

## **CHAPTER-II**

### **TASKS AND GOALS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS IN WEST BENGAL AFTER INDEPENDENCE (1947-1948)**

The demands of the Bengal Hindus for a separate province inside India in which they would be the majority was intended to lead them secured through the disaster of partition to a bright future. After take-over of the office of the Government of West Bengal as a separate state in August 1947, it soon became clear that these plans were going badly wrong. Partition transformed Bengal's political landscape. Having lost two-thirds of its territory to East Pakistan, West Bengal was left with only 89 of the 250 constituencies in the Assembly of undivided Bengal.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Position of the Congress Party and the Muslim League in West Bengal after Partition**

The Partition of Bengal virtually overturned all the previous balances and changed the position of every political party in the new province. Before partition, the provincial wings of two all-India parties namely the All India Muslim League (henceforth AIML) and the Indian National Congress (henceforth INC) had dominated Bengal's politics. In West Bengal, the most obvious disaster of partition fell on the Muslim League. It may be recalled here that after the domination over Bengal Governments since 1937, the Muslim League in West Bengal virtually collapsed. Those Muslim notables who stayed on in West Bengal, they had no other alternative but to join other parties particularly in the Congress. After independence, the ruling power in the other provinces automatically devolved to the hands of the leaders of existing provincial Congress committees and most of which had the opportunities to run the respective provincial governments between 1937 and 1939. But, in West Bengal, the situation was quite different because as a political party the Congress did not get the opportunity to rule over Bengal like other provinces. So, at the critical juncture when India won independence and subsequently was partitioned,

the leaders of the Bengal's Congress had no clear mandate in their province. Factional hostilities broke out at every level of the Bengal Congress for controlling power of the new state. In that connection, the name of the 'Hooghly Group' deserved special mention. It was the 'Hooghly Group' whose front ranking leaders were a handful of Gandhian camp and latter-day belonged to 'no-changers'<sup>2</sup> who, as followers of Mahatma, had taken up spinning, weaving, good works and village welfare in the mid-1920s. Their main working centres were situated in the Arambagh subdivision of the Hooghly district and in Bankura. In these rural areas of Bengal, the Congress had put down strong roots during non-cooperation and the anti-chaukadari tax campaigns of the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> It was also able to win adequate support from the middle castes of Bengal particularly the Mahishyas, once lowly fisher-men who were pushing at the gates of the twice-born.<sup>4</sup> In the 1930's Prafulla Chandra Sen, one of the leading figures of the Bengal Provincial Congress stood against the Bose brothers<sup>5</sup> and build up a considerable network of supporters in this south-western region of Bengal. He now emerged as a leader of the Hooghly faction and his protégé, Atulya Ghosh, another notable Congress leader became the faction's most effective organizer and fixer. But, even after the defenestration of the Bose bloc from the Congress, the Hooghly Group was not in a position to control the Bengal politics. It had to come across huge difficulties due to its influence over a narrow geographical limits and control over only 10 seats of 250 in the Bengal Assembly, was far from the dominant position in the politics of the province. It was only after partition that its stock began to rise.

The Hooghly faction<sup>6</sup> had to device and weave for its solicitation of power after independence. It is important to note here that despite partition, the Bengal Congress was still an organization dominated by the members from Eastern Bengal. According to the constitution of the Congress party, the Provincial Congress Committee consisted of the provincial delegates to the All-India Congress Committee. The old rules laid down that the number of delegates from each province were determined by the district's population, not by the size of its Congress membership. Since they had the largest populations, the eastern districts of Bengal would send many more delegates to the AICC than the western Bengal. The East Bengal sent 344 delegates which were many more in comparison of West Bengal's delegate 200 in numbers, even though Congress members were almost as numerous in the Hindu-dominated west as in the much more populous Muslim east<sup>7</sup>. In July 1947, the

Congress Working Committee decided that Provincial Committees in the partitioned provinces of Bengal and the Punjab should continue to function as before until such time as the Congress came to rewrite its constitution.<sup>8</sup> In this way the decision of the Congress Working Committee allowed delegates from East Bengal and its continuous control over the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. In August 1947, Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh (henceforth P.C. Ghosh), an ardent disciple of Gandhiji from the Abhay Ashram in Comilla, East Bengal and a protégé of Acharya J. B. Kripalini, the then All-India Congress president, took charge of the state government of West Bengal with the blessings of the central Congress leadership. Surendra Mohan Ghosh, a key man in the erstwhile terrorist organization, named Jugantar from Mymensingh, East Bengal, was allowed to continue, to be the president of the West Bengal Congress for the time being,

### **Background of Prafulla Chandra Ghosh**

Prafulla Chandra Ghosh is a remarkable character in Indian politics. He was born on 24<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1891 in the Malikanda village of Dhaka district in East Bengal. His father Purna Chandra Ghosh was a village primary school teacher and mother Binodini Devi was a pious and generous women. He was all along a very bright student and as a consequent of that he became the first class first in Chemistry from Dhaka College in 1913, and in 1916 he was not only the first class first in M.A but also became the toper among the pas out students of M.A, M. Sc in Chemistry. He did his Ph.D. from Calcutta University in 1920.<sup>9</sup> As a mark of extraordinary scholar, his some 'Research Papers' were published in the Journal of 'London Chemical Society'. Not only that, as a first Indian, even before getting Ph.D. Degree, he was appointed in the post of "Deputy Assay Master" in Calcutta Mint with the monthly salary worth Rs-500.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Abhaya Ashram***

In personal life as well as spiritual life, P. C. Ghosh was very much influenced by Swami Vivekananda and Sree Arobinda. Later, when he came into the contact with M. K. Gandhi, became an ardent disciple of Gandhiji. After the meeting with Gandhiji in 1920 and deeply inspired by him about non-violence as well as fearlessness, P. C.

Ghosh decided to join in the freedom movement in India under the guidance of Gandhiji, and he resigned from the service accordingly in order to engage himself in freedom movement in all respect. After leaving service to join non-cooperation movement and for self realization through the service of the country, P. C. Ghosh along with Suresh Chandra Bandopadhyay , and consultation with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and Gandhiji established 'Abhay Ashram' in 1922, whose main centre was Kummilla in Eastern Bengal.<sup>11</sup> Remaining in the path of truth, non-violence and adoration to God P. C. Ghosh devoted his life for the sake of his motherland on the path of Mathma Gandhi and that is why he was in favor of Council boycott against Deshbandhu's move to Council entry. Due to lack of unanimity, there was an election for the post of 'secretary' in Bengal Proviencial Congress Committee. In that election Deshpran Birendranath Saahmal from Midnapore was the candidate of the followers of Council entry i.e, the group of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das , and Prafulla Chandra Ghosh was the candidate of Council boycott group as well as Gandian Group. At last, P. C. Ghosh won the election by a margin of 10 votes. <sup>12</sup>

### **Role of Prafulla Chandra Ghosh in Tripuri Congress**

As a strong believer of Gandhian Philosophy as well as thought, Prafula Chandra Ghosh along with 80 (eighty) delegates of Bengal used their voting right in the historic Tripuri Congress in 1938 in favor of Patravai Sitammaia who was supported by Gandhiji against Subash Chandra Bose. After resignation of Subash Chandra Bose, as a Congress President in April 1939, then Babu Rajendra Prosad was elected the Congress President and P.C. Ghosh was one of the members of the Working Committee, formed by the Congress President.<sup>13</sup> Though, there were differences of opinion in politics, P. C. Ghosh had good personal relation with Bose brothers. Before partition, especially after the declaration of 'Direct Action Day' on 16<sup>th</sup> August,1946 by the Muslim League, severe communal violence took place in Calcutta and thereupon same communal brutality had broken out at Noakhali in Eastern Bengal on the month of October, 1946 and the almost same thing happened through Bihar holocaust. In that situation Mahatma Gandhi, the 77 years old man, rushed Noakhali in order to restore communal harmony and tranquility and avoided to attend the celebration of Independence Day on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1947 and expressed unhappiness for communal intolerance.

## **Way to Partition**

In the meantime, after the election of 1946, it was found that within the 11 provinces Congress had got the thumping majority in 8 provinces where Muslim League only 3 provinces. In the Bengal Assembly election (1946, March) there was a resounding success both for the Muslim League and the Congress. The League got 115 seats out of 121 Muslims seats, and the Congress got 87 out of 90 general seats wiping out the Hindu Mahasabha, excepting the University seat won by Shyama Prasad Mookherjee.<sup>14</sup> Naturally, after election Muslim League formed Ministry in Bengal province. As per the instruction of Viceroy, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru formed central Ministry on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1946. Though at the beginning, Muslim League did not join with the Nehru's Central Ministry, but in the month of October without any consultation with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, League joined the Central Ministry according to the advice of Viceroy.<sup>15</sup>

Due to increasing communal violence and mass killing in different parts of the country especially after the Muslims to adopt the slogan of 'Lar ke lenge Pakistan' or 'no cause is dearer or nobler than Pakistan' or Nehru's controversial faux pas after the acceptance of Cabinet Mission Plan, whether the Congress would follow the Cabinet Mission Plan toto, Nehru answered that his party was 'completely unfettered by any agreement and free to meet all situation as they arise',<sup>16</sup> (10<sup>th</sup> July 1946) –thus it makes clear that India was going to divide. But Ghandiji was dead against the partition and expressed his view that if the communal violence would continue then the destruction of the country was inevitable. Pandit Nehru and Sardar Ballav Bhai Pattel boldly stated that it was not possible to work with the League. They also said that if the partition happened, then the League members would engage themselves into their developmental work, and they (Nehru & Patel) also did for the betterment of their part and thus peace might restore.<sup>17</sup>

## **Stand of *Abhaya Ashram* and the Selection of P.C. Ghosh as the Leader of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly**

Keeping in mind the above situation, when the partition of India as well as Bengal was inevitable, the activists of the '*Abhoy Ashram*' (Commilla, now in

Bangladesh) decided that they would not change their working place whether it was East or West Bengal, but one might be allowed to work in his birth place. Though the birth place of P. C. Ghosh was East Bengal, but he was deeply associated with the work of West Bengal. In that situation, due to the desire of his associates of West Bengal, P. C. Ghosh inclined to become the leader of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. The president of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (henceforth BPCC), Surendra Mohan Ghosh also expressed his desire to become the leader of the Legislative Assembly. J.B. Kripalini, the then All India Congress President decided that he personally would talk to the M.L.As of the Congress party and also cleared that most acceptable between the two would be elected the leader of the Legislative party, but there would be no open opposition. Both Surendra Mohan Ghosh and Prafulla Chandra Ghosh were agreed with the proposal and lastly majority of the Congress M.L.As expressed their confidence on P.C. Ghosh and that is why he was elected the leader of the Legislative Assembly. After becoming the leader P.C. Ghosh at first proposed Surendra Mohan Ghosh to become a member of his Ministry but he declined.<sup>18</sup>

### **Shadow Ministry - (New Bengal Ministry Prior to 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947)**

The year 1947, experienced not only the birth of Independent India but also witnessed the 'Partition of Bengal'. Indeed West Bengal suffered most due to the partition; it was a blow to the economy, culture and identity of the Bengali people. It was an overall crisis of the Bengali nationality during the first phase of the post-independence days that left permanent socio- cultural impact in the psyche of the Bengali people.<sup>19</sup> Before the partition of Bengal, it was decided among the Congress, Muslim League and the Government of India that the leader of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly along with his colleagues would join with the Muslim League Ministry headed by Khwaja Nazimuddin- as a 'Shadow Ministry'. No work would be done in West Bengal without the approval of the shadow Ministry. Though, in all affairs i.e. work order and implementation of any project would be exercised by the League Ministry of United Bengal. In case of any disputes as well as differences of opinion between League Ministry and Shadow Ministry, Governor had the right to resolve, if necessary the Government of India would interfere to solve the problem. 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1947, i.e. from the day of oath taking of the 'Shadow Ministry' of P.C.

Ghosh to 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 were very crucial day in the life of P.C. Ghosh.<sup>20</sup> The first biggest challenge came before the Shadow Ministry with the Government Employees' Government of India given the rights of all the Govt. Employees' of united Bengal to work either in East Bengal or India as well as West Bengal. As most of the employees' were Hindus, so almost all of them wanted to work in West Bengal. The Ministry unanimously decided to absorb them.<sup>21</sup>

### **Steps taken by P.C. Ghosh as head of the Shadow Ministry**

Prafulla Chandra Ghosh had no earlier experience in the field of administration. He thought that if he would go ahead with the development of common people, honesty and hard work, in spite of some mistake the country would progress. His second impression was that if the recruitment of Chief Secretary and other Secretaries were up to the mark then the implementation of the policy of the council of ministry would be easier. Keeping in mind the above thinking, P.C. Ghosh went through all the secret reports of the higher officials of administrative and judicial. He recruited Sukumar Sen (I.C.S) as the Chief Secretary, Karuna Kumar Hazra (I.C.S.) as personal secretary, Ranajit Gupta (I.C.S.) as Home Secretary and Shaibal Kumar Gupta (I.C.S) as Education Secretary. These recruitments were no-doubt very good because the devotion and sincerities they showed in their working place was noteworthy. At the time of the 'Shadow Ministry' one day, after noon a letter from Mahatma Gandhi came in the hands of P.C. Ghosh by somebody. In that letter Gandhiji wrote (30<sup>th</sup> June, 1947), "Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel sent a message that there should be a Marwari in your Cabinet – Badridas Goenka or Khaitan. It appears to me that it is proper to do it and improper not to do it."<sup>22</sup> P.C. Ghosh was very much astonished after getting the letter from Gandhi, as because a few days ago he (Ghosh) approved the name of the ministers from Centre. Sardar Patel was one of the approval bodies, but at that time he personally did not say anything regarding that matter. It was fully illogical that a minister from Marwari community must be inducted. Thereafter, as Gandhiji was not able to hear the telephonic conversation, P.C. Ghosh narrated the whole matter to Kripaliniji, so that he could inform Gandhiji. After knowing fully well Gandhiji told Kripaliniji, 'If Prafulla thought that the proposal was unjustified, he might think that I had not written him that letter'.<sup>23</sup> It was worthy of mention that P.C. Ghosh had no grudge against any Marwari, as because

according to his will Iswardas Jalan, a man of Marwari community became the first Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly and Asutosh Mullick became his Deputy.<sup>24</sup> Iswardas Jalan became the Speaker by dint of his worthiness, not because as a Marwari. In the Shadow Ministry, and the first Ministry of P.C. Ghosh there was no Muslim and for that reason nobody told him anything. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh all along deeply believed that one able and honest Hindu Minister could do justice to all communities and at the same time a Muslim Minister vice-versa. Worthy men should be given the opportunity to perform in the appropriate places irrespective of caste, class and religion. Ministers should be inducted from each and every community – this policy is nothing but to perpetuate the communal ailment.

### **Pakistan Flag Hoisted in Maldah – Murshidabad and Indian Flag in Khulna**

When Gandhiji was doing his best to restore the peace and communal harmony in Calcutta, even at the day of independence i.e. on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, in the meantime, P. C. Ghosh Ministry had to face a severe problem. On 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947, Pakistani flag was hoisted in the district town of Murshidabad and Maldah. On 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, Indian flag was hoisted in Khulna. The report of the boundary commission of two Bengal as well as Radclif Award was published on 17<sup>th</sup> August. In that report, it was found that the entire Khulna district was within the part of East Pakistan, on the other hand some part of Murshidabad and Maldah districts along with the main city of Maldah and Murshidabad had become the part of West Bengal. Naturally, there was an overcast environment in two Bengal. In that situation, P.C.Ghosh along with Khwaza Nazimuddin made a joint statement. The essence of the joint statement was that if there was a necessity regarding the change of the Radclif Award, it must be done with the consultation of the government of two Bengal, and until and unless it had not done, the people of both side had to obey the boundary line. Gandhiji welcomed the joint statement as statesmanlike and sagacious. Though, Sardar Ballav Bhai Pattel, the first Home Minister of India did not like the joint statement. Later Government of India formed a five men committee in order to consider the demands of the people, but the result was meaningless.<sup>25</sup>

### **Problems Faced by P.C. Ghosh**

As the first Premier of West Bengal, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh had to take the responsibility of the administration at a very critical moment. At that time there were main three problems before him, such as: 1) Food Crisis, 2) Communal Problem and 3) Corruption. In the Government store room there were only the food grains of only some days. So, with the import of the food grain by the steamer and without any delay it was transferred to the necessary places. In order to meet up the food problem, in spite of huge hardship, P.C. Ghosh was able to collect almost one lakhs maund food grains from his own province (West Bengal). But, another danger came from Maitriyee Basu, leader of Congress trade union. Maitriyee Basu came to P.C. Ghosh only few days before the Durga Puja and demanded that one month's salary had to be given as advance to the driver of the food supply department. P.C. Ghosh informed her that if she would come to him at least two weeks ago, then an arrangement might be done for giving advance of all the equal salary holders. So, it was not possible by any means to give the salary of one month as advance only to the drivers of the food supply departments. After that without giving any notice as well as intimation, one day morning the drivers of the food supply departments started ceasing work. In that circumstances, in order to meet the crisis, Premier Ghosh with the help of Charu Chandra Bhandari, the then supply Minister, appealed to the non government transport owner to help the government by giving car drivers. In that way P.C. Ghosh showed his capacity that he was not a man to bend his head to the illegal and unjustified demands.<sup>26</sup>

It is a fact that the restoration of communal harmony was not an easy task. In order to make the proper atmosphere regarding the peaceful living of the Muslim community in West Bengal, P.C. Ghosh did his best. According to the consultation with Khaza Nazimuddin, and the President of both the Congress and the Muslim League the decision regarding the Puja, Korbani, Tajia and processions, P.C. Ghosh decided that all the religious practices would be performed according to the arrangement of the previous British administration.

### **Fasting of Gandhiji to end Communalism**

At the day of independence i.e. on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, Mahatma Gandhi was in Calcutta. In order to restore peace and communal harmony in Calcutta where

Hindus did not have the courage to go to the locality of the Muslims and the Muslims had no capacity to go to the Hindu areas, so Gandhiji gave a proposal to Hussain Shahid Suharawardy to stay with him. From 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 Gandhiji managed to live in Calcutta at 150 Belegkata Main Road near – Haidari match factory and incidentally Suharawardy also had to pass a few days along with Gandhiji in the same house which was in fact an abandoned house of a Muslim gentleman.<sup>27</sup> Though, at the initial stage some people were not ready to tolerate Suharawardy and raised the slogan ‘Go back Gandhi’, but after one or two days the situation started becoming normal. In the meanwhile, after receiving the news of communal violence at Thatta in Punjab the situation of Hindu –Muslim relations in Calcutta was becoming out of control. As a follow up of the above mentioned Punjab incident a sizeable percentage of Hindus of Calcutta had determined to take revenge and they found no way out but to humiliate Gandhiji at any cost because for Gandhi only they were not supposed to take actions as per their plan and challenging mind. In that situation, the house where Gandhiji was living along with Suharawardy was attacked on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1947<sup>28</sup>. Premier P.C. Ghosh after receiving that news, rushed to the place forthwith along with police commissioner at midnight. On the next day i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1947, at 9.15 p.m. Gandhiji started his fasting for indefinite period and declared he would end his fasting only when communal harmony would restore. It was just a miracle, after starting the fasting of Gandhiji, those people who were involved in the incident of the attack of Gandhiji’s residence they repented and requested Gandhiji time and again to stop his fasting. Not only that, they started handing over their arms to Gandhiji. On the other hand, it was declared on behalf of the Government of West Bengal that those who would hand over the arms and other weapons within the limited days, no action would be taken against them.<sup>29</sup> At last, with the written commitment made by Nirmal Chatterjya, Niranjan Sing Tali and Suharawardy on behalf of the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims community respectively, Gandhi decided to end his fasting on 4<sup>th</sup> September at 9.15 p.m. Before the discontinuing his fasting he reiterated, “see, I am ending my fasting on the basis of your commitment, if the communal violence recurs, you must not come back to me with your life on the pretext of the violence, rather if you sacrificed your life to stop the communal violence, I will be happy.”<sup>30</sup>

*Shanti Sena*

During this time a group of youth and Students being inspired by the nobility of Gandhiji, they formed 'Shanti Sena' in order to restore communal harmony. Mahatmaji advised the activists of the *Shanti Sena* to work in the trouble prone areas defying the question of safety and security of their own lives. In that peace restoring campaign on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1947, a highly educated youth named Sachin Mitra sacrificed his life. Later on, more three educated youths namely Smritish Bondopadhyay, Bireshwar Ghosh and Sushil Dasgupta sacrificed their lives for the restoration of law and order and communal understanding. Such type of life sacrifice of a few patriots of Bengal set an example of love for motherland for the days to come.<sup>31</sup>

### **P.C. Ghosh's Attempt to Eradicate Corruptions**

For the sake of eradication of corruption P.C. Ghosh, the Premier of West Bengal gave his special attention. He strongly believed that the main obstacle for the cause of nation building was no other than corruption. In this respect P.C. Ghosh was fortunate to enjoy full support and sympathy from J. B. Kripalini, the then All India Congress President and Chakrabarty Raja Gopalachari, the then Governor of West Bengal. Sukumar Sen, the then Chief Secretary of the state was also very much enthusiastic regarding this matter. Besides these, P.C. Ghosh had received help from many official and non official personalities of the Government, both from the provincial and Central Governments. Premier Ghosh thought that the primary safeguards of democracy were-i) equitable public Service commission and ii) entirely free, honest and efficient Judicial system. It is ethically in-correct for a person to become a member of Public Service Commission, if once he or she became the Secretary of any one department there. In the case of Judiciary also, no person should be inducted who once became the M.L.A. or M.P. According to the suggestions of the Premier P.C. Ghosh regarding the recruitment of the Public Service Commission, a three man Service Commission headed by a retired District Judge B.K. Basu was appointed by Chakraborty Raja Gopalachari, the Governor of the state . The other two members were – Scientist Sudhamay Ghosh and Jitendra Prosad Neogi, professor of economics. The question regarding the appointment of the Judges in High Court was not arisen, but how many Judges were needed, was the vital question came to the fore front to meet the demand of the day. In the undivided Bengal, the total Judges were 22

in number. P.C. Ghosh realized that 13 Judges would be sufficient for West Bengal, 7 for Calcutta and 6 for the rest part of West Bengal.<sup>32</sup>

### **Election of P.C. Ghosh as the Member of the Legislative Assembly**

It may be mentioned here that when Prafulla Chandra Ghosh was elected as the leader of the West Bengal Legislative Party, he was not the Member of the Legislative Assembly. But, after becoming leader of the Legislative party as well as Premier or Chief Minister of West Bengal, it was mandatory for him to become an M.L.A. In that context, Khagendra Nath Bandopadhyay, a Congress M.L.A. from Birbhum District left his Seuri Assembly seat for P.C. Ghosh who later on won the by-election due to the whole hearted efforts of Khagendra Nath Bandopadhyay.<sup>33</sup> In that election, being aware of his weak position, P.C. Ghosh sought help from the central Congress leadership and Acharya Kripalani, the then All India Congress President responded positively and in his election campaign he appealed "... the new province of Bengal was created under difficult conditions and needed its ablest leader to steer through the initial stages of independence, Sri Prafulla Chandra Ghosh has justified the choice... Bengal is fortunate in having at its helm of affairs one who can be truly described as the first servant of the people. I hope the people of Birbhum will be proud to elect him as their representative in the Assembly. Knowing as I do the work and worth of Sri Prafulla Chandra Ghosh I feel that to oppose him in this election would be doing a distinct disservice not only to West Bengal but to united Bengal"<sup>34</sup>. That by-election was won by Dr. Ghosh defeating his nearest rival, a Hindu Mahasabha candidate by a margin of 22,480 to 13,492 votes.<sup>35</sup>

### **Unexpected Problems faced by P.C. Ghosh**

During the period of Shadow Ministry, P.C. Ghosh was quite aware regarding the impending problems of his Ministry. The very first of all, was the desire of Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel through the letter of Gandhiji, which had already been mentioned. The Second problem came from his close circle. Ghosh became the Premier of West Bengal for the earnest desire of somebody, now one of them came to him (Ghosh) and asked him to form a committee consisting of some special personalities, who were obviously the outsiders and insisted him to consult with them

before doing any work. But, P.C. Ghosh literally expressed his inability for the simple reason that if it would happen, the outsiders would be able to get inform about all the secret matters of the Government and that committee would be transformed into a Supper Cabinet. Though there was no answer from that person, but he was not satisfied.<sup>36</sup> The third problem for P. C. Ghosh had come with the discharge of Radhanath Das, Supply minister of his Ministry in the charge of corruption in collaboration with League Ministers. But, as a consequence of that 'Hooghly Group' the most influential group in Provincial Congress Committee became very angry against Premier P.C. Ghosh.

### **Security Bill**

In the meantime, as an inevitable consequence of the Partition of Bengal huge Refugee influx, Communal environmental situation along with sabotaging activities of the Communists gradually led to the degradation of the law and order of the Province. In order to tackle this situation, P. C. Ghosh brought the Security Bill in Cabinet in December, 1947. When Prafullya Chandra Ghosh introduced the Security Bill in the Assembly of the West Bengal Legislature, the Communist Party of India jointly with the Socialist Republican Party started agitating against the proposed Bill and described it as Black Bill. Without joining with the CPI and SRP, the other Left parties also opposed the Security Bill.<sup>37</sup> As Premier Ghosh explained, "No patriotic citizen who stands for the safety and integrity of the state need have any fear of the provisions of the bill. Saboteurs, communal mischief mongers, gun runners and foreign agents and spies would have every reason for fear. No right thinking citizen would want to feel otherwise"<sup>38</sup>. The Communists were deadly against the Security Bill, and the anti Ghosh Group within the Congress party started using the grievances against P.C. Ghosh secretly. When the Security Bill was being discussed in the Cabinet then one day a group of people came in a Jeep and began to throw stones in the Assembly compound. In that situation to disperse the mob, police had no other alternatives but to fire and as a result one innocent namely Sishir Mandal, an employee of the Relief and Welfare Ambulance Corps died on the spot on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1947. Speaking on the floor of the Assembly, P.C. Ghosh denounced the agitation as a "well-laid conspiracy" designed to discredit the Government and to capture power by violence.<sup>39</sup> In the midst of controversy and huge excitement, the

Security Bill was passed, but with this the days of the Ghosh Ministry began to lose its spirit and solidarity.<sup>40</sup>

### **Move to Oust P.C. Ghosh from the Seat of Premiership**

In the meanwhile, Ghanashyam Das Birla came to no. 8 Theatre Road i.e. Government resident of the Premier P.C. Ghosh in the Month of December 1947, with a paper signed by the majority of Congress M.L.A.s. and gave it to P.C. Ghosh. In that paper, though there was no specific allegation against the Premier, but it was mentioned that in order to run the administration more effectively there should be a change of leadership of the Congress Legislative party. In place of P.C. Ghosh they wanted Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy (henceforth B.C. Roy) as their leader. Having read over all ongoing politics and situation he realized that he would better leave the Ministry rather than to continue it for the greater interest of the country. In spite of being aware of the ultimate result he was determined to pass the security bill and in the long run it was passed on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1948. As the situation was followed Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, a true follower of Gandhiji and a man of high moral values, realized that he had lost the confidence of the majority of the Congress M.L.As. So, he resigned from the post of the leader of the Congress Legislative Party on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1948 and at a meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1948, the Congress Legislative Party unanimously accepted the resignation of P.C. Ghosh. In the same meeting Bidhan Chandra Roy was then elected leader of the Legislative Assembly (on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1948).<sup>41</sup> However, P.C. Ghosh left the Secretariat on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1948. B. C. Roy, after becoming the leader of the Legislative party invited P.C. Ghosh, to become the Home Minister of his Cabinet, but he did not comply with the request of B.C. Roy.<sup>42</sup>

### **Activities and Achievements of P.C. Ghosh as the First Premier of West Bengal**

Before leaving the Ministry on 22<sup>th</sup> January 1947, what Prafulla Chandra Ghosh Ministry had done only within five (5) months were as follow:

1. Directives were issued to the Secretaries to give notes in files in Bengali language, which were implemented with enthusiastically by Sukumar Sen, the Chief Secretary of the state;

2. Directives were given to introduce English education after class five in lieu of class three;
3. Excepting Tols and Madrasas any School, College or Hospitals aided by the Government would not be reserved for any community;
4. Policies were taken to allow more financial aids to the collages of rural areas. It was decided that government grant would be given to 'Ramkrishna Mission Vidyapith, Belur, and Shantiniketan. Belur Vidyapith started taking Government grant from the month of October, 1947;
5. It was decided that the education of the first 8 (eight) years would be the '*Buniadi* i.e. Basic Education. The main features of the basic education were as under: i).the medium of conferring education would be vernacular as well as mother tongue. ii). knowledge of History, Geography, Literature, Mathematics and general Sciences would be imparted to the pupils through the productive works like- preparation of thread by spinner, agriculture etc. iii). it was 8 years compulsory education for the all children from the age of 6 to 14;<sup>43</sup>
6. Education must not be controlled by the State rather it should be in the hands of those who dedicated for the purpose and of high academic caliber. Ancient Indian education was not under the state controlled, yet India could enjoy the highest place in the field of the scientific activities. Government would allocate fund and only verify whether the allotted fund had been spent for the specific projects or not. The educationists would also not become MLAs or MPs. Governor Rajaji after convincing with that view, one day he had given a proposal to the authority of the 'Belur Math' for taking the responsibility of education. But due to lack of capacity they were not ready to take that responsibility;
7. In the field of the admission of the students merit was only the determining measure. In the case of medical admission the system of admitting the sons of the doctors and the Ministers quota was declared null and void;
8. Rupees two lakhs were sanctioned for the construction of the Atomic substances scientific laboratory. Rupees more one lakh had been sanctioned for the development of scientific researches in Government Collages. It was planned that Chemistry laboratory of the Presidency College would be newly constructed;
9. Double shift had been introduced in Government colleges, Medical, School and Colleges for the accommodation of the advancing students from East Bengal;

10. Monthly salary of the primary school teachers had been enhanced rupees 10;
11. The ancestral house of poet Rabindranath Tagore was taken over officially and handed over to the hand of the 'Rabindra Smriti Raksha Committee' on 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1947. An arrangement had been made to give three 'Rabindra Award' yearly whose monetary value was Rupees 5000;
12. An arrangement had also been made to give Rupees 100 per month to ailing rebel poet Nazrul Islam;
13. A plan had been made to establish a University for the Science education outside Calcutta. A commitment had been received on behalf of the Jhargram Raj Estate that eight (8) hundred bigha land and 50 bigha wetlands along with rupees one lakh without any cost would be hand over to the West Bengal Government. But, before taking any initiatives for the fulfillments of the above planning, P.C. Ghosh had to leave the office of the Primer of West Bengal;
14. Prohibition of alcohol was taken as a policy and that policy was initiated in some districts at the beginning;
15. It was decided that the salary of the lower income group of employees would be enhanced rupees two crores per year with the expectation of rupees one crore would be assisted by the Central Government;
16. The residents of the devastated areas caused by the cyclone and sea flood of 1942, were giving *chaukidari* tax up to rupees one, their flood loan had been exempted. As huge employees came from East Bengal to West Bengal that is why it was decided that no employee would be allowed to continue his or her service after the age of 55;
17. It was executed with the agreement of the Government of India that all the I.M.S. officers would be excluded from the Government service of West Bengal;
18. As the numbers of Bengalese in Arms Police Brigade were very thin, therefore, 800 Bengalese youths were recruited in that department;
19. It was necessitated for the children to practice song in the school. But there was a scarcity of efficient teachers. So, with the consultation of Pankaj Mallick, the legendary singer some financial cooperation was conferred to a singing association for the preparation of singing teacher;
20. After taking the responsibility of the Premiership of West Bengal, P.C. Ghosh noticed, some wealthy people's concept was that in free country, Government would do everything for the development of education. So, P.C. Ghosh appealed

to the peoples to donate money for the spread of education and medical facilities. After that, P.C. Ghosh started receiving money from the people and the last cheque what he received was rupees fifty thousands;

21. In order to provide more facilities to the patients Premier Ghosh wanted to stop horse riding at Maidan and construct hospital by the Government or Non-Government Organizations. For the implementation of the above plan discussion was going on with the Turf-Club, but before implementing it he had to leave the Ministry;
22. As the cow milk was imported to Calcutta from the rural areas, so it was very hard to collect some milk for the ailing persons in the village areas. It was planned that cow milk would be produced and supplied to Calcutta in a reasonable price. For the implementation of the above project it was decided to hand over four thousand acre land to the Government. But P.C. Ghosh had no scope to implement that plan as he had to quit the Ministry as well as Premiership on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1948;<sup>44</sup>

### **Background of P.C. Ghosh as an All India Leader**

It has already been mentioned that at the time of the independence of India, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, Member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) was unanimously elected the leader of the Congress Assembly Party (CAP) of West Bengal on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1947. Subsequently he became the first Premier of West Bengal (3<sup>rd</sup> July 1947) with the support of both Acharya Kripalani, the then All India Congress President and the Congress High Command. But that did not mean that he was a powerful political personality in West Bengal. He was not even a member of the state legislative assembly at the time of his sworn in as a head of the shadow Ministry on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1947. He won a bye-election from Birbhum in November, 1947.<sup>45</sup> However, after joining non-cooperation movement in 1921 Prafulla Chandra Ghosh along with Suresh Chandra Banerjee organized Abhoy Ashram as its founder secretary to work for the country. He toured the various districts of East Bengal in order to win mass support in favor of non-cooperation movement. He was sent to jail for three weeks on the ground of distributing leaflets which urged the people to join the Congress Volunteer Corps (CVC). He was then elected Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee defeating his nearest contestant candidate Deshpran

Birendranath Sashmal. He spent huge times for travelling throughout the country with Chakrabarty Raja Gopalachari, Jamunalal Bajaj, Ballabhbhai Patel and even also along with Gandhiji. He had accomplished many constructive works in the villages of pre-independent era including the spread of Charka. He also joined in the Khadi Pratisthan and introduced many new concept like-dyeing, printing, agriculture and fisheries as a genuine organizer of Abhoy Ashram. Not only that he had attended the Lahore Congress in 1929 and in 1930 he was arrested on the charge of conducting the Satyagraha movement at Midnapore district in Bengal and having organization the Sayagraha Committee through the 'Abhoy Ashram'. Thereafter being released from jail in 1931 he attended the Congress Session of Karachi and again was arrested and released in 1932. He was also one of the delegates of the Calcutta Session of the Congress and in the Congress Workers' Conference of Poona (1933). Prafulla Chandra Ghosh got an opportunity to become the member of the All India Village Development Organization (AIVDO) in the Bombay Session of the Congress in 1934. As an ardent follower of Gandhiji, P.C. Ghosh performed his duties in the villages of Bengal and Orissa and organized volunteers for constructive work in the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi. It is interesting to note that between the year of 1935 and 1939, he attended the Haripura (1938) and Tripuri Session (1939) of the Congress and supported the candidature of Pattabhi Sitaramayya against Subhas Chandra Bose, and subsequently became a member of the Congress Working Committee.<sup>46</sup> However, again he was arrested in 1940 and released in 1941. In 1942, as a result of his involvement in the Quit India Movement once again he was arrested. He was however released in 1944. After releasing from jail he met Gandhiji at Sevagram Ashram and went to Balarampur in order to assist Labanyalata Chanda and Jamuna Ghosh (his sister) in their Basic Education centers. He had also an opportunity to become the President of the Kustarba Committee in Bengal in 1945. After wide scale communal disturbances following the great Calcutta Killing in 1946, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh visited the riot affected areas of Eastern Bengal.

### ***Bangaal vs Ghoti***

As a man, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh was liberal in outlook and against the prevailing caste system and untouchability in the society. He was always stood for women emancipation and was also in favour of modern scientific education.

Moreover, he never wanted to neglect Indian Cultural Heritage and her rich languages. According to him an Indian Child should be educated in his mother tongue. P.C. Ghosh fully supported Gandhiji's Basic Education System and he was against the concept that education should be controlled by the state. But, most astonishing event was that in spite of the above background as well as complete devotion as a true Gandhian in the field of Congress sponsored activities all over India and when necessities, after the selection of his name as leader of the Congress Legislative Party and thereafter the first Premier of West Bengal, the factional hostilities broke out in West Bengal politics and he was branded as a '*Bangaal*' or East Bengalee.<sup>47</sup> In fact during the time of the independence, in West Bengal there were major three faction within the Congress Party- namely the Gandhian Group, the Jugantor Group and the Hooghly Group. Among these three factions none was powerful enough to control the party within the state legislature. In that situation, when P. C. Ghosh, leader of the Gandhian Group became the first Premier of West Bengal and thereby the domination of the Gandhian Group automatically established over West Bengal politics which provoked to determine the Jugantar and the Hooghly Groups to break their dominance at the aim of establishing their own authority in West Bengal politics. Surendra Mohan Ghosh, the leader of the Jugantor group and the then President of the Pradesh Congress Committee was also the aspirant for the Premier post in West Bengal,<sup>48</sup> was unhappy because it had poor representation in the Ministry ( only two minister out of total of eight ). In another side, antipathy developed between P.C. Ghosh and Hooghly Group (led by Atulya Ghosh) when Premier Ghosh decided to reconstitute his Cabinet soon after its formation. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1947, P.C. Ghosh left for Delhi being summoned by the Congress President. It was widely believed in West Bengal Congress circles that the mission of P.C. Ghosh was to confer with the Congress President regarding the reconstitution of the Ministry<sup>49</sup>. On his return from Delhi speculation was revived. It was believed that some of his Cabinet Ministers would resign because the party needed them in other fields of activities. The vacancies thereby would be filled up by P.C. Ghosh's close associates.<sup>50</sup> Another interesting factor which added fuel to animosity between Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and the Hooghly Group was cultural in essence. The Hooghly Group and its leaders those who were a band of West Bengal Congressmen deliberately unleashed the sentiment of 'sons-of-the-soil' among *Ghotis* (leaders mostly of Calcutta origin) of West Bengal to destroy East Bengal's as well as the influence of

Bangaal refugees in the Congress and for that reason they were reluctant to accept Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, an East Bengalee, as leader of the party<sup>51</sup>.

Meanwhile the District Congress Committee in Midnapore (a stronghold of the Hooghly Group) carried a resolution asking Nikonja Behari Maity, Minister for Waterways and Irrigation, to resign in protest against P.C. Ghosh's intention to reshuffle his Ministry.<sup>52</sup> Nikonja Behari Maity was a senior Midnapore Congressman and a hard-core follower of the Hooghly Group, resigned from Ghosh Ministry on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1947 following the resolution of the Midnapore District Congress Committee.<sup>53</sup> Shortly thereafter, three other Ministers of P.C. Ghosh Cabinet, namely- Radhanath Das who was charged in corruption with the collaboration of League Ministers<sup>54</sup>, Bimal Chandra Sinha and Jadabendra Nath Panja who were also the followers of the Hooghly Group, resigned on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1947.<sup>55</sup> In its target to oust P.C. Ghosh from the seat of power of West Bengal, the Hooghly Group teamed up with the Jugantor Group, which remained unhappy about its power position within the Ministry. The Jugantor Group easily cooperated with the Hooghly group in the hope that the ouster of P.C. Ghosh might create an opportunity to strengthen its position.<sup>56</sup>

### **Interference of Central Leaders in West Bengal Politics**

In that time the Ministry of Prafulla Chandra Ghosh confronted a real crisis. As P. C. Ghosh was not a powerful Congressman in West Bengal, therefore, he needed central support and he appealed to Kripalaniji accordingly. The latter immediately came forward and condemned the course of action taken by the Midnapore District Congress committee on the ground that it was 'unconstitutional' and 'destructive' of all discipline<sup>57</sup>. Kripalaniji's intervention pushed Congress factionalism into the background for the time being. Premier Ghosh filled two of the three vacancies (and the third remained vacant for unknown reason) by appointing Annada Prasad Choudhury and Charu Chandra Bhandari as Minister-in-Charge of Finance, Health and Local Self Govt. and Civil Supplies respectively on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1947.<sup>58</sup> It is needless to say that the newly appointed two ministers were close associates of P.C. Ghosh during the nationalist movement. It may not however be assumed that hereafter the internal conflict of the Congress Party was resolved. It reappeared before long.<sup>49</sup>

In early September of 1947, a violent communal riot broke out in West Bengal between the Hindus and the Muslims. The city of Calcutta in particular became the scene of extreme violence and lawlessness.<sup>50</sup> On behalf of the state government, in a broadcast P.C. Ghosh announced that the majority of the people who had been longing for peace would try their best for the restoration and preservation of communal harmony by working in a spirit of brotherliness against a handful of miscreants.<sup>51</sup> However, in spite of efforts of Premier P.C. Ghosh, no noteworthy improvement of the situation was in sight.

### **Deterioration of Central Favour on P.C. Ghosh**

In the light of the above it appears that Prafulla Chandra Ghosh was willing to rely more on Central leaders as a counterweight to his small mass base in west Bengal. Interestingly, the cordial familiarity between P.C. Ghosh and the Central Congress leadership started thinning when he declined to comply with Gandhiji's wish (which was conveyed to him through Patel) to induct a representative of Marwari Community into the Ministry of West Bengal<sup>62</sup>. It may be mentioned that Gandhiji received substantial financial assistance from the Marwari Community, particularly from Ghanashyam Das Birla, at the time of carrying out several constructive social works as part of the nationalist movement<sup>63</sup>. May be Gandhi was inclined of acknowledging this by way of allowing the Marwari Community to take part Governmental power after independence. But, P.C. Ghosh declined to allow Gandhiji's proposal on the ground of a 'narrow nationalism'.<sup>64</sup>

### **Selection of Bidhan Chandra Roy as the Premier of West Bengal**

It may be noted that immediately after P.C. Ghosh's continuation to power in West Bengal Premier the Hooghly Group and the Jugantor group were deeply engaged into an alliance with the aim of removing him (Ghosh) from the seat of power. It was very much clear that due to factional feud the Congress Party in West Bengal did not remain under the exclusive control of any of the three factions, but the combination or alliance of two against the third was unpreventable. So, taking advantage of this situation, the Hooghly Group was determined to pull down the dominance of the Gandhian Group. Actually, the logic of the partition was on their

side because the leaders of the East Bengal had to leave their respective constituencies on the wrong side i.e. the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Therefore, as a calculated move, first- the Googhly Group joined hands with Jugantor Group to kick out Prafulla Chandra Ghosh from his office within six months after he had been sworn in as Premier of West Bengal. Then in a more enthusiastic move, the Hooghly faction extended its supporting hand to Bidhan Chandra Roy for becoming next Premier of West Bengal. The reasons behind the selection of B.C Roy in place of P.C. Ghosh were something very special to the Hooghly faction. B.C. Roy was an eminent personality of Bengal without any factional affiliation. Besides these – in view of the cultural antipathy between East Bengal and West Bengal Congressmen, it seems likely that B.C. Roy was acceptable to the Hooghly Group because he was a son of West Bengal itself.<sup>65</sup>

Keeping in mind the above facts, the king-makers i.e. Hooghly faction hoped to influence B.C. Roy by their control over the party, because Bidhan Chandra Roy had no organizational background at all of his own. Bidhan Chandra Roy was not only a successful physician from the time of the 1920s but also one of the so-called Big-Five in Calcutta city politics.<sup>66</sup> Not only that he was a former Mayor of Calcutta Corporation (1931-1933) and ex- Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University (13<sup>th</sup> March, 1942 to 12<sup>th</sup> March 1944). He had also served as an Alderman of the Calcutta Corporation since 1938 to 1944. Naturally, in these different roles through a few decades B.C. Roy was able to put his feel the pulse not only of the city's middle-class literate but also of its moneyed men.<sup>67</sup> Besides the possessing of above mentioned high qualities, Bidhan Chandra Roy was an appropriate person to make a bridge between small town district leaders i.e. the Hooghly faction and the influential person of the Metropolis. More importantly B. C. Roy had the close connections with the top most political personalities in the central congress leadership including Prime Minister. It may be recalled that since 1932, when the congress high command's ambiguous reaction against the Communal Award and as a result, that particular year split the Bengal Party down the middle. In that time Bidhan Chandra Roy was considered as one of the Centre's key men in Bengal politics.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, Bidhan Chandra Roy was personal physician both of Gandhi and Nehru. Therefore, considering the above facts the very shrewd politicians of Hooghly Group realized that they needed a link up to Delhi and that necessity might provide some help in this respect i.e. controlling power of West Bengal. Thereafter, they decided to select B.C.

Roy for the top job of West Bengal calculating the hope that he (Roy) would be an effective detector at the Centre on their behalf.<sup>69</sup>

In spite of the above facts behind the screen, there was also a background as to the choice of Bidhan Chandra Roy as Premier of West Bengal. In this regard let us see what Saroj Chakrabarty, the personal assistant of B. C. Roy informs us about the decision in favour of Dr. Roy. In his words,- 'Lord Mountbatten as independent India's first Governor General was specially invited by Prime Minister Nehru at a dinner party in his house. Lady Mountbatten was there with her husband. Only those who were close to the Prime Minister were invited at the dinner. Dr. B. C. Roy who had just returned from America stopped at Delhi on his way back to Calcutta. Nehru had invited him to the dinner party specially to introduce him to Lord and Lady Mountbatten. Dr. Roy had a very animated discussion with the Governor-General and told him of the stupendous problems that the leaders would have to surmount flowing from the partition of the country. Bengal and Punjab were reeling under refugee influx. Lord Mountbatten and his gifted wife were so attracted by Dr. Roy's dynamic personality and political foresight that they discovered in him a person who could not only face the problems that came in the wake of partition followed by onrush of millions of refugees into West Bengal and the eastern states but was also capable of occupying the highest position in the country. The Governor General urged Nehru to send him to the problem – ridden States of Bengal instead of wasting his talent as Governor of Uttar Pradesh. The Prime Minister heeded to his advice and requested Dr. Roy to go to Calcutta for taking over the reins of the province. That night's dinner party and Dr. Roy's chance Meeting with Mountbatten proved to be a fateful, not only for West Bengal but also for the country.'<sup>70</sup>

### **Formation of Ministry headed by Bidhan Chandra Roy**

When the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was celebrating in Calcutta on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of January 1948, then Bidhan Chandra Roy formed his Cabinet after a short swearing-in-ceremony by Governor Chakraborty Rajagopalachari at Government House at 9.15 a.m. Incidentally the story of Bidhan Chandra Roy at the helm of West Bengal from 9.15 a.m of the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of January, 1948 to 12 noon of the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1962, was the development of West Bengal in all its

sphere of activities. It was a fascinating era of transformation of the vivisected province named West Bengal into a vibrant progressive and industrially advanced state of the country, from darkness to light, frustration to hope and confidence.<sup>71</sup>

On the question of Ministry formation, Bidhan Chandra Roy consulted with Gandhiji and received his blessings. With the hope of a dynamic administration B.C. Roy formed his Ministry by the following personalities - i). Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, a big business magnate of Calcutta and a former Minister in the Fazlul Huque Ministry in 1937 and later a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. ii). Harendra Nath Chaudhury iii). Nikunja Bihari Maity,4). Bimal Chandra Sinha, 5). Bhupati Mazumdar, 6). Prafulla Chandra Sen,7). Niharendu Dutta Majumdar, 8). Mohini Mohan Burman, 9). Kalipada Mukherjee, 10). Jadavendra Nath Panja and 11). Hem Chandra Naskar. Of these, four, including B.C. Roy were not members of the Legislative Assembly. It is noteworthy that Kiran Sankar Roy, the then Leader of the Congress Legislative Party of the East Bengal Legislative Assembly and the leader of the Congress Party of Pakistan was appointed as Home Minister of B.C. Roy Ministry on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1948.<sup>72</sup> B.C. Roy wanted to include Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the retiring chief Minister, in his Cabinet, but P.C. Ghosh expressed his unwillingness on the ground that B.C. Roy declined the same invitation of Prafulla Chandra Ghosh to join his Cabinet. Not only that supporters of P.C. Ghosh sometimes charged B.C. Roy with having his hand in the removal of Prafulla Chandra Ghosh from leadership of the party while the supporters of B.C. Roy accused P.C. Ghosh of having carried on systematic vilification against B. C. Roy's Ministry in his capacity as a member of the Congress Working Committee so as to bring it in the bad books of the congress High Command. The problems between B.C. Roy and P.C. Ghosh came to such a situation that ultimately P.C. Ghosh with his group (Gandhian Group) including Suresh Banerjee and some senior congressmen like Charu Chandra Bhandari, Pramatha Nath Banerjee, Ananda Prasad Chowdhury, Kanailal De, Deben Sen, Haripada Chatterjee, Bimal Ghosh etc. seceded from the Congress and formed a new party known as 'Krishak Mozdoor Praja Party (KMPP) at the end of February, 1951 and started functioning as an opposition bloc.<sup>73</sup>

### **Announcement of B.C. Roy as an Impartial Leader of West Bengal**

It has already been mentioned that Prafulla Chandra Ghosh was the leader of the Gandhian group and became the first Premier of West Bengal. At the same time the Jugantar group and the Hooghly group were also very much eager to handle the political power of the state. As a consequence of the lure of power, the stage was created of the removal of P.C. Ghosh and advent of B.C. Roy at the helm of West Bengal. In that circumstance, Bidhan Chandra Roy made it clear that he did not belong to any group as because he had been unanimously elected the leader. He tried his best to keep up his commitments and in case of the discharge his duties as the Chief Minister of the state. He not only could go beyond from narrow barriers of party politics but always ready to enroll co-operation and suggestion of his opponent and critics for the benefit of West Bengal. In order to keep the government machineries above group politics, once B.C. Roy expressed his ultimate goal of administration in the following manner, "The policy of my Ministry would be generally to satisfy the needs of the people of the province. The Ministry's immediate task was to tackle the Food and Clothing problem. The second task was to utilize the people who had come from East Bengal (nearly 1 million refugees had by then crossed the border) to West Bengal and lastly- to remove panic among the border population and if possible, to help in the restoration of confidence among the minorities in East Bengal,"<sup>74</sup>.

### **Attempts of Bidhan Chandra Roy to solve Unemployment Problem**

Bidhan Chandra Roy was very much well-regulated in his work. The office of the Chief Minister i.e. Writers' Buildings where he was the first to reach and the last to leave. After becoming the Chief Minister of West Bengal Bidhan Chandra Roy would not address any public assemblage at least for the next few months, instead, he was deeply engaged regarding the problems of the province and setting their priorities. Among the various problems of West Bengal, the most important was unemployment. It was difficult to provide employment to hundreds of unemployed youths who came to his residence. He advised them to start business to earn their living. The most of the refugees unemployed youth had no money at all even for their day to day existence. In that circumstances, the Premier would provide them some small funds either from his own resource or from the Department of Industries or Refugee Relief Department and asked them to go to the whole – sale markets for buying articles that could sell together with their prices. In that way Bidhan Chandra

Roy not only solved the daily needs of the unemployed moneyless youths but also instilled in them a spirit of self-reliance and hope.<sup>75</sup>

Many fair-price shops had been opened by the Government of West Bengal and B.C. Roy encouraged peoples to come forward and take advantage of them. He inspired Bengali young men for transport business, though taxi and bus permits were particularly reserved for the freedom fighters as a measure of relief. The Civil Supplies Department, Government of West Bengal issued a huge number of permits from time to time for importing pulses, rice, mustered oil etc. As huge amount of capital were required in case of the dealing of food grain business, but the political sufferers who had spent their most of the precious time in jail, had no such capital. In that situation, some cunning traders taking advantage of the economic weakness of the political sufferers known to the Ministers to sponsor their cases. As a result of the above situation, though Government had the best intention, but the issues of licenses and permits led to corruption and *Benami* (pseudo) transactions. This way corruption spread not only among a section of the public but among employees of Government Departments who had dealings in licenses and permits.<sup>76</sup>

### **Attitude of B.C. Roy towards the Communists of West Bengal**

After partition, Communist Party of India was first heaping strength and their violent activities becoming a threat to the law and order situation in West Bengal. In order to curb the excessiveness of the Communists and maintain the law and order situation strictly, Bidhan Chandra Roy, the Premier of West Bengal searching a shrewd as well as tactful politician and a strong Man, and in that case his automatic choice fell on his life-long friend Mr. Kiron Sankar Roy, Zamindar of Teota in Eastern Bengal and leader of the Congress Assembly Party in Dhaka. It has also mentioned that B.C. Roy invited Kiran Sankar Roy to join his government as home minister and accordingly he (Kiran Sankar Roy) sworn in as Home Minister on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1948. Thereafter within few months, Kiron Sankar Roy took the initiative in banning the Communist Party in West Bengal. At the allegation of capturing power following the path of violent activities and creating a situation of anarchy the Communist Party of India was declared illegal on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1948.<sup>77</sup> However in order to justify behind the banning of the Communist Party by the Government, Kiran

Sankar Roy made allegations against that party in the Assembly. He informed that the Communist Party attempted to generate a state of anarchy with the object of seizing power by violent means, agitating villagers to ignore the forces of law and order, exciting labour to act of violence against administration and to sabotage all outcome and finally attaining arms and making West Bengal as the first base of operation. On the question of banning of Communist Party i.e. whether the party should be banned or not, Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India gave his reaction<sup>78</sup> after consulting in central cabinet that any step in the nature of banning of Communist Party in India should be avoided at present. Not only that, he also realized the swiftly pushed through the West Bengal Security Act that was even more draconian than the one it replaced.<sup>79</sup>

### **Concern and Initiatives of B.C. Roy to Deal with the Refugee Problems of West Bengal**

The most important task before the Ministry of Bidhan Chandra Roy was to face with refugee problem at the very beginning of the partition of India as well as Bengal. The inflow of refugee from East Pakistan throughout the year 1948 was the most critical problem that B.C. Roy had to face and a series of correspondence passed between him and the Prime Minister of which both the leaders made their own appraisals. Bidhan Chandra Roy informed the Prime Minister regarding a misleading propaganda made by a Minister of East Pakistan named Hamidul Huq Chowdhury that 20,000 people from there had migrated to West Bengal while 30,000 Muslims had gone to East Pakistan from West Bengal. B.C. Roy apprised Prime Minister Nehru that though it was impossible to give any exact figure, but as per information, it appears that approximately 10 lakhs of people in most cases belonging to middle class Hindus had migrated to West Bengal.<sup>80</sup> In a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1948, Prime Minister Nehru communicated to Bidhan Chandra Roy that some news from East Bengal were so alarming that some of the followers were turned upset. Furthermore, it was also stated that he could presume the entire situation of that part of Bengal and decided to take some cautious policy to minimize the tension out of that unwanted situation. As the situation prevailed in view of maintaining a cordial relation with any neighboring country it was decided that there should not be any miscalculated steps so that the migration of the people of East Bengal might get inspired to cross the border

and to settle in India particularly in West Bengal and a few other provinces of India. In fact Nehru had a mind to extend help to them and side by side to find out mechanism to heal up the wounded minds of the Hindus or the then East Bengal.<sup>81</sup> In another letter regarding the disgusted refugee influx question dated August 16, 1948, the Prime Minister again wrote to B. C. Roy that, "I still think that every efforts should be made to prevent it. I think it was a very wrong thing for some of the Hindu leaders of East Bengal to come to West Bengal. In spite of our efforts, it is difficult to induce most provinces to absorb more refugees. We have been pressing them to do so for a long time. I think that in spite of every difficulty in East Bengal it is far better for our people to face the situation there than to come away."<sup>82</sup> Not only that in another letter addressed to Bidhan Chandra Roy, dated 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1948, Pandit Nehru wrote that "... running away is never a solution to a problem. ... To the last I would try to check migration even if there is war".<sup>83</sup>

Bidhan Chandra Roy in a press conference held on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1948, announced "It was the view of both Central and West Bengal Government that able bodied men should arrange for their own source of subsistence because help could not be doled out indefinitely and continuance of such gratuitous relief would be demoralizing to the individual concerned."<sup>84</sup> He advised the refugees who were presented a cross section of East Bengal Hindus i.e. peasants, artisans and lower middle classes to form registered co-operative societies so that Government could provide loan on the basis of proper scheme. Besides these, in order to check migration B.C. Roy tried to create a pressure on Nehru for appointment of a Deputy High Commissioner in Pakistan to represent the grievances of the Hindus to East Bengal Government to check migration. As a consequences of that Santosh Kumar Basu, a veteran congressman and ex-Mayor of Calcutta Corporation was selected for the said post.<sup>85</sup> In order to sort out the refugee problem as well as regarding the settling of the refugees, B.C. Roy sent a 11 member team headed by Nikunja Behari Maity, Relief and Rehabilitation Minister of West Bengal in the Andaman on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1948, with the object of exploring the probabilities of agriculture, forest, fisheries and development of industries. The report of West Bengal Government regarding the settling of the Bengalese refugees in the Andaman was placed before the Prime Minister and other concerned central Ministers in the first week of December 1948, at the time of B.C. Roy's attending the Inter- Dominion Conference.<sup>86</sup>

When Bidhan Chandra Roy became the Chief Minister of West Bengal then democracy was in its first stage of gestation. The fall of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ministry of West Bengal headed by Prafulla Chandra Ghosh within six months of its assumption and the threat to replace of B.C. Roy's Ministry only within a period of three months due to devastating as well as dangerous factional politics in Congress Party in West Bengal gave rise to speculations that any Ministry of Bengal was a matter of months only. In that situation, Bidhan Chandra Roy acknowledged that the greatest safeguard of the parliamentary democracy was a durable Government formed by the elected people representatives and chief gossips and rumor - mongering had to be prevented, if government wanted its progress. He also visualized that if once a Government was formed by the majority members of a party it was expected to stick to materialize plans to achieve the desired goals of the respective Government. It was however the credit of Bidhan Chandra Roy to defeat any kind of conspiracy regarding the destabilization of the Government and left no stone unturned to push up the trend and measures of development. He ultimately showed his worth of able leadership to lead the Government and also the victory in three successive general elections and to form Congress Ministry in the province of West Bengal. <sup>87</sup>

## Notes and References

1. Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition - Bengal and India, 1947-1967* (henceforth- *The Spoils...*), Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007, p. 211.
2. No-changers were those Congressmen who, after 1923, stuck to non-cooperation, while the 'pro-changers' were those who wanted to enter the councils. See Tanika Sarkar, *Bengal 1928-1934. The politics of Protest*, Delhi, 1987, pp.26-33.
3. Rajat Kanta Ray, *Social conflict and political unrest in Bengal, 1875-1927*, Oxford, 1984, pp.290-292, The *chaukidari* tax was levied on a locality to pay for its *chaukidar* (village tax collector).

4. Hitesranjan Sanyal, 'Congress movements in the villages of eastern Midnapore, 1921-1931, in Marc Gaborieu (ed.), *Asia du sud. Traditions et changement*, Paris, 1979, Sanyal, 'Arambager Jatiotabadi Andolan' (The nationalist movement in Arambagh), *Anya Artha*, 6 (September 1974), Sanyal, 'Bankura Jelay Jatiabadi Andolan', *Anya Artha*, 10 (January 1977), and Partha Chatterjee, 'Caste and politics in West Bengal, in his *Present history of West Bengal*, Delhi, 1997.
5. In the 1930's during the internecine struggles inside the Bengal Congress between Sarat and Subhas Bose and their rivals, the Hooghly faction did their bit by leading the attack on the 'Krishak Samitis (peasant committees), which the Boses had tried to set up, see Joya Chatterji, *Bengal divided – Hindu communalism and partition, 1932-1947* (henceforth *Bengal Divided...*), Foundation Books, New Delhi, 1996, p. 117.
6. During the time of the independence in West Bengal there were three major factions within the Congress Party- namely the Gandhian Group led by Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the *Jugantor* Group and the Hooghly Group led by Surendra Mohan Ghosh and Atulya Ghosh respectively. Among these three factions none was powerful enough to control the party within the state legislature. Ginger Group: Several Congressmen too felt resentment against the Congress Government influenced by the Hooghly Group. The most reactive among them were: Prafulla Banerjee, Naren Sen, Ramlochan Mukherjee, Jehangir Kabir, Jagannath Kolay, Maitreyee Bose, Shyamapada Bhattacharya, Aurobindo Ghosh, Haren Majumdar, Kanailal Goswami, Pratap Chandra Chunder. Collectively these Congressmen were known as Ginger Group. They wanted to revitalize the Congress party and save it from the corruption through weakening the dominance of the Hooghly Group. No doubt the leaders of the Ginger Group were prominent, but certainly they were not of Atulya Ghosh's stature. Due to lack of (1).Sufficient organizational strength and internal cohesion along with (2) absence of leaders like Atulya Ghosh- gradually disintegrated and failed to reach the goal. See Prasanta Sen Gupta, *The Congress Party in West Bengal- A Study of Factionalism 1947-86*, Minerva Associates (Publications) Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta, 1988, pp.41-45. also see Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *Jiban Smritir Bhumika*, Titas, Kolkata, 2014, p. 94.
7. Hence Mymensingh in the east, with its large population but with only 29,500 or so Congress members, had fifty-five delegates to the Provincial Congress Committee. In contrast, Midnapore in the west, with almost 35,000 members, had only thirty-

- two delegates: see Kamini Kumar Banerjee, *Why West Bengal has no respect for the Congress*, 15 July 1949, AICC-II, PB-3 (ii)/1949.
8. Summary of the Proceedings of the Working Committee, AICC-I, G-30/1945-46.
  9. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* pp. 24-25.
  10. Atulya Ghosh, *Kasta Kalpita* (henceforth- *Kasta...*), Ananda Publishers, Calcutta, 1980, p-62., Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p. 26. Dr. Ghosh in his '*Jiban Smritir Bhumika*' mentioned that he would draw the salary of Rs 500 per month as a first Indian Deputy Assay Master, though Atulya Ghosh in his '*Kasta Kalpita*' mentioned that the salary of Dr. Ghosh as a Deputy Assay Master was Rs 1000 to 1200.
  11. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.46, also see Atulya Ghosh, *Kasta...* pp. 65-66.
  12. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.46,
  13. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
  14. Nitish Sengupta, *Land of Two Rivers...*, p.454.
  15. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.93.
  16. Nitish Sengupta, *Land of Two Rivers...*, pp.459-461.
  17. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.94.
  18. *Ibid.*
  19. Chandan Basu, *The Making of the left Ideology in west Bengal - Culture, Political, Economy, Revolution 1947-1970*, Abhijeet Publications, Delhi-110094, 2009, p.4.
  20. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p. 953.
  21. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* 95-96.
  22. Letter from Gandhiji to Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, see Annexure -1, cited in Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p. 953.
  23. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* pp. 97-98.
  24. Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p. 121.
  25. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.99.
  26. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
  27. Nirmal Kumar Basu, *Satchallisher Dairy*, 1947, ed. by Abhik Kumar Dey, Punachha, Kolkata, January-2014, pp. 315-319.
  28. *Ibid.*, p.350.
  29. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.101.
  30. Nirmal Kumar Basu, *op.cit.* p.353.

31. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.102.
32. *Ibid.*, p.103.
33. Nitish Sengupta, *Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy Jiban O Samaykal (in Bengali, henceforth Dr. Bidhan Chandra...)*, Dey's, Kolkata, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition-2009, pp.75-76.
34. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, November, 14, 1947.
35. *The Statesman*, November, 21, 1947.
36. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p.108.
37. Prafulla Kumar Chakrabarty, *The Marginal Men*, Naya Udyog, Calcutta, 1999, pp.45-46.
38. *The Statesman*, December, 9, 1947.
39. Saroj Chakrabarty, *My Years With Dr. B. C. Roy (henceforth ... With Dr. B.C. Roy)*, A Centenary Volume, Saraswaty Press Limited, Calcutta, 1982. P. 69.
40. Nitish Sengupta, *Dr. Bidhan Chandra...*, pp.75-76.
41. *The Statesman*, January, 16, 1948. Also see Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p. 122).
42. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p. 110.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-107.
45. Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p. 119.
46. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* pp. 79-80.
47. Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils...*, p. 221.
48. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p. 94.
49. *The Statesman*, August, 23, 1947.
50. *The Statesman*, August, 27, 1947.
51. Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils...*, p. 221.
52. *The Statesman*, September, 5, 1947.
53. Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p. 121).
54. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* pp. 108-109.
55. Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p. 121.
56. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* p.22.
57. *The Statesman*, September, 6, 1947.
58. Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p. 121).
59. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* p.22.
60. Government press note placed the casualty list as 291 dead and 292 injured. For details, see *The Statesman*, September 3, 1947.

61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, February 17, 1957.
63. On 1 October, 1927, Gandhi wrote to Virla, “My thirst for money is simply unquenchable. I need at least Rs 200,000 for Khadi, Untouchability and Education. Then there is the Ashram expenditure. No work remains unfinished for want of funds, but God gives after severe trials. This alone satisfied me. You can give as much as you can for whatever you have faith in,” In a reply Birla wrote, “Whenever you find any particular kind of work impeded for lack of funds, you have only to write to me”. See G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of Mahatma*, Calcutta, Orient Longman, 1953.
64. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, *op.cit.* p. 99.
65. Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* p.24.
66. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *With Dr. B.C. Roy*, p.4. Tulshi Charan Goswami, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, Sarat Chandra Bose, Bidhan Chandra Roy and Nirmal Chandra Chunder were known as so-called Big-Five in Calcutta city politics.
67. *Ibid.*, p.12.
68. Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided...*, pp. 47-48.
69. Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils...*, p.217.
70. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *With Dr. B.C. Roy*, pp.6-7.
71. *Ibid.*, p.1, also see, Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p. 123.
72. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* pp. 123-124.
73. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *With Dr. B.C. Roy*, pp.7-8. also see, Dilip Banerjee, *op. cit.* p.124)
74. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *With Dr. B.C. Roy*, pp.8-9.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
77. By an order of Calcutta High Court on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1950 the Communist Party of India was declared legal. Also see “*Bidhan Chandra Karnadhar - Tabu Khandita Banglar Nabhisvas*” A Bengali Article by Amalendu Dey in *Saat Dashak Samokal O Ananda Bazar* (in Bengali), Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 2013, p. 100.
78. Nehru expressed his disapproval in his fortnightly letter to chief ministers dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 1948, telling them that ‘the West Bengal government as you know has banned the Communist Party...without reference to us...this procedure is undesirable because any such action leads to repercussions’, see G. Parthasarathi

- (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru. Letters to Chief Ministers 1947-1964*, Government of India, Delhi, 1985, vol. I, p. 99.
79. The West Bengal Security (Amendment) Bill, with its harsh provisions, was put to the Assembly in September 1948. It was explicitly designed to ‘extend the existing power of controlling processions to case affecting the safety and stability of the province’. It gave the police greater powers than they had previously possessed to search without warrant and to detain ‘under- trials’ in custody for up to thirty days, doubling the previous limit of fifteen days, a move that was justified ‘in order to facilitate the collection of materials and preparation of necessary papers for consideration of the provincial government’: ‘West Bengal Security (Amendment) Bill, 1948, With Statement of Objects and Reasons’ (issued by the Government of West Bengal Judicial and Legislative Department), 15<sup>th</sup> September 1948, Kiran Sankar Roy’s Private Papers ( by kind permission of Sri Surjya Sankar Roy).
80. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *With Dr. B.C. Roy*, p. 24.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
83. *Nehru’s letter addressed to B.C. Roy, dated 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1948 cited in Saroj Chakrabarty, ... With Dr. B.C. Roy, p.32.*
84. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
87. *Ibid.*, p.35.