehru was in favour of abstaining from the ensuing election. But still the annual Congress session of 1936 decided to participate in the election. But a sharp difference arose among the Congress leaders regarding the joining of ministry by the elected congress members, provided the Party would get majority. The All India Congress Committee resolved that the issue may be decided after the completion of election.

Under the Government of India Act 1935, the Political Parties in Bengal were very much serious in contesting the election of 1937. In Bengal, there were three main political parties which contested the election. These were Congress, Muslim League and Fazlul Haque's Krishak Proja Party. So before 1937 election, the position of the Congress and the other two parties need analysis.

On the 11th October, 1934 the Presidential election and other office-bearer's election of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee took place in Calcutta. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy's name was proposed as president without his approval, by Surendra Mohan Maitra of Rajsahi and seconded by Moulavi Jalaluddin Hussami. The rival group then tried to propose the name of Dr. Prfull Chandra Ghosh as against Dr. Roy, but Dr. Ghosh refused to contest. At that time, Subhas Chandra Bose was in Europe. In

spite of that Birendranath Sasmal proposed the name of Subhas Chandra Bose as presidential candidate. But Dr. Roy was elected President by a margin of 113 - 86 votes. In the other office-bearers election, Surendra Mohan Maitra of Rajsahi and Moulavi Mahiuddin were elected as Vice-Presidents and Kamal Krishna Roy and Kiron Shankar Roy were elected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively of B.P.C.C. Thus Dr. Roy became the President. Later, in due time Dr. Roy became the elected member of All India Congress Committee and was nominated as a member of the Congress working Committee.

On taking the charge of the President, Dr. Roy had to face a new problem. "During the election for the Central Assembly in 1934 Bidhan approached Sri Sarat Chandra Bose, who was then under detention, and suggested to him that he should stand as a Congress candidate, but Sarat babu preferred to join Pandit Malaviya's 'Congress Nationalist Party' along with many other from Bengal. As a matter of fact, the elections of the Central Assembly from Bengal were a failure so far as the Congress was concerned. Sri Sarat Chandra Bose, although under detention was elected to the Assembly."⁽¹⁾

In the beginning of 1935, Sarat Ch. Bose was released from Jail. After that, the then famous "Big Fives" of Calcutta, Nirmal Chandra Chandra, Tulsi Charan Goswami, Naliniranjan Sarker, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and Sarat Chandra

Bose met in a meeting to discuss the then political situation as well as to plan for future programme. But there were differences of opinion on various matters mainly with Sarat Bose on the one hand and the rest of the group. Having failed to take an unanimous decision the leaders could not see any united programme. It was the time of factions and groups in Bengal politics.

It has been observed that throughout "the year 1935 and early in 1936 the difference of opinion amongst congressmen in Bengal continued. They were practically divided into several groups and it was well-nigh impossible to bring them together to accept any common programme. Thus differences became more outspoken in 1936 at the time of Provincial elections for the Legislature. A committee was formed consisting of four members from the two opposing groups of the congress for the nomination of candidates for the election. Bidhan was elected as the chairman of the committee. There was unanimity in the selection of all the 200 and odd candidates. But in the case of four candidates there was a sharp difference of opinion. The two groups voted for their respective candidates and Bidhan had to exercise his casting vote in all the cases. Sri Sarat Chandra Bose was not satisfied with his position and he appealed to the Central Parliamentary Board which decided that the cases of these

four candidates should be placed before the general meeting of the Bengal Provincial Congress committee for their final verdict. Accordingly the committee met and upheld the selections of the candidates for whom Bidhan had given his casting votes. Again Shri Sarat Chandra Bose was dissatisfied with this finding of the general body of the B.P.C.C. on this also he appealed to the Working Committee, which felt that it was desirable to have a compromise on this issue and for that reason decided that the four names of the two groups should be reconsidered in a way that two from each group might be put in as candidates. Bidhan Chandra, on principle, refused to accept the findings of the working committee because according to the previous decision, the general body of the B.P.C.C. had already given their verdict on the matter. On the ground he resigned from the committee and Shri Sarat Chandra Bose undertook the entire responsibility for running the election that year. ⁹⁹⁽²⁾

It has been observed that "the evolution of Muslim Politics during the years following the Swarajya Party's withdrawal from the Legislature in 1930 was marked, on the one hand, by efforts of Muslim leadership in the Legislature to advance the community's interests by beneficial legislations, and, on the other, by Proja Andolan under the Nikhil Banga Proja Samity which was consolidating Muslims on the economic platform. The spread of English education among Muslims, Particularly in

East Bengal after the establishment of Dacca University in 1921, brought into being a new class of rural leadership, young and educated but not based on traditional land holding. This class represented the urge for modernization and also provided leadership to Proje Andolan which in effect was a new development in Bengal Muslim Politics. Thus, progress in education along with the growth of local self-governing institutions and enlargement of the electorate, enfranchising 4 new Muslim voters to every 3 Hindus, brought into politics new forces and possibilities before the provincial elections of 1937."⁽³⁾

But the Muslim leaders of the then time Bengal were not united. During 1933-37 the leaders were divided into three main groups. All Bengal Proje Sammelan which latter renamed Krishak Proje Party since its birth in 1929, had tremendous influence over the peasantry & the Muslim middle class. Moreover the party had an organisational units at the district level. Fazlul Haq was an able leader of the K.P.P. On the other hand, with the emergence of Krishak Proje Party for the consolidation of Muslim Peasantry under the radical leadership felt helpless for the landed Muslim aristocrats. So, on the eve of election, they formed United Muslim Party in May 1936 with Nawab Habibulla Bahadur of Dacca as President. The leaders of the United Muslim Party realized that without an election alliance with the Krishak Proje Party, the party's election

prospects would remain gloomy. But this unity move broke down on the question of leadership. Krishak Proja Party's choice of Fazlul Huq as the leader of the United Front was not acceptable to the United Muslim Party leaders. Huq described the United Muslim Party as a Party Zamindars, whereas Khwaja Nazimuddin of the United Muslim Party charged the K.P.P was "not a purely Muslim organisation" and it "never sought or welcomed the co-operation of prominent Muslims of Bengal who really represent and voice the interests and feelings of the Muslim Community."⁽⁴⁾

During this period, a section of business community of Calcutta was trying to form a new Muslim League Party in Bengal with the consent of Jinnah. M.A.H. Ispahani, Abdur Rahman Siddique and Noorudin took the leading role in formation of the new party. Jinnah was invited to Bengal in August 1936 "to settle the dispute between the United Muslim Party and the Krishak Proja Party. It is noteworthy in this context that a section of the Krishak Proja Party and others also welcomed this development."⁽³⁾ Though Jinnah had tried to unite both the groups under the banner of All India Muslim League and to some extent he was also successful because KPP in one time joined the Muslim League Parliamentary Board. But the unity did not survive long because fazlul Huq protested against the manner in which first meeting of Muslim League Parliamentary Board had been convened without consulting him or other important Krishak Proja Party leaders. Huq described the arbitrary decision to call

the meeting as "a fresh and deliberate attempt to insult the Krishak Proja Party and to make them feel that as Krishak and Projas they must submit here as elsewhere to what the nawabs and Zamindars may choose to decide on their behalf." (6) Later, when the first meeting was held on 8 September 1936, the K.P.P. members walked out from the meeting because of differences with the other members in the preparation of the election manifesto. So the unity move broke down and both the Muslim League and the Krishak Proja Party challenged each other in the "battle of vote."

Before the election, KPP was in dire need of funds and for collection of fund Huq approached B.C. Roy, Nalini Ranjan Sarker and Kiran Senker Roy, the three influential State Congress leaders. The three leaders agreed to finance K.P.P. election and by collecting Rs. 20,000/- they handed over to Huq with a verbal promise that KPP would jointly fight against the Muslim League along with Congress.

Early in 1937 the results of the elections were out. Poll counts showed that Congress became the largest party (not getting absolute majority), K.P.P. formed the second largest party, although it was challenged by Muslim League leaders. Mr. Fazlul Haque agreed to work with the Congress in case the ~~XXXXXX~~ Congress was willing to accept office. Sarat Bose and Subhas Bose were then dominating BPCC and the former was elected as the

leader of the Congress legislature party, which was the largest single majority party and Bose brother's also possess the Key-position in the organisational wings of the Congress. Sarat Chandra Bose refused to consider the question of Congress accepting the office as he felt that it would be lowering the prestige of the organisation to be a party of the Coalition government. The High Command, Bose Brothers contended, had not at that time given its permission to form a Coalition Ministry in ~~West~~ Bengal. Later, when A.I.C.C. took a decision that Congress should accept office in provinces in the meantime, in Bengal Mr. Fazlul Haq joined the Muslim League group and formed the Ministry in 1937.

Governor Sir John Anderson first invited Sarat Bose as the leader of the single largest party to form a ministry. But factionalism within Bengal Congress and intransigence on the part of High Command turned the table. The Congress Party in Bengal missed the bus, although a few months later the High Command gave their green signal for a coalition Ministry. But then, it was too late. Here the list of elected candidates of various political Parties have given below.

Total Members Elected : 250

1. Congress	60
2. Independent Muslim candidates	41
3. Muslim League	40
4. Krishak Proja Party	35

5. European	25
6. Independent Hindu (from lower caste)	23
7. Independent Barua Hindu	14
8. Other Independent candidates.	12

Out of 60 candidates of the Congress Party 17 members were being elected from Scheduled Caste Hindu section from labour wing and Tripura Krishak Samity. And the maximum members of the Krishak Proja Party were from Muslim peasantry section.

There were 63 members in the Bengal Legislative Council. According to Party position :-

1. Independent Muslim	13
2. Independent Hindu	12
3. Muslim League	11
4. Congress	10
5. European	6
6. Members of other Sections	11

After forming the Ministry with Muslim League Fazlul Haque became the Prime Minister of Bengal.

Being the largest party, "the Congress had the primary responsibility to form a ministry but the in-decision

of the All India Congress Committee about accepting office stood in its way. In this situation and in the face of rising expectations, the possibilities in respect of Cabinet Formation, Pending decision of the A.I.C.C, were : (a) the congress could have formed a coalition with the Krishak Proja Party on the basis of a minimum programme for the purpose of ministry making without itself joining the ministry, or (b) it could have helped Fazlul Huq in forming a coalition government with its passive support by not joining the opposition." (8)

It has been stated that, "the leadership in Bengal lacked the foresight to arrive at a 'compromise' with Huq who, though a somewhat immature politician, was never a total separatist like many other Bengal Muslim leaders. The Congress should have taken advantage of Huq's antipathy to the Muslim League and perhaps Huq would have been the answer to Pakistan. But the internal quarrels in the Bengal unit of the Congress made this impossible. In fact even the relations between the AICC and the Bengal unit was far from satisfactory". (9)

Muslim League took the opportunity of Congress Party's policy of abstaining from Fazlul Huq's ministry. "The league leaders saw the danger of the Proja - Congress coalition. To avert this situation, they offered their support to Fazlul Huq." (10)

Thereafter the obvious course for the Congress was to go to the opposition. In the Fazlul Huq's ministry among the ten ministers, Hindus and Muslims were the equal numbers. But due to the rift among the ministers, the ministry was not stable, strong and efficient. Congress, the opposition party, repeatedly presented no-confidence motions against the ministers separately. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi visited two times in Bengal in the year 1938 and due to his influence 24 independent scheduled caste members joined the congress legislative party which endangered the existence of the KPP Muslim League coalition Ministry. But the faction politics of Bengal Congress could not utilise this opportunity. Even Gandhiji tried to form Congress - KPP Coalition Ministry but this was also not fruitful. Later Fazlul Huq remarked that Congress had tried for a number of times to form a coalition ministry with his party but the acceptance of this proposal means, 'sign the death warrant of Islam.'

"However the constant opposition of the Congress resulted in the drawing together of the various Muslim groups in the Assembly, and the Huq Government's fate depend on a consolidated Muslim Front. It was therefore natural that Congressmen characterised it as a 'Muslim' government. It is well to remember here that the Muslim League till the mid 30's was a small group composed of landlords, high officials and members of the noble families. The 1937 elections gave

only 4.3 percent of the muslim vote to the League but ten years later, 1947, it won three-fourths of the same vote." (11)

According to Professor Myron Weiner, "It was in the three years between 1937 and 1940 that the League grew from a limited - interest group to a vast mass movement which was to win its demand for a Pakistan state of eighty million people." (12)

Meanwhile, the second world war came and Prime Minister Huq wholeheartedly supported the then British administration. During this period Huq's ministry had not to face any serious crisis. But the Provincial Congress Party was facing a serious organisational conflict.

In 1938 Shri Subhas Chandra Bose was the President of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and in that year he was elected President of the Indian National Congress. As he was the nominee of Gandhiji there was no difficulty in the election. But in 1939 Subhas Bose opposed the official Congress candidate Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who was supported by Gandhiji. Soon after his election Subhas Bose became ill and it was with much difficulty that he attended the next session at Tripuri. After the declaration of result in which Bose re-elected as Party President by defeating Gandhiji's nominee Pattabhi Sitaramayya Gandhiji became very much shocked and remarked "Pattabhis defeat is my defeat". This statement created tremendous impact among the congress leaders and mainly among the majority members of

Congress Working Committee. The members of the newly formed working committee began to oppose Subhas Bose. So owing to difference of opinion with the High Command, Bose resigned from the Congress Presidentship at a meeting of the AICC held in Calcutta in April, 1939.

With the resignation of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose from Congress presidentship, group bitterness in the Bengal politics manifested itself in many ways. Many prominent congressmen and leaders threatened the Central leaders for quitting the party.

During the AICC meeting held in Calcutta in April, 1939 Gandhiji came to Calcutta and stayed at Sodepur and sent for Bidhan and asked him to take up the membership of the Working Committee. "I was hesitant in the beginning," says Dr. Roy, "because I did not want to come between the opposing groups in the congress. I had never any group mentality so far as the Congress was concerned and I did not relish the ~~saxa~~ suggestion when there existed such a difference of opinion amongst the leaders of the Congress. But even so Gandhiji persisted in my joining the Working Committee along with Dr. Profulla Ghosh." (13) So, again he joined as a member of the Working Committee. For this Bidhan had to suffer materially and otherwise on several occasions. Even his house at Wellington Street was attacked in the Party feuds "The difference of opinion manifested itself in

the day to day working of the Bengal Provincial Committee. The matter was placed before the Working Committee and various meetings took place at which the problem of congress in Bengal was discussed. Eventually the working committee decided to expel Shri Sarat Chandra Bose from the Congress for a certain number of years and appointed an adhoc committee for stabilizing the position of the Congress in Bengal. Then Gandhiji asked Bidhan to try and re-organise the congress in Bengal. Several attempts were made and various discussions took place but nothing very tangible came out. The group mentality among the congressmen vitiated the entire atmosphere and Bidhan tried to avoid getting involved in these squabbles. The result was that he kept himself aloof from any active congress work." (14)

From the above discussion we can analyse one thing that Bengal congress was never smooth sailing and the leaders of the Provincial congress were always at daggers drawn with each other. So nothing organisational works had done due to organisational difference and group politics and it is better to say that personality - clash was the root of organisational drawback. Here it must be said that before the party quarrels began in Bengal, "the Bose brothers and Dr. Roy worked together. Of course, later they did not see eye to eye with one another in politics. Nevertheless, Bidhan had always remained a personal friend of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He was also his doctor in times of crises in his health." (15)

However, Subhas Bose after quitting Congress formed a new Political Party named "FORWARD BLOC". Consequently Congress was loosing its power and influence in the province.

The congress leadership during the early months of Huc's Prime Ministership created a vicious circle for him. "Their constant criticism and personal attacks at public meetings and in the press, in fact, made his position weaker. (16) Within a few months he came to feel that in the situation created by outright congress opposition he could bank only on the anti-Hindu feeling of a section of muslims to sustain him and his ministry" (17)

But soon Fazlul Huc was loosing ground in its own Krishak Proja Party. ".....the League was the dominant partner in the coalition government from the very beginning even though the Prime Minister belonged to the Krishak Proja Party. After the revolt of a section of that party against Fazlul Huc's leadership and his formally joining the League at its Lucknow session, the dominant position of the League in the Government became even more marked." (18)

Fazlul Huc was the most popular leader of Bengal and he was always devoted at that time fully for the interests of the Muslim community. "In spite all this, his leadership marked a decline on account of his differences with Jinnah in 1941." (19) The reason of the difference was that Jinnah ordered the Prime Minister of Bengal, Assam and Punjab of his

Muslim League to quit the membership from the Defence Council which was established for the second World War by the British.

"In the Presidential address at the Bengal Provincial Muslim League Conference held at Sirajganj on 15 February 1942, Jinnah accused Fazlul Huq of disloyalty and faithlessness to the national organisation and interests of the Muslims, and narrated the circumstances which led to the expulsion of the Shere Bangla".
(20)

Thereafter Huq was relinquished from the Muslim League leadership and Khaja Najjimuddin became elected as the leader of Muslim League. But Huq again formed his second ministry (Progressive coalition ministry) with Forward Bloc, his own followers of Krishak Proja Party and with few other small parties. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, the famous Hindu Mahasabha leader, was the Finance Minister of this Progressive coalition Ministry and in fact Mukherjee had a tremendous influence on the second Huq's ministry. Muslim League characterised it as 'Hindu' dominated ministry because out of nine, four ministers were from the Hindu community.

"Notwithstanding his services to the Muslims, Fazlul Huq became unpopular with the Muslim intelligentsia and students because his dissociation with the Muslim League and Coalition with the Hindu Mahasabha".
(21)

"The strength of the Progressive Coalition headed by Fazlul Huq consisted of Progressive Assembly Party - 42, Congress Bose Group - 28, Krishak Proja Party - 19, Hindu Mahasabha - 14, Independent Scheduled Caste Group - 12, Anglo - Indians - 3, Labour - 7. The 42 members of the Progressive Assembly Party were the seceders from the Muslim League, including the original members of the Krishak Proja Party who remained with Fazlul Huq in the Muslim League in 1937"⁽²²⁾.

The official congress consisting of 25 members also promised their co-operation to the new ministry. Kiran Shankar Roy was the leader of the official Congress legislative Party. Muslim League, the opposition party, was always trying to dislodge the new Huq ministry.

"In spite of the strong opposition organised by the Muslim League, Fazlul Huq continued to command a large majority in the Legislature. But he had to face the hostility of Sir John Herbert, Governor of Bengal who could not tolerate the independent policy - following by his ministry and found his actions prejudicial to the interests of the British Empire particularly in the time of the war."⁽²³⁾

Following conspiracy of the then Bengal Governor with the Muslim League, Huq was resigned on 28 March, 1943. Then Governor requested Khwaja Nazimuddin, the leader of the

Muslim League to form the Ministry.

"In Legislature Nazimuddin's position was weak, as he had no majority. His ministry depended upon the support of the Hindu and European members. On March 28, 1945 his ministry was defeated by 106 votes to 97 on the Secondary Education Bill, as the Hindu members voted against it and Europeans and Anglo-Indian members abstained from voting. Fazlul Huq, leader of the opposition, commanded majority in the Legislature. It was expected that he would be commissioned by the governors to form the ministry. But R.G. Casey refused to commission him to form the ministry. He imposed section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935 in the province." (24)

There was not much activity in the legislative and administrative fields during the period of Nazimuddin premiership except that the ministry had to tackle a severe famine in late 1943 when people died in thousands. According to Government report 1.5 million people died in famine while according to contemporary estimate 3.5 million people died and it effected severely th life of 20 million out of 60 million people in Bengal. (25) The figures of death probably did not reveal the full gravity of the calamity. In the famine - stricken area 10 percent of the people or an estimated 1.2 million to 1.5 million men, women and children become beggars. (26) Another 6 million people, including 2.7 million land labourers,

1.5 million poor peasants, 1.5 million country industrial workers and 25,000 poor school teachers, were reduced to a very similar status." (27)

"It is futile to apportion blame for this great famine. Neither the Fazlul Haq Ministry nor the Muslim League Ministry created the conditions for it, though each held the other responsible for the catastrophe." (28)

But Wavell accused the Muslim League Ministry for this famine because Ministers were busy with political rivalries and they ~~xxx~~ did not devote themselves fully to the famine. (29)

In 1944 Nazimuddin Ministry again faced another serious problem, i.e., the cloth scarcity. Muslim League Ministry was also accused by the opposition parties as well as the then Central Government for the emergence of this sudden cloth scarcity problem.

Nazimuddin Ministry prepared "the way for the subsequent chaos in Bengal leading ultimately to a communal clash which occurred on an unprecedented scale. It was the prelude to Pakistan." (30)

However, after Nazimuddin's Muslim League Ministry's fall, Bengal Governor Cassey took the administration under his control following clause 93 of the constitution until 1946

election.

After the Second World War, in 1945, general elections in Britain brought the Labour Party to power and its leader Clement Attlee became the Prime Minister. Labour Party had already promised in its pre-election campaign that it would give independence to India, if the Party won the election.

"The first step undertaken by the Labour Government was to order elections to the Central Legislative Assembly. Because the federal part of the constitution of 1935 had not come into force, elections to the central legislative Assembly was held under the provisions of the Constitution of 1919. The results were declared in December, 1945 and showed that the Congress Party had won in almost all non-reserved or general (in practice, Hindu majority) Constituencies, the Muslim League gathered all Muslim reserved seats and Akali Dal won in the electoral districts reserved to the Sikhs. This was the culmination of the British policy of divide and rule, but Indian leaders were also responsible for the polarization along religious lines. The deepening breach between Hindus and Muslims was ominous for the future of India. Muslim League, strengthened by its election victories, pressed its demands". (31)

"In February 1946, when the provincial elections were in progress and the Bengal election was yet to be held, the

decision of the British Cabinet to send a cabinet mission to India was announced. It consisted of Lord Pethick - Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A.V. Alexander. The Mission arrived in India in March 1946 with the purpose of discussing with the Indian representatives steps to be taken, first 'to secure the widest measure of agreement as to the method of framing of constitution', Second, 'the setting up of a constitution making body', and third, 'the bringing into being of an Executive Council having the support of the main Indian Parties'. These proposals along with the British Labour Party's election to power in 1945 meant different things for the Muslim League and the Congress. While to the Congress a Labour Government meant 'early attainment of self-government, to the Muslim League it meant opposition to their demand for Pakistan since the Labour leaders were 'allergic to Muslim League demand for partition and separate Muslim State.'. Jinnah decided to fight for a separate constitution making body for a separate State of Pakistan."
(32)

"After nearly three months' hectic activity the cabinet mission failed to achieve a consensus and gave its own recommendation. They recommended a Union of India embracing both British and the Princely states with powers to deal with subjects like foreign affairs, defence and communications with authority to raise finance required for the above subjects and

the States retaining all subjects other than the Union subjects and all residuary powers. The Mission also favoured a constitution-making body and formation of an interim government comprising of the two major communities. The All India Congress Committee at its Bombay session by 205 votes against 51 accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan. But the Muslim League Passed two resolutions in July 1946 withdrawing its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan and reiterating its resolve to resort to mass struggle for achieving Pakistan. August 16th was fixed as the "Direct Action Day" when meetings were to be held throughout India to enforce their claim." (33)

During this period Hasan Saheed Suhrawardy, the leader of Muslim League in Bengal, held the post of Chief Minister.

League's 'Direct Action Day' was directed against 'British Slavery' and against 'the contemplated future caste Hindu domination'. So it can be said that the action was against the Hindu Community as well.

"On the 16th of August, 1946 large number of processions of Muslims emerged from various parts of the city and the processionists carried with them lethal weapons. A conspiracy was hatched with the tacit support of the European officials for a communal riot in the city. The object was to unleash a sudden mass attack on Hindus who formed the majority population of

Calcutta, annihilate as many of them as possible and drive away a substantial portion of the Hindu citizens to convert it into a Muslim majority city. Once this was achieved the city of Calcutta could be claimed for the new state of Pakistan. League volunteers and goondas were imported from other parts of the country. In pursuance of their secret plan large scale attacks on Hindu houses located in predominantly Muslim areas, particularly in the Park Circus, Kidderpore and Machua bazar were made. The papers came out with horrors stories. Chief Minister Surahwardy himself went to the Central room at Lalbazar and directed rescue and help for Muslims wanting to be evacuated from Hindu pockets. Congress and Hindu Manasabha leaders thought the Government would come to the rescue of the Hindu population but soon they were disillusioned. After 48 hours of looting, arson and killing the army was called out in aid of civil power. It was only then that riots were somewhat controlled on the main thoroughfares of Calcutta. But in mixed localities like Beliaghata (north Calcutta) the fury of the riots continued unabated. The Hindus had by then realised that they would have to defend their lives and honour of their women unaided by Governmental help. Even Dr. B.C. Roy's house at Wellington Street was attacked and the ground floor of the building was ransacked by hooligans. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee took a bold stand and organised defence in various parts of the city endangering his personal safety. The Muslim Leaguers

who had hoped that the Hindus would crumble and flee the city received reports of large scale retaliation. The drama was soon reversed. Hindus began to retaliate in the areas where they were strong and streets of Calcutta were flowing with blood of both the communities." (34)

"Actually the greater portion of those killed in Calcutta were from the poorer Sections of both communities - the shop-keepers and dock-workers (Khalasis) who were mostly Muslims from Noakhali, Gwalas (Milkmen), Cartmen, Rickshaw pullers and Darwans or Door-keepers, who were mainly from Bihar". (35)

According to official estimates in Calcutta 5,000 people were killed, fifteen thousands people were injured and about a lakh rendered homeless following communal clashes for the 'Direct Action Day'.

"The riots in Noakhali was followed by the Calcutta riots and was equally savage. The Hindus who were numerically inferior there to the Muslims (80 percent of the population was Muslim) could not retaliate and it was almost a one-sided affair. The accounts of horrors and atrocities committed there reached Calcutta and in other parts of country. It was during the height of the riots in Noakhali that Gandhiji went there and undertook a walking tour to instill courage in the minds of the minority community. Suhrawardy who

was the Chief Minister then made strong security arrangements for Gandhiji. But the exodus from Noakhali which had already began prior to his visit showed no signs of abatement. The evacuees brought with them moving tales of savagery and outrages on women. Acharya Kripalini who was Congress President at that time after his return from a tour of riot-torn Noakhali, in his statement mentioned how vermilion marks on countless Hindu women were effaced and conchshell bangles broken before dishonouring them. The statement inflamed the passions of Hindus and communal violence broke out in Bihar which later spread to the United Province. The acts of Hindus where they were numerically superior were no less brutal than Muslim Savagery." (36)

II. Independence and Partition:

When this time Bengal and other Provinces were effected with large-scale communal violences, the Congress leaders at the Centre were facing absolute non-co-operation from their Muslim League colleagues in the day-to-day function of the interim government. So, judging all the situations the Congress had no other alternative but to accept the Mountbatten plan for division of India.

Muslim League had already declared their option for Pakistan and in favour of their demand the league leaders

had taken various political strategies like "Direct Action Day". Muslim League leader Jinnah, in a speech delivered in the Central Assembly, said, that Hindus and Muslims could never unite because the Muslim mind had been thinking in terms of separation for the last thirty years. (37)

The Congress leaders were also tired and disgusted with the Muslim league leaders. Nehru told a visitor, "We were tired men. We were not prepared to go to Jail again." (38)

The British Government already announced that it intended to withdraw from India by June, 1948, though Britain quit India in August, 1947.

"The withdrawal was presided over by the new Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten. His duty was to smooth the path to independence by persuading the Congress leaders. Particularly Nehru, to accept the Partition. Severe rioting between Muslims and Hindus marked the last year of British rule in India. In some place the religious civil war was incited by Muslim League, such as in the major riot that occurred in Calcutta in June, 1946. But Hindu and Sikh groups were responsible in other areas. The riot were a factor in persuading Congress leaders to accept the division of India to create Pakistan. They were convinced that a large and disaffected Muslim minority would be a source of instability. Long years of agitation in opposition had told on some Congress leaders, who were anxious to turn to the construc-

tive business of governing. They did not want to put a determined resistance to the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan for fear that it might delay the departure of the British and their own ascent to seat of Power." (39)

The Congress Working Committee ultimately accepted the Pakistan proposal and the Partition of Provinces. Explaining the Congress resolution, J. B. Kripalani, the Congress President, in a Press Conference at Madras on 9th March, stated that the Congress wanted a united India, but "if that is not possible and if people must murder each other then the Working Committee recommend the division of the Punjab into two Provinces". He also said that Congress would also demand the partition of Bengal, "if conditions are the same in Bengal." (40)

"The Congress High Command accepted 3 June plan which provided for the partition of India as well as the partition of Bengal and the Punjab. Jinnah gave assurance of the acceptance of this plan by the Muslim League." (41)

"During this time a proposal was mooted to the effect that Bengal should be made a sovereign and independent state. The Chief Minister of Bengal, Suhrawardy whom the Hindus blamed for the carnage in Calcutta and who worked tirelessly for the division of the country, started a dialogue with Sarat Bose. Sarat Bose had also seen Jinnah to enlist his support for this

move. The scheme was vehemently opposed by the Congress leaders at the Centre including Vallabhbhai Patel and Nehru, although a small section of Congressmen in Bengal was in secret sympathy with it. The Hindu Mahasabha and its leader, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee opposed it, so did the leaders of the Muslim League. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Hindu Mahasabha passed resolutions for creation of a separate Province of West Bengal." ⁽⁴²⁾

On 20th June, 1947, the two wings of the Bengal Assembly accepted the proposal of the partition of Bengal. And then events moved in kaleidoscopic rapidity. The House of Commons and the House of Lords passed the Indian Independence Bill. So the country was ready for freedom and simultaneously for partition.

The Congress High Command and the Muslim League was reached an agreement at Delhi on 29th June, 1947 through the mediation of the Viceroy on the re-organisation of the administrative set up in the partitioned provinces of Punjab and Bengal. Then after a meeting with Governor Burrows, Bengal Premier Suhrawardy, the Muslim League leader and Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh, the leader of Bengal Congress Party, a brief communique was issued in the following line. "The unprecedented situation arising out of the decision of June last that the province of Bengal shall be partitioned, arrangements have been made to appoint

Ministers to represent the view point of West Bengal. The relationship that will subsist between the existing Government of Bengal and the new Ministers has been agreed to by leaders of the major political parties here and in New Delhi." (43) Governor Burrows then announced the decision to set up a Ministry for the West Bengal unit of undivided Bengal. Accordingly Governor requested Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh to set up his Ministry in respect of non-Muslim majority part of the province.

"The Governor further explained the relationship between the existing Government and the new Ministers and said that the new Ministers would be consulted on all matters affecting West Bengal with right to initiate policies in matters solely concerning West Bengal. Any decision reached by them would be implemented by the Government. But in the event of difference of opinion the matter would be referred to the cabinet. The West Bengal Ministers would have the right to call for papers and to act thereon on their initiative, to ask the Secretary to examine any proposal." (44)

On 4th July, 1947 Governor Burrows administered the oath of office and Secrecy to Dr. Ghosh and other Ministers. The name of the new Ministers were Dr. Suresh Banerjee, Nikunja Maity, Kamal Krishna Roy, Jadavendra Panja, Hem Naskar, Radhanath Das, Kalipada Mukherjee and Mohini Burman. Though Dr. Ghosh also invited Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee

to join the Ministry but both Dr. Roy and Mukherjee had expressed their inability to join the Ministry. At that time, the communal situation in Calcutta and its adjacent districts continued to remain tense which had been started since 16th August, 1947 when Muslim League declared the 'Direct Action' day. So the first and the foremost task of the Dr. Ghosh's Ministry was to contain communal disturbances in West Bengal. Immediately the new Ministry took some steps to restore communal peace in Calcutta and its adjacent district Howrah. Dr. Ghosh met the policemen belonged to the Muslim community who had refused to work as a protest against attack by the Hindus of the Howrah district. This special armed Muslim police force had inducted by the Muslim League Ministry earlier for the purpose of curbing violent activities of the Hindu community and to safeguard the lives and properties of the Muslims. However Dr. Ghosh persuaded the Muslim policemen to resume their duties and he was addressed a Mass Meeting for restoration of communal peace. But though the communal situation began to improve at Howrah but it took a bad turn in Calcutta following the death of a Police Officer. Both the Muslim League and Congress Ministry jointly took some measures to bring the situation under control. They took the help of the British army in breaking up hooligan elements. In a press interview Dr. Ghosh said, "the house must be in order before the transfer of power on August 15 when Bengal as a whole will cease to exist and we shall have two states. We must make Calcutta free from

trouble, communal or otherwise, and have full control of the city's administration before August 15. One of the preliminary steps is to have officers of our choice to "key posts in the police."⁽⁴⁵⁾

"A large number of Muslim Police Officers with communal leanings had signified their intention to opt for East Bengal. Their places were to taken by Hindu Officers. Official announcement of this decision tended to improve the morale the Hindu community of West Bengal. Side by side Government selected 21 additional points in the danger zones for army and armed police pickets with orders to "shoot to kill" any person found committing crimes. The new Chief Minister's hope for quickening the pace of return of normalcy were realised as a result of the measure initiated by Government. After a week's complete disruption of traffic, trams and buses ran on different routes and there were positive signs of returning confidence and activity in Calcutta. The number of dead came down to only one. But the new Ministers did not relax their efforts and visited affected areas and addressed public meetings to instill courage in the minds of panicky people."⁽⁴⁶⁾

Viceroy Lord Mountbatten and Governor Burrows met Suhrawardy and Profulla Ghosh, the joint Chief Minister, and advised them to take measures to combat the deteriorating communal

situation on the eve of transfer of power. Armies were deployed in Calcutta and in border districts of West and East Bengal.

In the second week of August when Gandhiji came to Sodepur near Calcutta on his way to Noakhali where Hindus in thousands had been killed by the Muslims, Muslim League leader Osman apprised Gandhiji that the West Bengal Hindus were decided to take revenge of previous Muslim oppression when the Muslim government servants would be transferred to East Bengal. So Osman requested Gandhiji to stay in Calcutta so that the life and property of the Muslims could be saved. Osman also gave word to Gandhiji that they would try to restore communal peace in Noakhali.
(47)

Suhrawardy and Dr. Ghosh also sought Gandhiji's guidance. They also requested him to postpone his visit to Noakhali for some days to which Gandhiji agreed. Gandhiji met the representatives of Muslim and Hindu communities and heard their sorrowful stories. He even had a discussion with Governor Burrows regarding the deteriorating situation of the communal clashes. During his visit in the riot affected areas of Calcutta, accompanied by Dr. Ghosh, Mayor Sudhir Roy Choudhury and Muslim League Secretary Osman, he met riot-victims and heard their sufferings.

Gandhiji and Suhrawardy decided to stay together

in a worst effected area in Calcutta for restoration of communal
(48)
amity and work for peace. During Gandhiji's visit at Beliaghata
in Calcutta on 13th August for his peace-mission he faced angry
demonstration by Hindu Youth. "A British Military picket was
posted on the road while armed and unarmed police pickets were
stationed inside the compound. Suhrawardy joined Gandhiji straight
from Writers Buildings and his arrival was signal for a
more hostile demonstration. The demonstrators demanded of
Gandhiji to take his residence in some other part of Calcutta
which bore marks of Muslim vandalism rather than in a place
like Beliaghata. The crowd broke through the police cordon,
poured into the compound clamouring to go in. Some 20 young
men later on saw him and he explained to the demonstrating
youth his mission. Some of them hurled stones smashing doors
and windows, hurting a foreign visitor, but the room occupied
by Gandhiji was spared. Both Gandhiji and Suhrawardy appeared
unperturbed and carried on with their normal programme.
(49)
Thereafter the demonstrators melted away." The nation
witnessed a remarkable signs of return to communal amity in
Calcutta on the 15th August, the day of Indian Independence.
The Hindus and Muslims were totally abstain from any communal
tension even in the worst affected areas in Calcutta for the
time being. So " ... the presence of Gandhi really seemed to
work miracles, as peace returned to Calcutta on the eve of 15
August after he had persuaded Suhrawardy to stay with him in

(50)
 riot - torn Beliaghata" in Calcutta.

Before independence the Central Government announced the appointment of Boundary commissions to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of Punjab and Bengal. Sir Radcliffe was the Chairman of the Bengal Commission. The other members of the commission were Abu Saleh Mohd. Akram, S.A. Rahaman, Bejon Mukherjee and ~~Charu~~ Charu Chandra Biswas.

"The Boundary Commission began its session from July and various political parties submitted their memoranda making claims on areas on fantastic grounds. One such memorandum was submitted by the West Bengal Muslim League. The League claim was based on the principle of contiguity and majority. Their claim also included Calcutta. The memorandum stated that the determining factor in regard to the division of the province should conform to this principle and they argued that applying this principle new Eastern Bengal was to comprise Chittagong, Dacca and Rajshahi division. Mr. Mohammed Ali proposed to Dr. Ghosh that Calcutta should remain as the common capital of both the states until the division of assets and liabilities was completed. Dr. Ghosh rejected the idea on the ground that after 15th August, West Bengal and East Bengal would be two separate dominions and two alien Governments could not function from one place."
 (51)

Meanwhile a partition council was constituted with H.S. Suhrawardy and Khwaja Nazimuddin on behalf of the Muslim League and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and Dhirendra Narayan Mukherjee on behalf of the Congress. The Council had five main committees and sub-committees. The main task of the council was to work out the administrative consequences of separation. In the council there were serious differences of opinion between Muslim League and Congress members. The first difference of opinion was whether roads and road bridges, certain forests and rivers should be included among "assets". The another issue which sharply divided the members was with regard to divisible assets. Regarding the question of land and buildings belonging to Government there had been also a sharp difference. "At this time the coffer of ~~the~~ the provincial exchequer was almost empty. It will be evident from the fact that Mr. Suhrawardy complained that although Rs. 25 lakhs was promised for purchase of building materials and travelling allowances and pay of officials who were joining the East Bengal government, only Rs. 5 Lakhs had been made available. The West Bengal wing replied that this was due to genuine shortage of currency but all effects were being made to supply the promised amount." (52) The partition council had altogether 15 sittings and viceroy Lord Mountbatten had to participate in one meeting when serious difference arose.

"The Government of India had already declared that

All India Service Personnel would be given the option to serve either India or Pakistan after partition of the country and it equally expressed the hope that the Government of the partitioned provinces would give a similar option to officers of provincial services and to all other employees under the Government serving in connection with the affairs of the province. So far as West Bengal Wing was concerned, doubts were expressed whether it would be feasible to give option to all employees of all categories considering the fact that the province would be reduced to nearly one third of its former size. Ultimately it was decided that the Government could not avoid the moral duty of giving the opportunity to all non-muslim employees the right to exercise their option. The result was that with very few exceptions all non-muslim employees opted to serve in West Bengal. A transfer office was created for absorption of surplus persons. All departments were directed not to make any new appointment but to leave the vacancies open for the surplus personnel. The same Government order dated 13th August also forbade extension of service to any Government servant." (53)

Accordingly Muslim ICS Officers except one opted to serve under the Pakistan Government. The majority of Hindu ICS Officers preferred to work in the Indian Union. But the majority of British ICS Officers who were then serving under the Bengal Government expressed their intention to retire from ser-

vice after Indian Independence.

However, the Independence came to India on 15th August 1947 and as a result of the partition of the country the State of Bengal came to be divided into two parts. The Western part became an Indian State, i.e. the West Bengal and the Eastern part went to Pakistan, i.e. the East Pakistan. Muslim League Leader Khaja Nazimuddin became the Chief Minister of East Pakistan, a province of the Pakistan State and Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh, as a Congress leader, took his oath of office as Chief Minister of the West Bengal. Chakraborty Rajgopalachari was nominated as the first Governor of the new province of West Bengal on that date.

"Immediately after independence the Congress Party at the State level was in a condition of disrepair. Since Bengal was partitioned as well East Bengali Congressmen who opted for India, assumed control of the party organisation and set up their nominee, Dr. P. C. Ghosh, a devoted Gandhian belonging to the Abhay Ashram group as the first Chief Minister of West Bengal. The new leadership faced many pangs because in Calcutta it failed to achieve a popular following. Factionalism ensued between the East Bengali and West Bengali elements.....".

(55)
"The expulsion of Bose in 1939, coupled with his flight from India 1942 and the partition of 1947, virtually

destroyed the urban coalition that had dominated the Congress Organization in Bengal from the 1920s. During the war, the coalition remained shakily intact, led by the Jugantar group, an old and famous terrorist organization that had joined the nationalist movement under Gandhi's leadership. Suren Ghosh, the leader of the Jugantar, was the Pradesh Congress President, and Kiron Shankar Roy, a Jugantar supporter, was the leader of the Bengal Assembly Congress Party. The Jugantar Group drew its membership, however, primarily from east and north Bengal, areas which were absorbed into Pakistan as result of partition, and shortly after independence a number of the Jugantar supporters (including Kiron Shankar Roy himself) opted for East Pakistan".⁽⁵⁶⁾

"Independence thus ushered in a serious political crisis in West Bengal. The urban coalition that had dominated the Congress until the expulsion of Bose in 1939 no longer existed; a number of the congress supporters had followed Bose out of the Congress and joined the leftist parties; a number of Congress strongholds had been cut off by partition, and the party faced the prospect of contesting elections in an area where a Muslim Ministry had been in Power before independence."⁽⁵⁷⁾ After partition of Bengal following independence all most all of the Bengal Muslim League leaders began to settle in East Pakistan and so the Muslim League, which had been in Power in

Bengal before independence, had no such influence in West Bengal.

Bengal Congress was at that time suffered from factional politics. In explaining the condition of the Bengal Congress Party, Gandhiji once wrote that it was impossible to get good leaders in the then (1947) set up of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee. The leaders of the committee were being concerned with their vested interests and the interest of the party, without taking any interest for Bengal for the last twenty years. Accordingly to Gandhiji, though at that time among the three to four persons who had been empowered to ~~select~~ select the representatives of Bengal, some were honest but there was none among them who did not like power and influence in the party. Also these leaders were not prepared to sacrifice their party's interest from the greater interest of the country. (58)

So the partition of Bengal, the partition of the Congress party, the lack of experience of Dr. Ghosh's government, the poor position of the then opposition parties like Forward Bloc and the communists and the defection of East Bengali congressmen from the Bengal Congress created a serious political crisis in West Bengal.

Area:-

"With the Historic partition of the country accompanying Independence on August, 15, 1947, the State of West Bengal came into being with a little less than two fifths of the land surface and a little higher ratio of population of the Province of Bengal of undivided India." (39) The Bengal Boundary Commission, otherwise known as Radcliff Commission, announced the award on the Bengal boundary on the 17th August, 1947. "The Commission assigned to East Bengal the whole of the Chittagong and Dacca divisions and to West Bengal the whole of Burdwan division. Except Khulna the whole of Presidency Division was included in West Bengal. As every body knows, Calcutta with 24 Parganas and Murshidabad of the Presidency division and Darjeeling district of Rajsahi division also went to West Bengal. As a result of the award West Bengal got an area of 28,033 Sq. miles -----whereas East Bengal's share fell 49 thousand Sq. miles.....". (6d)

Thereafter, the State grew in bulk with accession of territories in three stages - once in 1950 when Cooch Behar (erstwhile a Princely State), once in 1954 when Chandernagar (Formerly a French settlement), and finally in 1956 when on the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Committee, the Purulia sub-division of Manbhum district and a portion of the Kishanganj Sub-division of Purnia district (both previously

belonging to Bihar) were incorporated within the State. Divided into 16 districts under two administrative divisions, West Bengal covers (in 1961) an area of 85, 855 Square Kms. (a little less than 3% of Indias land area)."⁽⁶¹⁾

At present the state is divided into 17 districts under three administrative divisions, i.e. Presidency, Burdwan and Jalpaiguri.

Geographical Location:-

"Situated within $21^{\circ}38'$ - $27^{\circ}10'$ N and $85^{\circ}50'$ - $89^{\circ}50'$ E, the State stretches from the picturesque outer Himalayas in the North down to the Bay of Bengal in the South. Seven states (three of them - Bhutan, Nepal and East Pakistan - foreign) met at its borders - Sikkim on the North, Bhutan on the north-east, Assam and East Pakistan on the east," now Bangladesh, "Nepal and Bihar on the West and Orissa on the South - West. With direct access to the Sea and a net work of national and international airlinks, the states geographic location makes it truly the 'Gateway of India' in the East. A system of roadways and railways radiate out of and into the state to connect it with all the major centres of activity in country. The hub of the spectacular and fast - growing industrial concentration in Eastern India - the heaviest concentration in the country - it commands an extensive agricultural and industrial hinter land, reaching beyond its

frontiers far up to the mid West, North, West and East India, and provides efficient facilities to an area which is even wider"⁽⁶²⁾.

Now West Bengal is one of the smaller states of India but before partition of Bengal in the Pre-independence period the state was much bigger.

Population:-

As a result of the Radcliff award "West Bengal got an area of 28,033 Sq. miles containing a population of 21,194,613 of which nearly 53 lakhs were Muslims and 1.58 crores Hindus whereas in East Bengal's share fell 49 thousand Sq. miles with a total population of 3,91,11,912 Muslims being 2.77 crores and Hindus 1.14 crores. In terms of percentage Muslim population stood at 25.01% in West Bengal and 70.83% in East Bengal while non-muslim formed 74.99% in West Bengal and 29.17% in East Bengal."⁽⁶³⁾

"The population of West Bengal was 26.30 million in 1951. About 21.73 million were born in the State. The rest of the population constituted of 0.51 million non-displaced persons from Pakistan, 2.09 million displaced persons from Pakistan, 1.85 million immigrants from abroad. Between 1941-51 the States population increased at an annual rate of 1.32 percent, The state's growth rate in population is surpassed by many other Indian States."⁽⁶⁴⁾

III. Economic Conditions:

"West Bengal is a state; but its importance in the economy of the country is out of all proportion to its size. It is the pioneer in large scale industry in the country. Modern mining in India began when the first coal mine was sunk in Raibangaj in 1814, though the industrial possibilities of Raibangaj coal had been realised and put to use some forty years before. Pig iron was first manufactured successfully by modern methods in the district of Birbhum in 1777, and the first Jute mill in the country was established in 1855 at Rishra near Serampore through the co-operative efforts of George Auckland and Shyam Sundar Sen. Up to 1935 - 36 the undivided province of Bengal was the most industrially advanced region of the country. Over half of India's joint stock companies engaged in manufacturing, tea plantation and coal-mining industries were located in Bengal, and they accounted for over 55 percent of the total paid-up capital in large-scale industries of the country."⁽⁶⁵⁾

During the second world war the economic condition of Bengal had changed rapidly. When the world war was going on "commodities were taken out of the province as from other parts of the country without giving anything in return. Sterling balances accumulated in London to be repatriated to India when Britain would be in a position to pay after the war. Bengal suffered most for this."⁽⁶⁶⁾ In 1945, J.R.D. Tata, an Indian

Industrialist, said in London : "As a result of the war and India's contribution towards it, we have millions dead in Bengal owing to famine."⁽⁶⁷⁾

"Bengal's economy was shattered and her social and cultural fabric shaken to its foundation. Some engineering industries overworked. These had to fulfil war orders and had plenty of raw materials. But lakhs of men, village artisans, making a myread articles of daily use for the people, were rendered idle. They had no raw material for their work. K.C. Ghosh, in his famine in Bengal, writes: Small enterprises scattered among villages and partly dependant, on large factories from which they received their raw materials were forced to close down, as they could not be sure of a steady supply of these materials."⁽⁶⁸⁾ "Those who perished in the famine mostly belonged to the landless labour class. The poor peasantry sold its petty holdings to become landless. The lower middle class used up its reserves in the form of gold, ornaments, and savings bank deposits. The upper middle class was brought one or two steps down the social ladder."⁽⁶⁹⁾

After independence, the situation had changed rapidly. "And then came the partition, a gift of the British as much as our Muslim League and Congress leaders. Throughout the British period many man-made calamities struck Bengal's

economic and social order. Every time she showed resilience, and recovered, thanks to the bounties of Nature and the abilities of her people. But every time she was reduced to a lower standard of living. She rallied soon from the aftermath of the war and the famine. Once again, partition violently disrupted the economy of the province. The unending flow of refugees from East Bengal began." (70)

According to Marcus F. Franda. "To complicate the poverty and under - development that is common to all of India, West Bengal has had to contend with a series of events which have seriously disrupted its economy. In the past twenty years alone, West Bengal has had to with stand the wear and tear of major Allied war operations in and around Calcutta, had suffered one of the target famines ever to occur in India, and has witnessed communal riots that began in August, 1946, culminated in the partition of 1947, and led to the subsequent influx of more than four million refugees. The partition of Bengal in 1947 cut off the supply of food grown in East Bengal, creating serious shortages in the West + The supply of Jute to West Bengal dwindled to a trickle, leaving the jute industry without raw materials; transportation and communication networks were disrupted (71) also after partition of Bengal.

"The people of West Bengal suffered many hardships in quick succession when Independence dawned. Frustration was

universal. Land as ever was inadequate, industries were mostly in non-Bengali hands, production was at a low ebb, prices were high, the basic necessities of life were scarce and un-employment, particularly among the middle class educated population was rampant." (72)

Though the people of West Bengal had been exploited by the British since June 23, 1957, "yet, on the dawn of independence, she was producing, per head of the population, much more than any other state in the country. Considering her territory and population, she was still the wealthiest state." (73)

According to Ranajit Roy, a famous Journalist, "in 1947, West Bengal had the highest per capita income, In installed electric power capacity and per capita consumption she had a long march over the other states, not excepting Maharashtra and Tamilnadu. She had easy access to industrial raw materials and had business connections and an infrastructure to make progress faster than any other state. Calcutta was the busiest city and the Port there handled much more cargo than even Bombay." (74)

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