

## **CHAPTER-VI**

### **PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (PDA) GOVERNMENT – PROMISES AND PERFORMANCES (1972- 1977)**

In the midst of Presidential rule in West Bengal and under the regime of West Bengal affairs Minister headed by Siddhartha Sankar Ray, West Bengal faced its sixth general election.

#### **The General Elections of 1972**

As per the notification of the Election Commission of India, the general election of West Bengal was held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1972.<sup>1</sup> In that election Congress (R) came to an electoral understanding with the CPI and some others parties in the name of Progressive Democratic Alliance (PDA), on the other hand CPI (M) led United Left Front (ULF) was also in the electoral battle. When result of the election came out, it was found that Congress (R) having got 216 seats became the single largest party with more than absolute majority, whereas Congress (O) got only 2 seats, CPI, the main electoral partner of Congress (R) became the second power securing 35 Assembly seats and main contender of that electoral battle i. e. CPI (M) got only 14 seats. It was really a matter of astonishing in the history of success rate of Congress party in the course of electoral battle in West Bengal. From the first general election in 1952 to the general election of 1971, the number of seats of the Congress party in West Bengal Legislative Assembly were-- in 1952– 150 out of 238 seats, in 1957- 152 out of 252 seats, in 1962- 157 out of 280 seats, in 1967- 127 out of 280 seats, in 1969- only 55 seats got the Congress party. But after the split of Indian national Congress in 1969 (in national level) the Congress party divided parallaly into two groups and i.e. Congress (R) and Congress (O). After division it was found that in 1971, Congress (R) secured 105 seats and Congress (O) only 2 seats and in the

election of 1972 Congress (R) reached its climax securing 216 and Congress (O) got only 2 seats again.<sup>2</sup> It is mentionworthy that during the golden period of Indian National Congress just after the independence as like as other states of India, the Congress in West Bengal came to power with its recognition as a national party as well as the main protagonist of the Indian national movement. Under the mighty leadership of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and Atulya Ghosh- Prafulla Chandra Sen in the general election of 1952, 1957 and 1962 the Congress could maintain its predominance in West Bengal politics. It may be noted that from 1948 to 1962 the Congress of West Bengal had a rare opportunity to enjoy the leadership of Dr. B.C. Roy but after his death on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1962, a crisis moment came over the Congress and the situation was such that a systematic decline started in the organizational platform of the Congress and with a result of effecting the linkages between the voters and the Congress party. Not only that due to the split of West Bengal Congress and birth of Bangla Congress on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1966 under the leadership of Ajoy Mukherjee, one of the architects of famous ‘Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar’ and its second ‘Sarbadhinayaka’<sup>3</sup> and his alliance with the anti-Congress parties led to the Congress party out of power in the general election of 1967. Then in 1969 the strength of Congress party reduced and it got only 55 seats and in 1971 though Congress (R) got 105 seats but it was far behind from the absolute majority to form a Government. But in the election of 1972 the Congress party (R) in West Bengal not only got the absolute majority but securing 216 seats it broke the all previous records in the history of electoral victory the Congress party in West Bengal. Now question is that what factors became responsible for Congress’s landslide victory in the election of 1972 and unexpected defeat of the CPI (M) party, which gradually increased its strength from the election of 1967 to 1971 systematically. It is noteworthy that in 1967, CPI (M) got 43 seats, in 1969 and 1971 it secured 80 and 113 seats respectively. But in the election of 1972 the number of seats of CPI (M) was only 14.<sup>4</sup> In that context, there was a speculation regarding the large scale rigging organized by the Congress (R) as well as Progressive Democratic Alliance for winning the election and washing out the opposition parties from West Bengal. Jyoti Basu, the then opposition leader as well as Chief Ministerial candidate of CPI (M) mentioned in his autobiography ‘*Jotodur Mone Pore*’ about the nature of rigging in his home constituency Baranagar in the following term: “On 11<sup>th</sup> March 1972 i.e. the day of election after reaching my Baranagar Constituency I found that in most of the booths, the voting procedures were over. There was no CPI (M)

polling agents in the 100 polling booths out of 135 due to the huge atrocities of the Congress party. The goondas of the Congress party had snatched away the ballot boxes, stamped on ballot papers in favour of the candidates of PDA i.e. CPI candidates and drop them into the boxes.<sup>5</sup> It may be mentionworthy that young CPI candidate named Shivapada Bhattacharjee was his rival. At about 12 noon on that polling day Jyotirmoy Bosu, CPI (M) leader and MP made a complain about serious rigging in Baranagore constituency to the Governor over telephone. Later, Jyoti Basu himself talked over phone and made the same complain. Not only that Jyoti Basu made a written complain regarding that matter to S.P. Sen Verma, the then Election Commissioner by telegram and to the Governor by a letter. Following the orders of the Governor the Chief Secretary immediately made an enquiry and reported accordingly to the Governor that there was nothing wrong in the polling booths in Baranagore constituency. Naturally Jyoti Basu's demand for repeal of polling could not grant.<sup>6</sup>

However, when Jyoti Basu's demand for revocation of polling was not complied then Jyoti Basu withdrew himself from the electoral battle alleging rampant rigging and corrupt practices followed by the Congress (R). Not only that during the five- years rule of Congress (R) led Progressive Democratic Alliance (PDA) from 1972 to 1977, the Leftists particularly all the elected CPI (M) MLAs (altogether-14), the WPI (Workers Party of India), and the SUCI (Socialist Unity Centre of India) as a mark of protest boycotted the Assembly as well as Ministry headed by Siddhartha Sankar Ray on the charge of illegal one.<sup>7</sup> Veteran Congress leader and former President of the Pradesh Congress Committee, Somen Mitra and Sardar Amjad Ali, veteran Congress leader and former M.P. of Bangla Congress and Congress (R) expressed the same opinion that the rigging, booth capturing, fake stamping on ballot boxes were not new in the history of election in West Bengal and these tactics were imported earlier mainly by CPI (M). Both the leaders further acknowledged the fact that though in some cases riggings were held more or less but that does not mean that Congress won 216 Assembly seats only by rigging. The leaders also felt that if there was no rigging at all, in spite of that Congress would win at least 160 seats that means win of Congress and defeat of CPI (M) was inevitable in the election of 1972.<sup>8</sup>

Actually prior to the election of 1972, there were so many events took place in the political scenario in West Bengal as well as India and abroad which directly or indirectly played very important role behind the winning of Congress (R) and washing out of the CPI(M) in the election of 1972. Those factors which gradually led to the landslide victory of Congress (R) in the general election of 1972, were as under:

### **Role of Chhatra Parishad**

It is a fascinating outlook of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India and is considered sometimes as one of the architects of modern India that in the post independent period students should not participate in the active politics of the country. As the students were not lag behind during the time of freedom movement for the removing of chain of bondage encircled in our motherland, so after independence students should not participate in the sphere of active politics for attaining power on behalf of the political parties. In that case their role would be certainly different. That is why Pandit Nehru wanted complete involvement of the student communities in their education so that they would be able to become valuable citizen of the country and devote themselves for the upliftment for their motherland. So, Pandit Nehru wanted to consolidate the student community apolitically under the umbrella of National Students Union (NSU) which would be absolutely free from active party or power politics. But the very necessary efforts of Pandit Nehru could not fulfil because all the political parties did not agree to accept the opinion of Pandit Nehru. In that pretext, the opposition parties particularly the name of Communists party deserve special mention.

In the post independent period, the Communist party of India started uniting the students of colleges and universities under the banner of 'Students Federation'. In West Bengal and Kerala, the 'Students Federation' established their influence among the students swiftly. The students under the banner of 'Students Federation' would participate in the students' union election in the various colleges, universities and winning the election they would adopt some well planning programme for motivating the general students towards the doctrine of communism and subsequently the communists used the students for winning general election in order to capture power in active politics. It is noteworthy that the Communist leaders ignoring the freedom with

the slogan 'Yea Azadi Jhuta Hai'(This freedom is fake) what inspired the youth-students to hate freedom obtained on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 and suspected the Congress leaders as well as Gandhiji.<sup>9</sup> But many students hailed from Congress family and believer of anti-imperialism as well as ideal of Congress party also tried their best to counter the Students Federation and urged the necessity to form a students' wing according to the ideal of Indian National Congress. In that circumstances, leaders like Bidhan Chandra Roy, Prafulla Chandra Sen, Bijoy Singh Nahar, Bijayananda Chattopadhyay assessing the situation requested Atulya Ghosh, the then President of WBPCCC to take appropriate steps regarding the formation of a students' wing according to the vision of Indian National Congress. Thereafter as a result of the extraordinary dealing of Atulya Ghosh with Central Congress leadership and thereby considering the urgency of West Bengal and Kerela where the communists using the students for the interests of power politics, at last the Central Congress leadership gave the approval for the formation of students' organization in the two states. In that context, on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August 1954 some Congress leaders and workers of Students-Youth attended in a two days conference in Indian Association Hall, Kolkata under the chairmanship of Saila Kumar Mukherjee, the then Speaker of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. In order to resist the gradual thriving of students' federation a proposal was accepted to form a students' organization on the basis of democratic philosophy. The name of 'Chhatra Parishad' was also accepted in that conference on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1954. In that way 'Chhatra Parishad' was formed on 28<sup>th</sup> August, the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of Atulya Ghosh in 1954. Besides, Atulya Ghosh, those respectable personalities remained present at the time of the birth of Chhatra Parishad were Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Bidhan Chandra Roy, Prafulla Chandra Sen, Bijoy Singh Nahar, Shri Bijoyananda Chattopadhyay, Gyan Chandra Ghosh etc. Shri Bidhu Bhushan Ghosh became the first President of Chhatra Parishad.<sup>10</sup> In the second day of the conference of West Bengal Pradesh Congress committee held at Malda in 1955, a students' conference was held with the representatives of the students. Notable personalities like U.N. Dhevar, Babu Jagjivan Ram, Atulya Ghosh and other provincial Congress leaders were present there. The third state conference of the Chhatra Parishad was held at Wellington Squire, Calcutta in 1959. Shyamal Bhattacharya was elected the State president of Chhatra Parishad. It was decided to write a constitution of Chhatra Parishad and its Flag was also approved in that conference. In the same venue i.e. wellington Squire the fourth state conference of the

Chhatra Parishad took place in 1961 and again Shyamal Bhattacharya was elected the President. In the meantime, China attacked India in 1962 and one portion of the communist party started spreading the rumor that not China rather it was India first attacked China. As a result of the ideological conflict the Communist party of India divided into two parts. The pro-Chinese communist leadership formed the Marxist Communists party. Under the circumstances, nationalist students' society gradually started joining with the Chhatra Parishad on the basis of ideological ground and thereupon the domination of Chhatra Parishad over the various College units gradually established. On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1962 a gigantic students' conference was held under the banner of Chhatra Parishad as a protest against the Chinese attack on India. In that conference the nationalist students took oath for the protection of their country. In the fifth State Conference of the Chhatra Parishad that was held at Midnapore in 1964 and once again Shri Shyamal Bhattacharya was reelected President of Chhatra Parishad. The sixth State Conference of the Chhatra Parishad was taken place at Mahajati Sadan in Kolkata on 8<sup>th</sup> May in the year of 1968 under the Presidentship of Shri Indu Adhikari. From that conference in the presence of Bijoyananda Chattopadhyay Shri Parya Ranjan Das Munshi was elected the President of Chhatra Parishad unanimously. Actually Chhatra Parishad under the leadership of Priya Ranjan Das Munshi always considered as the turning point in the history of constructive political movement as well as life line of chhatra parishad.<sup>11</sup> As in the decades of 60s in the field of the establishment of 'Civil Rights' the students of the Barkley University gave birth to the awakening throughout the country and shook the administration along with political set up of the United States of America, in the decades of 70s the revolution of French students vibranted the city of Parry, in the same way-the Naxalbari movement and the contemporary wave of nationalist students' movement brought the change of political and social atmosphere in West Bengal also.<sup>12</sup> In the meanwhile, as a result of the split of West Bengal Pradesh Congress and birth of Bangla Congress (1<sup>st</sup> May 1966) under the leadership of Ajoy Mukherjee, emergence of united front and the atrocities of some of its partners in the sphere of gheraos and its destructive politics along with gradual attack on opposition parties became day to day affairs; when the Congress leaders were in a dilemma and frustrated then the students community came forward under the leadership of chhatra parishad in the form of protest against the foregoing activities of the left front particularly the CPI (M). In that context, Shri Nitya Gopal Dutta, a student of Birati

College was brutally murdered by the Marxists cadets on 22<sup>nd</sup> April in 1969. Chhatra Parishad under the leadership of Priya Ranjan Das Munshi made a strong protest against that brutal killing and launched a political march to the Mahakaran (head administrative centre of the state) on 23<sup>rd</sup> April along with the dead body of Nitya Gopal Dutta. The numbers of bomb were hurled on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1970 in the room of the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University and in the house of Siddhartha Sankar Ray. Books of the university's library were set on fire and ransacked the properties of the university. Shri Bipul Roy, a Chhatra Parishad worker was murdered on the footpath of Amharst Street, Calcutta on 2<sup>nd</sup> May in 1970 at the time of public gathering addressed by Promode Das Gupta, CPI (M) leader in the Shradhananda Park. A procession was organized by Chhatra Parishad along with the dead body of Bipul Roy from Medical College to Writers' Buildings on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1970. Priya Ranjan Das Munshi published a death list of 22 chhatra parishad workers on that day. A chhatra parishad worker named Shuvankar Ojha was shot death pulling him from the bus in Purulia on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1970. There was a black day in the history of Naxalite violence when the statue of Sir Ashutosh Mookherjee was broken and College Street became blood sheeded. Shri Gopal Sen, Vice-Chancellor of Jadavpur University was murdered on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1970. Hemanta Kumar Basu, colleague of Netaji Subhas Chandra Basu and most popular leader of that time was also murdered by the extremists on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1971. One of the architects of Chhatra Parishad as well as head master of Akshay Educational Institution, Bijoyananda Chattopadhyay was killed on the way from Congress Office to his home on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1971. The chhatra parishad launched a movement for student concession in buses and trains on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1971 and as a result of that movement at last Siddhartha Sankar Ray, the then West Bengal affairs minister approved the demand of student concession on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1971.<sup>13</sup>

At the the time of United Front Government the left parties particularly the CPI (M) unleashing the violent politics throughout the state and after becoming disgusted about the politics of murder and blood shed of Marxist party, Ajoy Mukherjee, the then Chief Minister of United Front Government tendered his resignation and observed fasting Satyagraha as a mark of protest against the blood shed during his Chief Ministership. In that period of peril, the puzzled Congress leaders became orderless and unable to make a strong resistance against the ongoing atrocities. Under this circumstances, the Chhatra Parishad under the able leadership of Priya Ranjan Das Munshi and a branch of youth leaders like Subrata Mukherjee,

Somen Mitra, Sudip Bandopadhyay, Kumud Bhattacharyay, Pradip Bhattacharya, Nurul Islam, Jayanta Bhattacharya, Ashok Dev, Sougata Roy, Debaprasad Roy, Goutam Chakraborty, Laxmi Kanta Basu, etc. taking all type of life risk made in such a strong resistance for the protection of West Bengal from the blood bath of naxalites and left CPI that people of West Bengal considered them as their protector. Considering the dynamic leadership as well as life and death struggle of Chatra Parishad leaders the people of West Bengal as if found the reflection of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Priya Ranjan Das Munshi and gave their love to him generously which ultimately led to the Congress party in power partially in 1971 and overwhelmingly in 1972.<sup>14</sup>

### **Role of Siddhartha Sankar Ray**

In the landslide victory of Congress party in general election of 1972 as well as its return to power after a long time of five years in West Bengal, the name of Siddhartha Sankar Ray deserved special mention. It may be noted that after the split of West Bengal Pradesh Congress and birth of Bangla Congress (1st June 1966) under the leadership of Ajoy Mukherjee, in the election of 1967 Congress party for the first time after independence was unable to form Ministry in West Bengal and as a result of that United Front Government headed by Ajoy Mukherjee came into power. In the midterm poll of 1969 it was found that the strength of Congress became so less that Congress got only 55 seats in West Bengal Legislative Assembly. In that critical juncture of the Congress party in West Bengal Siddhartha Sankar Ray became the Leader of the Opposition of Congress party and taking the advantages of the inter-party conflicts within the United Front. S.S. Ray as opposition leader spearheaded the attack against the lawlessness and ongoing bloodshed throughout the West Bengal and severely criticized the activities of the CPI (M). Due to the able leadership of Siddhartha Sankar Ray Congress in West Bengal gradually started regaining its lost strength which reflected in the election result in 1971, where Congress securing 105 seats became the second largest party in West Bengal. Not only that during that time Chhatra Parishad's movement against the violent politics of CPI (M) and Naxalites got proper cooperation and timely assistance from Siddhartha Sankar Ray which also considered as one of the important causes behind the success of the Congress party in West Bengal in 1972 general election.

Besides these, as a Minister of West Bengal Affairs (29<sup>th</sup> June 1971 to 20<sup>th</sup> March 1972) during the imposition of 3<sup>rd</sup> time Presidential Rule in West Bengal (29<sup>th</sup> June 1971 to 20<sup>th</sup> March 1972) Siddhartha Sankar Ray performed many developmental works which remained in a stagnation position for a long time due to the continuous inner struggle of the United Front and lawlessness in the State.<sup>15</sup> But Siddhartha Sankar Ray in a strong hand tried his best to subside the lawlessness and politics of murder of ultra Marxists as well as left Communists by various measures. For example- as a mark of initial success as a West Bengal Affairs Minister, S.S. Ray convened an all party meeting in Calcutta on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1971 for a 'meaningful dialogue about the ongoing utter lawlessness and how to eradicate that senseless politics of murder'. Though there was some controversies about the Siddhartha Babu's policy of quelling the naxalites, but it was a fact that towards the last and initial stage of the 70s, the life and property of the people were not safe at all. There was no surety of life security of any individual whether he would come back to his dear and near ones after leaving home in the morning.<sup>16</sup> In that context S.S. Ray with the help of the state administrative machineries i.e. MISA, D.I.R, P.D. Act, declared some region as terror-prone areas along with the help of R.A.W. of Central Bureau of Investigation some squads were formed in the symbolic name like 'Ton Ton Macaute', Papa Doc' etc to quell the disturbances of the naxalites under the leadership of Ranjit Gupta, the then DIG of Police, Devi Roy, Chief vigilance officer along with Runu Guhaniogy and Tarapada Basu.<sup>17</sup> On 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> August in 1971, at midnight police arrested Saroj Dutta, the then state Secretary of West Bengal CPI (ML) and chief organizer of its mouth piece 'Deshbrati' and poet from the house of his relative name Devi Prasad Chattopadhyay of 9 B, Raja Basanta Ray Road and in the morning of that day his headless body was found in the Maidan. As per the account of the Amenesty International as much as 30,000 to 40,000 people were arrested and sent to jail in West Bengal on the charge of the activities of Left extremist. Arrest warrants were issued against 30,000 to 40,000 persons. It was known from the statement of Home Minister of West Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1973 that 17,787 naxalites were imprisoned.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the above facts 2,000 persons were arrested under D.I.R. and MISA and 17,000 persons were detained under the process of sub-judice.<sup>19</sup> However, adopting the aforesaid measures, Siddhartha Sankar Ray was successfully able to resist the naxalites atrocities and bring back the confidence of the common people in general.

## **Influence of Siddhartha Sankar Ray on Muslim Community**

It may be recalled here that prior to become the Chief Minister of West Bengal, as a successful barrister the monthly income of Siddhartha Sankar Ray was Rs. 60,000 which was many times more than Rs. 1,700, salary of a Chief Minister. In spite of various propaganda against Siddhartha Sankar Ray regarding the way of his handling the naxalites and various steps taken by him at the time of emergency; one thing was clear that from the economic point of view he was absolutely an honest person in terms of financial matters. It is said about him that he was a man of complete non-communal political personality and guardian of minorities and weaker section of the society. It is again noted about him that whenever there was not a single name in the UPSC list of IAS cadre then he turned upset.<sup>20</sup> In that connection, it may be noted here that on the eve of the general election of 1972, liberation war of Bangladesh started from the month of March 1971 and in that war assistance of the Government of India to the Muktiyuddha ultimately led to the victory and there emerged a free, sovereign Bangladesh in the world atlas. It is needless to say that in the liberation war of Bangladesh India's stand against Pakistan undoubtedly aggrieved the Muslim fundamentalists on the ground that Indira Gandhi as well as India in a very plain full way breaking the Muslim State i.e. Pakistan. During the time of Muktiyuddha of Bangladesh 'Bangladesh Mukti Sangram Sahayak Samity' (society for the cooperation of the liberation war of Bangladesh) was formed under the joint leadership of three general secretaries namely Santosh Roy, Jainal Abedin and Haridas Mitra. There were also four assistant secretaries of whom most notable were Tarun Sanyal, a leading intellectual and freedom fighter and Sarder Amjad Ali to supply medicine, gumboot etc. to the liberator of Bangladesh. When any Muslim sympathizer to the liberation war of Bangladesh like Sarder Amjad Ali, a veteran politician and M.P. of the Bangla Congress (West Bengal) would go to Bangladesh to help the Muktiyuddha, the citizen of Bangladesh would not believe easily any Muslim from India rather suspected they may be the spy of West Pakistan. Therefore, as per the opinion of Sarder Amjad Ali it was found that though the Muslim fundamentalists of both part of Bengal were very much against the interference of India into the internal affairs of Pakistan as well as division of a Muslim State, but in spite of that they had an unfailing confidence on Siddhartha Sankar Ray that under any circumstances Muslims would be protected by this non-communal politician simply because that he was the grandson of Desh Bandhu Chittaranjan Das who was trusted

by both the Hindus and the Muslims. It is a fact that like others people of West Bengal, the Muslims also extended their political support in favour of the Congress to come back to power. As a result of that most of the Muslim dominated areas Congress candidates came out victorious. Naturally, the whole-hearted support of the Muslim Community to Congress in the general election of 1972 and their confidence on Siddhartha Sankar Ray may be considered as one of the significant factors behind the landslide victory of the Congress party in West Bengal.<sup>21</sup>

### **Last Phase of the Political Development in 1972**

The Election Manifesto<sup>22</sup> of the Congress party and Indira Gandhi's image which reached its zenith just after the winning of the liberation war of Bangladesh, along with her some radical steps in the field of economic policies i.e. bank nationalization, abolition of privy purses, land reforms and others legal administrative measures to restrain the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few and above all her 10-point programme and pro-poor stand and brilliant slogan 'Garibi hatao' (remove poverty) effectively countered the election cry of her oppositions "Indira hatao" (remove Indira), which collectively led to the resounding victory of Congress (R) in the general election of 1972 in the Lok Sabha and also in the Assembly election of West Bengal.<sup>23</sup>

### **Formation of Cabinet and S.S. Ray Sworn-in as Chief Minister**

Under the given circumstances the election was held in 1972 and the verdict of the same brought the congress to power and initiatives were taken to form a new government under the leadership of S.S. Ray. Incidentally he was empowered to lead the congress party but he did not contest in the election. It is noteworthy that after resounding victory of the Congress party it was the demand of the Congress MLAs to see Siddhartha Sankar Ray in the seat of the Chief Minister of West Bengal. Though at the beginning Siddhartha Sankar Ray was not willing to become the Chief Minister but lastly due to the interference of Mohan Kumar Mangalam and P.N. Haksar,<sup>24</sup> Principal Secretary of the Prime Minister, S.S. Ray agreed to take the responsibility of the same. This situation had, however, developed due to the direct intervention and, of course, willingness of Smt. Indira Gandhi in this regard. On 17<sup>th</sup> March 1972,

Siddhartha Sankar Ray was elected unanimously the leader of the Congress Legislative party. On the eve of the swearing-in-ceremony, Ray met the Prime Minister to show the list of his proposed Council of Ministers but she (Indira Gandhi) literally refused to look into the list saying that “You should do whatever you think best”. Thereafter, Siddhartha Sankar Ray along with his proposed Council of Ministers took oath on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1972 at Raj Bhavan by Governor A.L.Dias. The new Council of Ministers consisted of 16 Cabinets, 9 State and 4 Deputy Ministers.<sup>25</sup>

### **Malda- Raiganj By-Election: Victory of S.S. Ray & his wife Mrs. Maya Ray**

It has already been mentioned above that Siddhartha Sankar Ray was not the candidate of the Assembly election in West Bengal in the election of 1972, but he was elected the leader of the Congress Legislative Party (CLP), so it was mandatory for him to become an MLA from any constituency of West Bengal. So, Siddhartha Sankar Ray wanted to contest a seat from comparatively rural area instead of his traditional home constituency Bhawanipur in South Calcutta. As Siddhartha Sankar Ray was born and brought up in Calcutta in the environment of affluent society, so, he wished to recognize himself more with the rural people to become aware of about their problems than the urban population. He was given the nomination by the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Election Committee for the Malda Assembly constituency and Mrs. Maya Ray, wife of Siddhartha Sankar Ray from Raiganj Parliamentary constituency from where Sidhartha Sankar Ray was elected earlier. The Power, Irrigation, Waterways and Hill Affairs Minister of West Bengal and stalwart in the politics of Malda district, Abu Barkat Aatur (A.B.A) Ghani Khan Chowdhury did the ground work for winning of Siddhartha Sankar Ray from the Malda Assembly constituency. Md. Gofurur Rahaman was the sitting Congress MLA from Malda, who had to resign in favour of Chief Minister of West Bengal due to the suitable intervention of ABA Gani Khan Chowdhury. However on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1972 Siddhartha Sankar Ray won from Malda Assembly Constituency defeating his nearest rival Thakur Prasad, an independent Left supported candidate by a comfortable margin of 37,544 votes.<sup>26</sup> The following day, i.e. on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1972 Mrs. Maya Ray was declared elected from Raiganj Parliamentary constituency trouncing her nearest rival by a margin of 1,40,000 votes.<sup>27</sup>

## **Mass-scale Employment**

It was decided in a special Cabinet meeting held in Chief Minister's room regarding the employment of 28,000 persons within three to four months on the basis of the proportion of 100 people from all the 280 Assembly constituencies throughout the West Bengal. As per the decision of the special Cabinet meeting, Chief Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray was empowered to form district-wise Ministerial Sub-committees for the recruitment of class III and class IV employees. It was also decided that under the purview of that scheme an MLA could recommend for employment at best of thirty names from his constituency for favourable consideration to the Cabinet Sub-committee. It was a tradition that the class III recruitments would complete through the Public Service Commission in the form of open competitive examination. By this insincere method the powers of the P.S.C. was curtailed and it was handed over to the Cabinet Subcommittee i.e. indirectly to the members of the Legislature. The inevitable outcome of that devious method was that many unemployed youths ran after MLAs and Ministers day by day for securing Government employment. But it was impossible for an MLA to satisfy the hundreds of the unemployed youths by merely having the authority for recommendation only 30 employments in his constituency. Naturally, corruption engulfed some members of the legislature that lately leading to the arrests of a few among them. Dr. Prffulla Chandra Ghosh, the veteran Congress leader and first Chief-Minister of West Bengal often used to remark: "Do not corrupt the Legislature by appointing the MLAs on licence and permit bodies, but put Government officers with a background of integrity. These officers can be removed or punished for malpractices, but you cannot do so against members of Legislature".<sup>28</sup>

## **Cabinet Meetings in Districts**

Keeping in mind the promises in the election manifesto of the Congress party on the eve of the election in 1972, as a Chief Minister of West Bengal Siddhartha Sankar Ray wanted to bring swiftness in administrative activities and to develop equally throughout the state. So, instead of running the administrative affairs from Writers' Buildings, the Chief Minister decided to hold Cabinet meetings in the districts and the first of such Cabinet meeting was held at Suri in Birbhum district on

21<sup>st</sup> August 1972. In that district-wise Cabinet meetings, it became the practice to make spot decisions to expedite the solution of the problems of the districts and the Ministers were directed to visit as many blocks as possible to know the problem for taking appropriate steps. An air-conditioned train was reserved for Ministers and high officials to attend the Cabinet meetings holdings in the districts.<sup>29</sup>

### **Developmental Projects for West Bengal**

As Chief Minister of West Bengal, Siddhartha Sankar Ray fully utilized his cordial relation with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for bringing various developmental projects in order to make 'Sonar Paschim Bangla' i.e. prosperous West Bengal. Due to his skillful endeavour for the development it was announced by the Central Government on 1st October 1972 that an integrated ship-building yard at Haldia would be set up at a cost of Rs.73 crores and another Low Temperature Carbonization Plant at Rs. 9 crores. The State Government under Siddhartha Sankar Ray also received firm commitments in investment of Rs. 189 crores in various undertakings public sector. Central Government by that time issued a letter expressing its intention for materializing various projects of West Bengal costing Rs. 85 crores. In addition to this, they agreed to expanse Rs. 42 crores for the installation an Alloy Steel Plant, Rs. 16 crores for Cement Plant, Rs. 14 crores for a Nylon Factory and Rs. 12 crores for an Automobile Tyre and Tube Manufacturing Unit. These were the initial success of Siddhartha Sankar Ray in the sphere of development as the Chief Minister of West Bengal, though lastly due to various reasons all the schemes were not materialized properly.<sup>30</sup>

### **Ordinance for Banning Strike and Lock-Outs**

Development of West Bengal and creation of job opportunities had badly shaken due to the introduction of some new weapon i.e. strikes, lock-outs and *gherao* techniques in the name of immediate meet up of the demands of the working class people in the industrial sector during the period of last two U.F. Ministries. As industrial peace is always essential for the swift progress of a State that is why considering the fact Siddhartha Sankar Ray in order to end these destructive practices in the name of movement of the working class and to restore normalcy in the

industrial field on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1973 West Bengal Cabinet approved an ordinance prohibiting strikes, lock-outs and *gherao* in the industries for the purpose of regaining the lost glory of West Bengal in the realm of industrial development.<sup>31</sup>

### **Others Developmental Activities Initiated by the Government, Headed by Siddhartha Sankar Ray**

It may be noted that many developmental programme initiated and successfully completed by during the regime of Siddhartha Sankar Ray for all round development of West Bengal. In the sphere of the educational development as well as to promote higher education many diploma courses such as Journalism, Library Science and honours courses were also introduced in the colleges throughout the West Bengal. In order to formulate a properly articulated system of education from primary schools to the the level of the universities, Siddhartha Sankar Ray introduced the establishment of a network of Primary schools, Secondary schools and Colleges in the form of 10+2+3 system. In the light of his experience as an Union Education Minister, Siddhartha Sankar Ray considering the condition of the grass root level people introduced compulsory vocational training for the learners from different strata. As a lawyer and a very well conscious citizen of the country, it was not unknown to the Chief Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray about the condition of womenfolk of India particularly of West Bengal. So, in order to bring the women in touch with the knowledge world, Siddhartha Sankar Ray intraoduced the compulsory education for girl students up to class eight and it was free from any financial burden.<sup>32</sup>

It appears from various sources as well as interviews of some contemporary political personalities that apart from various projects and obviously education Siddhartha Sankar Ray took up various schemes for overall development of West Bengal and these were as under: i. construction of fly-over in Calcutta as well as all over West Bengal initiated during the Chief Ministership of Siddhartha Sankar Ray. ii. Second Howrah Bridge, iii. Metro Rail, iii. Yuba Bharati Stadium, iv. Netaji Indoor Stadium, vi. Khudiram Anushilan Kendra, vii. Farakka Barrage and so on. All these were completed during his time. There were also other constructive works that he accomplashed and among them was the construction of connecting bridges in all the districts of West Bengal. One of the remarkable achievements of Siddhartha Sankar

Ray was to bring back discipline and work culture in the government offices and the sole purpose was to whip up the developmental process of the government. It may be noted that S.S. Ray was also concerned about the food crisis of the province and so he paid much attention to agriculture.<sup>33</sup>

### **Role of Siddhartha Sankar Ray for the Election of President and General Secretary of WBPC**

It is a fact that Siddhartha Sankar Ray was very close to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and became one of her most capable advisors after the split of Indian National Congress in 1969. Indira Gandhi would often seek his advice on diverse matters. Being a reputed Barrister as well as his profound knowledge on law and as a member of the Congress Working Committee and Central Parliamentary Board, Siddhartha Sankar Ray had the immense scope to influence the decision making process both in organization and administration. His voice was also prominent whether it was in the meetings of the National Development Council or in the conference of the Chief Ministers or any other matters. He was virtually one of the main dominating voices in the all India Congress politics from early 1970s to the end of 1975. He had also the decisive voice in the Congress politics of West Bengal. In that time Siddhartha Babu was so influential in the politics at national level that considering his frequent meeting to Indira Gandhi in Delhi earned the reputation of being a 'Delhi-based' Chief Minister.<sup>34</sup> In that pretext, as per the compliance as well as directives of the AICC, some organizational changes were made by Siddhartha Sankar Ray on the ground that no Minister should be an office bearer of the Pradesh Congress Committee. It is noteworthy that the posts of President and General Secretary of the PCC were lying vacant for quite some time. For filling up the post of PCC President and General Secretary, the Chief Minister's eye fell on Arun Kumar Maitra and youth leader and MP, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi respectively. So, Siddhartha Sankar Ray called both of them separately in his room and as a result of the intervention of S.S. Ray Arun Kumar Maitra agreed to resign his post as a Minister of Co-operation, Fisheries, Closed and Sick Industries to become the President of the PCC.<sup>35</sup> Priya Ranjan Das Munshi was also likewise agreed to become the General Secretary of the PCC with the request of the Chief Minister. In a meeting

of the WBPCCC's Ad-hoc Committee S.S. Ray proposed their names for the two posts and within a short time they were unanimously elected.<sup>36</sup>

### **Influence of Siddhartha Sankar Ray Over State As Well As Central Politics in the Early Decades of 70s**

It has already been mentioned that securing 216 Assembly seats out of 280 in the general election of 1972, as an unanimous leader of the Congress party, Siddhartha Sankar Ray was sworn in as Chief Minister of West Bengal on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1972.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that the number of assembly seats, won by Congress (R) was 105 in 1971, but it was increased up to 216 in the election of 1972 and proportion of votes increased from 29.19 per cent to 49.08 per cent in the two consecutive elections.<sup>38</sup> which was enough signaling regarding the strong support base behind the Congress (R) in West Bengal. Under the circumstances, at the time of becoming the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Siddhartha Sankar Ray was not only the unparalleled leader of the state but also one of the influential leaders of the All India Congress party. He used to share very close relationship with the Central leadership particularly Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's blessings with him. At the initial stage of 70s there was none among Bengali leaders who could challenge the authority of Siddhartha Sankar Ray in the political affairs at national level particularly about the affairs of the West Bengal Politics. He was so influential that even Prime Minister Indira Gandhi herself would seek the name of capable persons from West Bengal for inducting Union Government. In that case, Central Ministers from Bengal like- D.P. Chattopadhyay, Pranab Mukherjee and Sankar Ghose etc. were inducted in the Central Cabinet as per the favourable recommendation of Siddhartha Sankar Ray.<sup>39</sup> As a member of the Central Parliamentary Board and Congress working Committee, Siddhartha Sankar Ray was very much dependable and capable political personality to Indira Gandhi who rightly utilized the energetic capabilities of S. S. Ray in the field of solving the dissensions within Congress party at national level, especially in Bihar where Kedar Pande was replaced by Abdul Ghaffar Khan as Chief Minister by the recommendation of Siddhartha Sankar Ray.<sup>40</sup> As a mark of influence of Siddhartha Sankar Ray on central government it was found that in a letter addressed to Indira Gandhi on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1974, the name of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was recommended by S.S. Ray as the proposed Presidential candidate of Congress party. In that letter S.S.

Ray wrote “I think Mr. Fakruddin Ali Ahmed is our best bet. I cannot think of any other person. Apart from being a Muslim, he is also from the Eastern region, and we have never had a President from this region. He will be completely loyal and Mrs. Ahmed is eminently presentable.” However, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed became the official candidate of the Congress party and was elected fifth President of India on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1974.<sup>41</sup>

Under the given circumstances, the influence of Siddhartha Sankar Ray as one of the close advisors of Indira Gandhi on diverse matters was established at the national level. Not only that, he would enjoy the overall command in the administration as well as organizational level in West Bengal. Moreover, with the boycotting of the Assembly by the oppositions, particularly the CPI (M), it was expected that the Congress Government under the leadership of Siddhartha Sankar Ray would be able to perform its duty smoothly. It was also expected that the uninterrupted five-year rule under a dynamic leader like Siddhartha Sankar Ray would give an enthusiasm to the Congress leaders in West Bengal which would gradually led to the foundation of a strong organization of the party and continue its domination for long time. But unfortunately all the hopes and expectations about the Congress party in West Bengal as well as prospects of the personal leadership of Siddhartha Sankar Ray took a different turn within a very short span due to some unexpected circumstances.

### **Weak Support Base and Lack of Efficient Leadership Behind the Marginal Power of Congress Party in West Bengal**

In spite of landslide victory of the Congress (R) party in the general election of 1972, the well-knit organization of the party as well as its efficient leadership were almost absent in West Bengal. It is a point of fact that may be appropriate to mention here the undivided Congress party ruled over West Bengal uninterruptedly for nearly a period of two decades. In that connection it may be recalled that the Congress (R) and its leadership failed to retain the seat of power for long time due to massive Left Front victory in 1977 general election under the charismatic leadership of Jyoti Basu. The most significant point is that after the defeat of the Congress party in the election of 1977, it could not able to regain its power till to-day. Naturally, it will be an

obvious question, why did Congress accomplish very poor show in the election of 1977 and it could capture only 20 seats out of 294 assembly seats while CPI (M)-alone got-178, and could not come back to power as well as become a marginal power in the politics of the state in West Bengal?<sup>42</sup>

There were so many factors which were collectively responsible for the decline of the Congress party and in the long run it led to become a marginal power in West Bengal politics:

First of all, after independence (15<sup>th</sup> August 1947) to 1967 undivided Congress ruled over West Bengal continuously by and large for 20 years as a result of the image of Congress party in the national as well as state level as a main advocator of the freedom movement in India. Moreover, during that time West Bengal Congress was fortunate enough to enjoy the charismatic leadership of Bidhan Chandra Roy who won the heart of the people by introducing an era of peace and prosperity in the midst of tremendous hindrance and a viable opposition in West Bengal. He was calm, neutral and knew the pulse of the people of the state. Bidhan Chandra Roy was also one of the advisors of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on diverse matters. B.C. Roy utilized his close relation with top leaders of the country like Nehru, Patel, Moulana Azad etc. as an advisor or as a personal physician for the overall possible development of West Bengal. It is mentionworthy that in the field of the smooth functioning of the state administration for nearly 14 years, B.C. Roy could follow the policy of division of power strictly. In that connection the name of Atulya Ghosh deserved special mention. Atulya Ghosh was the President of WBPC from 1950 to 1958 and he again became the PCC chief in 1961.<sup>43</sup> Besides the stature of the PCC Chief, others PCC Presidents like Jadabendra Nath Panja (1958-1961), Rabindralal Singha (1962 – 1964)<sup>44</sup> etc. belonged to mighty Hooghly Groups headed by Atulya Ghosh. Naturally, entire Congress organizations were under the absolute control of Atulya Ghosh. Atulya Ghosh was the man of rare caliber regarding the organizational abilities and with the help of his innate capabilities he discovered most potential local notables from each and every district throughout West Bengal. It was Atulya Ghosh's quality of leadership through which he established organizational network from local level to top level by superb handling the district wise stalwart like Santosh Roy of Cooch Behar, Abdus Sattar of Murshidabad, Gani Khan Chowdhury of Malda etc. and was able to make a powerful local support base of the Congress party. It may be said that

due to his extraordinary organizational abilities it became possible for West Bengal Congress to win over three successive general elections in 1952, 1957 and 1962 respectively and as a result of that he would enjoy the confidence of the Central party leadership and subsequently became one of the most important national leaders of the Congress party in India.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the secrecy behind the winning of consecutive three general election of Congress party in West Bengal was within the chemistry of the well understanding in between B.C. Roy and Atulya Ghosh. There was as if an unwritten agreement between the two stalwart that B.C. Roy would not interfere into the organizational affairs and while Atulya Ghosh would not intervene into the administrative affairs. It is also important to note that B.C. Roy would hardly go to the Congress Bhavan and in the same way Atulya Ghosh would seldom come to the Writers' Buildings.<sup>46</sup>

In case of Siddhartha Sankar Ray who was never considered as the undisputed leader of West Bengal. It is notable that Bidhan Chandra Roy inducted young Siddhartha Sankar Ray, in his second Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1957 as Judicial, Legislative and Tribal welfare Minister. Siddhartha Sankar Ray resigned from the Minister-ship on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1958,<sup>47</sup> and also from the MLA-ship on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1958. He did not come back in congress party even with the request of B.C. Roy rather he was reelected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly as an independent candidate supported by the opposition parties in a bye-election, held on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1958 from the same 146- Bhowanipur constituency.<sup>48</sup> However, he came back at the crucial time of the Congress party after the death of Bidhan Chandra Roy and defended Prafulla Chandra Sen's Ministry in the floor of the Assembly House against the severe onslaught of the CPI (M.) and subsequently became the opposition leader and the West Bengal Affairs Minister and thereafter Chief Minister of West Bengal. In spite of establishing absolute control over West Bengal, the main loo-falls of Siddhartha Sankar Ray was that he did not try to build his own local support base and thereby his control over party organization was always far from firm. In that respect, he had basic difference with Atulya Ghosh, the undisputed well-knit organizer of the Congress party in West Bengal, and Bidhan Chandra Roy, architect of West Bengal. Both the leaders while enjoying the logic of the division of power keeping aside their personal ego for the greater interest of the development of West Bengal, Siddhartha Sankar Ray was against the division of power. Siddhartha Sankar Ray started interfering as well as controlling both state administration and overall organization of

the Congress party in West Bengal. These attitudes of Siddhartha Sankar Ray regarding his overall supremacy enraged the other leaders of West Bengal that led to the division among them into pro-Siddhartha and anti-Siddhartha group.<sup>49</sup>

Despite his complete dedication towards the fulfillment of his duty and earnest desire for improvement of the people of the State, mainly as a consequence of inter-party rivalries, Siddhartha Sankar Ray had to quit office in tragic political circumstances. There was division in the cabinet, division in the party machinery and his reputation as Congress leader suffered a serious setback due to inter-party feud and successive defeats in Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections in 1977. Moreover, Siddhartha Sankar Ray was emotionally-charged along with fluctuating temper and failed to understand the mood of his people.<sup>50</sup>

### **Wheat-Bran Scandal**

The Ministry of Siddhartha Sankar Ray had to face many unwanted crisis from the outset and as a result of that it did not get off a smooth start. The Ministry came under serious stress when news reached in Writers' Buildings relating to the arrest of Shri Arun Dasgupta, confidential assistant of Kashi Kanta Maitra, the then Food Minister of Ray's Ministry on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1973 while he was carrying with him a large amount of unaccounted money. As per the version of Shri Haladhar Patel, press reporter of 'Satya Jug patrika' in his book entitled 'Bhushi Kelenkari' (wheat-bran scandal) that "in order to make his political carrier strong in the soil of Nadia District, Kashi Kanta Maitra, the then Food Minister in the form of political nepotism started giving the permits of wheat-bran selling to his party cadres ignoring all formalities and procedures. In that context for getting cooperation from youth Congress, Kashi Babu incorporated many influential youth congress leaders including Sudip Bandopadhyay, the then Youth Congress President of West Bengal in the wheat-bran distribution committee. The other notables who were incorporated in that committee were- Somen Mitra, Debaprosad Roy, Shibdas Mukhopadhyay, Shibu Chowdhury, Swarajbandhu Bhattacharyay etc. Due to his nefarious tactics the price rate of wheat-bran increased from Rs. 20-22 to Rs. 40-44 per maund. Not only that as a result of mixing of wheat-bran (which is always used as food for cattle) with atta (smashing wheat that is used as food for men) it became the food for men and it would sell Rs.

56 to 60 per maund. In that way a black market of Rs. 9 crores was created centering wheat-bran”.<sup>51</sup>Kashi Kanta Maitra had also given the permit as well as license for distribution of wheat-bran to Jaydeep Mukhopadhyay, world famous tennis player and nephew of Chief Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray. It was expected to Kashi Kanta maitra that if there would start any enquiry regarding this matter and the name of Jaydeep Mukhopadhyay would automatically come into surface then the Chief Minister would be forced to skip the matter and in this way Kashi Babu and his associates would be spared. But it is interesting to note that Siddhartha Babu as a Chief Minister of West Bengal took the challenge of his Food Minister Kashi Kanta Maitra. After the arrest of Shri Arun Dasgupta, confidential assistant of Kashi Kanta Maitra on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1973, the very next morning i.e. on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1973, Chief Minister ordered for an immediate investigation into the matter and said, “How many more dishonest persons there are in Writers’ Buildings?” and then hand over the order to D.I.G. personally through his P.A. Mr. Saroj Chakrabarty.<sup>52</sup>

Following the order of investigation, when the name of Adhish Mukherejee, brother-in law of the Chief Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray as well as father of Jaydeep Mukherjee came into the surface, then the investigating officers rolled up for the time being. Incidentally, Jaydeep Mukherjee authorized his father for running the license of wheat-bran, so both the father and son became accused and as per law and for the sake of impartial investigation it was necessary for the investigation officer to arrest them. As Adhish Mukherjee and Jaydeep Mukherjee were very close relative of Chief Minister, so the investigating officers were hesitating to arrest them and before going for such action they sought permission from Siddhartha Babu. In that pretext, Chief Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray categorically gave a strict order in the following way, “As like as others accused his relatives would also be arrested at per law and no special arrangement would be made for them.”<sup>53</sup>As a result of the directives from the Chief Minister, Adhish Mukherjee was arrested and took bail from court and as soon as Jaydeep Mukherjee would land in West Bengal after the end of his tennis tournament in London, he would also be arrested as per the dictation of Chief Minister to enforcement branch.<sup>54</sup>It has also been written by Mr. Saroj Chakrabarty, personal assistant of the Chief Ministers that “into the enquiry of wheat-bran case some of the relations of Chief Minister’s were involved and latter on arrested. But Siddhartha Babu had not interfered in any manner whatsoever in favour

of his relations either for securing their release or by influencing the process of investigation.”<sup>55</sup>

Whenever the investigation of the wheat-bran scandal was going on, then in the meantime, Food Minister Kashi Kanta Maitra sent two resignation letters- the first one on 30<sup>th</sup> July and the second on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1973. In his letters Kashi Kanta Maitra requested the Chief Minister to accept his resignation ‘in view of a well-laid and pre-planned conspiracy against him’. He also interrogated the Chief Minister to appoint a sitting Judge of the Calcutta High Court for an enquiry regarding his activities as Food Minister.’ The Chief Minister hesitated initially and at last a brief discussion with some of the senior Cabinet Ministers on 5<sup>th</sup> August Maitra’s resignation was accepted and thus Kashi Kanta Maitra quitted the Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1973.<sup>56</sup>

### **Wanchoo Commission**

In spite of taking stern action against Food Minister Kashi Kanta Maitra, Chief Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray however failed to extricate the ministry from the crisis of corruption. A fresh allegation was brought before the Government by Sudip Banerjee, President of the West Bengal Youth Congress and Kumud Bhattacharjee, President of Chhatra Parishad through a Press conference on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1974 and demanded resignation of five Ministers and three senior officials on the plea of ‘corruption and incompetence.’ Both the leaders also threatened to resign from the Congress party if no action were taken against them. The Chief Minister in order to assuage the aggrieved leaders announced that an enquiry Commission would be appointed to probe all allegations of corruption against accused Ministers on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1974. Thereafter, with the approval of Prime Minister for setting up of such a Commission, the Union Government constituted a one man commission headed by K.N. Wanchoo, ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and was instructed to submit its report within one month.<sup>57</sup>

Though, Wanchoo commission was appointed as per the demands of of the top leaders of Youth and Student wings of the Congress party in West Bengal to eradicate corruption from the state administration, but the most astonishing event was that the constitution of the Wanchoo Commission as if fuelled the simmering

discontent within the party. After constituting the commission, the Chief Minister remarked, "I do not think there is any other Government in the world which had followed such a liberal and open procedure."<sup>58</sup> Some of the leaders and Cabinet colleagues of S.S. Ray found a well laid conspiracy behind the appointment of Wanchoo Commission in order to place some of his co-workers in the dock. Therefore, a division in the party and within the Ministry came into the forefront over the appointment of Wanchoo Commission. The dissenters of S.S. Ray insisted for 'collective decision' and considered that the appointment of such Commission against the Ministers and leaders of the ruling party would tarnish the image of the Congress in West Bengal. However, a Gazette notification was issued on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1974, relating to the appointment of the Wanchoo Commission for inquiry against corruption.<sup>59</sup>

### **Reports and Impact**

Being authorized to investigate the corruption, Mr. Justice Wanchoo selected 10 complaints for through investigation out of more than 130 written complaints which had no *prima facie case* for reference. Among the 10 complaints-charges against Pradip Bhattacharya, Jainal Abedin and Prafulla Kanti Ghosh, the front ranking Congress leaders were found to be forged. The complaint against Gurupada Khan regarding the appointment of his son as his Confidential Assistant was not at all a matter of reference to the Commission. It was found that the complaints against others Congress leader like Subrata Mukherjee, P.K. Ghosh on the ground of accepting bribe was absurd. So, lastly the complaints against only five Congressmen i.e. Ajit Panja, Sitaram Mahato, Santosh Roy, Govinda Naskar and Suniti Chattaraj would go to the Commission. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1974 the five Ministers appeared before the Commission in order to submit their replies. The Commission completed its sittings on 22<sup>nd</sup> December and the last reports were received by the Chief Minister on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1975. After receiving the reports of the Wanchoo Commission, Chief Minister went to Delhi at once for consultation with the Congress President and the Prime Minister. Returning from Delhi by the evening plane a special Cabinet meeting was summoned at midnight on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1975 to consider the reports of the Commission. Thereafter the Chief Minister announced the resignation of Santosh Roy, the Relief Minister and Suniti Chattarji, Deputy Minister who had

already sent their resignations letter earlier according to the advice of the Chief Minister. The three other Ministers i.e. Ajit Panja, Sitaram Mahato and Govinda Naskar were given fully cleansed by Mr. Justice K.N. Wanchoo. In his report Mr. Justice Wanchoo remarked, "A Minister's integrity should be above reproach and like Caesar's wife his conduct should be above suspicion".<sup>60</sup>

However, at the initial stage there was no protest as such and thereupon 180 Congress MLAs in a signed statement supported the appointment of the Wanchoo Commission, yet centering the remark of Chief Minister 'I shall decide who will continue as Minister or go after I receive the report of the Commission',<sup>61</sup> some Congressmen including his anti-groups within the party got a scope to feel that the main purpose of the Commission was to save few person who were close to the chief minister. So, it is difficult to conclude that the Commission had some purpose other than identifying the corrupt ministers. Whatever the intentions it was, but the fact remains that as a result of the appointment of the Commission and its aftermath intensified the factional feuds within the Congress party particularly among the Yuba Congress and Chhatra Parishad activists. Reports about the physical clashes among the young Congressmen started pouring from many districts and as a result of its inevitable consequences not only sapped the party's vitality but also its image was tarnished as a whole.

### **Breaking up of the P.D.A.**

The Congress (R) led Progressive Democratic Alliance (PDA) Ministry had to face an additional problem at this time. When it was found that CPI was gradually moving closer towards the CPI (M), speculation erupted about the utility of the PDA. It may be noted that in the all India Railway strike called by the opposition parties in May 1974 where in spite of becoming partner of Congress party in the PDA Ministry in West Bengal, CPI joined in that strike with the CPI (M). Not only that the CPI leaders brought the allegations against the Ministry that it was being dominated by the 'Rightists' and accused the Chief Minister for all that happenings. It also carried a resolution and directed the MLAs of the CPI to 'function henceforth as the Opposition'. At this juncture, Chief Minister wrote a letter to the Prime Minister on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1974, informing her about the decision of the C.P.I. for breaking the

Progressive Democratic Alliance. In fact, Chief Minister received report regarding the decision of the C.P.I to break the P.D.A. (This meeting was held on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1974.) from Intelligence service. The Chief Minister suspected that a conspiracy was hatched by some top Congressmen and one Central Minister behind the breaking up of PDA to humiliate him. Being irritated and aggrieved as a result of intensified factionalism and corruption within the party and the Government, the Chief Minister at one stage wrote to the Prime Minister on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1974 in the following manner: “I am taking a firm line regarding groupism in the party here—also against antisocials or those who are connected with antisocials. I know that this may create difficulties, but I have reached the limit of my patience. I have really nothing to lose in taking this line. Bengal has no future whatsoever unless all this is stopped. If the party goes against me for taking this attitude, I am quite willing to step down. Whatever I have done in my life I have tried to do it well. I had a great success at the Bar and built up a reputation of being absolutely fearless and honest. I tried my best to keep up this reputation as a Central Minister and I do not see why at this age I shall allow people to point out to me and say that I have ruined Bengal by being soft”<sup>62</sup>

Thus, it was found that Siddhartha Sankar Ray’s control over the organization of West Bengal Congress party was not strong and he had to take external help to control the party affairs. It was unknown that whether the prime minister gave any reply to the letter of Siddhartha Sankar Ray or not. However, the fact that as it appears was that the organization of the Congress party in West Bengal was being controlled by the inefficient leaders and as a result of that the internal as well as outward cohesion of the party came under serious stress due to group politics.

### **Groupism in West Bengal Congress Politics and Siddhartha Sankar Ray**

It is important to note here that in spite of resounding victory in the general election of 1972 and installation of Congress Government under Siddhartha Sankar Ray, as a party the Congress (R) was not free from problems at all. Many veteran old guards of the congress party were unhappy because of failing to get party tickets and dissatisfied with the concession of as many as 41 seats to the CPI.<sup>63</sup> Not only that, though it is unfortunate but fact remains that the West Bengal Pradesh Congress was again became the victim of factional politics during the tenure of the Chief

Ministership of Siddhartha Sankar Ray. In the election of 1972, breaking the traditional system in distribution of party trickets, young leaders from Yuba Congress and Chhatra Parishad were given the priority for fighting the electoral battle. It is a fact that the most of the old and reputed Congressmen were remained under the fold of Congress (O) while the leaders of the new generations particularly the Yuba Congress and Chhatra Parishad were amalgamated themselves with the Congress (R) which was known as Indira Congress or Naba Congress. It was also impossible to deny that the leaders of the Chhatra Parishad and Yuba Congress played a very crucial role in the victory of the Congress (R). They became as if the main driving force of the Congress (R) and got success in the electoral battle of 1972. It was observed by Somen Mitra who was given the party tickets from Sealdah constituency instead of sitting MLA, Binoy Banerjee due to the endeavour of Praya Ranjan Dasmunshi, the then all India Youth Congress President, that “as many as 80 MLAs of the 216 of the Congress (R) in 1972 whose average age groups were not above 30. If Siddhartha Babu would be able to utilise the youth force of the party properly in a united manner instead of taking every possible steps to divide them, the future of the Congress party in West Bengal as well as political carrier of Siddhartha Babu himself would not had to face difficulties.”<sup>64</sup>

Factionalism during Siddhartha Sankar Ray era initiated within the comparatively young Congressmen centering the difference of opinion on some matter between Prafulla Kanti Ghosh, popularly known as Sata Ghosh (MLA, Cossipore) and Subrata Mukhopadhyay (MLA, Ballygunge). In that events Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi (henceforth P.R. Dasmunshi) supported Subrata Mukhopadhyay while Somendra Nath Mitra, better known as Somen Mitra (MLA, Sealdah) and his close associates like Lakshmi Kanta Bose (MLA, Rash Behari), Barid Baran Das (MLA, Shyampur) supported Sata Ghosh which bifurcated the Congress organization and its driving force i.e. youth Congress in a parallel way whose after-taste remained long days that sapped the vitality of the Congress organization in West Bengal.<sup>65</sup>

At this stage, the single party dominated politics of West Bengal centred round the Congress (R) and S.S. Ray was the Chief Minister. (1972-1977).The political scene of West Bengal was such that most of the non- Congress parties could not obtained sufficient number of seats in the Assembly and the number was so less

that their voices could hardly be ventilated in the Assembly Hall. Add to this was the defeat of Jyoti Basu, a promising figure of the opposition parties. But the situation was such that followed the opposition parties had no other alternative but to boycott the Assembly accusing the election was entirely a colossal rigging and as a consequences the Ministry headed by Siddhartha Sankar Ray was termed as an illegal one and virtually the West Bengal Legislative Assembly turned into a Legislature without any opposition party.<sup>66</sup>

But fact remains that allegations of most of the opposition parties were unheeded by S.S. Ray and the accusations and criticism of the opposition parties were not so active to bring down the spirit of the Government. Rather it was the infighting and factionalism of the Congress (R) that crippled the stability and strength from within.<sup>67</sup> If Siddhartha Sankar Ray would want, he could easily minimize the intraparty collision, but mysteriously he indulged it.<sup>68</sup>

### **Rural Vote Bank and the Congress Party**

It is also worthy of mentioning that in the years of 1964-65 a Provincial-political conference was held at Mayapur, Hooghly District which was presided over by Ajoy Mukherjee, the then President of West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee. K. Kamraj, the then all India Congress President was also present that conference. Among the various proposals of Mayapur provincial conference, the most important one i.e. 'ownership of land' was accepted unanimously. According to that proposal, the ongoing ceiling system of land in India was the fixation of upper limit and in that connection ceiling system in lower limit of the land to be introduced. Surplus land above the upper ceiling would have to be distributed among the poor people in accordance with the opinion of the experts in the form of necessity of land for the livelihood of a five member family. It was also stated that lands would be remained only in the hands of that people those who were entirely dependant for their day to day life on lands. People belonged to other professions like psicians, lawyers, teachers, businessmen etc.would not allow to retain lands in their hands. Only cultivators would become the owner of the land. Though the proposals were accepted unanimously, but most of the Congress leaders did not accept the proposals willingly from the core of their hearts. As traditionally big landlords, jotedars and landed

aristocrats were the main vote bank and closely associated with the Congress party since long das, so the anti jotedars proposals disillusioned them to the congress. Though it was accepted officially but in practice it was not executed at that moment.<sup>69</sup>

It is very important to note that besides featherbedding the grouping in the Congress party, Siddhartha Sankar Ray, the Chief Minister of West Bengal did many welfare activities for the development of poor people. It was during his time homeless people got homes, landless got land and loan from I.R.D.P. In the time of the implementation of these projects there were no Congress workers in the rural areas along with the S.D.O and B.D.Os in order to get political benefits. Not only that in spite of introducing of land reforms, operation barga, distribution of crops according to the ratio of 25:75 among the cultivators and landlords; all these went against the Congress Government due to lack of positive propagation among the beneficiaries. Another drastic negative impact of these welfare programmes of Siddhartha Sankar Ray was that those who were the traditional vote bank of the Congress party from its inception i.e. jotedars and zaminders were disillusioned to Congress due to adopting anti-jotedars stances and they started tilting to the Janata party and CPI (M). But most irony of fact that those who were benefitted due to adoption of anti-jotedars stand by Siddhatha Sankar Ray, they did not come under the fold of the Congress party rather preferred to remain in their previous stand i.e. under the red flag of Communists. So, it was found that those who were politically with the Congress, after being frustrated from economic point of view they left Congress; on the other hand those who became economically benefitted could not change their political stance and remained with the left politics- which drastically affected the prospects of the congress party in West Bengal. Therefore it might be stated that despite of adopting various revolutionary measures for the ameliorating of the poor people, only due to lack of positive campaign in favour of Siddhartha Sankar Ray's Ministry or failure of countering the negative campaign of the opposition as a result of infighting and as its inevitable consequences congress systematically got de-touched from the common people which were reflected in the general election of 1977.<sup>70</sup>

### **Impact of the Verdict of Allahabad High Court (on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1975) on the West Bengal Government vis-à-vis the Congress Party**

Indira Gandhi was elected from Rai Baerily Parliamentary constituency against her contestant candidate Raj Narayan by a margin of 1,10,000 votes, in the general election of 1971. Raj Narayan Brought an allegation against Indira Gandhi for adopting illegal techniques and also immoral assistance from a Government official named Yash Pal Kapoor and also filed a suit against Indira Gandhi in Allahabad High Court on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1971.<sup>71</sup> In his verdict of the case known as 'Rajnarayan vs. Mrs. Gandhi', Mr. Justice J.M. L. Sinha of Allahabad High Court on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1975, convicted Indira Gandhi for adopting corrupt practices and unseated her from the Lok Sabha and disqualified her membership in the House of Parliament or State Legislature for 6 years. As a direct impact of the verdict of Allahabad High Court, Chief Minister Siddhartha Sankar Ray started losing the support from the Congress high command and the possibility of his replacement by Pranab Mukherjee with the blessing of Sanjay Gandhi, younger son of Indira Gandhi became clear.<sup>72</sup> It is a fact that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi entrusted Siddhartha Sankar Ray, Chief Minister of West Bengal and H.R. Gokhale, Central Law Minister to handle the legal affairs on behalf of her related to election centric suit of Allahabad High Court. Both the leaders assured Indira Gandhi regarding her surety of victory in that suit. But it was Sanjay Gandhi who apprehended that the case did not handle properly. Sanjay Gandhi earlier expressed his agony to his mother about the possibility of defeat of Indira Gandhi in the suit of Allahabad High Court due to the conspiracy of Devkanta Baroo, the then All India Congress President, S.S. Ray, Gokhale and Hemabati Nandan Bahuguna, the then chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Naturally, after seeing the outcome of the suit of Allahabad High Court on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1975, which was considered as the great shock in the political life of Indira Gandhi who also started believing the assumption of her son about the conspiracy as well as improper handling of the suit of the Court by S.S. Ray and others. So, after becoming cautious, Indira Gandhi took over the responsibility of Allahabad High Court's suit from the hands of S.S. Ray and Gokhale and ignoring all obstacle obviously by Siddhartha Sankar Ray, she handed over it to Asoke Sen to look over the case in the Supreme Court.<sup>73</sup>

After the judgement of Allahabad High Court on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1975 and along with the interference of Sanjay Gandhi into the diverse matter of politics as well as his entrance into politics, the anti Siddhartha Sankar Ray's group in West Bengal politics became very much enthusiastic. Among the anti-Siddhartha groups, those who strongly asserted themselves against Siddhartha Sankar Ray were- A.B.A. Ghani

Khan Choudhury, Sato Ghosh, Somen Mitra, D. P. Chattopadhyay etc. The name of Pranab Mukherjee was also incorporated in the same queue. As a result of infighting into the Congress party in West Bengal that was sufficient in damaging his overall image as a leader of the party as well as chief administrator of the state.<sup>74</sup>

### **The Inner Story of Indira-Ray-Sanjoy Rupture**

From the above it thus become clear there was a significant role in creating disenchantment between Siddhartha Sankar Ray and Indira Gandhi. It may be recalled that Siddhartha Sankar Ray, the chief minister of West Bengal was not in the good book of Sanjoy since the early days of the year of 1974. Sanjoy Gandhi had personal hostility against S.S. Ray who drew the attention of Prime Minister towards certain 'irregularities' of his (Sanjoy) Maruti project. Moreover, despite issuing orders from the Centre to treat Sanjoy Gandhi as a VIP, Siddhartha Sankar Ray never attended the airport to receive Sanjoy Gandhi and did not sanction any amount of money for his frequent visit to Bengal. Shri Saroj Chakrabarty who was the personal assistant of Siddhartha Sankar Ray, the Chief Minister, later wrote, "Through some of his (S.S. Ray's) personal and confidential letters dictated to me, the Chief Minister brought to the notice of the Prime Minister certain grave irregular features of Maruti Project. This had infuriated Sanjoy Gandhi against Ray. Sanjoy Gandhi became a sore enemy of Ray and resolved to remove him from the political scene."<sup>75</sup>

### **Sanjoy Gandhi and Factionalism within the Congress party of West Bengal**

Sanjoy Gandhi's involvement into the arena of Indian politics towards the end of 1975, and his anti-Ray attitude was diplomatically utilised by the pro-changers i.e. anti S.S. Ray group as an opportunity to expedite their campaign against Siddhartha Sankar Ray. The anti-Siddhartha Sankar Ray group of Congressmen (including A.B.A. Gani Khan Chowdhury, Tarun Kanti Ghosh and Prafulla Kanti Ghosh who) would obtain continuous as well as solid backing from the two Central Minister i.e. D.P. Chattopadhyay and Pranab Mukherjee and they determined to change the state party leadership. In the words of Saroj Chakrabarty, "They (anti-Ray) went in plane loads to Delhi to complain to Mrs. Gandhi. Sanjoy was there to poison the ears of his mother. The procedure was that these Congressmen would first go to

Sanjoy; Sanjoy would then tell them what to say to the Prime Minister against Ray. These Congressmen then sought an appointment with the Prime Minister which Sanjoy arranged without any difficulty and they went and told Mrs. Gandhi all kinds of things about Ray. While this was going on in Delhi, one evening N.K. Seshan, Private Secretary to Prime Minister, telephoned to the Chief Minister. Seshan warned Ray that there was a conspiracy going on against him and false charges were being made. Seshan further informed Ray that Sanjoy was behind this and that two Central Ministers from Bengal were the persons in Delhi who were provoking the Prime Minister to take action against him.”<sup>76</sup>

Being irritated and aggrieved at that point, Siddhartha Sankar Ray is said to have drafted a resignation letter also. But the supporters of S.S. Ray particularly P.R. Das Munshi, Subrata Mukherjee, Sougata Roy, Sudip Bandopadhyay, Kumud Bhattacharyay and others refrained him from that step on the ground that his resignation would imply ‘yielding to Sanjay Gandhi’ and urged him to fight it out. So Sanjay as well as pro-changers groups of West Bengal Congress party failed to dislodge Siddhartha Sankar Ray but he was successful in replacing Nandini Satpathi of Orissa and Hemabati Nandan Bahuguna of Uttar Pradesh who were the sitting Chief Ministers of those provinces respectively. However, antipathy between pro-Siddhartha and anti-Siddhartha groups began to intensify. Though Sanjay Gandhi failed to remove Siddhartha Sankar Ray but he at least succeeded in dividing Congress party machineries as well as Ministry of West Bengal. In a nutshell, the interference of Sanjay Gandhi in West Bengal Congress politics complicated factionalism and made the situation more critical. In that connection, an intelligence Report revealed the attitude of the pro-changer as well as anti-Siddhartha Sankar Ray’s group in the following manner: “The announcement of the names of candidates for contesting the Parliamentary elections from West Bengal has caused disappointment amongst the pro-changer (anti-Ray) group. At the instance of Kamal Nath, who has been made an observer of the Yuba Congress (R), they have now taken up a surreptitious move to set up independent candidates in those constituencies where the candidates of Chief Minister’s choice, or favoured by the Chief Minister, as well as CPI candidates have been officially set up to contest the ensuing election. The main idea behind this move is to humiliate and lower the image of the Chief Minister.”<sup>77</sup> The infighting became so deepened that even many Congressmen filed their nomination papers in many constituencies as independent candidates which

collectively paved the way the landslide defeat of the Congress party in West Bengal in the Parliamentary election of 1977 and the same was reflected in the Assembly election also.

## **J.P. Movement-- All India Perspective and Its Impact on West Bengal**

### **All India Perspective**

After the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri (11<sup>th</sup> January 1966), when Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister (19<sup>th</sup> January 1966)<sup>78</sup> of India with the blessing of the so-called syndicate group's leader, then many leaders particularly the opposition started feeling that the inexperienced and comparatively young Indira Gandhi would only be a puppet in the hands of the top leaders of the then Congress party. Even Ram Manohar Lohia would call her a '*gungi gudiya*' i.e. a dumb doll. But after defeating the official nominee for the post of president of India in 1969 and the victory of V.V. Giri as Indira Gandhi's candidate for the same, she regained confidence and could establish her authority over the party organisation.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, after the Liberation War of Bangladesh and side by side due to victory and triumph of the Congress party in the general elections of 1971 and subsequently in 1972 in West Bengal Assembly election, the self-confidence of Indira Gandhi reached its zenith. After getting unexpected success in the power struggle, Indira Gandhi became so aggressive that she adopted various diplomatic tactics for dissolution of the coalition government in Orissa and Congress (R) led government was installed there under the leadership of Nandini Sathapathi. Accordingly in Uttar Pradesh after toppling down of the sitting Ministry, Congress (R) led government headed by Kamalapati Tripathy was formed there. Thereafter in Mysore and Gujarat the Ministry of Congress (O); and in Punjab Jana-Sangha--Akali coalition governments were overthrown and most of the cases Presidential Rule were imposed which helped Indira Gandhi to control the politics of those states easily. Not only that, in the pretext of the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the imposition of emergency in order to maintain internal security i.e. MISA under whose any person would be arrested without giving any explanation. As a result of adopting these measures gradually led to the birth of autocratic mentality whose inevitable outcome was the establishment of dictatorship.<sup>80</sup>

It may be said that victory does not spare even the victor. In the case of Indira Gandhi it was found that after passing a year of her resounding victory in the election battle in various provinces in 1972- within a very short period the widespread social and economic displeasure rapidly engulfed the country. In spite of Indira Gandhi's efforts to give a socialist orientation to the policies adopted by the Congress by nationalizing the banks and abolishing the privy purses, the sufferings of the common masses were not shortened. Unkind nature as well as drought and along with inflation, labour unrest, gradual rising of oil prices in international markets, fall in production, strikes in urban areas, closure of factories, increasing rampant corruption in administration, party leaders and all time low balance in the treasury- collectively shock the all sections of the people i.e. not only the poor but also the middle class people as well.<sup>81</sup>

Amidst of growing discontent among the common people throughout the country due to gradual price rise of necessary commodities and corruption, agitation started each and every state of the country against the government as well as Congress party. Whenever the government was very much confused to check the price rise then the demands of the Congress leaders of Telengana region in Andhra Pradesh for separate state led to the Congress party in a very embarrassing situation. Adding fuel into the ongoing complicated situation, the Congress leaders of the different states engaged themselves infighting for becoming Minister or capturing government power as much as possible. In that connection infighting of the Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh deserved special mention. The internal conflict of those states was so ugly that the Ministry had to change and in some cases Presidential rule was imposed. In that juncture observing the nature of infighting of Congress party the common people as a whole came into the understanding and became more furious on an impression that the Congress leaders were more attentive to fulfill their narrow personal group interest than the collective welfare of the common people. In the meantime, Indira Gandhi earned more defame recruiting Ajit Narayan Roy as the Chief Justice of Supreme Court bypassing the rights of the three senior Justices namely- Shelton, Hegde and Grover who resigned as a mark of protest immediately. The interference of Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India into the purview of judiciary in an unprecedented manner was severely denounced by almost all the Bar Council of India and accused Indira Gandhi's attempt to break the neutrality of Judicial Department. Educated people of the nation as a whole did not accept that

action of Indira Gandhi and S.M. Sikri, the outgoing Chief Justice remarked “It was a severe attack on the freedom of Judicial Department”.<sup>82</sup> It was accused by the oppositions and erudite personalities that nation was moving towards dictatorial way of governance.

### **Era of Political Retreat of Indira Gandhi as well as Congress (R)**

From the above discussion it is clear that Indira Gandhi was subject to criticism throughout the country due to her autocratic style of rule. Obviously, the days of political retreat of Indira Gandhi as well as Congress (R) after 1969 started due to misrule, corruption, disregard of democratic rights of the common people and above all her failure to put an end the intra-party feud not only in West Bengal but also some other states in India. In that connection the name of the state of Gujrat, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Manipur, Nagaland and Pandichery are worthy of mention.

As a result of infighting and country wide discontent an alternative political choice became obvious that was manifested in the Gujrat Assembly election by 10<sup>th</sup> June 1975. In that election, Congress (R) won only 75 seats while the Janata Front of the opposition comprising of Congress (O), Jana Sangha, Socialist Party and Bharatiya Lok Dal, secured 86 seats. The result of the Gujrat Assembly election was a great blow to the political career of Indira Gandhi who clearly understood that in the ensuing Parliamentary election the opposition would form again the Janata Front against her and thereby the win of the election would be almost impossible for her.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, in the meantime, the mid-term election was held in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Manipur, Nagaland and Pandichery. The result of the election was so worse to the Congress (R) that it could not able to win any small states and lost the absolute majority in Orissa. Though in Uttar Pradesh Congress won 215 seats out of 425, but it secured only 32 percent of votes. These miserable results frightened Indira Gandhi in the one hand and the eyes of the isolated opposition political groups opened on the other to make a strong platform to bring to an end the Indira Era. The situation convinced the leaders of the oppositions groups that if they could strengthen themselves by any means, the end of Indira regime was imminent. In that pretext, all the leaders of Congress (O), Jana Sangha, Bharatiya Kranti Dal, S.S.P. etc. jointly requested Loknayak Jarprakash Narayan<sup>84</sup> to come forward in order to take the

leadership of the combined opposition to save the country from the misrule of the Congress (R) headed by Indira Gandhi.<sup>85</sup> In that point one may recall that all the above mentioned parties had almost negative approach to each other and they could not able to focus any alternative programme as well as policies excepting that of the overthrowing Indira Gandhi from power.<sup>86</sup>

### **Background of J.P.'s Coming into Movement**

However, in response to the joint appeal of the non-Congress combined opposition parties, Jayprakash Narayan accepted the appeal.<sup>87</sup> Under the leadership of J.P.'s 'Youth for Democracy', the mighty students' movements in Bihar in the name of '*Chhatra Sangrasha Samity*' later on turned into the fold of 'total revolution'.<sup>88</sup> J.P.'s move and his organized efforts proved to be an open threat to the power and position of Indira Gandhi and she had no other alternatives but to declare emergency rule in the country at midnight of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1975. The turning point of the situation was such that Indira Gandhi took up the course of arresting the leading opposition leaders and they put them in jail and obviously J.P. was not an exception.<sup>89</sup>

### **Impact of J.P. Movement and Emergency in West Bengal**

#### **J. P. Visits Calcutta for Uniting Opposition Parties**

The declaration of the emergency and the subsequent jail of a few national leaders including Jayprakash Narayan proved to be a political threat to West Bengal. The misrule of the by gone years and the intra-party feud of the Congress (R) added fuel to the flame of the political situation and the people of West Bengal were naturally seeking a relief from such a caotic scene in the political life of West Bengal. Here one may recall that the gradual deterioration of democratic values and increasing authoritarian approach throughout the country, as a 'world peace solder' Jayprakash Narayan initiated his effort for an alliance of all opposition parties for strengthening the opponent in order to make a viable alternative for the sake of democracy. Two frontranking CPI (M) leaders namely Jyoti Basu and P. Sundaraya met J.P. on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1973 and after 40 minutes discussion, the two communist leaders welcomed J.P.'s attempt for the realization of an apolitical platform in the defence of democracy

and civil liberties. His proposal for a meeting of the leaders of all political parties in India for ensuring 'free and fair elections' was also highly appreciated by the Communist leaders.<sup>90</sup>

### **J. P. Visits in Calcutta and Unity of the opposition (July 5, 1974)**

Jayprakash Narayan arrived in Calcutta on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1974 with his three day programme. At this stage he met most of the important communist leaders namely Jyoti Basu and B.T. Ranadive of CPI (M) etc. to form a combine opposition like Bihar under an umbrella. The ultimate aim of J.P. was to launch a movement for 'total revolution' to paralyze Government institutions and machineries by dint of mass movement. Despite their ideological differences the CPI (M) and other political parties warmly welcomed such a movement of J.P.<sup>91</sup>

Thereafter, at the invitation of Prafulla Chandra Sen, veteran Congress (O) leader and former Chief Minister of West Bengal, J.P. again came to Calcutta on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1974 for finalising the background of a Bihar type movement in West Bengal. At the time of his addressing in a mammoth gathering at Calcutta Maidan, J.P. expressed his excitement accusing Mrs. Gandhi's Congress and her way of working as the root cause of sufferings and discontent. J.P. further accused Indira Gandhi for the destruction of the democratic norms and also expressed the opinion that there was only 'skeleton of democracy' in the name of democracy. Explaining his movement in Bihar that would develop into a 'total revolution' whose ultimate goal was to complete transformation of society. He firmly reiterated that a 'revolutionary situation' existed in the country and shortly it would engulf the whole of India.<sup>92</sup>

### **Violent Demonstrations on Jayprakash Narayan's Visit to Calcutta (2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1975)**

It is a fact that as a result of the internal rivalries between pro-Siddhartha and anti-Siddhartha group among the leaderships of West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPC), Yuba Congress (YC) and Chhatra Parishad (CP) constantly destroyed the vitality of the Congress organization. The factional leaders were more concerned about their group interests rather than the interest of the Congress party as a

whole. It is also a fact that neither the pro nor the anti-Siddhartha Sankar Ray group taken any bold step for strengthening the support base of the Congress party in the soil of West Bengal. Factional interest was so predominant that the corporate interest of the party was entirely neglected whose inevitable consequence was that general confidence of the people on the Congress party gradually eroded. Amidst factional rivalries between pro-changer and no-changer, one thing was clear that both the factional groups were pro-Indira under the fold of Naba Congress or Indira Congress i.e. Congress (R). Therefore, as and when Jayprakash Narayan spearheaded his campaign all over the country against various misdeeds of the Central Government and various State Governments led by the Congress (R), then as if, for the time being setting aside the group rivalries of the Congress (R) jointly showed their violent demonstration against Jayprakash Narayan in West Bengal. Here it is noteworthy that on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1975, J.P. came in Calcutta to address a convention of youths and students in the University Institute Hall, but he had to face a violent demonstration in front of the proposed venue and he was prevented from addressing the convention by the several thousand Chhatra Parishad and Yuba Congress supporters. The demonstration was so violent mood that the car of J.P. was gheroad and one Chhatra Parishad supporters named 'Sabita' danced on the bonnet of his car and his supporters were also had to face pelting stones which were hurled by the demonstrators.<sup>93</sup>

But J.P. was not a man to stop there and in order to materialise his political objectives he addressed a gathering in Calcutta attended by the teachers and students. To quote J.P. as he addressed, "ground is ready for a total revolution in West Bengal. No where else in India such exploitation, unemployment, poverty and a gap between the rich and the poor as in West Bengal".<sup>94</sup>

### **Intelligence Report on J.P.'s Visit to Calcutta**

It may however, be noted that the Intelligence Branch of the West Bengal Government was well aware about the proposed Calcutta visit of J.P. and the Government was also informed about his plans and programmes. Incidentally the entire programme of J.P. was chalked out by a number of political parties<sup>95</sup> which heartily appreciated Jayprakash Narayan to lead the movement against the misrule of West Bengal. In spite of all oppositions J.P. was successful in addressing two

meetings in Tamruk (4<sup>th</sup> June 1975) and Contai (5<sup>th</sup> June 1975) and all the more he was also able to organize a mammoth rally in Calcutta (on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1975) as a mark of unity of the anti-Congress forces with not less than 20,000 followers. Not only that from the gathering of Brigade Parade ground J.P. called for the formation of *LOKA SANGRAM SAMITY* in order to unite the people for peaceful political agitation against the present rulers who were the root cause of miseries and suppression of civil liberties of the people as a whole for misusing official power on the plea of Emergency (external), MISA and DIR.<sup>96</sup> As a reaction, in order to give a fitting reply to J.P.'s anti congress procession the widely circulated congress factionalism in West Bengal took a dramatic turn. As per the direction of the Congress High Command the two rival groups of WBPCCC temporarily resolved to sort out their differences to organize anti-JP rally during his stay in Calcutta.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly after two days of JP's rally an anti-J.P. gathering was organized by the WBPCCC at Calcutta maidan under the leadership of Siddhartha Sankar Ray, which was attended by about 10,000 people.<sup>98</sup> Actually, it was the name and fame of J.P. and his wide acceptance to the oppositions despite different ideologies and his reputation as a crusader against the misadministration and corruption and non-attraction to official power collectively created a sense of confidence among the common people. These shows an open political tussle of the Congress Party (R), its leader S.S. Ray as well as his followers and the emerging political supporters of some parties of the then West Bengal.

### **National Emergency and Its Impact on West Bengal**

After the imposition of the emergency at the midnight of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1975, as many as at around 1,000 prominent leaders were arrested on that fateful night.<sup>99</sup> At the time of emergency, in order to stop the voice of any kind of oppositions over 100,000 people were arrested under Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and the Defence of India Rules (DIR).<sup>100</sup>

### **20 points programme of Indira Gandhi**

With the imposition of emergency and taking repressive measures against the oppositions like- censorship of press, banning of assemblage, meeting and discarding many fundamental rights of the citizens; side by side with the consultation with P.N.

Dhar, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, in order to develop the economic condition of the people as well as country during emergency, Indira Gandhi declared her famous 20 points programme on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1975.<sup>101</sup>

It is impossible to deny that as a consequence of the adoption of 20 points economic programme by Indira Gandhi during emergency brought some major positive changes in the discipline of public life. Not only that, it was able to bring a change in various aspects of public life such- a growing economy, controlled inflation, a reversed trade deficit for the first time, enhanced developmental expenditures and stringent action was taken against tax evasion and smugglers. But , inspite of adopting the various economic measures adverse impact fell on Congress party and its supreme leader Indira Gandhi due to her repressive measures such as- Suspension of fundamental rights, large- scale arrests of political leaders and activists in the name of MISA and DIR, press censorship and extending the tenure of legislatures by not conducting elections which collectively affected the interests of the common people and as a consequences of that the Congress party and Indira Gandhi had to pay a heavy price for this misadventure.<sup>102</sup>

During the emergency some excesses adversely affected the Congress organization in national level and state of West Bengal as well. In that context the name of Extra Constitutional Authority and Sterilisation were most important.

### **Extra Constitutional Authority**

During the time of Emergency, Indira Gandhi's younger son, Sanjay Gandhi, who held no office in the government but became all in all. He was so indispensable that as if he became the defacto Prime Minister. With the support and encouragement of his mother (Indira Gandhi) Sanjay Gandhi was able to establish his influence over politics through the administration and Youth Congress. A group of followers of Sanjay Gandhi comprised of Bansi Lal (defence minister from December 1975), Om Mehta (home minister), Kishen Chand (lieutenant-governor of Delhi) and R. K. Dhawan (additional private secretary to the Prime Minister) were collectively operating the whole affairs through the House of the Prime Minister.<sup>103</sup> As per the indirect instruction of the Prime Minister, officers from most of the Departments and party leaders would present at the residence of Prime Minister to discuss and seek

necessary direction from Sanjay Gandhi. The files of various departments were to send to Sanjay Gandhi for his verbal approval. In this way developing of an extra-constitutional centre of power, Sanjay Gandhi started functioning like a well-oiled 'Extra-Constitutional Authority'. During the emergency period no body had the courage to ignore the said authority of Sanjay Gandhi. Those who would hesitate to follow the unofficial instruction of Sanjay Gandhi, had to face the punishment in the form of transfer or remove.<sup>104</sup>

### **Five Point Programme of Sanjay Gandhi**

Sanjay Gandhi reached the highest limit of his power during the period of emergency. Flattering created in such an environment after mixing with fear that one of the most famous illustrated periodical of India through the voting of its readers selected Sanjay Gandhi as the number one Indian in the year of 1976.<sup>105</sup> So, 'helmsman of new India', 'last resort of the country' and 'future light of India' Sanjay Gandhi adopted 5-point programme in order to bring social and economic changes in the fabric of the society in the month of July 1976. The programmes were as follows: 1. Family planning; 2. Planting trees and cleaning the environment; 3. Refusal of dowry; 4. Promotion of adult literacy; and 5. Abolition of caste.<sup>106</sup>

Amongst the excesses during the time of emergency, probably the most well-known was the campaign for 'family planning'—which gradually converted into a wide-circulated drive for forceful sterilization.<sup>107</sup> The most adverse reaction of forceful sterilization was intensified among the people of the Muslim community in India. P.N. Haskar, principal secretary to the Prime Minister noted that 'Muslim as a whole have come out in opposition to sterilisation' and were involved in resistance to it. Disturbances spread to Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra. Detailing some incidents he warned, 'If this goes on, the Congress runs the danger of losing support of Muslims, Harijans and poor people'.<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, it was found that the emergency and its excessiveness left an indelible imprint on the mind of the Indian people. In order to satisfy to Sanjay Gandhi, the defacto Prime Minister during emergency whole administration in many states was utilized for the fulfillment of the sterilization programme and as a result of that the implementation of land ceiling laws as per the 20 points economic

programme of Indira Gandhi almost came to a halt. The imposing sterilization in the name of 'family planning'-led to popular resistance and its inevitable outcome were killing of police and other officials in one hand and police firing and death on the other. Therefore, it was obvious that the benefits of the 20-point government programme, if there were any were eclipsed as well as overshadowed due to the 5 points non-official programme of Sanjay Gandhi. So, as a far reaching consequence of the above happenings, discontents were shimmering into the minds of the people in a full swing which reflected in the post emergency election of 1977 throughout the country and particularly in West Bengal.

### **Declaration of Election During Emergency and Defeat of the Congress party**

During emergency, Indira Gandhi was acquitted by the judgement of the Supreme Court constitution Bench comprising of Chief Justice A.N. Ray, Justice H.R. Khanna, Justice K.K. Mathew, Justice M.H. Beg and Justice Y.V. Chandrachud from all the charges (on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1975) on which she was found guilty by Mr. Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha of Allahabad High Court (on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1975).<sup>109</sup> After being confident by the verdict of Supreme Court Constitution Bench on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1975, Indira Gandhi released Jayprakash Narayan after five months detention on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1975 due to the deterioration of his health condition.<sup>110</sup> Thereafter in the midst of excessiveness of emergency, receiving the positive reports time and again from intelligence branch and leaders of her party about the sure victory of Congress party, Indira Gandhi recommended the President of India for dissolution of the Lok Sabha on 18<sup>th</sup> January for fresh Lok Sabha election and the same was held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1977. With the declaration of new election all the arrested opposition leaders and activists were released from detention. In that juncture, understanding the importance of unity among the oppositions- Congress (O), Jana Sangha, Bharatiya Lok Dal and Socialist Party jointly formed 'Janata Party' on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1977. Morarji Desai, Chaudhury Charan Singh and Surendra Mohan elected President, Vice-President and Secretary respectively of the newly formed Janata Party. These parties also had an electoral understanding with the Communist Party of India (Marxist). In contrast, the Communist Party of India supported the Indian National Congress in the election of 1977. But the most astonishing event of that time was to leave Central Ministry and Congress (R) party by Babu Jagjivan Ram on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1977.

Hemabati Nandan Bahuguna, Nandini Sathapathi (both had to leave Congress party due to Sanjay Gandhi) and Babu Jagjivan Ram jointly formed a new party known as 'Congress For Democracy'.<sup>111</sup> In that pretext, on the eve of the Parliamentary election Jayprakash Narayan, Babu Jagjivan Ram and Morarji Desai jointly in an appeal to the people said- 'in that critical juncture you (people) have to choose one option i.e. either Democracy or Autocracy.'<sup>112</sup>

### **Impact on West Bengal**

As like as all India scenarios the excessiveness of emergency was also effective in West Bengal. This had virtually shattered the prospects of the congress party in the state. at this point there was also a trend of politics which brought to light the almost forgotten chapter of the conflict between pro-Siddhartha and anti-Siddhartha groups. In the wake of emergency, the infighting reached so high that the party was virtually divided and thereupon Congress as a political party lost its credibility and was demoralized. Apart from factionalism, the style of governance of Siddhartha Sankar Ray and his activities during emergency greatly aggrieved the people. In the name of the Maintenance of Internal Security Act more than 18,000 people were arrested in West Bengal. Not only that the excesses of police actions, arrests of senior journalists namely Barun Sengupta, Gour Kishore Ghosh, Jyotirmay Dutta,<sup>113</sup> reckless demolitions and press censorship in West Bengal at the time of emergency under Siddhartha Sankar Ray- was considerably reflected in the ballot box of the Congress party in both Lok Sabha and Assembly elections held in 1977.<sup>114</sup>

### **Date of Election and Result**

However, as per the notification of the Election Commission of India the election of all 42 Lok Sabha constituencies were held in West Bengal on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1977.<sup>115</sup> As a result of infighting within the West Bengal Pradesh Congress and over all negative impact of emergency and its excessiveness among the 42 Parliamentary constituencies Congress candidates won only three Lok Sabha seats namely- Krishna Bahadur Chetri from Darjeeling, Sougata Roy from Barrackpore and Dharendra Nath Basu from Katwa.<sup>116</sup> The prospect of the Indian National Congress (R) in all India level was also not favourable.

## **Dissolution of State Assembly**

In view of the verdict of the Lok Sabha election, 1977, a new central cabinet was formed under Morarji Desai on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1977. One of the immediate tasks as well as first steps taken by this new Government was to give an order to dissolve the Congress led state governments of West Bengal and accordingly arrangement was made to arrange the election of this state assembly at the earliest.<sup>117</sup>

The Assembly election in West Bengal was held on 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> June of 1977 respectively.<sup>118</sup> In the state assembly election, Siddhartha Sankar Ray did not contest. Interestingly most of the cabinet ministers excepting ABA Barkat Gani Khan Chowdhury were defeated and the total number of the congress MLAs in the new assembly was only 20 out of 294 seats.<sup>119</sup>

## **Notes and References**

1. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p.884.
2. *Ibid.*, p.882.
3. In the wake of Quit India movement to oust the British rule from Tamruk Sub-Division in Midnapore district, West Bengal on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1942 and it continued upto 1<sup>st</sup> September 1944. Satish Chandra Samanta, Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee, Satish Chandra Shahu and Barada Kanta Kuiti became the first, second, third and fourth Sarbadhinayak of 'Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar' respectively, and Sushil Kumar Dhara was its Home Minister and G.O.C. in-Charge of Bidyut Bahini, i.e. Army division of 'Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar' (Tamralipta National Government), See Shree Radhakrishna Bari, (ed.), *op.cit.* pp. 108-122.
4. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p.882.

5. Jyoti Basu, *Jatadur Mone Pore -- Rajnaitik Atmakathan* (in Bengali), National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta, 1998, p. 259.
6. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, pp .414-415.
7. Sitaram Sharma, *West Bengal-Changing Colours Changing Challenges*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2014, p. 55.
8. Personal interview with Somen Mitra, a veteran Congress leader, former President of WBPCCL, first Yuba Congress President of West Bengal and AICC member, on 2<sup>0th</sup> February 2017; also see Personal interview with Sarder Amjad Ali, a veteran Congress leader and former Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha M.P, on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
9. “*Atiter Kichhu Katha*”, a Bengali article by Priyaranjan Das Munshi in *Swaranika* ,Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival, Impression, New Buligunj Road, Kolkata, 2004, p.69.
10. Personal interview with Kumud Bhattacharya, former state President of the Chhatra Parishad from 1973 to 1977, on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017; also see “*Amader Itikatha*”,a Bengali article by Samir Roy in *Swaranika*, Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival, Impression, New Bulygunj Road, Kolkata, 2004, p.13.
11. “*Amader Itikatha*”,a Bengali article by Samir Roy in *Swaranika*, Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival, Impression, New Bulygunj Road, Kolkata, 2004, p.15.
12. “*Swadhinata Uttar Banglar Chhatra Andolon O Chhatra Parishader Prasangikata - Atiter Kichhu Katha*”, a Bengali article by Nirbed Roy in *Swaranika*, Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival; Impression, New Bulygunj Road, Kolkata, 2004, p.97.
13. *Amader Dinlipi*, an information of various important events (in Bengali), in *Swaranika*, Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival; Impression, New Bulygunj Road, Kolkata, 2004, pp.23-27.
14. “*Hathat Chhatra Parishader Janya*”, a Bengali article by Dr. Partha Chattopadhyay in *Swaranika*, Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival; Impression, New Bulygunj Road, Kolkata, 2004, p.58; also see “*Chhatra Andolon - Chhatra Parishad O Amader Samay*”, a Bengali article by Sougata Roy in *Swaranika*, Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival, Impression, New Bulygunj Road, Kolkata, 2004. p.79.

15. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p. 887.
16. Personal interview with Kumud Bhattacharyay, former state Prresident of the Chhatra Parishad from 1973 to 1977, on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
17. *Times of India*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1970; also see Amar Bhattacharya, *Naxalbari Andolaner Pramanya Tathya Sangkalan - Naya Istahar* (in Bengali), Illias Road, Kolkata, 1998, p. 122.
18. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1973.
19. *The Statesman*, 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1973; also see Amar Bhattacharya, *op.cit.* p. 124.
20. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 413.
21. Personal interview with Sarder Amjad Ali, veteran Congress leader and former Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha M.P, on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
22. The election manifesto of the Congress party on the eve of the general election of 1972 made an appeal to elect the Congress candidates in order to ensure a stable government and economic prosperity. The party's election campaign was mianly focusing the law and order. The manifesto stressed on Indira Gandhi's 'Garibi Hatao' (Remove Poverty) call to rebuild 'Sonar Paschim Bangla' (Golden West Bengal). It further said, "The interests of the weaker sections of society, particularly the scheduled Castes, scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes will be given special attention. All those bellow the level of subsistence today- particularly in rural areas –will be helped to improve their income, by land reform, improvement of agricultural techniques and by provision of subsidiary occupations. Land reform... will be carried through and in the towns and cities an urban ceiling will be enforced". See Election Manifesto, Indian National Congress, 1972; also see Prasanta Sen Gupta, *op.cit.* p.134.
23. Sitaram Sharma, *op.cit.* p. 72.
24. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p .416.
25. *Ibid.*; also see Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* pp.926-927.
26. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* pp. 481-482; also, see Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 423.
27. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* pp. 156,162.
28. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.425.
29. *Ibid*, p .428.
30. *Ibid.*, p .429.
31. *Ibid.*, p .432.

32. See *Swaranika*, Chhatra Parishad Golden Jubilee Celebration and Reunion Festival; Impression, New Bulygunj Road, Kolkata, 2004, p. 27.
33. These information are based on the interview with Kumud Bhattacharya, former state President of the Chhatra Parishad from 1973-1977, on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
34. Pranab Mukherjee, *op.cit.* p. 107.
35. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p.926. Arum Kumar Maitra became the President of WBPCCC in 1972 and continued up to 1977 before Purabi Mukherjee taking the charge of PCC chief in the same year i.e. 1977. See name list of the Presidents of the WBPCCC, inscribed on the wall of *Bidhan Bhavan*, Head Quarter of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Philipps More, Kolkata.
36. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p .420.
37. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* pp. 882, 926.
38. *Ibid.*, pp.977-978.
39. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.492.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 435.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 435, 444, 451.
42. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p, 882. It is noteworthy that apart from the result of 1977 election, Congress could capture the number of assembly seats- in 1982- 49 (then it became Congress (I)), 1987- 40, 1991 – 43 (then only Congress, i.e. no congress R or I respectively), 1996 -82, 2001- 26, 2006 -21, 2011- 42, which were far behind the absolute majority to form a Government.
43. Atulya Ghosh was the first elected President of WBPCCC, after Netaji Subash Chandra Bose who was elected BPCCC President in 1929 in Rangpur. Personal interview with Mihir Ganguly, a veteran journalist of West Bengal, on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.
44. See name lists of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee's Presidents and their tenure from 1945-2001, inscribed on the wall of Bidhan Bhavan, Head Quarter of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Philipps More, Kolkata.
45. Personal interview with Mihir Ganguly, a veteran journalist of West Bengal, on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.
46. Personal interview with Somen Mitra, a veteran Congress leader, former President of WBPCCC, first Yuba Congress President of West Bengal and AICC member, on 2<sup>0th</sup> February 2017. Also see Somen Mitra, *Anubhab* (in Bengali), Punachcha, Kolkata, 2001, p. 34.

47. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p. 916.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 355.
49. Personal interview with Somen Mitra, a veteran Congress leader, former President of WBPC, first Yuba Congress President of West Bengal and AICC member, on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
50. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p .413.
51. Haladhar Patel, *Bhushi Kelenkari* (in Bengali), Samabaya Press, Kolkata, (Year of publication is not mentioned)... pp. 2-11.
52. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p .437.
53. Haladhar Patel, *op.cit.* p.51.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 438.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, pp .447-448.
58. *Ibid.*, p .448.
59. *Ibid.*, pp .448-449.
60. *Ibid.*, pp .449-450.
61. *Ibid.*, p .448.
62. The text of the letter appears in *Ibid.*, pp.450-451.
63. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p. 502.
64. Personal interview with Somen Mitra, a veteran Congress leader, former President of WBPC, first Yuba Congress President of West Bengal and AICC member, on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
65. Somen Mitra, *op.cit.* pp. 31-32.
66. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p. 502; also see Personal interview with Deba Prasad Roy, a veteran congress leader, former MP, MLA and AICC member, on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2017. In that election (1972) Congress (R) lonely got 216 seats and its electoral partner i.e. CPI got 35 seats. It is also mentionable that the Bangla Congress (Ajoy Mukherjee) merged with the Congress (R), Kashi Kanta Maitra of SSP and Apurbalal Majumder of FB also joined with Congress. The opposition i.e. CPI (M) got only 14 seats and its electoral partners i.e. RSP-3, SUC-1, and WPI secured only 1 seats. In that pretext, when CPI (M), WPI and SUCI collectively boycotted Legislative Assembly (Their total seats were-14+1+1=16). See Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p. 502.

67. Deba Prasad Roy, “*Doors Theke Delhi* (in Bengali), *Dharabahik Atmakatha*, Part-17”, published in *Eakhan Doors*, (ed.) Pradosh Ranjan Saha, Dover Lane, Kolkata, 2016.
68. Deba Prasad Roy, “*Doors Theke Delhi* (in Bengali), *Dharabahik Atmakatha*, Part-14”, in *Eakhan Doors*, (ed.) Pradosh Ranjan Saha, Dover Lane, Kolkata, 2016. Though, it is very astonishing, but fact remains that during the last 34 years long Left Government and 6 years Trinamul Congress regime, it was not made any file named ‘Congress File’ in the prisons in West Bengal, but it was made each and every prisons during the reign of Siddhartha Sankar Ray. The intra-party friction became so fatal that the ‘Congress File’ in the prisons was prepared at the aim of giving penalty to the supporters of the various groups of the Congress party. The Congressmen became enthusiastic to arrest the Congressmen of counter groups under the MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act). Siddhartha Babu using his administrative power to sent one by one congress leaders to the prison under MISA. Even the members of the AICC and Congress MLAs were not spared. All these actions taken by Siddhartha Sankar Ray were not considered by the common people as his success rather they considered these as corruption of the Congress party. But the unfortunate was that all these were only the fruits of the intraparty rivalry of Congress in West Bengal which tarnished the image of the party and sapped its vitality as a whole. See Deba Prasad Roy, “*Doors Theke Delhi* (in Bengali), *Dharabahik Atmakatha*, Part- 15”, in *Eakhan Doors*, (ed.) Pradosh Ranjan Saha, Dover Lane, Kolkata, 2016.
69. Atulya Ghosh, *Kasta....*, pp. 191-195.
70. Deba Prasad Roy, “*Doors Theke Delhi* (in Bengali), *Dharabahik Atmakatha*, Part-17”, in *Eakhan Doors*, (ed.) Pradosh Ranjan Saha, Dover Lane, Kolkata, 2016.
71. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1975.
72. Sitaram Sharma, *op.cit.* 77.

73. Barun Sengupta, *Indira Ekadashi* (in Bengali henceforth *Indira...*), in Barun Sengupta *Rachana Sanghara*, Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata, 2008, pp. 566, 577.
74. Pranab Mukherjee, *op.cit.* p. 107.
75. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.515.
76. *Ibid.*, p.516.
77. *Ibid.*, p.510.
78. By this time Guljari Lal Nanda acted as the care taker Prime Minister. See Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.146.
79. Sitaram Sharma, *op.cit.* p. 71.
80. Aurobinda Poddar, “*Gharer Baire Muktiyuddha - Muktir Yuddha Bhitare 1971-80*,” a Bengali article in *Saat Dashak, Samakal O Anandabazar*, Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata, 2013, p. 142.
81. Sitaram Sharma, *op.cit.* pp. 71-72.
82. Barun Sengupta, *Indira ...*, pp. 551-554.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 556, 557, 565.
84. Jayprakash Narayan was a rare Indian politician probably after Gandhiji, who never touched any office of state power in spite of having it within his easy achieve. He was the second most popular man after Nehru in the Indian political stage and could have succeeded Pandit Nehru due to his enormous credentialities. See Pranab Mukherjee, *op.cit.*p.79. As a result of his life long struggle for restoring peace throughout the world Jayprakash Narayan, popularly known as J.P. (henceforth J.P) was given the prestigious ‘Magsaisai’ award in 1966. The man of high moral values who always fought for ‘*shuddhi*’ as well as ‘reform’ and had the deep grievances against corruption, misadministration and dishonor to democracy. See “*Sesh Parjanto Chhaker Baire 1971- 80*” (in Bengali), in *Saat Dashak, Samakal O Anandabazar*, Ananda, Kolkata, 2013, p. 138.
85. Barun Sengupta, *Indira ...*, pp. 555-556.
86. Bipan Chandra and others, *op.cit.* p. 261.
87. J.P.’s comments in *Everymens Weekly*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1974; also see Bhola Chattopadhyay, *Jayprakash Narayan O Sampurna Biplab* (in Bengali), Ananda, Kolkata, 1987, p.62.

88. At the beginning of the year of 1974, J.P. thought that it became compulsory to launch a movement like-42 in the wake of corruption and misadministration in the country. That movement would not be as like as to install Ram instead of Shyam or Madhu rather it would be more-wider, deeper which would bring qualitative transformation in society. Full Democracy would be established in the all sphere of society and state. In later time J.P. called these ideals of revolution as ‘Total Revolution’. see Aurobinda Poddar, *Gharer Baire Muktiyuddha - Muktir Yuddha Bhitare* 1971- 80, a Bengali article in *Saat Dashak, Samakal O Anandabazar*, Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata, 2013, p.144.
89. In that critical juncture, considering the personal relations between J.P. and Indira Gandhi, (The personal relation between Indira Gandhi and Jayprakash Narayan since long days. Nehru and J.P. were very close to each other. Moreover, the relation between Kamala Nehru, mother of Indira Gandhi and Pravabati Devi, wife of J.P. was so intimate that it was stated that if Pravabati Devi would alive then it would probably not be possible for J.P. to take merciless attitude to the only daughter of Kamala Nehru. From the childhood days of Indira Gandhi, J.P. always called her fondly as ‘Indu’.) in a response to the media persons regarding the meeting between J.P. and Indira Gandhi in Patna on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1977, J.P. said, “Indira’s coming to see me proves that old connection with Nehru family still remains.” see *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1977; also see Bhola Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.* p.57. some sympathizers towards the J.P. movement inside the Congress namely Chandra Shekhar, Mohan Dharia, Krishna Kant, Ramdhan and even Bisheswar Prasad Koirala, former Prime Minister of Nepal unsuccessfully tried to make a compromise between them. See Bhola Chattopadhyay, *op.cit.* p.63.
90. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p .434.
91. *Ibid.*, p .447.
92. *Ibid.*, p.461.
93. Personal interview with Deba Prasad Roy, a veteran congress leader, former Rajya Sabha M.P., MLA, AICC member on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2017.
94. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.470. The experience of Calcutta on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1975 was so shocking to J.P. that in later time referring the incident he said in Bihar in the following manner: “What happened there, and of which I myself was a victim, was naked hooliganism and gangsterism in the presence of a West

Bengal Minister, a West Bengal M.P. and possessor of police officers and police force. West Bengal would be doomed unless the State is rid of Yuba Congress-Chhatra Parishad gangsterism”.

95. Programme of J.P. was chalked out as per the decision of the Nava Nirman Samiti (NNS) comprising of - Congress (O), JS, BLD, SP, SSP, PSP, RPI, F.B.-Subhasist, Radical Humanist and Sarvodaya Mandal, and the seven Left Parties was held on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1975. See Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.473.
96. *Ibid.*, p.473.
97. *Ibid.*, p.472.
98. *Ibid.*, pp.473-474.
99. Barun Sengupta, *Indira ...*, p. 572.
100. Devid Lockwood, *The Communist Party of India and the Indian Emergency*, Sage, New Delhi, 2016, p.115.
101. 20 points programmes were as follows: 1. Government shall control the price hike and take stern action against hoarders and black marketers. 2. Upper ceiling of lands in rural areas shall be implemented and vested lands shall be distributed. 3. Housing lands shall be given to the poor people in the rural areas. 4. ‘Bonded labour’ system shall be abolished as soon as possible. 5. Measures shall be adopted to provide loan among the poor and middle-class people. 6. Measures shall be adopted to increase the rate of land labour. 7. Irrigation system shall be extended. 8. Measures shall be taken for producing more electricity. 9. All types of facilities shall be provided to the tant industries. 10. Measures will be taken to sell good qualities of mill made dhuti and shares in the rural areas. 11. All types of legal actions will be taken in the urban areas to stop the activities of the speculators. 12. Stern action will be taken against those were not paying taxes properly. 13. Taking stringent measures will be continued against the contraband. 14. System of providing license to the investors will be easiest in case of opening industries. 15. Measures will be taken so that workers may take part in the administrative system of the industries. 16. National permits will be given to truck vehicles. 17. Income tax will be paid only those who will earn upto 8,000 per years instead of previous 6,000 per years. 18. Essential commodities will be provided to the students hostels in a regular price rate. 19. Measures will be adopted to provide books and khatas to the students at the cheapest rate. 20.

- Legal measures will be adopted so that as much as possible apprentices will be inducted in the industries. See Barun Sengupta, *Indira ...*, pp. 572-573.
102. Pranab Mukherjee, *op.cit.* p. 83.
  103. Devid Lockwood, *op.cit.* p.144.
  104. Aurobinda Poddar, “*Gharer Baire Muktiyuddha - Muktir Yuddha Bhitare 1971-80*,” a Bengali article in *Saat Dashak, Samakal O Anandabazar*, Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata, 2013, p. 152; also see Bipan Chandra and others, *op.cit.* p. 261.
  105. Aurobinda Poddar, “*Gharer Baire Muktiyuddha - Muktir Yuddha Bhitare 1971-80*,” a Bengali article in *Saat Dashak, Samakal O Anandabazar*, Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata, 2013, p. 152.
  106. Devid Lockwood, *op.cit.* pp.145-146.
  107. In the event of the implementation of the programme, supposing political opposition from some corner Sanjay warned “so called leaders within and without the Congress’ that ‘any leader of any community or religion who opposes family planning ...should be thrown out’”. Kishen Chand, the then lieutenant-governor of Delhi, directed the civil servants of Delhi that those who had more than two children would have to sterilize- otherwise ‘no promotion, no confirmation, no increment, no entitlement to government housing, no loan advances, no leave’. It was found that the chief secretary of the Uttar Pradesh issued an instruction to the district magistrates and divisional commisionals of the state to ‘inform everybody that failure to achieve monthly targets of motivations will not only result in stoppage of salary but also suspension and severest penalties’. Even school teachers were also instructed to be sterilized and directed to motivate five other individuals for the operation. Those who were suitable age among the wider section of the population of India, it was found that people were denied from renewing driving, scooter, rickshaw and arms licences on the ground of failing to show a sterilization certificate. Sometimes people were refused treatment at hospitals and after enclosing in cinemas- they were checked to see the sterilization certificate. See Devid Lockwood, *op.cit.* pp.152-153.
  108. See P.N. Haksar papers, Subject File Number 57. Note to the Prime Minister as Principal Secretary, 1977, 29-31; cited in Devid Lockwood, *op.cit.* p. 154; also see Vinod Mehta, *The Sanjay Story*, Harper Collins, New Delhi, 2012, pp, 163-65.
  109. Pranab Mukherjee, *op.cit.* p.74.

110. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.488.
111. Bipan Chandra and others, *op.cit.* p. 261.
112. Aurobinda Poddar, “*Gharer Baire Muktiyuddha - Muktir Yuddha Bhitare 1971-80*”, a Bengali article in *Saat Dashak, Samakal O Anandabazar*, Ananda Publishers Private Limited, Kolkata, 2013, p. 152.
113. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p.484.
114. Sitaram Sharma, *op.cit.* p. 60.
115. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.* p.884.
116. *Ibid.*, pp.163-169.
117. Saroj Chakrabarty, ... *Chief Ministers*, p. 519; also see Bipan Chandra and others, *op.cit.* p. 261.
118. Dilip Banerjee, *op.cit.*p.884.
119. *Ibid.*