CHAPTER – II

NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT-THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BENGAL, 1904 – 1934: A BRIEF SURVEY

The transition from national revolutionism to Marxism is a historical process. Thus analysis and interpretation of the emergence of Marxism in India cannot be understood properly without unveiling the pervading thread of development of the entire history of national revolutionary movement in India. Grasping the proper perspective of the process of transition from national revolutionism to Marxism depends on the historical development of socio-political and economic conditions of the country. However, quite obviously, this historical process had not been a smooth and linear one and demands a careful analytical discussion of this period.

The review of literature in the preceding chapter shows that there have been vast array of detailed writings, Indian as well as foreign, covering various aspects of national revolutionary movement per se. The present chapter, therefore, proposes to consider the entire history of national revolutionary movement very concisely.

Background and early indications:

India was under colonial subjugation for almost 200 years. A number of colonial European powers came in the medieval India with a mercantile interest. The Indian nationalist movement has been a natural reaction to the colonial rule and ruthless exploitation of resources of the country. Hosea Ballou Morse (1855-1934) observed that the Portuguese first arrived in India either in 1497 or 1498. The Portuguese came to India even before the Mughals. First Portuguese factory was established in 1501 in Calicut. (Morse Vol 2: 2) BP Misra has shown those twenty eight years before the arrival of Babur in India, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama landed in Calicut on 20 May 1498. (Misra, 2012: 3-42) Reaching the legendary Indian spice routes unopposed helped the Portuguese Empire improve its economy that, until Gama, was mainly based on trades along Northern and coastal West Africa. The Mughals came to India in 1526 and gradually established their authority over the country. In 1580, the then Mughal emperor of India, Akbar, gave the Portuguese permission to build business center in the village Hooghly beside the river Bhagirathi. However, the Portuguese were not very much interested in occupying territories in India except some small areas like Goa or lower Bengal for their business interest. Almost after 100 years later of Portuguese arrival to India, the English, the Dutch and the French came to India one by one. The foreign traders, mainly the English, tried to usurp the vast Indian market for their finished industrial products and unending natural resources and raw materials as inputs to cater to the needs of their emerging industrial factories. So, they tried to monopolize over the whole of the country. They were helped in this effort by a section of Indian
native states and feudal lords. In Bengal, the indigenous traders shook hands with the English mercantilists with the hope that this would enable them to conduct trade & commerce without the interference from the Nawab of Bengal. For the sake of expansion of trading activities, all of these foreign mercantile companies tried to surpass the others even by resorting to war and in the process, the East India Company triumphed ultimately. At the same time, the East India Company fought battles against the then Mughal, Maratha or Sikh powers for securing their business interest to the maximum extent possible. They began by annexing Bengal, Bihar & Orissa and then, gradually established their political control over India and established their sovereign control over a united India.

It could be said that for their petty individual interests a section of Indian native states and feudal lords helped the English in establishing their domination over Bengal and later on, over India. The disunity of post-Mughal period in India and rivalry among contending Indian regional powers also helped the East India Company. But, there were many historical evidences of sporadic incidences which might be considered as expression of discontent against the presence of English establishment in several parts of the country. This discontent led to some forms of spontaneous agitation against the British rule here or there many a times. Particularly, beginning from the second half of the 18th century all through the 19th century a good number agitation & rebellion could be observed: Sannyasi & Fakir Rebellion (1762 - 74), Malabar Movement (1792), Santal and Munda Mutiny (1855 - 56, 1899 - 1900), the great Uprising of 1857, Wahahabi Movement (1863 - 71), Indigo Rebellion (1859-62) etc. The anger of the people expressed itself against the feudal rule or against the British rule again & again through these movements. But the leaders and followers of these sporadic and isolated movements failed to develop these as a united movement of the people. The British imperialists could suppress these movements ruthlessly and by this way slowly established their domination all over the country. They tried to re-pattern the old structure of feudalism for their business interest. The trading community of India who were so long exploited by the feudal lords also became hand in glove with the English counterpart. The East India Company when came to India, it came with a mercantile interest and essentially carried a mercantile character. But shortly, the Company came to the realisation that they could use this opportunity of making a bonding of interest with a section of the native mercantile capital which might be easily collaborative and subservient partner of the trading business.

With the advent of British traders, the scope of enhancement of trade in terms of volume or in terms of item became wider for both native and foreign traders. This commonality/ homogeneity of interests emanated from the desire of both to abolish the remnants of Mughal monarchy along with
predominantly feudal economic structure that still existed in India. However the harmony of
interests between British and Indian groups of mercantile capital was very limited in character for
two reasons. First, there were no causes that all sections of mercantile capital would be
collaborative and subservient to British traders as common trading interest was non-existing for
many and, therefore, the collaborative section did represent only a fragment of the whole
mercantile capital. Other one is that there were areas of conflict of trading interest even with those
agreed to collaborate. Irreconcilable contradictions arose between the foreign & indigenous traders
over the share of the trading market and also with the extent of accessibility of trading opportunities
and availability of trading benefits. Failing to cope with the artistry of the indigenous artisans,
imperialist rulers took recourse to repressive methods. The indigenous handicraft industries were
destroyed forcibly; the fingers of loomers were severed. Various legal restrictions were imposed
over the Indian traders by the East India Company as well as by the British Parliament. The foreign
traders, particularly the East India Company, established their absolute domination and control over
the Indian market, particularly over Eastern India, in this way. From traders, following this process
gradually, the British Company assumed the role of a ruler. By the early 1830, the English had
become the dominant power in India. In 1830, Raja Rammohun Roy was sent to England to meet the
King of England as an ambassador of Mughal Emperor Akbar-II and the mission failed to produce any
positive result in favour of Emperor of Delhi. However, till then East India Company officially
considered them as ‘faithful servant of Mughal Emperor’. But after 1832, the East India Company
stopped unilaterally declaring themselves as ‘faithful servant of Mughal Emperor’. (Marx, 1978: 41)
Thus, rise of one dominant power was ultimately settled after over a hundred years of turmoil.

For running the business and offices and governance, the English felt the necessity of a handful of
educated Indians. So, with the very narrow and limited purpose of producing some office clerks, the
Britishers sowed the seed of English education in India. Simultaneously, British legal system was
introduced first in Bengal and later in other regions of India, for administrative purposes. The
introduction of English education and British law brought with it the message of European
Renaissance to India, particularly to Bengal. In this connection Marx observed:

   We must not forget these little communities were contaminated by distinction of caste and
slavery.......England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindusthan was actuated by
vilest interest, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them.......whatever may be the
crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about the revolution.
(Marx, 1853)
A close look at the European history from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century would help in understanding the nature of the European renaissance. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, within the framework of the feudal system, the contradiction was sharpening between the feudal economic relations and the rising mercantile capitalism. It was in the fifteenth century that the urge of the development of the mercantile capitalist class reflected in a new socio-cultural movement against feudal decadence, the religious superstition and absolutism. This basic contradiction, and as its super-structure ideological strength gradually developed and intensified, mutually influencing each other; and in course of time came the progress of science and the transformation of mercantile capital to national capital, a new philosophy of secular humanism rose and in synchronisation with this, establishment of industrial capitalism and democratic revolution were accomplished in many countries. Aspirations for equality, liberty and fraternity arose all over the Europe. It rocked the foundation of the feudal religious creeds, concepts and sense of values and unfurled the philosophy of humanism which called for rationality, individual liberty and women's liberation. The new philosophy held man as its central theme freed from religious tutelage and armed with a scientific attitude for inquiry. It was this agnostic and secular aspect of humanism which had lent it all the youthful fervour. In this connection, the following observation by Engels is worth quoting:

When Europe emerged from the Middle Ages, the rising middle-class of the towns constituted its revolutionary element......The development of the middle class, the bourgeoisie, became incompatible with the maintenance of the feudal system, therefore, had to fall......Moreover, parallel with the rise of the middle class went on the great revival of science;......now up to then science......had not been allowed to overstep the limits set by faith, and for that reason had been no science at all. Science rebelled against the Church; the bourgeoisie could not do without science, and therefore, had to join in the rebellion..........The rising middle class was bound to come into collision with the established religion. (Engels, 1978:8)

However, the above model of European renaissance had its genesis, development and decadence as well; it passed through different levels. Owing to the inexorable laws of capitalism, when it grows it grows with national consciousness with the object of building up the nation on the concept of humanism and democracy. But as soon as it takes root, it gives birth to monopoly capital, invites its own crises and at once lays hands on foreign market acquiring the character of ‘cosmopolitanism and imperialism’. It has been stressed upon by Marxist writers that when world capitalism had reached the stage of imperialism from that point the bourgeois humanism started to compromise with religion and all sorts of prejudices.
Pointing to the period of 1880’s in Europe, Engels commented:

And now came the triumph of British respectability over the free thought and religious laxity of the Continental bourgeois. Nothing remained to the French and German bourgeoisie as a last resource but to silently drop their free thought religion must be kept alive for the people—that was the only and the last means to save society from utter ruin. Unfortunately for themselves, they did not find this out until they had done their level best to break up religion forever. And now it was the turn of the British bourgeois to sneer and to say, ‘Why, you fool. I could have told you that two hundred years ago. (Engels, 1978: 31)

From this perspective, therefore, the advance of industrial capitalism was not characterized by an unambiguous acceptance of secular ethos and values; actually in one way or other, religion remained in spite of structural changes in economy and polity.

The impact of the thoughts of the European renaissance conveyed through Western-education acted as a strong stimulus in breaking the inertia of feudal India. Within the fold of feudal economy, the process of accumulation of mercantile capital had already started and by the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the new mercantile capitalist class of India as an antithesis to feudalism had emerged as a powerful force. (Deb, 1992: 17) This economic framework provided the necessary background of the Bengal awakening. Given this internal contradiction between decaying feudalism and rising mercantilism, the impact of the thoughts of European renaissance started a new social movement which was first embodied and personified in a totality in Rammohun. Like many other European counterparts, Bengal renaissance had started through the religious reformation movement. However, unlike the past religious reformation movements, the renaissance religious reformation in Bengal had a distinct qualitative difference. As opposed to the past movements, the latest one gave stress on rationalism, inductive logic and objective as well humanist values.

Rammohun conceptualised the process of the renaissance in Bengal through religious and social reform movements. His was the attempt to fight against idolatry, religious dogmatism and various sectarian superstitious practices based on Hindu religion. The activities of Rammohun, his struggle against India’s feudal backwardness, against scholasticism and the gap between theoretical thought and life, his attempts to introduce the country to the greatest attainments of western culture, including philosophy — all of this was of great positive significance. (Brodov, 1984: 137-138) In the midst of the meekish faith in unchangeability, it appears, Rammohun, for the first time, mooted the idea that change was both possible and necessary and further, he launched a life-long struggle to
realized the changes he visualized. In fact, ‘Rammohun Ray was the first modern Indian who infused a spirit of change into the Indian ethos.’ (Mukhopadhyay, 1979: 17)

Vidyasagar was the next great personality who followed the footsteps of Rammohun. With his agnostic philosophical outlook, militant secular humanism, his strength of character, personality and unyielding sense of individualism, Vidyasagar can be placed alongside the giants of the European Renaissance movement. (Mukherjee, 1974: 3) His lack of interest in religion, his denunciation of the Vedanta as an untrue philosophy, his strong condemnation of the greed of lucre in the Sanskrit pundits of the orthodox brand and his pungent satires directed at their shallow learning and dishonesty of intellect, his rational-human appreciation of the needs of chance in Hindu society, and last but not least in importance, his stubbornness in matching practice in full conformity with his committed profession indicate with certainty that Iswarchandra was a radical thinker in the humanist tradition in the early nineteenth century Bengal. (Bhattacharyya, 1986: 211) In his effort in upholding secular humanism, Vidyasagar got Akshay Kumar Dutta as a close associate. Mainly these two personalities had propensity in the then context to exclude dharma from the social and moral fields. The trend of secular humanism as represented mainly by Vidyasagar however, could not establish itself as the predominant feature in the Bengal Renaissance movement. A reverse social movement arose and this trend sidelined and suppressed the bold secular humanist trend of Vidyasagar. This reverse social movement was led through literature mainly by Bankimchandra and his group. They made an attempt to infuse Hindu religious beliefs within the humanist ideals. This trend almost swept away the secular humanist tradition of Vidyasagar. (Mukhopadhyay, Manik, 1992: 12-14) These were the people who were fully exposed to English education and belonged to mainly professional groups, i.e., either traders or educationists, officials etc.

With the passage of time, the politics of the British Administration, particularly after establishment of direct rule of British Parliament, were all derived from a new model of attitudes — a model which abandoned the cherished belief in reform for a benevolent but strong government. A new imperial sentiment sustained this modified model of enlightened despotism. (De, 1992: 143) The Government was keen on throwing obstacles to the newly emerging native elites. Simultaneously with this, the British rulers in their endeavour to consolidate and perpetuate their political and economic dominance started a more vigorous campaign for enslaving the Indian people spiritually. Moreover, the colonialists’ ideological offensive ran into stubborn resistance from different strata of the then society. The oppressed individuality and national pride instead of denying religion and traditionalism any effective role, in actuality took recourse to these two. Secular humanism was not given its due
role. The strength to fight for establishing national dignity had been searched in the pages of religious scriptures, in the pride of Indians in their past.

However, the prevalent political mood of the then Bengal was not definitely anti-British. Nationalism in the sense of unification of the country and its freedom from foreign rule was not yet clearly understood. (Chowdhury, 1958: 153) But, in any case, the change of mood from the earlier attitude of cooperation with the Britishers to a form of nationalism with an anti-colonial content, though in a limited scale, should not be missed. Diffusion of political ideas derived from the West and the impact of British rule no doubt produced conditions for the unity of the entire country, but the claim of superiority on the part of the English and the wounded feelings of self-esteem and roused feelings of exasperation of the Indians were also other factors which gave birth to an opposing sense of national and cultural consciousness. (Chowdhury, 1958: 155) This second phase of Bengal renaissance, particularly after the Queen’s Proclamation of 1858 which signaled the direct British rule in India, may, therefore, be described as the beginning of the nationalist phase, of which one of the greatest representatives at its initial stage was Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. (Kaviraj, S, 1995; Deb, 1992: 39) His literary works reflected the spirit of the age- the pain, the antagonism, the compromise, the vacillation, the search for pride in the past history. His mind roamed in the highland of patriotism and yet he never countenanced the idea of winning freedom by driving away the English. Bankim’s nationalism was broad-based on the love of the country as a whole, but he went a step further than his contemporaries in envisaging the concept of India as a cultural and racial entity. A version of ‘reformed’ Hinduism developed by Bankim was the basis of his philosophical concern and he fostered the idea of nationalism in the horizon of the politics of Bengal in the initial stage of nationalist phase, though his idea of nationalism, to acknowledge the historical truth, could not be firmly equated with the nationalist ideas of a later age symbolizing Swaraj or self-government. (Chowdhury, 1958: 155)

Vivekananda came into the scene in this perspective of anti-British sentiment. The openly racist and discriminatory policies of the British rulers those wounded the emerging Nationalist consciousness, gave birth to cowardice and feeling of subjugation among the Indians. Vivekananda tried to awaken the countrymen against these on the basis of love for country, self-esteem and national pride. But he did this through religion, through reviving Hinduism - though he gave stress on ‘Karma Yoga’ while practicing ‘Dharma’. Instead of worshipping God within the secluded premises of temple, he asked the youths to make them prepare mentally as well physically for developing human values. However, a number of critics argued that Vivekananda’s ideas were full of contradictions. As opposed to Liberalist principles of life, he even was in favour of early marriage of girls, advocated against widow-
marriage. He further stated that the mythical characters like Sita-Sabitri should be ideal character of Indian women and made similar other comments. (Lahiri, 2018; https://blog.mukto-mona.com)

For freeing India from foreign domination his clarion call was:

India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand or her young men — men, mind, and not brutes. The English Government has been the instrument, brought over here by the Lord, to break your crystallised civilisation ........... How many men, unselfish, thorough-going men, is ...... ready now to supply, to struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things sympathy for the poor, and bread to their hungry mouths, enlightenment to the people at large — and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts ........? (Vivekananda, 1893- Letter to Alasinga)

In this way, slowly, the urge for freedom began to develop, within the minds of educated Indians. At this particular historical juncture, a new chapter in the annals of the Indian national movement started. That new chapter came to be known as the revolutionary nationalist movement.

As we have seen in Chapter 1 that according to the writers/commentators on the national revolutionary movement in India, it spanned for almost thirty years (1904-1934). But this does not mean that it had not its beginning a few years back in a limited scale and it did not continued even after 1934 though very scantily. The duration of revolutionary activities has been kept confined to these thirty years only to indicate that during this period, the national revolutionary movement was in its peak though sometimes it also passed through a period of slumber. The national revolutionary movement has been periodized by the writers in different ways according to their particular objectives of study. We prefer to discuss the whole process of national revolutionary movement in four phases keeping in mind its origins, tactics and strategies adopted, formation of alliances with other such groups and finally, the intensity of their efforts to liberate the country by way of armed rebellion. The four phases may be as follows: (A) The First Stage from 1897 to 1914; (B) The Second Stage from 1914 to 17; (C) The Third Stage from 1921 to 1927; (D) The Fourth Stage from 1928 to 34 which we propose to discuss below.

The First Stage of National Revolutionism (1897 - 1914):

An oppressive foreign rule, economic crisis, awakening of national consciousness and the restrictive conciliatory policy of the then Congress leadership may be said to have constituted the four main ingredients for the emergence of radical nationalism and its subsequent violent manifestations among the educated youth of India. (Mukhopadhyay, A K, 2009: xxii) The Mahabharata, the Gita and
the two festivals promulgated by Tilak, the Shivaji Festival and the Ganapati Festival, laid the foundation of radical nationalism in Maharashtra. Similarly, in Bengal — the Goddess of power, Kali and Durga, were seen as the fountainhead of nationalism by the leaders like Bepin Chandra Paul. The radical nationalist ideology and movement reflected a combination of militancy and orthodox Hinduism. Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo and Lajpat Rai and the other extremist leaders encouraged the use of religious idioms as a medium of mass contact. Tilak founded a cow-protection association and organised Ganapati and Shivaji Festivals to rally the Hindu sentiment. Aurobindo equated Goddess Durga with the motherland. This reliance upon Hindu heritage and past glory continued in the national revolutionary periods also and that resulted in alienation of other religious groups from the national revolutionary movement. (Chatterjee & Guha Ray, 2006: 493) Besides, the life and work of the great Italian leader Mazzini greatly inspired the revolutionaries. There is agreement among a wide range of scholars that the Bengal revolutionaries to a great extent were influenced by the Italian Risorgimento, by the Nihilist movement in Russia and by the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland. (Majumdar, 2002: 174-175; Pal, 1973: 198; Sen, 1988: 102; Halder, 2009: 39; Mukherjee H & Mukherjee U, 1964: 78; Roy, 1990: 155)

June 22, 1897 saw the advent of the idea of political assassination and the cult of bomb as a form of revolutionary nationalism or the ‘Age of Fire’ (Agniyyug). On that day, in Poona, Maharashtra, Chapekars brothers assassinated Mr. Rand, the then Plague Commissioner of Poona. The Chapekars were sentenced to death; but the spirit was far from being crushed. Revolutionary secret societies continued their silent activities in that region of India through ‘akhrs’ or clubs of physical exercise which arranged for study of the literature of European secret societies and anarchism as well. (Halder, 2009: 235) Even in the face of brutal British repression, the revolutionaries of Maharashtra continued to pursue their goal of building up a network of activists to target notorious British officials — to terrorise the colonial administration. Revolutionaries became very active, particularly in Poona, Nasik, Satara and even in places like Gwalior, Kathiawad, Baroda- all Maratha bastions. (Halder, 2009: 235; Mukhopadhyay, A K, 2009: xxii) A number of violent action programmes either had been undertaken or planned. The police tried hard to suppress the dissemination of militant activities of the revolutionaries. Most of the leaders and workers were arrested and many of them were implicated in Poona, Nasik and Satara trials. This led to the gradual weakening of revolutionary activities in Maharashtra. Till 1911, few such incidents were reported from that province. (Mukhopadhyay, A K, 2009: xxii) The activities of the revolutionary nationalists had become only spasmodic after that.
But, violent acts of militant nationalism were spreading across other parts of India, particularly in Bengal, during the same period. The tactics of political assassination as a weapon of militant nationalism in Bengal in beginning of the twentieth century seemed to have been imported from Maharashtra. Aurobinda Ghosh and Jatindranath Bandyopadhyay were the harbingers. As a part of a long-term strategy, they first encouraged the setting up of gymnasiums to train the youth as bodybuilders and in the skills of fighting with sticks and daggers. Secret societies had indeed already appeared in Bengal though they were not yet prepared for terrorism or direct action. Anushilan Samiti (1902), Atmonnati (1897) and Suhrid Samiti (1901), Dawn Society (1902), Bandhab Sammilani (1902), Friends United Club (1902), were perhaps the earliest Samiti be formed with a vague idea of freedom of the country, but primarily- if not solely - engaged in physical culture. (Haldar, J, 2011: 97-99; Guha, n.d., 27) The Anushilan Samiti was the most prominent among all these organizations. As the name ‘Anushilan’ indicated, the Samiti upheld Bankim’s philosophy of ‘anushilan’, the religion of culture and training. The Anushilan Samiti was soon to develop a well-organized political network all over Bengal from which sprouted many independent revolutionary groups, most important being Dacca Anushilan Samiti & Jugantar.

The earliest acts of revolutionary nationalism in Bengal at the turn of twentieth century were primarily marked by dacoities and bank robberies to collect funds to buy arms among other things. The stress later shifted to the killing tyrannical British administrators and their Indian collaborators. The Bengali revolutionaries specialised in the making of the bomb which is treated by many as one of their major contributions to the tactics of revolutionary nationalism.

The arrogant measure of Lord Curzon to divide Bengal in 1905 brought the Bengali discontent with foreign rule almost to a point of national revolt. Protest movements took the form of ‘Swadeshi’ and boycott of British goods and encouragement of national bourgeois enterprises. Gopal Halder has commented: ‘Swadeshi was in fact the springtime of Bengali national life.’ (Halder, 1958: 237) Swadeshi breathed a new life into the revolutionary movement as well, and imparted to it the new soul that the revolutionary societies of Bengal had so long needed. The incipient phase of national revolutionism was over by 1905. The years 1906 to 1908 were years primarily of underground work when bombs were being prepared and tried by the band that Barindrakumar Ghosh led at the time. (Halder, 1937: 238) The first overt act was the foundation of the Bengal weekly Jugantar in March 1906 by Barindrakumar Ghosh with the help of his friends, Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta, the first editor and Abinash Bhattacharya. ‘The Jugantar breathed revolution in every line and pointed out how revolution can be effected, by collection of arms, seduction of armed forces, by terrorism of the Russian type, armed rising, guerilla warfare and so on’. (Guha, n.d.: 29) However, Pramathanath
Mitra, the founder of Anushilan Samiti was not at all in favour of this move and opposed it. This might be said to be the beginning of the breach between the two sections. (Halder, 1958: 238) The publication of ‘Jugantar’ as a weekly may be said to have started the beginning of ‘Jugantar’ as a separate group — actively dedicated to the cause of a revolutionary movement. The Jugantar began to attract the young bloods with its positive doctrine of revolution. The open preaching and the teachings of violence began to dissatisfy P Mitra as the young men of the Jugantar paper were the members of Anushilan Samiti as well. In 1907, these young revolutionaries led by Barindrakumar formally dissociated themselves from the Anushilan Samiti. But the group took no formal name, adopted no constitution. (Guha, n.d.: 29) Their group later on came to be known as Jugantar group.

When Pramathanath Mitra went to Dacca by the later part of 1906, the Dacca Anushilan Samiti was started by him. Pulinbihari Das was the leader of the Dacca unit. He chalked out a somewhat different path from the parent body. That led to Mitra’s difference with Pulin as he had link with the group led by Barindrakumar. The Dacca branch soon introduced many formalities such as a constitution, oath taking, centralised leadership etc. (Halder, 1958: 239) In fact, it took a more rigid form of a party than the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti. It also took up the programme of overt violent acts — dacoities and murders in particular — to which Pramathanath were definitely opposed. Dacca Anushilan Samiti gradually drifted away from the Calcutta Centre, as the Jugantar section had earlier done.

The police tried to suppress the activities in their inception and so, as expected, the police oppression was in full swing. It posed a big challenge to the young revolutionaries. The challenge had to be accepted. Between 1906 and 1907 the revolutionaries attempted a number of attacks. There were many attempts to kill Lieutenant Governor Andrew Frazer, but he escaped unhurt each time. Minor attempts during the time mostly failed. The blow that shocked the liberal politicians and electrified the whole country was the heroic deeds of Prafulla Chaki and Kshudiram Bose on April 30, 1908 in which they inadvertently killed two innocent European ladies instead of killing Kingsford, the District Judge of Muzaffarpur. In order to evade arrest, Prafulla Chaki killed himself. The other young man, Kshudiram stood the trial and paid the highest price. His death was mourned almost openly by the educated Bengalis at large. The supreme sacrifices of Kshudiram & Chaki created great upheaval in the minds of the educated Indians. (Halder, 1958: 239) The bomb outrage at Muzzafarpur was followed by searches by police and the discovery on May 02, 1908 of the Maniktolla ‘factory’ of Barindrakumar and his friends. This led to the arrest of almost the entire group including its head, Aurobindo Ghosh. Thirty four of them were sent up for trial at the Alipur Sessions Court in connection with what came to be known as the Alipur Bomb Case. Aurobindo was acquitted by that
court on May 06, 1909 and fifteen of them were ultimately found guilty by the High Court (Feb 10, 1910) of a ‘conspiracy to wage war against the King - Emperor’, and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and transportation.

It was a trial of historic importance. (Mukhopadhyay, A K, 2009: xxiv) First, because the accused stood the ordeal undaunted and unconcerned; Barindrakumar, Upendra Banerji and Ullaskar Dutta became legendary figures in the imagination of their people. Second, even as the trial preceded, one of the accused, Naren Gossain, who had turned ‘approver’ and was for safety segregated in jail was killed there in Presidency Jail by his two co-accused, Kanailal Dutta and Satyendra Bose. Both paid the highest penalty of law with courage and patriotic exultation that thrilled the countrymen. Revolutionary morale reached its high watermark as the sacrifices of the revolutionaries set the standard which those who came after them were equally zealous to emulate. Third, other acts of revolutionary vengeance in connection with the case had followed: the murder of the police inspector who had apprehended Kshudiram, of the government pleader Asutosh Biswas and of the Superintendent of Police (CID) Samshul Alam who was all through in charge of it. Fourth, the trial of Aurobindo brought Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das to the forefront of professional and political platform.

In order to suppress the ‘terrorists’, the name that was used by the Govt agencies of that time to denote these fire band national revolutionaries, the British rulers took recourse to a number of repressive measures. But, despite all that, the manner in which the revolutionaries ceaselessly carried out their activities throughout Bengal till 1914 is truly amazing. The partition and the sweeping acts of repression undoubtedly fed the flame. In the two years 1908 & 1909, there were quite a number of dacoities and secret killings. In East Bengal, such activities were carried out through the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, the Bakhergunj Swadesh Bandhab Samiti, the Brati Samiti of Faridpur, the Suhrid Samiti and the Sadhana Samiti of Mymensingh. (Halder, 1958: 241) In between 1910-1914, a number of acts of violence, big and small, were carried out. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti has been organised into a well-centralized body of Pulin Das which had hundreds of branches under its control. As the Alipur bomb case proceeded in Calcutta, the Anushilan Samiti along with four other Samitis of East Bengal was outlawed. Pulin Das along with others were jailed under the Regulation III of 1818. But the Anushilan Samiti was far from making an exit. In 1910, the Dacca Conspiracy Case was launched against its members; fifteen were sentenced to imprisonments. The Samiti was thus deprived of leadership. But its younger men were undaunted. Men like Naren Sen, Trailokyanath Chakraborty and Rabi Sen not only held together the organization after 1910, but also spread it into new areas and established contacts almost all over Northern India. (Halder, 1958: 243)
The Anushilan Samiti thus became a byword for revolutionary action, courage, discipline, secrecy etc.

Such Samiti or secret revolutionary groups were by no means few. The Swadeshi movement had encouraged the formation of such local groups and each of them in its turn had its branches. The aim and object or the method and techniques were almost similar, but the counsels and loyalties of each were its own. For secret societies had to work in narrow, isolated grooves and could not risk their very existence in the name of revolutionary united front.

Jugantar, the suppressed weekly (banned in 1907) served as a rallying point for the Aurobindo-Barindra group of Calcutta and the title stuck to others of different groups who came later to be connected with the close and distant work of the paper. So, in 1910, the members of these different groups who were being tried together in the Howrah Conspiracy case were designated by the prosecution, presumably to strengthen its case, as members collectively of the 'Jugantar Party'. The name was adhered to later by these groups and others which came into existence, though these groups never merged and the Jugantar never meant anything more than a federation of revolutionary groups. (Guha, n.d.: 33) Jugantar was not a formally organized party. Even when it acted as a party, it assumed the character of a federal party agreeing on the ideal as also the strategy. (Mukhopadhyay, A K, 2009: xxvi) In 1911, the revoking of the decision of the Partition of Bengal gave a big boost to the revolutionaries. Since then, apart from bombs, other modern armaments also were used by the revolutionaries. The message of revolution gradually spread to various parts of India, from Maharashtra to Bengal and from there to Punjab - the revolutionary mode of thinking spread far and ride. The radical leader of the National Congress, Lala Lajpat Rai tried to build up revolutionary setup in Punjab. Increased taxation of the Chenab canal colonies and the water tax on the Chandrabhaga canal in 1906 provided the cause for the Punjabi militant nationalists to rally public opinion in favour of revolutionary activities. These activities, however, received a boost after a few years with the arrival of Rashbehari Bose. Alongside Punjab, in Madras, Central Provinces, Orissa and Bihar too revolutionary activities started picking up steam. But due to quick police offensive and ruthless persecution, the various revolutionary groups set up in a number of provinces gradually beat a retreat and ultimately petered out. It was only in Bengal that the groups managed to survive — through various stages of ups and downs — till about 1934. (Halder, 1958: 243)
The Second Stage of National Revolutionism (1914 - 17):

The tactics of individual terrorism were vigorously pursued by the revolutionaries during the time also, though, at the same time, both military and popular upheaval for freedom was their real objective all along. The mixing of efforts from both inside & outside the country for an upheaval makes this second stage unique. The period saw intense activities, international organizational efforts and intricate plan and plots by involving a number of countries of Asia, Europe or America for a countrywide upheaval. Attempt for an upheaval planned over the three continents. Rashbehari Bose and Jatindranath Mukherjee are the two towering figures of this phase of revolutionary history; the former was to plan for defection of the Indian forces while Jatindranath remained in the field in Kolkata. An upheaval was planned and it was supposed to start on February 21, 1915. But the plot failed - Rashbehari was hotly pursued by the police and he, ultimately, escaped to Japan to pursue his revolutionary dream there. The emissaries and the leading figures with their associates in the British Indian forces were caught and executed. Jatindranath from his hiding in Kolkata continued to wait for the arrival of foreign arms and to defend the organization with the arms and means available here. But while trying to receive armed shipment from Germany, Jatindranath was surrounded by the police force in Balasore, Orissa. He died a martyr’s death along with one of his companions, Chittapiya, fighting to the last on September 09, 1915. (Halder, 1958: 248) All attempts to procure foreign arms had been checkmated by 1916 and attempts at upheaval had led to disaster.

A sort of ‘hit and run’ tactics could alone be adopted under the circumstances. That was played in 1916-17 with increasing courage – the toll of official life was heavy. An intense period of repression led to the dispersal of the revolutionaries and societies about to be immobilised. Large number of revolutionaries were put into jail under Regulation III of 1818 or interned in villages under the Defense of India Act 1915. The year 1917 was also crowded with events, but it was evident that the revolutionaries were too weak to organize an upheaval any longer. An intense phase of activity drew to a close with the end of the War in 1918. It had made the name of the Bengal revolutionaries famous for courage, moral character and patriotic self-sacrifice. The reputation could never be dimmed by any propaganda of the Government or by the counsels of the wise and liberal leaders. (Mukherjee, J, 1963: 285) There is no doubt about the fact that the activities of the national revolutionaries fired the imagination of the people, particularly of young men at a time when the whole country was groaning under the nailed heels of the jack - boots of the British Government. But sober minded and thinking elements among the leaders of the revolutionary movement were aware of the harm done by some of the activities like individual assassination and political robbery. Nalini Kishore Guha has written that doubts about the correctness of the policy of political robbery began
to arise in the minds of some of the revolutionaries on moral grounds. He has further commented that no important leader of the revolutionary movement had any attraction for robbery but in order to keep the activities running it was found not possible to abandon it completely. They realised that the people of the country were gradually becoming alienated. Guha also writes that even from 1913 onwards a process of rethinking started among those who were formally strong advocates of terroristic activities. They began to realise that with arms procured by them they could at best create a disorder in the country but would not be able to win state power. Their reliance was then placed on the plans to organise mutiny among the Indian soldiers and obtaining arms aid from foreign countries. (Guha, N, 2012: 103-118, 141-147)

It is a record of failure, no doubt, but it showed that the revolutionaries of India were not mere ‘terrorists’ but possessed political vision as well as realistic understanding of the then context. (Halder, 1958: 247) However, it must be remembered that the mass national liberation struggle itself was in the initial stage at that time. The masses only began to enter the field of conscious political action. In such a situation the revolutionaries raised the banner of complete independence which is to be achieved through revolutionary struggle. This by itself was a contribution of the first magnitude. By their shining examples the revolutionaries succeeded in instilling among the people a spirit of undaunted defiance against the mightiest empire of the world. Even in the face of governmental repression, the revolutionaries were able to create a durable framework of secret organisations in Bengal and Punjab and to some extent in UP. The plan for mutiny with the help of Indian soldiers during the period created a panic in the government machineries. At the same time, the revolutionaries took the responsibility of volunteer service, relief work, nursing activities etc. with a strict puritanical code of morality and celibacy etc. These works were undertaken with a missionary zeal and devotion and because of this the individual revolutionary became an idol. (Halder, 1958: 248) Even, their flood relief work in Bardhhaman got the commendation from the then Governor of Bengal. (Guha, N, 1012: 104)

The revolutionaries, however, being dissatisfied with what had been achieved so far gradually started feeling that in spite of their sacrifices the dream of freeing India was a distant reality. They initiated a search for a revolutionary ideology and revolutionary programme by drawing lessons from their own history as well as from the histories of the revolutions in other countries. They could not always draw correct lessons but at that stage the very beginning of the search for lessons was an outstanding achievement. (Mazumdar, 1979: 98-99) Not all but a few national revolutionaries started realising that revolution is a social process governed by definite laws at different stages of social development and operating through the activities and alignment of the basic social forces in a
given country. This realisation began to dawn upon the consciousness of a section of the national revolutionaries due to the impact of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia. But, the full realisation of this, in a large scale, was delayed till 1934.

**The Third Stage of National Revolutionism (1921 - 1927):**

In between 1917 - 20, the revolutionary movement had been in suppression as the cadres, in most cases, were in detention. Gandhiji launched the non-co-operation movement in 1921. This opened up opportunities for the militant nationalists who had been lying low till then, as also for those who had been imprisoned, but set free under the Royal Proclamation of 1919. The national revolutionaries gathered round Desbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He appealed to them to give non-violent non-cooperation a trial and join the National Congress for that purpose. While the most of the Jugantar revolutionaries agreed to it in deference to Desbandhu’s appeal, the Anushilan held aloof and sought to reorganise themselves a fresh. As the Congress launched a mass movement in 1921, the revolutionaries too had to reorganise and examine their potentialities. Militant activities, however, have not yet on their cards. (Halder, 1958: 250) It has been observed that taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in public agitations offered by the non-cooperation movement, the national revolutionaries could attract a large number of radical - minded young volunteers from the folds of the non-violent movement to secret societies. This opened up another phase of revolutionary agitation.

However, things came to upset them and their plan. Gandhiji’s suspension of the movement in view of the incidents at Bardoli (Feb 1922) made them think of reorganising themselves again with a new crop of young man for a revolutionary upheaval in due course. So, new groups began to come into existence from about the time, notably the Chittagong group which was to be led by Surya Sen. A Dacca group was founded by Hemchandra Ghosh and later came to be divided into two halves, the Sri Sangha and the Bengal Volunteers (BV). (Halder, 1958: 250) The second cause of the new trend was the impatient urgings of some these groups to launch terrorist action early in 1923, for, as they held, finance had to be found and enemies had to be punished. During 1922 - 24, the national revolutionaries of Bengal, particularly, the Jugantar group made their presence felt with a series of violent actions. The matter came to a head with Gopinath Saha’s attempt (January 08, 1924) to kill Charles Tegrat, the then Commissioner of Police, Calcutta which resulted in the unfortunate murder of an innocent European. Gopinath died like a martyr and now the press of Bengal and even the Serajgunj session of the provincial conference of Congress paid him openly the martyr’s tribute. From now on, the people of Bengal no longer feared to acclaim the ‘terrorists’ publicly as they had done in the pre non-cooperation days. (Mukhopadhyay, A K, 2009: xxviii)
In July 1924, the revolutionaries distributed a pamphlet named ‘Lal Bangla’ (Red Bengal). The pamphlet openly called for the killing of policemen, following which, during the period of four months from July to October at least five attempts were made on the life of policemen. (Mazumdar, 1979: 120) The Govt reacted sharply and an ordinance was promulgated in October 1924. Everyone suspected of any revolutionary activity was sent into jail. Revolutionary activities did not stop immediately, but the repressive measures of the Govt proved effective for the time being. So, the years 1927 and 1928 were comparatively free from violent activities from the government point of view. The Govt did succeed in dislocating the activities of the revolutionaries for a few years. However, nearly all the prisoners detained in 1924 were released by 1928 and in the beginning of 1929.

A more significant part was played in the politics of India as a whole in the post non-cooperation period by a revolutionary organisation outside Bengal, in UP. In 1924, due to the endeavour of Sachindranath Sanyal of Benares and Jogeshchandra Chattopadhyay who hailed from Dhaka, a new revolutionary organisation was formed in Benares - Hindustan Republican Association (HRA). Previously Sanyal founded Anushilan Samiti in Benares in 1908. (Habib, 2017: 12) However, the efforts of Sanyal were marginalised greatly after the failure of plan of insurrection in 1915 which had been undertaken with Rashbehari Bose. Sachindranath who was transported for life released in 1920. Jogeshchandra was also in jail from 1916 to 1920. In October 1924, at its session in Kanpur, the HRA acquired a distinct ideological character. It announced its goal of establishing an independent and undivided India through an armed revolution. Inspired by the November Revolution of Russia, later its leaders were to incorporate the ideology of socialism in their programme. Still later, many among them turned Marxists. The HRA central committee was formed of representatives from all the states of India, and its leaders got moving according to a well laid out plan.

On 09 August 1925, the HRA activists raided a train in Kakori, the then UP and looted around five thousand rupees for the purpose of purchasing arms & ammunitions needed for carrying out national revolutionary work. The police soon traced the incident to the HRA and arrested about forty of its members. Sanyal & Chatterjee, both under detention even before the Kakori incident, were also implicated in the case. Chandra Sekhar Azad, another prominent leader of HRA, who played a very important role in organising & spreading the revolutionary activities in UP could evade the police net along with Bhagat Singh. The UP was shaken up in 1927 by the supreme sacrifice of four of its Martyrs: Rajendra Nath Lahiri, Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfuqullah and Roshan Lal, the four Kakori ‘dacoity’ prisoners. Lahiri was hanged on 17 December 1927, Bismil & Ashfuqullah on 19 December 1927 and Roshan Lal on 20 December. (Ghosh, Sankar, 2013: 130-133) Their sacrifice ignited the
minds of the younger generations of the Northern India from inertia and we could see some valiant fight of the North Indian revolutionaries in the next phase. The HRA was successful in affecting the climate of political opinion in Northern India after 1927.

It is to be further stated that the HRA were deeply influenced by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and socialist experiments carried out there. There had been a definite socialist tendency in their ideas of independent India’s social & economic structure. They also started contemplating the inevitable role of the peasants & workers in the process of transformation of India. At the same time, the HRA also held a vague idea regarding international character of national liberation movement. However, the petty-bourgeoisie romantic values of HRA revolutionaries blocked the path to accept those policies fully. But, HRA is the first national revolutionary organisation which started drifting towards socialism. (Laushey, 1975: 39; Habib, 2017: 28)

**The Fourth Stage of National Revolutionism (1928 - 34):**

The detention of most of the revolutionaries in 1924-25 resulted in a brief inactivity of violence in Bengal. From March 1927, the Bengal Government started releasing those who were arrested in 1924/25 and many of the revolutionaries were set free by the end of December 1927. After the release, the leaders of Anushilan and Jugantar effected an amalgamation of the two parties as was agreed upon by the respective leaders while in prison. But the amalgamation could not last for more than a year or so due to the weaknesses inherent in such national revolutionary organisations formed on the basis of petty-bourgeoisie revolutionism. The intra-group rivalries acted as a stumbling block in the unification move. (Mazumdar, 1979: 121) A ‘Revolting Group’ comprising revolutionaries of younger generation including many middle cadres belonging to both Anushilan & Jugantar who had been organising themselves since 1923 decided upon a separate programme of actions. However, the plans of the Revolting Group could not be materialised due to leakage of information and premature arrests of some of the leaders of the new amalgamated revolting party towards the end of 1929 in what came to be as the Mehuabazar Bomb Case.

After that two groups, the Chittagong group under the leadership of Surya Sen who was the mastermind behind the Chittagong Insurrection and the Bengal Volunteers group decided to act on their own without keeping connections with other groups for reasons of security. Their lines of action were, however, different. The Chittagong group planned for a short term and time bound preparation of insurrection in a limited area and succeeded in creating a completely new precedent in the history of the national-revolutionary movement in India. The BV group planned and succeeded in carrying out a series of sensational assassinations of British Officials. (Halder, 1958: 251)
In North India, from the ruins of the HRA, Bhagat Singh and Chandrasekhar Azad built up the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA). They renewed their activities from September 1928. During the time, the Simon Commission came to India in 1928 and the Commission was formed for India without any Indian representative in it. This resulted in widespread agitation throughout the country. While leading one such protest rally, Lala Lajpat Rai was mercilessly assaulted by the police on the roads of Lahore and he, ultimately, succumbed to his injuries. In retaliation, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru of the HSRA killed John P Saunders, an assistant superintendent of police mistaking him for James Scott, the superintendent of police, in broad daylight on the streets of Lahore on 17 December 1928. However, they could evade arrest and pursued their revolutionary activities with vigour.

From the beginning of 1929, the revolutionaries started their activities in a well-planned out manner in different parts of India. The first exercise was carried out that year, when on April 08, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutta throw bombs in the Assembly in protest against the Governor General’s attempt to pass two bills which would be detrimental to the interests of the people of India. Both of them were arrested and later Bhagat Singh was ordered to be hanged – on the charge of assassination of Saunders. In pursuit of the case, the police arrested eighteen revolutionaries and all of them were implicated in what came to be known as the famous Lahore Conspiracy Case. In jail, they started a hunger - strike in order to claim due recognition as political prisoners. One of the revolutionaries, Jatin Das breathed his last after 63 days of fasting. The heroic activities of the HSRA came to apparent end with the death of its leader Chandrasekhar Azad, on 27 February 1931, in direct exchanges of fire with the police in Alfred Park, Allahabad. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru- the revolutionary trio were hanged to death on 23 March 1931.

The Chittagong Group of revolutionaries led on April 18, 1930 their raid on the local armoury which was captured by surprise. In daringness and discipline, as well as in planning and subsequent attempts – the fight at the Jalalabad Hill on April 22, 1930, at Kalarpol on May 06, at Chandannagar on June 28 – the Chittagong revolutionaries set an example which no one could ignore.

Alongside Chittagong, in Calcutta also revolutionary groups were targeting British officials. While the mass movement proceeded on the line of Civil Disobedience, the Jugantar revolutionaries planned side by side a full-fledged campaign of ‘terrorism’ and guerilla activity in Calcutta and the districts. The Anushilan would wait and prepare for a general rising, but were carried off soon by their cadres to plan elaborate actions. (Halder, 1958: 254-56) An unsuccessful attempt on the life of Tegart (August 25, 1930) at Dalhousie Square was made by the BV volunteers. It was the most vehement period of campaign so far seen, in which the Chittagong Group and the BV of Dhaka and Midnapore
took the lead. It ended with the attempt at Lebong, Darjeeling on March 08, 1934 on the life of the then Governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson. In between, there is a record of murders of district officials, and attempts at murder of Europeans, of Indians who were considered hostile, attempts at raids for fund, raids on European clubs in Chittagong, fights directly with the police – etc. etc. which were unprecedented in intensity and extension. A host of great heroes of Indian freedom movement including Masterda Surya Sen, Benoy, Badal, Dinesh, Pritilata and the likes became martyrs. Hundreds who were equally daring and determined were sent to Port Blair in the Andaman; thousands languished in detention camps and jails without trial. The country as a whole grumbled under the imperialist repression.

Gopal Halder, an eminent national revolutionary, delineates some of the important features of this fourth phase from 1930 to 1934. (Halder, 1958: 256)

First, the times were significantly changed and the revolutionaries were changing with the times in their outlook. The national and international situations had become things of growing concern to the revolutionaries. The Irish parallel of the earlier phase – a secretly trained army – increasingly gave place to the ideals of mass revolution. They appeared to have found in the Marxist ideology an alternative. It offered them a wider field and opportunity of rallying the masses of peasants and industrial workers in a national struggle to meet their original goal of putting an end to colonial rule. Not that all were advancing evenly; ‘Inquilab Zindabad’ and not ‘Bande Mataram’ was the slogan of the upper Indian revolutionaries, e.g. Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutta. But, in Bengal, revolutionaries went to gallows with the old cry of ‘Bande Mataram’.

Second, the method of organisation had become more secular now, though the old moral standards were still valued very high. The biggest innovation was of course the admission of women, particularly young girls, into the revolutionary ranks.

Third, the revolutionaries increasingly started feeling that through the tactics of political assassination or area-wise armed insurrection as means of ousting the British rulers the movement could not reach the higher stage to effect a capture of any point of power or attain the stage of an upheaval. It was realised by 1935 that the way to mass movement and upheaval could not be reached through such acts of isolated ‘terrorism’ and secret societies.

Fourth, the revolutionaries felt that in spite of their valiant heroism and huge sacrifices, they failed in achieving their goal. Communalism was on the rise; repression went on unabated. They became puzzled. To all these, the revolutionaries in their anxious search for a solution found no answer. The British authorities had handled about 2500 men and dozens of women too in this period in different
jails and detention camps and about 400 prisoners from all over India were imprisoned at Andaman. This very fact helped them in the search for an answer. A distinct swing to socialism and Marxism was evident among these prisoners by 1935 in the Bengal jails or camps. So, when the revolutionaries were released from the Bengal jails in 1937 - 38 (in the case of Andaman prisoners it was 1946), there remained almost no one to revert to the old path of individual assassination or robbery. The larger number thought that the mass awakening was a fact, and it called for new approaches and new methods. Many directly desired to take to the proletarian path. ‘Terrorism’ with all the groups was a thing of the past. The nation, they held, had accepted their ideal of complete independence as goal; and popular upheaval was in the offing and their sacrifices could provide the necessary sense of courage to their countrymen. (Adhikari, G, 1984: 4-5)

Epilogue:

Politics and ideology of the national revolutionaries, in its initial phase, was primarily moulded or influenced by the ideas of the French revolution or the contemporary actions of the Irish struggle for independence and the progressive ideas of the Left-wing of the international working class movement in Europe and America. It was only after the Soviet Socialist Revolution of 1917, in the early twenties that the forward-looking leaders, though not many in numbers, began to turn towards slowly to the ideas of scientific socialism and realised the need for organising workers and peasants as the decisive revolutionary force in the struggle for national independence. (Pramanik, N, 1984: 242)

It must be said that revolutionary nationalism had failed in some very vital aspects. First, it could not enlist active Muslim support. It failed to resolve the religio - social conflicts of the Indian life and the Bengal life as a part of it. Observing Hindu rituals was must for the national revolutionaries of Bengal and this, in turn, kept the Muslim fraternity isolated from the national revolutionary movement. That of course, is the failure it shared with Indian nationalism as a whole; and it is a failure the roots of which lay deep in the then Indian society. However, one important exception was Ashfuqullah of HRA who was a devoted Muslim. He wrote that in spite of devotion for Muslim religious practices, ‘for the purpose of truth’ he was ready to be labeled as a communist. (Habib, 2017: 28) Secondly, in spite of their theoretical emphasis upon the armed insurrection, at least in the later phase, the national revolutionaries, in most cases, could not rise above the individual or group action. Besides, though they theoretically emphasised the organisation of the masses, in actual practice, they mostly avoided to work seriously in this direction. As a result, the influence of the revolutionaries was minimal among the workers and peasants. Thus the revolutionary movement in India was, in fact, reduced to a movement of the select few. (Pramanik, N, 1984: 305) The HSRA, in spite of its belief in
socialism, and the other revolutionary associations were deeply influenced by ‘petty-bourgeoisie revolutionism’. Their belief in ‘heroic violence’ or ‘propaganda by action’ resulted in the death of huge number of revolutionaries and their organisational activities were greatly restricted. (Habib, 2017: 130) They could not stand against the governmental repression or nationalist leaders’ aversion towards them. Thirdly, the national revolutionaries tried to put forward an alternative leadership in opposition to the dominant Gandhian leadership. But, as the revolutionaries in most of the phases had to work secretly for the very nature of their organisation and pattern of work, the revolutionary leaders failed to emerge as public figure like their nationalist counterpart. And the absence of public figure in the revolutionary rank had made them crippled in the matter of moulding the public opinion in favour of their strategy and tactics. There was not a single leader who could equal Gandhi in the quality of leadership. Their mission of forging an alternative leadership remained unfulfilled and the leadership of the Indian national movement remained in the hands of the Gandhian leaders. (Chandra, Bipo, 1979: 247-48) At the same time, it is to be admitted that revolutionary nationalism was a movement that was subscribed by the best elements of the country, at least, for long thirty years. Although it failed in achieving its goals in substantial terms, the national revolutionary movement left an indelible mark on the history of the Indian anti-colonial movement – by shaping the long term political strategy and tactics of the national leadership in a radical direction and as well as in uniting all shades of Indian public opinion behind the ideal of courage and self-sacrifice that they set. It is to be remembered that the national revolutionaries belonging to the middle class were the first to demand complete independence from British rule. They refused to compromise with the halfway house of dominion status and other concessions that the colonial rulers were handling out and which the then Congress leaders were willing to accept. Instead, they revived the tradition of armed resistance that marked the peasant rebellions of the 19th century and inaugurated a new wave of revolutionary offensive. It was to the credit of the national revolutionaries that they could create the anti-imperialist consciousness among the people by their heroic deeds. Their acts of rebellion – as they hoped – indeed inspired a new generation of revolutionaries in the 1940s. In post-war India, widespread peasant uprisings, industrial strikes, the Mutiny of the Royal Indian Navy Cadets and the launching of the Indian National Army under the leadership of Netaji Subhash Bose, were in fact a continuation and extension of the legacy of the national revolutionaries. Revolutionary nationalism succeeded in what it intended to do – evoking by the maximum sacrifice of a chosen few the ‘spirit of minimum sacrifice on the part of the many’. This uncompromising trend of Indian national movement appears to have been left a very rich and noble heritage which no one could deny. Bipo Chandra comments, in this connection, that the revolutionaries were very much successful ‘in arousing the country and in winning the love and respect of their countrymen, but for
the cause of nationalism’. (Chandra, Bipan, 2009: 249) This was no mean success and this can be treated as the great success of the national revolutionaries. However, the fruits of their success were gathered by the traditional Congress leadership which they had hoped to replace. The fire of revolution which was kindled by the Chapekar brothers in Maharashtra in 1897 flaring and fading through years of uncertainty at last culminated in a dazzling burst of brilliance in the heroic struggle of the INA and the Naval Uprising of 1946 and struck terror into the hearts of the imperialist rulers.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, an attempt may be made to delineate some of the broad features of revolutionary nationalist movement of India in general and of Bengal in particular: First, the revolutionaries did not belong to a single unified party, but were divided into a number of secret societies, generally working independently. Secondly, they did not subscribe to any common ideology but expressed the common nationalist aspiration for full freedom and a common faith in armed revolution. Thirdly, the prevalent tactics and methods of the revolutionary nationalists were not accepted equally by all the activists as a good number of them accepted these as temporary and unwelcome devices of defense and counter-attack. Fourthly, it is also to be noted that as opportunities presented themselves, in the national and international fields, the revolutionary nationalists tried to take advantage of them and changed their method and techniques in accordance with the requirements of the situation. Fifthly, most of the leaders of various revolutionary groups had probably an exaggerated notion about the role of the middle-class intelligentsia in the national democratic revolution. The democratic content was relatively weak in their political consciousness and, of course, it was alien to their methods of organisation which were intended to be military and secret. (Laushey, 1975: 86) Lastly, as observed by R P Dutt, the national revolutionaries completely ignored the issue of mass organisation and mass involvement. Their ideas exhibited certain ideological lacuna. At that stage, they had no viable concept for social construction after the overthrowing of the British rule. Neither had they offered a clear idea of the political structure after the British rule (Dutt, R P: 1979). By late thirties, a glorious chapter in the history of Indian national movement ends in the main and a search for a new revolutionary ideology and a revolutionary programme to suit the new time begins. Upon their release in the late 1930’s or 40’s the revolutionaries either joined the Communist Party of India or one of the other Socialist / Marxist Parties which had come into existence in the thirties or forties or formed their own parties on the basis of their particular interpretation of Marxist ideology. Laushey believes that probably fifty percent of the national revolutionaries converted to Marxism either in the jails or in the detention camps. (Laushey, 1975: 86) Those revolutionaries who did not convert to Marxism either joined Congress or dropped out of nationalist politics. In any case, the revolutionary party did not function effectively after about 1934 and were formally or informally dissolved in the late thirties.