

The Emergence of Social Organization

A) Hill North Bengal B) Plain North Bengal

The last quarter of the 19th century gave witness of gradual transformation of the people of North Bengal in the Socio-Political sphere.¹ Consequently, a host of social associations originated for socio-cultural and political developments. These associations proved themselves as an important network for promoting social and cultural awareness. The creation of social organizations was evident in two parts of North Bengal.

viz, 1) Hill North Bengal.

 2) Plain North Bengal.

A. Social Organization in Hill North Bengal.

Generally, it is known to all that the associations /organizations are formed to highlight the demands of the people and they place their demands of the people and they place their demands occasionally before the administrators for fulfilling their hopes and aspirations.² It is also true that these organizations had arranged meetings and exchanged their opinions for promoting common objectives.³ Though these associations were not long-lived, they acted as a medium of developing ethnic unity. It is known from the secondary sources (lack of primary source) that during the last phase of the 19th century some associations existed, but their characters were ethno-political. We can know from these sources that in 1883 a branch of Indian Association was established in Darjeeling.⁴ In this context Babu Dwaraka Nath Ganguly and Dwaraka Nath Ghosh of Calcutta went to Darjeeling.⁵ In 1886;two representatives from Siliguri were present in 'Indian National Conference'-which was held in Calcutta. So it can be said that both the Hill and plain areas of Darjeeling had ardent and close contact with nationalist organizations.

The person who played an active role in Darjeeling was Bagha Jatin (1902-07). He was the member of Anusilan Samiti and had opened a branch of it in Darjeeling. The name of this organization was 'Bandhav Samiti'.⁶

In 1905, Lord Curzon divided Bengal into two parts – East and West. All people against this partition started movement.⁷In this context Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das and Sister Nivedita delivered speeches at Town Hall of Darjeeling protesting the unjust decision of the British Government.⁸ They expressed the ideals of Swadeshi through their speeches. As a result some Swadeshi organizations emerged in Darjeeling.⁹ Now we shall discuss about some associations of Darjeeling which were founded for socio- cultural upliftments.

Nepali Sahitya Sammelon: In 1924, Dharanidhar Kairala and Suryavikram Janavali—two Nepali teachers and their companion Parasmani Pradhan founded Nepali Literary Sahitya Sammelon. It was particularly a Nepali literary association. Some learned men of Darjeeling were deeply connected with this organization and did their best for the upliftment of Nepali language and literature. It was influenced by the Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelon very much. The contribution of this association was remarkable and it had far-reaching significance for social and cultural development of Darjeeling hill areas and especially for the entire Nepali community. It translated and published more than twenty written books for the benefit of the School Children.¹⁰

Nepali Sahitya Sammelon established a strong network for its literary development. Barring publication and translation of many books it published a journal named 'Nepali Sahitya Sammelon Patrika' which was acclaimed as a high standard Journal.¹¹ It produced a large number of famous literary works which survived for a few centuries. Considering all these, it can be admitted that this organization made some outstanding achievements for the upliftment of Darjeeling hill area and the Nepali Community as a whole.

2. Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak Sammelon

In the Darjeeling Hill area another Social organization named Gorkha Dukkha Nivarak sammelon was set up in 1932. It had branches in many towns and

cities of India¹² there was a background behind the formation of this organization. The standard of living of the hill community was not so good, though they got higher wages than the laborers of the plain area.¹³ They led a reckless life and ran into debts owing to heavy expenditure on marriage and other ceremonies.¹⁴ So they had to suffer very much. In order to remove their sufferings and deplorable condition they established this organization and mobilized all the Nepali- speaking people throughout India from Bombay, Calcutta, Benaras, Madras, Lucknow and Darjeeling.¹⁵ In a word, the condition of the inhabitants of Darjeeling hill area could better be imagined than described. So the Gorkha Community tried to remove such kind of pathetic sight in a fruitful way assembling on a common platform.

With a view to highlighting their thoughts and ideas, ventilating their problems and preaching their demands, Gorkha Dukha Nivarak Samiti published a literary journal called 'Khoji' in 1940. This journal was actually the heart of Gorkha Dukha Nivarak Samiti. Its chief editor was Rupnarayan Singh, a famous novelist and short story writer. A socio-cultural environment was created for this by the famous scholar.¹⁶ The organization was strong enough to create a hardy platform in-favour of their low social condition. Side by side, it adopted many plans to improve their social condition. Thus the organization played an important role for the socio-cultural upliftment of their community as a whole.

Nebula

Nebula was a social organization of Nepalis, Bhutiyas and Lepchas. It was founded in 1935 and its leading person was K.D.Pradhan of Kalimpong. He worked to ventilate the problems and preach the ethno-political demands of the hill communities of Darjeeling¹⁷. He became popular among these three communities of Darjeeling. His contribution in-favour of this organization was remarkable.¹⁸ It is interesting to note that Nebula emerged as a periodical but at the same time, it gained much importance as a social organization. The organization became successful to promote the consciousness of the Darjeeling hill people.¹⁹ It

cannot be denied that Nebula played a remarkable role in the arena of socio-cultural development of Darjeeling hill area.

Gorkha Samiti and Gorkha Library

Barring the above mentioned associations, the Indian Nepalis formed another organization named Gorkha Samiti which was founded in Darjeeling after the First World War²⁰(1926). It started its work in the name of ‘Anusilan Samiti’- a terrorist organization of Bengal. But it changed its name as ‘Gorkha Association’ under the impulse of the British Government. The president of this association was Agam Singh Giri. Its objective was to uplift socio-cultural interests of the Indian Nepalese.²¹ In the meantime another cultural organization was formed at Kurseong in Darjeeling district named ‘Gorkha Library’. It was inaugurated in 1918 with a view to developing educationally backward Nepali community.

Besides this, some other organizations were formed in Darjeeling. Among them mention must be made of Nepali Sahitya Adhyayan Samiti (Kalimpong), Nepali Sahitya prasar Samiti (Siliguri), Arya Samaj (Darjeeling branch), Hillmen’s Association and All India Gorkha League (Darjeeling). The first three organizations were most active in the spheres of social reforms, cultural activities, publication of books, journals, periodicals and ventilated the socio—economic backwardness of Darjeeling hill people.²²

Like Chhotonagpur region Darjeeling was regarded as an excluded area. Here the British administrative arrangements had cheated the Lepcha Bhutia tribes and gave birth a sense of separatism among them. So the British Government had to appease the Lepcha-Bhutia groups in order to avoid encounter with them. With a view to protecting themselves the British Government had allowed their migration from Nepal to Sikkim.

Side by side there was the influence of Buddhism on the communities like the Tamangs, the Rais and the Limbus. Each of them had separate language. But in course of time the impact of Buddhism over the Tamangs, the Rais and the Limbus had decreased and it was changed into Hinduism. Although they had

retained some Buddhist customs, they were united with one another. This ethnic unity was further enhanced by a large number of retired army men in Darjeeling district who developed a sense of ethnic exclusiveness which was turned into a movement.²³

At the beginning of the Indian Council Act, 1909, the leaders of the hill people (Nepalese, Lepcha and Bhutia) gave a memorandum to the Government for separate arrangements for Darjeeling. The members of the Hill men's union under the leadership of S.W.Ladenla, which was created in the year 1909, raised more articulated demands. The Hill men's Union was the association of the 'military pensioners' Government Servants traders and rich farmers. They belonged to Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha races. S.W. Ladenla was the heart and soul of this union.²⁴

The demand of the Hill men's union was the creation of a separate administrative unit including the "present Darjeeling district and the portion of Jalpaiguri district which was annexed from Bhutan in 1865." They also suggested for formation of North East Frontier province by annexing "Assam, Doars and hill territories which lie to the east of Bhutan and whose people have affinity with our people".

The fields for separatism were linguistic, racial and climatic as "the plains are entirely unsuited to the hill people, who will not go to the plains".²⁵

The Hill men's union wanted to form a breach between the hill people and the plain's people with regards to political, ethnic and cultural grounds. In the year of 1917 Hill men's Association was formed, whose main purpose was the social development of hill people.²⁶

On the other hand, the Kalimpong Samiti under Sardar Bahadur Bhindal and the people's Association under P.M.Pradhan presented a separate memorandum in 1920 opposing the exclusion of Darjeeling district under the Reforms of 1919. According to them, this type of exclusion will pave the way of backwardness of this district. In a meeting in Kalimpong in July 1920 an objection was given against separatism of Darjeeling from Bengal.²⁷ The signatories in favour of it were

Prem Sing etc. In spite of it, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, declared Darjeeling as a scheduled area and did not consider the demand which was submitted by Hill men's Association.

Under the Government of India Act, 1935, Darjeeling was made a partially excluded area from where only one member could be elected to the reserved seat. This did not satisfy the Hill men's union. They had submitted another memorandum in December 1934 in which an idea was made expressing their "utter helplessness to make their voice heard," only the remedy was the creation of North-Eastern Frontier province which was revived by them.

On the eve of Communal Award (1932), the unity of Lepchas, Bhutiyas and Nepalese became strong forming the Hill people's Social Union. On December 23rd, 1934 a public meeting of these hill people of Darjeeling took place under the presidentship of Sardar Bahadur S. W. Ladenla. About 600 people coming from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, and other villages had joined the meeting. In this meeting an attempt was made to foster brotherhood among the Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas. The most important feature of this meeting was that the Nepalis, Lepchas and Bhutias adopted the common ethnic term 'Gorkha' and the Nepali language.²⁸

At that time the Nepali Christian of Darjeeling had formed Indian Christian Association.²⁹ Besides this, the Buddhist in Darjeeling opened a branch of Bengal, Buddhist Association. Dr. K. C. Bhanj – a writer of a book on Darjeeling says that at this time an organization named 'Young Men's Buddhist Association' was founded in Darjeeling.³⁰

During Second World War C. R. Kasey was the Governor of Bengal. At that time R. N. Sinha – the then president of the Hillmen's Association gave a memorial to Lord Pethick Lawrance – Secretary of State for India in 1941. In this memorial he urged for the formation of North-East Frontier State under Chief Commissioner.³¹ The Association hoped that the British Government would be liberal in this matter as about two lakh Gorkhas had joined the Second World War

in favour of the British. But the developed national political situation had compelled the Gorkhas to stay restrained in the matter of Gorkhas.

Side by side, in Darjeeling the question of recognition of Nepali language was a turning point for all the ethnic groups in the hills and this issue strengthened the grip of Gorkha identity. In fact, the Lepchas, Bhutiyas, Rais and Limbus etc. become very much ferocious to announce Nepali language as their mother tongue and thus the percentage of Nepali-speaking people in Darjeeling increased from 20% in 1957 census to 60% in 1961.

The activities of the Hillmen's Association had paved the way for the emergence of an ethnic political party whose name was All India Gorkha League (AIGL) Darbar Singh Gurung representing from the hill in the Provincial Assembly founded All India Gorkha League in Darjeeling on 15th May, 1943 in order to assure the future of the Gurkhas if India gained freedom.³²

Now I shall discuss some original documents which clearly indicate the purpose and motive of establishing this organization. The Convener, organizer and President of the League –Mr. D. S. Gurung (B. L), was a renowned agitator, Politician and manipulator. After 1947, he was a member of the Constituent Legislative Assembly of the Free Hindusthan.³³

Home – Political (1) 16—1—1943

D—1 Head Office – Kalimpong

North Bengal

President;

D. S Gurung – ESQ. B. L.M.L.A (Bengal)

General Secretary;

R.D. Subba Esq. B.A.

Asstt. Secretary;

B, B. Chetri, Esq. B. A.

S.K. Rai, Esq. B. A.

Aims & Objectives

1. To organize and consolidate all the Gurkhas spread throughout India and elsewhere into one organic whole.
2. To make everyone realize that the Gurkhas belong to the great martial races.
3. To preserve the civilization, tradition and culture of the Gurkhas.
4. To further the development of the Nepali language and make the propaganda for its use.
5. To establish the political rights of the Gurkhas in India.
6. To promote friendship and harmony with all the communities of India.
7. To have connection with the independent kingdom of Nepal—the mother country of the Gurkhas with devotion and loyalty.
8. Special—to mobilize the Gurkhas spread all over India and to render every possible help specially by supplying man power to the allies in bringing the present World War into speedy and victorious end.

Sd/-

D. S. Gurung

D—2

Proceeding of the mass meeting of the Gurkhas of the district of Darjeeling and from outside held on the 15th May, 1943 at 2-30 P.M at the Rink Cinema Hall, Darjeeling to inaugurate the “All India Gorkha League”.

Sardar Bahadur Harjif Dewan Rai was voted to the chair amidst loud cheers.

About two thousand Gurkha men and women attended the meeting. The Hall was packed to suffocation and these who could not get accommodation inside the Hall, listened to the Speeches broadcast by the loudspeaker installed outside on the roof of the Hall from every nook and corner of the district and from Jalpaiguri, Duars and Calcutta. More than two hundred men from different Gorkha regiment

including the retired Gorkha officials were present and took keen interest in the proceedings.

Punctually at 2-30 pm, the tender age girls from different schools sang the opening song and garlanded the president.

Mr. Ari Bahadur Gurung, Bar-at-law read the message of good wishes from different parts of India. Messages from the following gentle men particularly were very interesting and encouraging Sardar Bahadur Jangbir Tamang , Ex-M.L.A. – Assam, Babu Mani Sing Gurung – The Editor of Gurkha Sewak, Shillong, Assam and from Babu N.R. Thapa—Dehradun.

The president having called upon Mr. D.S.Gurung to explain to the people the object of calling the Mass Meeting, spoke on the necessity of starting the All India Gorkha league and gave a brief history of how the idea of All India Gorkha organization developed and explained the aims and object of the League dealing mainly on the following three points.:

Viz,

- 1) The political rights of the Gorkhas in India.
- 2) The duty of the Gorkhas in the Present World War and (3)The relation of the league with the Nepal Government mentioning particularly the gift of Dhir Dham and Bhim Chhatra Briti by the Nepal Government to the Gorkhas of Darjeeling.

Mr. Bal Bahadur, Chettri B.A spoke on the civilization, tradition and culture of the Gorkhas.

Mr. Chandra Bahadur Gurung spoke on the citizenship and the right and duties of Gorkha as citizens of India.

Miss Tsering Lhamba spoke on citizenship and the responsibility of mothers in the uplift of the Gorkha nation.

Mr. Ranadhir Subha, B.A, gave a brief history of the Gorkha army and explained why Gorkhas in India must support the allies in the war for freedom against Hitlerism.

Mr. Shiba Kumar Rai, B.A. spoke on the necessity of starting the All India Gorkha League and moved the following resolution.

“Resolved in view of the fact that the condition of the Gorkhas spread throughout India is very deplorable and that the political Status of the Gorkhas in India is uncertain and that the future of the Gorkhas is at stake, an organization named, THE All INDIA GORKHA LEAGUE be formed at this mass meeting of the Gorkhas in order to look after the interest of the Gorkhas in all respects and particularly to establish the political rights of the Gorkhas in India after the war or whenever only political change takes place in India and further to mobilize the Gorkhas and support the Allies in the war effect.”

The resolution was seconded by Babu Lal Bahadur Nepali of Metteli Duars and was unanimously passed just at 4-15 p.m.

After this the creation of the General committee of the League took place and the following gentlemen were elected:-

Darjeeling

Rai Saheb Purna Bahadur Pradhan, Sarkar Bahadur Sukharaj Limbu, Mr. Bagbir Gurung, Mr. Bharat Singh, Gaharaj, Mr. Bal Bahadur Chettri, Mr. Bir Bahadur Singh, Mr. Nandlal Singh, Mr. Rup Narayan Singh, Mr. Dhanbir Sardar, Mr. Budhiman Lama, Mr. Hastalal Giri, Mr. Makerdhaj Subha.

Kurseong

Sardar Bahadur Harjit Dewan Rai, Captain Kagiman Lama, Sardar Bahadur, The Government of Bengal, Mr. Mangal Narayan Pradhan, Mr. Harka Sing Subha, Mr. Shiva Kumar Rai, Mr. Manik Chand Pradhan, B.Com, Mr. Purna Narayan Pradhan, Mr. Dil Bahadur Chettri, Mr. Keshab Bahadur Gurung, Subedar Purnodhoj Limbu. Mr. Mangal Singa lama, Naib Commendant Rai Bahadur, Nirmal Rai.

Kalimpong

Mr.K.D. pradhan M.A., Mr.Mani Narayan Prodhan, Mr.Tika Narayan Prodhan, Mr.Ranabir Subham, Mr.Ali Bahadur Gurung, Mr.Mani Kumar Chettri, Mr.Harka Bahadur Lama like many respected persons.

Siliguri

Mr. Rambaran Thapa, Mr.Kharga Bahadur Gurung, Mr.Dhan Bahadur khati.

Western Duars

Mr.Lal Bahadur Nepali, Mr.Jainarayan Pradhan, Mr.Sri Bahadur Thapa.

Eastern Duars

Mr.Amar Das Sharma, Mr.Prithi Narayan Pradhan. Before the presidential speech Mr. D.S Gurung appealed for fund and the donation (Rs.10,46,12,119.00) was collected by him from the volunteers.

The President Sardar Bahadur Hanjit Dewan Rai gave a short but very momentous speech to the following purpose.

The Gorkhas are loyal by nature. Having settled in India the Gurkhas have been true to the salt to the British Government and being Gorkhas by blood are loyal to the Nepal Government and further said that without the aid of the Nepal Government the Gorkhas in India must demand their just and legitimate rights and demand firmly and fearlessly.

Mr. Ari Bahadur Gurung proposed the vote of thanks to the chair, the donors and to all these who had taken so much interest and flocked to the Hall even from 12-30 p.m. after which the meeting came to an end.

After the meeting, the audience was entertained by a beautiful dance as Radha and Krishna.

Sd/-

H. D. Rai
President

Sd/-

D. S. Gurung.
President.

All India Gorkha League.

The first constitution of All India Gorkha League promised to protect the political rights of the Gorkhas mentioning Nepal as “mother land”.³⁴

The All India Gorkha League placed more statements like view and demanded that the district of Darjeeling adjoining Duars section of Jalpaiguri should be included in the province of Assam. This demand was placed through memorials. It was submitted to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel—the Congress High Command, the cabinet mission and the constituent Assembly through the Sub-Committee, Excluded and particularly Excluded Area.

The All India Gorkha League submitted a Memorandum at Gangtok to Hon’ble Dr. B. V. Keshar – the Deputy Foreign Minister and thereby demanded the inclusion of Darjeeling, and Duars in Assam. The formation of a separate province including the districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, States of Sikkim and Coochbehar which should organize a visible unit with the Indian territory.

The active leader named Ratan lal Brahmin and Ganesh lal Subba took the help of plain leaders like Sushil Chatterjee and S. N. Majumder and had formed the undivided communist party of India. This party had raised the slogan of forming “Gorkhasthan” and represented the case in this matter before the Constituent Assembly on 6th April 1947. The Darjeeling. Unit of the party placed a resolution for regional autonomy to the hill region in the mid forties from the point of culture, language and ethnicity.

In fact, the All India Gorkha League proposed two alternatives for Darjeeling on the occasion of ‘Independence Day’ (i) Darjeeling along with Duars should be included with Assam to create a separate province. (ii) The districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, the state of Coochbehar and Sikkim should organize a separate province. The second alternative was submitted by All India Gorkha League to the Government of India on April 29, 1952, emerged out of a “Conference at Darjeeling on October 30th 1949, of all the leaders of different groups of Cooch-behar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Sikkim”. The name of the new province was proposed as Uttar Khand Pradesh.³⁶

The All India Gorkha League memorandum of 1952 brought into prominence three alternatives for Darjeeling.

- (i) To make Darjeeling a separate administrative unit directly under the centre.
- (ii) A different province with Jalpaiguri, Cooch-Bihar and Sikkim.
- (iii) Merger of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri with Assam.

In all the three alternatives the common matter was separation from Bengal. But this plan was not possible in the post independent political Scenario. But the Government had to succumb to the demand for linguistic states and set up the States Reorganization Commission in 1955. It wanted to fill up the aspiration of the linguistic minorities. The S. R. C. reported that the linguistic States would weaken the national unity, observed “the urge for linguistic state has gone now deep down into the minds of the masses and refusal to create such states would lead to wide spread sense of frustration which might have grave consequences”³⁷ The A.I. G.L became very energetic to fulfill its demand in 1955. The State Government was not in favour of separation of Darjeeling from West Bengal and granting of regional autonomy, for such demand was the “thin end of a much bigger wedge intended to foster future claims for merger with Nepal.”³⁸

The official language in Darjeeling hills was Nepali. So the A.I.G.L was active in obtaining the Nepali language which took recognition by State Government. In 1967, the A.I.G.L had joined the United Front Ministry with a view to pursuing the Government to fulfil their two basic demands i.e. the autonomy of Darjeeling within West Bengal and the recognition of Nepali language. The State Assembly had passed a resolution and thereby supported the issue of regional autonomy. But on the basis of nature and extent of autonomy the resolution was valueless, On the other hand, the issue of Nepali language brought AIGL and the Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Bhasa Samity (ABNBS) very close and they started movement jointly to fulfil their hope and aspiration.³⁹

A branch of All India Women’s Conference was founded in Darjeeling in the year of 1947.⁴⁰ Besides this, a branch of All Bengal Mahila Samity was also established in Darjeeling in the year of 1930.⁴¹

B. PLAIN NORTH BENGAL

Barring Darjeeling district the whole area of Jalpaiguri, Maldah, Dinajpur and Cooch-Bihar was called plain North Bengal.

JALPAIGURI: In the primary stage the cultural activities in Jalpaiguri was started by individual efforts not by any social organization. In this context mention must be made of Umesh Chandra Roy who wrote one book namely 'Sikkimer itihash' in 1875.⁴² After it we say the name of Tarak Nath Ganguly who wrote a story entitled 'Soudamini'. Another Scholar was Krishna Mohan Chakraborty. He wrote 'Brahmaputra Mahatyam'.⁴³ Girish Chandra Sen and Salimuddin Ahmed translated Koran in Bengali.⁴⁴

Debating Club, Jalpaiguri (1897)—Jogesh Chandra Ghosh (later on a famous tea planter of Jalpaiguri) was a student of Presidency College, Calcutta. He was deeply influenced by the organizations of Calcutta. From that time he made a plan for forming an association of the educated person of Jalpaiguri to carry out various types of socio cultural activities. Consequently, he founded a 'debating club' in Jalpaiguri (1897). He himself became the Secretary of this club.⁴⁵

Arya Natya Samaj – It is a matter of controversy when this organization was set up. From one reference we can know that in 1900 a voluntary Social Service organization called 'Arya Natya Samaj' was established in Jalpaiguri under the enterprise of some middle class men.⁴⁶ From another source we also can know that Swadeshi movement in 1907 a National School was founded in Jalpariguri. It was situated on the ground of the Arya Natya Samaj which was founded in the year 1904.⁴⁷ Arya Natya Samaj was a drama cum cultural organization of Jalpaiguri. A series of dramas including dramas of Rabindra Nath Tagore were performed in the auditorium of Arya Natya Samaj which was used as a ground of nationalist activities in many times.⁴⁸ Prominent Stalwarts were intimately linked with this organization. It made an expedition against all kinds of social evils. Sashi Kumar Neogi – one of the members of this organization and editor of Trisrota gave a statement that members of this organization will pass their time by literary practices and cultural activities.⁴⁹ Another objective of this organization was to

give actual guidance to the youths who were involved in various types of unsocial activities and to lead them in proper way.⁵⁰ Sri Nirendra Nath Bagchi, one of the senior executive member of Arya Natya Samaj wrote, “Arya Natya Samaj though it was mainly a dramatic organization, tried sincerely to inspire the youths for education and literary activities.”⁵¹ This organization played an active role in the cultural sphere of Jalpaiguri even after 1947.

Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti: The cultural atmosphere was created by Arya Natya Samaj and Trisrota. It was followed by another association called ‘Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti.’ Some educated persons of Jalpaiguri took active role in forming this organization in 1928.⁵² This organization had great impact on the cultural sphere of Jalpaiguri.⁵³ Among the members of this organization mention must be made of Sri Upapada Banerjee, Sri Pramatha Nath Basu, Sri Umesh Chandra Sarkar, Sri Narendra kishore Nandi and Sri Durga Prasanna Ghatak.⁵⁴

Jalpaiguri Muslim Sahitya Samiti: After the establishment of Jalpaiguri Sahitya Samiti a good number of educated Muslims of Jalpaiguri town founded a literary association named ‘Jalpaiguri Muslim Sahitya Samiti’ in 1931.⁵⁵ Its president was Tajmal Hossain and Vice President Moulavi Safdar Ali and Maulavi Lajemuddin. The secretary and the Assistant Secretary of this organization were Maulavi Md. Sukurullah and Maulavi Azmal Hossain.⁵⁶

The first conference of Muslim Sahitya Samiti commenced on Jalpaiguri in 1931. The conference was presided by Maulavi Ismail Saheb B. L. The persons who had attended the conference were Maulavi Jaharatulla Ahmed-B.L, Maulavi Safiuddin-B.A Moulavi Azizur Rahaman etc.⁵⁷ From the educational qualifications and Social status of the attended persons it is proved that the minor Muslims of Jalpaiguri became much conscious about their cultural life and literary development.

The Anjuman-i-Islamia, Jalpaiguri: (1892) –In North Bengal, Anjumane- I –Islamia was founded at first in Darjeeling. Its branch was opened in Jalpaiguri. The organization had much importance to serve the social, political and educational interests of the Muslims of Jalpaiguri District. Its object was the

promotion of loyalty towards the British Government and the promotion and protection of the social, political, educational and other rights and interests of the Muhammadan community.⁵⁸ There were 165 members of this organization. The president and the secretary of this association were Nawab Musharuf Hossion, Khan Bahadur B.L. and Maulabi Kazi Abdul Khaleque. The association wanted to serve the social and educational interests of Muhammadan Community.⁵⁹

The Indian Tea Planters' Association: In 1915 Tarini Prasad Roy, Aminur Rahaman, Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh and others founded the Indian Tea –planters Association. Its aim was to protect their interest and highlight their demands to the Government.⁶⁰The principal officials of this association were viz.-

President – Babu Tarini Prasad Roy.

Vice – President – B.k. Banerjee, D. C. Ghosh, and N.k.Ghosh.

Secretary- B. C. Ghosh.

The members of this association had valuable view on the Reforms Scheme.⁶¹ They patronized many socio-cultural and political activities in Jalpaiguri.⁶² At present A.P. Roy (son of Tarini Prasad Roy) of Jalpaiguri has patronized Uttar Banga Sahitya Chakra a socio – cultural organization of Jalpaiguri.⁶³

Some other Voluntary Associations: From 1920 to 1946, a large number of voluntary organizations were established in Jalpaiguri. They played an active role in the socio cultural life of Jalpaiguri district. Among them mention must be made of 'Jana Kalyan Samiti' Marawari Relief Society, Indian Red Cross Society and Ahamadia association. Barring this, Sishu Niketan – an organization for child development was founded in 1937—38. In 1944 Sishumahal – a children education centre started its work. Another Juvenile organization namely 'Danpiteder Asar' worked for the growth of children physically and mentally⁶⁴.

Jalpaiguri Mahila Samiti: In order to improve the general condition of women the Jalpaiguri Mahila Samiti was founded in Jalpaiguri in the year of 1928. It was the first Mahila Samiti of Uttar Banga. They had opened a library in Jalpaiguri for women named Mahila Pathagar.⁶⁵

Cooch-behar

The Maharajas and some high officials of Cooch-behar State had deep interest for literary activities. Some Maharajas had patronized literature and socio-culture activities in Coochbehar.⁶⁶ Consequently, a large number of books of various branches (History, literature, Pauranic stories etc.) were written by some personalities of Cooch-behar royal courts and celebrities of the state.⁶⁷ A new era was started in the cultural life of Cooch-behar which got more importance and active support during the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhupabhadur. Besides this, we can mention the name of Maharani Suniti Devi (daughter of Keshab Chandra Sen) and Acharya Brajendra Nath Shil – the world famous philosopher whose contribution was remarkable for the development of higher education and culture in the Cooch-behar state.⁶⁸

Cooch-behar Sahitya Sabha: Cooch-behar Sahitya Sabha was an association for the cultural development of North Bengal. It was founded in the year of 1915 under royal patronage and it had a great role for the upliftment of cultural practices in Cooch-behar and North Bengal as a whole.⁶⁹ Before going in details about this institution we should know its background. Cooch-behar state had a remarkable role in press- publication.⁷⁰ In this context a journal named ‘Paricharika’ played an important role in the history of literary activities of Cooch-behar. It was published the year of 1878. The editor of this Journal was Sri Nepal Chandra Majumder. At the beginning its publication was started from Calcutta under the guidance of ‘Nababidhan Brahma Samaj’. Some members of the family of Keshab Chandra Sen took initiative to publish this paper and for twenty eight years the journal was published. But, due to some unavoidable causes this publication of this paper came to an end in 1906. In 1916 under the active supervision of Cooch-behar Sahitya Sabha ‘paricharika’ was again published. At that time its editor was Nirupama Devi—the younger sister of Maharani Suniti Devi and wife of prince Nityendra Narayan of Cooch-behar Raj family. The journal called Paricharika had attained a high quality literary status under the enterprise of the Cooch-behar Sahitya Sabha. It is found that the new part of its publication writing of renowned great poet like Rabindra Nath Tagore was published. Among other writers of this Journal mention

must be made of Kazi Najrul Islam, Banaful, Kumud Ranjan Mallik, Kabi shekhar Kalidas Roy and other writers.⁷¹ Undoubtedly, Coochbehar Sahitya Sabha deserved a remarkable place in the history of Coochbehar state. The famous writers had written so many writings on different issues that Coochbehar state was transformed into a central place of library and cultural practices. As a result of this practice a good number of writers and an enlightened community came into existence which had a remarkable contribution for the cultural upliftment of Coochbehar and North Bengal.⁷²

The persons, who were closely associated with the Coochbehar Sahitya Sabha, were Bijoy Charan Gupta, Bhagawat Charan Bandopadhyay, Sarat Chandra Ghosal, Bimal Chandra Chakraborty, Nihar Bala Devi, Devi Prasad Sen, Jiban Krishna Mukhopadhyay and others. So it can be said that a new wave came into limelight for the upliftment of literature in Cooch-behar which was deeply influenced by the contemporary celebrities of Bengal – the principal proposer of twentieth century society and culture. This cultural atmosphere continued for a long time in Cooch-behar even after its merger with India in 1950.

As an instance of this cultural upliftment in Cooch-behar we can mention a number of journals and periodicals from Cooch-behar after 1950. Among the papers mention must be made of Awan, Awaz, Amader patrika, Uttarayan, Yugabarta, Jagaran, Mashal, Khabar, Nagarik and Cooch-behar Sahitya Sabha Patrika. Dr, Nripendra Nath Paul in his article “Cooch-behar Adhunik kaler Sahitya Charchar Chalchitra” have placed a detailed picture of literary and cultural activities in Cooch-behar up to 1990.⁷³ In this article Dr. Paul has thoroughly studied about all the literary creativities in the spheres of Poem, Novel, Drama, short Stories, History, Archaeology, Folk culture and folksong, Puranic literature and many things.⁷⁴ So it is true that the cultural regeneration which had begun during the period of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan and Maharani Suniti Devi existed for long, which justify much credit in this field.

In Cooch-behar there was a development of three regional parties named Hita Sadhani Sabha, Praja Mandal and Cooch-behar people’s Association. The head quarters of first two associations were in Cooch-behar the third in Calcutta.

Hitasadhani Sabha was the Sabha of Rajbanshi Hindu Muslim Joteder of Cooch-behar.⁷⁵ the progressive Rajbanshis and alien Hindus of Cooch-behar had formed the Praja Mandal.⁷⁶

Malda

Socio Cultural Associations of Maldah District: In Maldah district a large number of social organizations were founded. Among them mention must be made of I) The Maldah Association. II) The Maldah Muhammadan Association. III) Maldah Branch of Rampur-Boalia-Dharma Sabha. IV) Maldah Jela Sahitya Sammelan. V) Maldah National Council of Education.(Maldah Branch)

All these associations had achieved an outstanding role for the social and cultural awareness of the people of Maldah districts as well as North Bengal.

I) The Maldah Association (M.A):

The Maldah Association was established in 1887. Its main objective was to ameliorate the conditions of the people of the district in every sphere. Its membership was opened to adult educated residents of the district. All the office bearers of this association were Hindus. The association had no Muhammadan representatives. Most of the members belonged to the legal profession. Others were Zaminders, Merchants, Physicians and Pleaders. There were 55 members of this association. Its president was Babu Jadunandan Chowdhury and vice president was Babu Radhika Lal Satiar B. L – pleader of Maldah. This association was truly a platform to take care of the general interest of the district.⁷⁷

Maldah Muhammadan Association (M.M.A): We can know from the Government reports that Muhammadans were the second largest community of Maldah district W.W. Hunter in his book ‘A statistical Account of Bengal’ (vol-Vii) wrote that the population in Maldah district was divided into Hindus and Muhammadans, The proportion of Hindus was the greatest in the North & West of the district and Muhammadans in the south.⁷⁸ The aim of this association was to uplift the political, social and educational condition of Muslim Samaj.⁷⁹ It was a Registered Association. List of the Registered Association–Government of Bengal shows that ‘Membership was opened to all educated Muhammadans. Business was

transacted by an elected committee of 30, mostly residents of English Bazar. A general meeting was held once a year. Expenses were met from voluntary subscriptions and donations having possessed no found. Present members including all leading Muhammadans were Pleaders, Mukhtears, Land owners, Trade-men and physicians. The association was directed by some officials.

They are as follows:

President –Maulavi Muhammad Ismail Chowdhury.

Secretary-Khan Sahib Abdul Aziz Khan, Pleader, English Bazar.

The association was very much involved for serving Muslim interests.⁸⁰

Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha (Maldah Branch): Rampur Boalia Dharma Sabha was an organization of Rajshahi district (Bangladesh). Its branch was opened in Maldah under the initiative of Radhesh Chandra Seth.⁸¹ As a social organization some type Socio – religious activities were performed by this organization. It is proved from the activities of this organization (Maldah branch) that some celebrities and social workers assembled jointly for the cause of this organization.⁸²

Maldah Zela Sahitya Sammelon : Maldah Zela Sahitya Sammelon was probably the most active and popular organization in the cultural atmosphere of Maldah. This was also the oldest and the first district wise association in North Bengal. Among the organizers of this Sammelon the main priest was Sri Radhesh Chandra Seth. We have already known that Sri Seth was a great scholar. He published some papers and periodicals and a large number of books. He had begun to start a book on the geographical identity of Maldah.⁸³ He also formed another vigorous organization named Maldah Jela Sabha.⁸⁴ For the cultural upliftment of Maldah Radhesh Chandra took the step to arrange a Sahitya Sammelon in Maldah. Sir Jadunath Sarkar – a famous scholar and historian had attended this conference. It can be noticed that after long preparation a Sahitya Sammelon of North Bengal was commenced in Maldah.⁸⁵ This Sammelon got the best response in the cultural arena of Maldah. Consequently, a large number of celebrities and other interested

persons from every nook and corner attended this Sammelon. It may be marked as a development in the cultural arena of Maldah.⁸⁶

Maldah National Council of Education: Another praise - worthy association of Maldah district was the 'Maldah National Council of Education' which had a far-reaching impact in the social, cultural and political life of Maldah. With a view to popularizing the issue of national education among the pupils of Bengal a campaign was commenced in 1905-06 at the initiative of Sri Radha Kumud Mukhapadhyay, Sri Nripendra Banerjee and Binoy Kumar Sarkar of Maldah.⁸⁷ Sri Sarkar had tried his best to run this organization successfully. He had joined the Bengal National College in Calcutta and made up his mind to inaugurate a branch of it at his birth place-Maldah. Within a short time he took all necessary arrangements and with the help of his companions founded the 'Maldah National Council of Education' in 1907.⁸⁸ The foundation of this organization was a landmark in the history of Swadeshi Movement in Maldah. It was found that in 1913 at least eleven schools were established in various places of Maldah under the guidance of Maldah National council of Education. This association took a very active role for the spread of education in Maldah. It may also be said that professor Binoy Kumar Sarkar had declared different types of prizes and scholarship for the pupils of Maldah. There was a library and a workshop at each school. The Association had planned to visit the schools regularly. In this context one renowned historian and former teacher of the Bengal National College stated that "It was due to Binoy Kumar Sarkar that Maldah became a place of interest. Some of us used to visit Maldah to see Binoy's field of operation.⁸⁹ So it is true that the Maldah National College of Education in Maldah had a remarkable contribution for the spread of education in Maldah. We all know that "Gambhira" was regarded as a popular folk culture of Maldah. Realizing its importance and to encourage the people connected with it Sri Sarkar had declared a prize of Rs.25/- for collection of the history of Gambhira and also wrote a book named 'The Folk Elements in Hindu Culture' in 1917.⁹⁰

Dinajpur

The western part of the district of Dinajpur was by and large a backward area and did not undergo any palpable socio-political change during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However, the town of Dinajpur, the headquarters of the undivided district witnessed the growth of national consciousness at an early date. In 1895 the Indian National Congress established a branch office at Dinajpur.

In the year of 1904, a branch of Calcutta 'Silpa O Biggan Siksher Unnati Bidhayani Sabha' was established in Dinajpur. The Maharaja Girija Nath Roy was its president. In that year 'Dinajpur Musalman Sabha' was founded for social and political development of the Muslim.⁹¹

Another association named The Dinajpur Land Holder's Association was formed in 1905. Its membership was restricted to those landlords who paid Rs.1000/- per year to the Government directly and gentlemen who paid annual revenue of atleast Rs.20,000/- to the Government. In the thirties of the last century, Maharaja Jagadish Nath Roy of Dinajpur became the President of this organization.⁹²

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