

CHAPTER IV

THE PENULTIMATE PHASE OF COOCH BEHAR RAJ : COOCH BEHAR AS THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER'S PROVINCE AND ITS RELATED PROBLEMS
(12th* August, 1947 - 31st December, 1949)

With the attainment of freedom, the Indian people began to enjoy the fruit of independence, but the people of Cooch Behar State had still to bear with the repressive rule of the monarchical government. Political parties were not allowed to function in Cooch Behar State. Biren De Sarkar, the Secretary of the C.P.I. of Cooch Behar State and Saroj Bhattacharya, an eminent communist worker and also a teacher of Rambhola High School were externed from Cooch Behar by the royal order of '24 Hour Notice' issued on 7th February, 1947. This banishment of the political activists from Cooch Behar was not a new phenomenon. At least 10 - 12 political activists had been externed from the State in the same way since last 5 years.¹ The State authorities also tried to obstruct the celebration of Independence Day in the state. The Civil Liberties Committee of Cooch Behar decided to celebrate the 15th August of 1947 as Civil Liberties Day. Initially the Committee was denied the permission, but ultimately the State authorities had to give in to the pressure of strong public opinion.^{1*} Prof. Durga Kinkar Bhattacharjee of the Victoria College had been dismissed from the State service on the 17th October, 1947 for taking active part in political activities.² Prof. Bhattacharjee's dismissal gave rise to a wide-spread agitation against the state authorities. The students community was at the forefront of this agitation, and strikes and picketing of the schools, college, bazars and offices were the features of this students movement³ which, with the support and co-operation of all the political parties, soon developed into a mass agitation raising demands for civil liberties, liberation of all the detainees, end of exploitation of the peasants and so on.⁴

It is significant to note that Cooch Behar State witnessed a peasant movement at Uchhal Pukuri and Dhulia region in the sub-division of Mekligung in 1946 under the impact of the Tebhaga movement which was raging the districts of North Bengal,⁵ particularly Thakurgaon sub-division of Dinajpur and the adjoining areas of Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and Malda. The salient feature of the movement was that 'share croppers taking paddy to their own threshing floor and not to the Jotedar's house as before, so as to enforce Tebhaga.'⁶ The peasants of Cooch Behar State agitated against the exploitation of the Jotedars and took their land forcefully. They established an independent government over the 30 villages under the leadership of Dineswar Barman, Dalim Bania and Nabanee Barman who were elected by the peasants as their King, Minister and General (senapati) respectively. This independent government by the peasants lasted for three months.⁷ In view of this grave situation, the Cooch Behar State authority resorted to military action to suppress the movement. The ring-leaders including Dineswar Barman were arrested and after trial they were sentenced to jail for several years.⁸ But still the peasant trouble lingered on in the Mekligung villages till December, 1948. The state authority did not consider this peasant trouble as Tebhaga movement since no one

agitated for the reduction of the Jotedar's share from one half to the third; what the peasants (adhiars) did was to appropriate the whole of the paddy themselves. Due to the timely action by the state authority against the ring leaders, this peasant movement subsided.⁹ Their ring leaders had been arrested who were known as Communists.¹⁰

Barring the Hitasadhani Sabha, the only state patronised organisation, there were no other organised political groups in Cooch Behar in pre-independence days.¹¹ As has been noted earlier, the political activities were strictly prohibited in the state. A person was to be expelled from the State by 'the Act of 24 Hours Notice' on the ground of mere suspicion that he was involved in politics. As a result of this draconian act, political activities had been carried on secretly in the state.¹² Since early 1940's the Communists infiltrated into Cooch Behar and formed a party cell there (1944) and its founder-members were Biren Dey Sarkar, Anil Roy, Sushil Dey Sarkar, Nikhil Mukherjee and Bisvanath Saha. Later Shiben Choudhuri and Jiban Dey also emerged as the Communist leaders. They had to carry on political activities secretly in Library, Gymnasium and Clubs.¹³ There were also other political groups such as the Forward Bloc, the Congress Socialist Party etc. in the State. Haru, Amal Basu, Bimal Basu, Durgesh Niyogi and Aparajita Goppi led the Forward Bloc Group.¹⁴ The Indian National Congress did not open its branch in Cooch Behar in pre-independence days. But the Praja Mandal (States People's Conference) was founded in 1946 in the State on the pattern of Congress sponsored programmes such as independence and democracy beside the right of the peasants over their cultivating lands was added to it.¹⁵ The President of the Praja Mandal was Umesh Chandra Mandal, a Gandhite Rajbanshi Pleader of the Dinhata Bar and the Secretary was Ramesh Roy, a C.P.I. worker. Its Vice President was Kabiraj Kamini Kumar Bhattacharjee and Assistant-Secretary was Anil Roy. The Praja Mandal first celebrated Indian Independence Day on the 26th January, 1947 at the present Shahid Bagh in Cooch Behar town and took the oath of India's independence and democracy. In fact, the Praja Mandal was a platform of various political groups among which the Communists were predominant.¹⁶ Praja Mandal leaders and followers demanded the establishment of responsible government in the state and actively supported the merger of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union. They cautioned the people about the dangerous communal politics of the Hitasadhani Sabha and tried to remove Cooch Behari-Non-Cooch Behari animosity.¹⁷

On the other hand, the formation of "Cooch Behar Hitasadhani Sabha" was announced at a largely attended public meeting of the Cooch Behari people held at Cooch Behar town on the 19th May, 1947. Khan Choudhuri Amanatulla Ahmed presided over the meeting. The sole objective behind the formation of the Hitasadhani Sabha was the welfare of the Cooch Behari people. At the said meeting nine proposals dealing with the problems of Cooch Behari people were adopted and sent to the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan for his kind consideration. Those proposals included adequate supply of food and cloth, introduction of compulsory primary education, enlargement of Legislative Council and establishment of responsible government. After the end of the meeting the Hitasadhani Sabha leaders paid a salutary visit to the Maharaja and expressed their deep loyalty to him. The Maharaja assured the Hitasadhani

leaders that he would duly consider their proposals and necessary steps would be taken in this regard. On the same day, in a welcome message to his beloved people, the Maharaja said that he was proud of the cordial bond between him and his people and promised to do his best to fulfil the needs of his people.¹⁸

Another meeting of the Hitasadhani Sabha chaired by the Education Minister Dharani Sankar Bhattacharya was held at Dinhata on the 31st Jaishtha, 1354 B. S. The Education Minister and Khan Choudhuri Amanatulla Ahmed at the meeting made fervent appeal to the Cooch Behari people to join the Hitasadhani Sabha as its members and dedicate themselves to the cause of Cooch Behar.¹⁹ The state authorities patronised the growth of the Hitasadhani Sabha. It is said that even the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan addressed the meetings of the Hitasadhani Sabha.²⁰ Rajkumar Indrajitendra Narayan, the younger brother of the Maharaja, also addressed the Hitasadhani Sabha meeting at Mekhligang.²¹ Abbas Uddin Ahmed, a leader of Hitasadhani Sabha and the eminent international folk singer wrote in his memoirs that the Maharaja was sympathetic to the cause of the Hitasadhani Sabha.²²

According to some writings published by the participants of the Merger Movement, the Cooch Behar State Authorities and the British Resident at the Durbar of Cooch Behar patronised the growth of the Hitasadhani Sabha. Besides, the Landholders' Association of Cooch Behar was the chief defender of the Hitasadhani Sabha. They had some definite political objectives behind this patronisation. It is said that they became alarmed at the rapid growth of the Tebhaga peasant movement in the border area of the Cooch Behar State which greatly fanned the peasant unrest in Mekhligang and Haldibari and therefore they wanted to free Cooch Behar from the influence of the Tebhaga Movement. The creation of the Hitasadhani Sabha was intended to act as a countercheck to the Tebhaga Movement and to divert the attention of the people from this peasant movement to Cooch Behari Non-Cooch Behari conflict.²³

Very Soon the Hitasadhani Sabha-led movement was directed against the outsiders who were known as Bhatias in Cooch Behar. The Bengalis of East and South Bengal were called Bhatias or outsiders in Cooch Behar. Abbas Uddin Ahmed has remarked that the predominance of the outsiders or the Bhatias was the main reason behind the formation of the Hitasadhani Sabha.²⁴ Satish Chandra Roy Singha, the Education Minister of the State, at a meeting held in Mekhligang on the 28th November, 1947 announced that the outsiders should be driven out from the state.²⁵ Khan Chaudhuri Amanatulla Ahmed, the President of the Hitasadhani Sabha and Satish Chandra Roy Singha, the leader of the Legislative Council wrote a letter on the 8th August, 1949 to the Adviser, the States Ministry, New Delhi informing him that "Cooch Beharis by nature simple, docile and law-abiding. They are economically and educationally backward. Taking advantage of their backwardness, the Bengalis exploited them in the past and they are exploiting them in the present. Thus there grew a natural dislike for Bengalis among the Cooch Beharis."²⁶ Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam and in charge of the Cooch Behar State, wrote to Sardar Patel after his visit to that state that there was strong anti-Bengali feeling in the state, resulting in the Congress as a whole tending to

become unpopular in Cooch Behar.²⁷ Sir Akbar Hydari's successor Sri Prakasa after a visit to Cooch Behar, also wrote to Sardar Patel expressing his impression that the main problem of Cooch Behar was the problem of the majority community, the Cooch Beharis, holding their own against a very small but powerful minority of Bengalis, who were anxious to assert themselves and to get the Cooch Beharis to accept their supremacy in everything, particularly in view of the obvious attempts of the Bengali minority to get the State merged with West Bengal and this resulted in the gradual consolidation of the Hitasadhani Sabha which had recently been rechristened the Cooch Behar Praja Congress. According to Sri Prakasa, the Cooch Beharis were definitely afraid of the growth of Bengali influence and it was the fear complex that predominated in the minds of the Cooch Beharis.²⁸ When this conflict between the Cooch Beharis and the Non-Cooch Beharis was raging the social atmosphere of the Cooch Behar State, the Ministers of the State who were also the Hitasadhani Sabha spokesmen had introduced several communal and repressive measures against the Non-Cooch Beharis in the field of service, education and land distribution.²⁹

The State Praja Mandal Samiti (the States' People's Conference) led by the left leaders predominantly was very aware of the dangerous communal politics of the Hitasadhani Sabha. In a memorandum dated July 28, 1948 addressed to Sardar Patel, Ministry of States, the Praja Mandal Samiti complained that the Hitasadhani Sabha made attempts to divide the Hindus of the state into two factions, namely, Cooch Beharis and Non-Cooch Beharis (The two nation theory). All sorts of rules and regulations had been and were being formed to drive out the caste Hindus of the Indian Union from the State. The Praja Mandal Samiti also held this view that 'the effect of this division among the Hindus had been to effect both the solidarity and expansion of the Muslims and the outcome of this policy was to Muslimize the whole state.' Therefore, the Samiti urged the Indian Union that 'for the safety and interest of the people of Cooch Behar and also for the solidarity of the Indian Union the Cooch Behar State be at once merged with such a province which was indissolubly connected with Cooch Behar culturally, economically, geographically and linguistically.'³⁰

The Hitasadhani Sabha leaders also launched a political movement. A section of the Hitasadhani Sabha and of the members of the State Council wanted merger with Pakistan. Khan Choudhuri Amanatulla Ahmed, the Revenue Minister of Cooch Behar State and his colleague Satish Chandra Roy Singha, the Education Minister of the State propagated at a meeting held in Mekhligang on 17th August, 1948 that they wanted Cooch Behar to remain independent of the Indian Union. They called for the destruction of the State Congress and accused the Congress of anti-state activities.³¹ Another official of the state, Hakim Ahmmad Hossain, while serving as a S.D.O. of Mathabhanga delivered a speech of the occasion of a Muslim religious festival supporting the cause of merger of Cooch Behar with Pakistan.³²

It was reported that since the partition, the Muslims of the State had been persistently trying to establish Muslim majority in the State. The Hitasadhani Sabha of which Khan Choudhuri Amanatulla was the President had practically become the main organisation for their activities to serve their purpose of establishing Muslim domination

in the state and they had achieved appreciable success of the capture of about 10 seats by Muslims with Hitasadhani tickets. The Revenue Minister and the Chief Secretary, who were Muslims, were practically running the administration with other Muslim officials of the state. It was also reported that the Muslims taking advantage of their position in the state were instigating the local people against the enlightened Hindus who were domiciled Bengalees. It was further reported that Barka Mea, an upcountry Muslim of Cooch Behar town and leader of the local Muslim League, Yakub Uddin, Halim Panchayat and Imdad Hussain, son of Khan Choudhuri Amanatulla, the Revenue Minister, had contact with Abbas Uddin Ahmed, the well-known musician, who was a native of Cooch Behar and an employee in the Publicity Department, East Bengal Secretariat (Pakistan) and supplied information of the state through him. They had been to Karachi twice and visited Dacca twice a month.³³

The Muslim League was styled in Cooch Behar as "Sabuj Sangha" and the Chief Secretary of Cooch Behar State was the President of this Association and Assistant Naib Ahilker Matiar Rahaman of Mathabhanga was the Secretary. This Association was situated in the house of the Personal Head Vallet of the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan at Cooch Behar town. Jamaluddin Daftri, his brother and his uncle and O.C. of Tufangang- Anwar Hossain (S.I. of Police) was the trainer. This Association claimed that they had got more than 5,000 able-bodied Muslim volunteers. Wahed Meah, brother of the Chief Secretary Ansaruddin Ahmed, was suspected by the Calcutta Police on the ground that he took active part in Calcutta killing of August, 1946. He came to Cooch Behar with a large booty. This Wahed Meah had been made Honorary Magistrate chiefly because of his connection with the Chief Secretary of the State. One of the brothers of the present Sadar Sub-divisional Officer, Cooch Behar, Fakiruddin Ahmad was the son-in-law of the Chief Secretary. Fakiruddin had since been made the Deputy Secretary of the Revenue Minister Khan Choudhuri Amanatulla Ahmed. Two of the nephews of the present Revenue Minister as placed in high posts in Pakistan, who frequented the Cooch Behar State on the plea of pleasure visit to their relatives. All these Muslims were connected with the 'Sabuj Sangha' as mentioned above. It was also reported that Abbas Uddin Ahmed, the noted artist, of Cooch Behar, who was reported to be a propaganda officer of the Pakistan Government had influenced some of the Muslim Ministers of the State in engaging his own brother Abdul Karim as Assistant in the Audit Department, although he was an under-graduate. He was later transferred to the Election Office to conduct polling booth and thereby influence Muslim voters. It was further reported that a huge sum of about Rs. 60,000/- had been sanctioned in budget to conduct the propaganda work on behalf of the royalist Hitasadhani Party and the sum was drawn without any voucher by His Highness the Maharaja himself.³⁴

Although unofficially and personally Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan agreed to accede to the Indian Union, he officially signed the Cooch Behar Merger Agreement only after two years on the 28th August, 1949. During this interval period the political environment was complicated by the masterly inactivity pursued by the Maharaja to the anti-India activities of the Hitasadhan Sabha and his ministers. It was argued that without his tacit approval it would

not have been possible for them to carry on such type of activities.³⁵ It has also been said the Maharaja had become a puppet in the hands of the members of the State Council and wanted to maintain the separate identity of Cooch Behar State.³⁶

Just after the independence there arose intermittent tension between the Indian Dominion and the Princely States. In this situation the tiny Princely State of Cooch Behar experienced with multi-dimensional forces and events, operating in tacit or manifest manner. The demand of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar to remain independent arose out of three major considerations. First, the Indian Independence Act, 1947 provided the right to the Princely States to merge with either of the Dominions or to remain independent. Secondly, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar had been a party to that section of the princely states which voiced for sustaining their independence. Thirdly, the Maharaja wanted to make a balance between the opposing forces within the local political elites propagating that Cooch Behar State should either join India or merge with Pakistan.³⁷ Moreover, the Maharajas of Cooch Behar had never been a direct party to the anti-colonial political movements. Thus the Indian nationalist consciousness could not touch upon the minds of the Maharajas of Cooch Behar. The Praja Mandal Samiti alleged that the Maharaja of Cooch Behar in collusion and collaboration with his Muslim pro-league and scheduled caste ministers thought that he could still play the same reactionary role as was done previously during the British era. The Ministers of the State were absolutely pro-league and they were in constant touch with Pakistan. The Praja Mandal also alleged that a most reactionary group (the Hitasadhani Sabha) had been formed and patronised by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar to serve his own personal purpose of dominating and ruling the people to the detriment of the safety of the Indian Union.³⁸ It has also been said that the Maharaja himself met Suhrawardy, the Prime Minister of Bengal and invited his opinion about the question of merger referring to the fact that his state was surrounded on three sides by territories of Pakistan.³⁹ It has been further alleged that Cooch Behar State authorities were forcing people to sign against merging and making propaganda against Indian Dominion.⁴⁰ Sardar Ballabhbai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of States wrote to the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that 'the Muslim members of the local Hitasadhani Sabha had their sympathies definitely with the neighbouring East Pakistan.⁴¹ According to Nanjappa, the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar, the Hitasadhani Party was artificially created by the previous State Government to fight integration and it did not represent public opinion.⁴² Shri Sri Prakasa, the Governor and also in charge of Cooch Behar State wrote to Sardar Ballabhbai Patel that he himself had discussed matters informally with Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan during his visit to Cooch Behar. The Maharaja seemed to take a very sensible and philosophical view, for he told the Governor of Assam that 'when all states have gone a few here and there are not likely to be left. The Maharaja naturally would prefer to have a separate existence, but was not very hopeful that would be possible. He preferred Assam to Bengal for he felt all Cooch Beharis' ties with the former.⁴³

K. N. Katju, the Governor of West Bengal, wrote a letter to Ballabhbai Patel on the 4th October, 1948 informing him that 'there had been all sorts of reports in the newspapers about the developments in Cooch Behar. It was suggested that the Muslims from Eastern Pakistan were infiltrating into Cooch Behar and some reports went to the length of suggesting that there would be a definite attempt made to make Cooch Behar join Pakistan and this movement would not be wholly repugnant to the ruling house. The police report which he recently saw was very much to that effect. But Mr. Himmat Singh K. Maheshwari, the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar met with him and assured him that all these reports were completely baseless. He suggested that all these reports were parts of propaganda for ulterior ends. Nevertheless, K. N. Katju was of the view that Cooch Behar having acceded to the Indian Dominion, the Government of India were vitally interested in its security and should be kept informed of what was happening in the state.⁴⁴ But Sri Prakasa gave a different opinion on the same issue in a letter dated the 29th March, 1949 to Sardar Patel. He observed that as regards reports about efforts to Muslimise the state with a view to its ultimate accession to Pakistan he could find no evidence of any such move during his visit to Cooch Behar nor was the allegation made by any of the many people who came to interview him. Even the State Congress, which had been so vigorous in its denunciation of the Chief Minister and the present Government seemed to have thought fit to drop this part at least of its armoury.⁴⁵

It is also significant to note that Umesh Chandra Mandal brought serious charges against the Chief Minister and the state administration of Cooch Behar in a letter dated 30th March, 1949 Dinhat addressed to A. B. Chatterjee, the Joint Secretary, States Ministry, New Delhi. He alleged that the Chief Minister had gone to Delhi "to make 'tadbir' for keeping the state as one administered by the Centre or to integrate it with Assam. The Chief Minister is very anti-Bengalee and he has already inducted lots of non-Bengalee state officers from Jaipur in places of experienced and able Bengalee officers. Now it is learnt that the present Commissioner of Police, J. Chatterjee is retiring and an Assamese retired Police Officer, some Phukan, is going to be appointed as Commissioner of Police." Umesh Chandra Mandal also alleged that "all the I. B. Papers concerning the participation of the State and of the Chief Minister in the Muslim activities of the neighbouring Pakistan area are being destroyed. Thus he requested the Joint Secretary to take steps to integrate the State with West Bengal, to remove the present Chief Minister at once and to place a Congressite Chief Minister in charge of the state from saving the state from being integrated with Assam, which, if done, would bring about trouble and discontent here. He further requested him to "put a stop to the destruction of the I. B. Papers and keep the present Police Commissioner in service till the integration of the state is effected."⁴⁶

Amidst such reports of alleged anti-Indian activities which have been going on in Cooch Behar State, the Bengalee leaders and various parties and organisations tried hard to draw the attention of the State Department of the Government of India to this volatile ground realities in Cooch Behar and seek its immediate intervention as remedial measure to stop such obnoxious activities there. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the Premier of West Bengal, wrote a letter

dated 13th April, 1949 to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for States and informed him that he was very anxious about Cooch Behar because of certain developments which had taken place there affecting the security not merely of West Bengal but also of the Indian Union. Therefore, Dr. Roy requested him to take up the case of Cooch Behar and its accession to the West Bengal Government.⁴⁷

Sarat Chandra Bose sent Sardar Patel a telegram on 25th April, 1949 in the following terms, "Reported attempts being secretly insidiously made for merging 99 percent Bengali speaking Cooch Behar with Assam. Invite your attention. Detailed reports in Nation 23 and 25 April. Appeal you do justice Cooch Behar and West Bengal." Later he wrote a letter dated 3rd May, 1949 to Sardar Patel on the same issue. The letter runs as follows, "... I have to invite your attention to reports which appear in the Nation of 23 and 25 April and also to the telegrams which appeared in the issue of the Nation of 29 April - (page 3). I do not think the facts contained in the said reports can be challenged. The people of Cooch Behar state are 99 percent Bengali-speaking and there is not a single Assamese there. Apart from linguistic reasons, other reasons such as cultural, geographical, administrative etc, support West Bengal's claim to Cooch Behar and completely negate Assam's claim to it. As you are the Minister-in-charge, I consider it my duty to draw your attention to the situation in Cooch Behar and the demands of the people there."⁴⁸

K. N. Katju, the Governor of West Bengal, wrote letters dated 23rd June, 1949 to both C. Rajagopalachari, the Governor-General of India and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and informed them that "In view of the fact that questions about Travancore, Cochin, Rampur, Banaras and Tehri Garhwal have now been settled, I presume that a final decision about Cooch Behar will not be much delayed. An early announcement will seem to be desirable."⁴⁹

The Members of the Cooch Behar State Congress Committee submitted a memorandum dated 30th March, 1949 to the Governor of Assam who was also the Dominion Agent for the State of Cooch Behar for his kind perusal and necessary action. They pointed out in the memorandum that 'the other day the Deputy Prime Minister of the Indian Union in connection with his budget speech in the Parliament declared that the States of Tripura, Manipur and Cooch Behar will be integrated considering their geographical situation and other conditions. As regards integration of the State of Cooch Behar they beg to submit that the State of Cooch Behar is all along being treated geographically, linguistically and culturally as part and parcel of Bengal. The treaty between the Rajah of Cooch Behar and the East India Company will also show that Cooch Behar is a part and parcel of Bengal and is to be annexed with Bengal.

They asserted in the memorandum that the speaking dialect of Cooch Behar is Bengali as spoken in the Northern districts of Bengal such as Jalpaiguri, Dinajpore and Rangpore. The Court language of the State is Bengali and the medium of education imparted in schools and colleges is also Bengali. List of text books prescribed for Primary and Middle English School and the forms used in the courts will exclusively show that Bengali is the only

medium and tongue of Cooch Behar State people. Not a single Cooch Behar people will understand Assami language in any form.

They also pointed out that trouble is already going on in the Bengali speaking areas of Bihar and Assam, and agitation is going on throughout India for the formation of provinces on linguistic basis. If Cooch Behar be integrated with Assam, they are afraid, the same trouble may arise here too. So their humble prayer is that Cooch Behar State be merged or integrated with the Province of West Bengal.⁵⁰

The Cooch Behar People's Association, a social organisation, actively worked for the interest of the people of Cooch Behar, was formed in Calcutta by the educated elites having Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri background.⁵¹ The Association was located at the G. S. Emporium, Central Avenue, Calcutta. Chunilal Mukherjee, an ex-professor of the Cooch Behar College and a successful businessman of the State as well as Tarapada Chakraborti and Barindra Ghose were the joint secretaries of the Association. From the very beginning the Association worked for bringing Cooch Behar to the fold of the Indian Union. In its meetings mostly held in Calcutta, the Association time and again supported the urgency of merger of Cooch Behar with India. But such activities had not been possible in Cooch Behar due to a general ban on meetings and processions in the State imposed by the strength of the Cooch Behar Public Safety Act.⁵² Later the Cooch Behar People's Association took a leading part in the movement already sponsored by the Bengalee organisers from Calcutta in favour of a merger with West Bengal. The Association received patronisation and support from most of Bengal's political and social elites, viz., Dr. B. C. Roy, Dr. S. P. Mukherjee, Sarat Chandra Bose, Probodh Sanyal, Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Sir J. N. Sarkar and others.⁵³

The visit of Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghose, Ex-Premier of Bengal to Cooch Behar during 1948 generated hope and enthusiasm among the political and social organisations favouring its merger with West Bengal. Dr. Ghose was objective in his mission enabling the people of Cooch Behar to understand the prospect if this area be merged with West Bengal. He cautioned those organisations playing with the native cards. As a result, the people of Cooch Behar favouring merger with West Bengal got boosted. Dr. B. C. Roy, the Premier of West Bengal, as mentioned earlier, had whole-heartedly supported the merger of Cooch Behar in West Bengal for the greater unity and integrity of the newly emerged Indian nation.⁵⁴

The eminent leaders of Assam province countered the arguments of the West Bengal leaders asking for the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. The Assam leaders tried to prove the arguments of West Bengal leaders as cocktailed and lofty without having any definite social base. To substantiate their arguments the Assam Congress leaders sharply pointed out that the linguistic, cultural, ethnological and religious affinity between Cooch Behar and Assam.⁵⁵ Gopinath Bordoloi, the Premier of Assam; wrote a fortnightly letter dated 18th June, 1949 to the Prime

Minister Jawaharlal Nehru regarding Cooch Behar. The letter runs as follows :

"I had occasion to consult the Assam Provincial Congress Committee and its working Committee in the meanwhile over matters of urgent importance and I am glad to tell you that they unanimously support our stand over the issues I am hereby mentioning."

"In reference to Cooch Behar, they adopted a resolution to the effect that the people of Assam would welcome a merger of Cooch Behar with Assam, provided the people of Cooch Behar decided to do so. It was pointed out that the speaking language, customs, manners and the mode of life of the people of Cooch Behar are the same as the people of Assam, as they belonged to the same kingdom till very recently; and that to merge her with West Bengal would be against her past history, culture and tradition, and what is more, against the declared wish of the people themselves. ..."⁵⁶

The Assam Congress leaders also referred the example of the deep seated influence of the Assamese religious prophets such as Shankar Dev, Madhav Dev and Shreedhar Kandali on the minds of the people of Cooch Behar through the ages. Thus to deprive Assam from getting Cooch Behar in its fold would be an attempt to distort the history.⁵⁷ To accelerate the move and to boost the people of Cooch Behar demanding the merger with Assam, the Chief Minister of Assam, Gopinath Bordoloi had made a hurricane tour in Cooch Behar.⁵⁸ To expedite the merger of Cooch Behar with Assam some administrative higher officials of Assam also came to Cooch Behar and met with the officials of the State. Various organisations of Assam such as Assam Pradeshik Kshatriya Samiti, Assam Jatiya Mahasabha demanded the merger of Cooch Behar with Assam without any delay. Besides, Nilmony Phukan and Sarat Chandra Sinha, two eminent personalities of Assam, came to Cooch Behar during this time and met with the Maharaja. Mr. Phukan argued that Cooch Behar should be merged with Assam and if it was merged with Bengal that would be harmful to the Indian Union.⁵⁹

It is significant to note that the arguments of the Hitasadhani Sabha leaders of Cooch Behar were almost the same as those of the Assamese leaders. For instance, Amanatfulla Ahmed, President, State Proja Congress (better known as the Hitasadhani Sabha) and Satish Chandra Roy Singha, leader of the House, Cooch Behar Legislative Council, wrote a letter to the Adviser, the Ministry of States, New Delhi, dated 8th August, 1949 and the letter runs as follows :

"The people of Cooch Behar (both Hindus and Muslims) unlike the Bengalis have got peculiar characteristics of their own. Their spoken language is quite different from Bengali - it is a peculiar Rajbanshi dialect - having greater affinity with Assamese a fact which Dr. Grierson, the learned philologist in his book of Linguistic Survey, Vol. V, has recognised. It is also spoken language of the entire people of lower Assam. Manners and customs are quite different

from Bengalis and are similar to those of Assamese and are officiated by the Brahmins of Assam. The Bengalis treat them as of inferior stock and are most reluctant to keep any social connection with them." They also pointed out in the aforesaid letter that "... the entire people of Cooch Behar (excluding the microscopic Bengali element) are against the merger of the State with West Bengal.... There grew a natural dislike for Bengalees among the Cooch Beharis ... to caste our lot with such a Province (West Bengal) will be sheer injustice to the people of Cooch Behar and the future of the latter will always remain in darkness."⁶⁰

Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan could not, however, remain impartial on the issue of the merger of Cooch Behar. He tilted towards favouring the cause of Assam and openly stated that the State's merger with Assam would be preferred to that with West Bengal for its strategic importance as well as for its cultural homogeneity.⁶¹ As mentioned earlier, the Maharaja told Sri Prakasa, the Governor of Assam, during the latter's visit to the State that 'he preferred Assam to Bengal for he felt all Cooch Beharis' ties with the former'.⁶² The Maharaja also told V.P. Menon, the Adviser, the Ministry of States, that he was confident that 95% of the population of Cooch Behar would cast their votes in favour of the merger of the State with Assam instead of Bengal.⁶³ The Maharaja also complained that the people from Bengal exploited the State for many years.⁶⁴ The arguments of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan clearly show that he had reservations on the issue of merging Cooch Behar with West Bengal. However, the Maharaja's arguments were rejected as baseless by the various political and social organisations like the State Congress, the State People's Conference in Cooch Behar.⁶⁵

While the political situation was becoming very much volatile in Cooch Behar state, the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru came to Calcutta and announced at a public meeting (held on 14th July, 1949) that the question of merger of Cooch Behar should be settled by a plebiscite as there is a division among the people of that State.⁶⁶

Such an announcement evoked mixed responses. Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, Assam Jatiya Mahasabha and other popular organisation of Assam gave thanks to Nehru for the announcement. Gopinath Bordoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam expressed his pleasure for Nehru's keeping of promises to declare a plebiscite for determining the future fate of of Cooch Behar.⁶⁷ On the other hand, Nehru's announcement for plebiscite in Cooch Behar had been strongly resented by the pro-Bengal movement makers under the auspices of the Cooch Behar People's Association. A public meeting demanding the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal was held on 20th July, 1949 at the Mahabodhi Society Hall, which was presided over by Sri Hemendra Prasad Ghose, a Journalist. Chunilal Mukherjee of Cooch Behar, Satyapriya Banerjee, of the Forward Bloc (Marxist Group), Dr. S. K. Ganguli, President of the New Bengal Association and the President spoke condemning the alleged conspiracy of the Congress High Command, who wanted to suppress the people of Bengal by opposing the re-inclusion of Cooch Behar to the truncated province. According to the speakers, the question of plebiscite raised by the Prime Minister in his Maidan

speech in Calcutta was superfluous in face of the fact that the question of plebiscite was not raised in regard to the merger of several other states.

A resolution was passed in the aforesaid meeting to the effect that the public received with a mixed feeling the announcement of the Prime Minister that the Cooch Behar State was going to be centrally administered and hoped that it would only be a preliminary to its merger with West Bengal at an early date without any plebiscite, on the grounds of its geographical contiguity and cultural and linguistic affinity.⁶⁸

Thus the issue of the merger of Cooch Behar became a heated controversy both in Bengal and Assam. It made the situation in Cooch Behar further a complicated one. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel also conveyed this to both Bengalee and Assamese leaders through his correspondences. He told Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the Chief Minister of West Bengal that 'Cooch Behar is a difficult problem.the problem is not easy of solution.'⁶⁹ He wrote to K. N. Katju, the Governor of West Bengal, that "from all evidence, independent as well as otherwise, it seems that merger (of Cooch Behar) with West Bengal is locally unpopular. It is a difficult problem and we will have to think hard about it lest we should provoke an unpleasant local situation."⁷⁰ At the same time he assured Sarat Chandra Bose that "I am fully alive to situation in Cooch Behar. There is no question under consideration of its merger with Assam. You can rest assured that in this matter justice shall be done."⁷¹

On the other hand, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel told Sri Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam that "it is most unfortunate that things should develop on these lines (Bengal versus Assam). I shall see what can be done to check these matters from worsening."⁷² He also wrote to Sri Prakasa, the next Governor of Assam, expressing his own views on the Cooch Behar State's affairs. In a confidential D.O. letter dated 13th April, 1949 to Sri Prakasa, Sardar Patel has pointed out that "as regards Cooch Behar, the problem is complicated for several reasons. "It has a strategic situation, in that it borders on East Bengal, Assam and West Bengal. Politically, it seems to be more connected with Bengal and Assam. Probably, from the point of view of indigenous population, it has affinities more with Bengal than with Assam. It is true that the majority of the people is non-Bengali in the strict sense of the term; at the same time, the court language is Bengali. He further points out, "we cannot think of an isolated existence for Cooch Behar. Merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal may create some local disaffection but will satisfy West Bengal. Merger with Assam may be preferred by the local population, but will set against us practically the whole of West Bengal. The association of the State has throughout history been with Bengalis, though unfortunately as a result of partition the area with which it had association has now gone over to Pakistan."

"My own tentative view is that," Sardar Patel informed Sri Prakasa, "if merger has to come about, it has to be with West Bengal; at the same time, we have to proceed very cautiously because of the considerable Muslim

population and the potentiality of its being a bone of contention between Assam and West Bengal. It is also clear that Cooch Behar must take some Bengali refugees. This may make some difference both to the composition of the population and to the inclinations on the question of merger. However, these are all my tentative views and no settled convictions. For the time being, I should be inclined to leave the state alone. After a few months we shall have to get down to business. In the meantime, we have to provide against two dangers : (i) Any local conflict between Bengalis and Non-Bengalis; and (ii) any infiltration of Pakistani elements. ... I would, therefore, suggest that you might have a close eye on the administration (of the state) and see that there is no cause for complaint or apprehension on the lines mentioned above."⁷³

In the meantime, the activities of the Communists and other left-wing political parties made the political situation volatile in Cooch Behar State. As noted earlier, the State Praja Mandal was predominantly led by the Communists and other left-wing political leaders. The ring leaders of the peasant movement at Mekhligang and other areas were the Communists. According to the I. B. report dated 7th August, 1949, five of the Communist Security Prisoners were arrested in connection with peasant agitation in the state some month ago. They were still being detained in the Dinhata Sub-jail under the provisions of the Cooch Behar State Security Act. Their leader Debi Neogi was brought in custody to Cooch Behar Court on the 6th August, 1949 in connection with the hearing of a petition at Sadar calling into question the validity of the last elections on the ground that he was debarred from exercising his franchise by reason of his detention without trial. Even while in custody, Neogi, at the time of his departure, seized the opportunity and addressed a crowd of people that had gathered nearby, to explain to them the fact that he was being detained indefinitely for his fight against the alleged oppression of the Maharaja and other landowners on the poor cultivators and agricultured labourers.⁷⁴

The Communist detainees in Dinhata subjail went on hunger strike. One of their demands being a monthly allowance of Rs. 40. They gave up the hunger strike on 26th July, 1949 on being told that enquiries about the amount of monthly allowance would be made from West Bengal. From 26th to 28th July, 1949 the following slogans were found written on the metalled portion of the main road within the town of Dinhata "Destroy the Capitalist Congress Government," "Release the prisoners," and "Rescue detainees from the jails by force."⁷⁵ Four of the five Communists who were detained in the sub-jail at Dinhata under the Cooch Behar Public Security Act were once again on hunger strike since the 26th August, 1949. They were Debi Neogi, Birendra Nath De Sarkar, Sunil Kumar Ghose and Shibendra Choudhuri. The hunger strikers were demanding enhancement of their personal allowances of Rs. 10/- to Rs. 40/- per mensem. At that time the Assam Detention Rules provided the grant of a monthly allowance of Rs. 10/- and this was accepted by the Cooch Behar Government. But under the West Bengal Detention Rules the allowances was Rs. 40/- per mensem.⁷⁶ Several communist pamphlets were found pasted on lamp posts, trees and walls in Dinhata on the 13th July, 1949.⁷⁷ It was also reported that the Cooch Behar Police had been unable to find any satisfactory clues

regarding the communist posters found pasted in certain places in the town of Cooch Behar in December, 1948.⁷⁸

Himmat Sing, the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar State, in the confidential fortnightly report dated 14th June, 1949 mentioned that the Revolutionary Socialist Party sent some emissaries including Biswa Nath Bajpai to establish branches of the organisation in the state. They held an un-authorized meeting in Mathabhanga. Two local workers were arrested by the Police under the Public Security Act but Biswa Nath Bajpai and his companion were allowed by the police to leave the state. In the words of the Chief Minister, "Disruptive elements appear willing to work under any label to achieve their ends. Magistrates and police have been directed to be alert."⁷⁹

Sardar Vallabbhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for States, could perceive the danger by the activities of the Communists and other left groups and conveyed this in a confidential letter to Sri Prakasa, the Governor of Assam and also in charge of Cooch Behar State, in the following words; "we should also ensure that the state is properly developed and that the schemes of development, agrarian reforms etc. are pushed through with vigour. Situated as the state is, it is likely to be a scene of communist activities. The removal of causes of discontent among the masses from now on would take the wind out of the communist sails."⁸⁰

At this stage an order for the reorganisation of the Intelligence Department of the Cooch Behar State issued by the Chief Minister on 25th March, 1949 came in for sharp criticism both from the Central Government and the Adviser to the Governor of Assam. The order was as follows :

"His Highness the Maharaja Bhup Bahadur is pleased to transfer the control of Intelligence Department from himself to the Chief Minister with immediate effect.

2. His Highness the Maharaja Bhup Bahadur is pleased also to order that Mr. R. K. Kaul, Chief Commandant of the Home Guards be put in charge of the Intelligence Department in addition to his duties but without extra-emoluments and directed to submit proposals for the reorganisation of the departments. Kumar Purnendunarayan will place at Mr. Kaul's disposal the necessary information about staff (clerical and detective) and the salaries, allowances or honorarium allowed to them, Such information shall be kept confidential.

3. The Intelligence and Detective Staff attached to the Police Department shall be separated from that Department and amalgamated with the Intelligence Department referred to in paragraph I.⁸¹

A. B. Chatterjee, Joint Secretary, Ministry of States, in his secret note on the subject of "Cooch Behar States Affairs" dated 2nd April, 1949 commented that this was a rather curious order issued by the Chief Minister, Cooch Behar State, placing the Chief Commandant of the Home Guards in charge of the Intelligence Department and

detaching it from the Police Department of which it had always formed a part. This was rather unorthodox and he wondered which was exactly behind this order.⁸² Hence the Chief Minister of the Cooch Behar State was requested to let the Ministry of States know what these changes were and the reasons for making them. But there was nothing in the Chief Minister's letter to show that the Governor of Assam who was in charge of the State had at all been consulted about the reorganisation of this Intelligence Department and it was not unlikely that he had purposely been kept in the dark. S. Narayanswamy, the Deputy Secretary, Ministry of State, in his note dated 20th May, 1949 remarked that it was doubtful how far the changes would be conducive toward better efficiency in the Department. He was of the opinion that although the Chief Minister had stated that the details of the reorganisation had still to be worked out, in any case he should have consulted the Governor of Assam and obtained his views before making any radical alteration in the department dealing with law and order.⁸³

It had also learnt from the I. B. report that the Intelligence Department was a non-police secret department working directly under the Maharaja with a relative and favourite of the Maharaja as the officer-in-charge. This department was actually a secret channel to spend money for political propaganda in the interest of the Maharaja and mainly to render financial help to the leaders of the local Hitasadhani Sabha for propaganda against the Bengalis and Bengal. The Intelligence Detective Staff attached to the Police Department was the Intelligence Branch under the Commissioner of Police.

The Darbar was taking all possible steps in this frantic attempt to avoid a merger with West Bengal Government. As the present Bengali Commissioner of Police could not be fitted in their present scheme the Darbar had to get rid of him. An Assamese was thus coming as his successor.⁸⁴

Another most important but controversial event was the General Election to the Cooch Behar Legislative Council which was completed on 1st June 1949. Out of 25 elected seats, unopposed returns took place in 11 constituencies. In the remaining 14 constituencies contest was keen and in some of them the proportion of voters (including women) who went to the polls was surprisingly high.⁸⁵ All the 11 candidates returned unopposed were nominees of the State Praja Congress (formerly called Hitasadhani Sabha). Out of the 14 contested seats 8 were captured by the State Praja Congress and this raised the direct strength of the State Praja Congress to 19 (11+8). Out of the remaining six seats, five were captured by 'Independents' who were however pro-State Praja Congress and one captured by West Bengal Congress Committee-backed candidate. The results may be classified in other ways as follows :-

(a) Out of total 25 elected Members, 16 were Hindus and 9 were Muslims - the proportion of the Muslim being 36%.

(b) Out of total 25 elected Members, 23 were Cooch Beharis, one Marwari and one Bengali.

(c) The following Bengalis, viz., Messrs. Chunilal Mukherjee, Bhaben Roy and Birendra Chatterjee lost to the State Praja Congress. One Cooch Behari, namely, Umesh Chandra Mandal, who was an official of the West Bengal Sponsored Congress Committee, also lost to a candidate of the State Praja Congress.⁸⁶

Just before the election which was held on 26th May, 1949, as it was reported that Muslims headed by one Bazlur Rahaman of Dinhatra submitted petition to the State Council for reservation of seats for Muslims. As a result, eight Muslim majority constituencies had been artificially created in the State by the Muslim Ministers to gain the cause of the Muslims. Besides, a non-Cooch Behari (i.e., less than four generations) could not stand for election to Cooch Behar Legislative State Council. They had a restricted right to vote for election. Thus a non-Cooch Behari residing permanently and continuously in the state for the last 10 years could vote but could not stand whereas a Cooch Behari (being in the State for four generations) could vote as well as could stand for election. This Act was passed in October 1948, by prerogative of the Maharaja. Apart from this, a person having no residence at rural areas cannot stand for election from rural areas thus excluding persons from six municipal areas from contesting in the twenty one rural constituencies. The curing of the constituencies was created by Cooch Behar Government Act dated 5th October, 1948. This Act was again amended on the 27th January, 1949 as a result of which six urban areas of 5 sub-divisions were amalgamated into one constituency namely urban constituency with an idea behind, it was alleged, to shut out the Congress leaders who mostly lived in town. The amendment of Cooch Behar Government Act. also provided that the Maharaja might specially permit any person to stand from any constituency. The Maharaja so far permitted two veteran Hitasadhani members (Muslims) to stand from rural constituency without having any residence in the rural area, whereas none from the Congress side had the fortune to obtain such permission. This amendment indicates the special intention of allowing Hitasadhani members to be returned uncontested.⁸⁷

It is reported that the existing Legislative Council was dissolved on the 23rd March, 1949 but the existing Ministers were ordered to continue in office till the next election was over. So the existing Ministers taking full advantage of their office made extensive propaganda with the help of the sub-divisional officers, other state servants, school teachers, with the following slogans, to exploit mass opinion : "Do you want the Ruling Chief or Congress? Congress does not want the Ruling Chief. Do not be misled by the Congress". Kumar Purnendunarayan (a kinsman of the Maharaja) had been very recently placed in charge of the State I. B. Department, to depict the Congressites as Communist and on that allegation to arrest and detain any one with a view to stifle the Congress activities in the State. This Kuman Purnendu Narayan was only the other day convicted for assaulting the students in Cooch Behar College Hostel, while he was in charge of the State Military. A very large number of voters had been intentionally excluded from the voter's list on the pretext that they were not living in this state for the last ten years. Besides, owing to the

constant preaching by the Hitasadhani Ministers that only Muslim would stand for the Muslim majority constituency and Hindu would stand for Hindu majority constituency, a tension was prevalent between Hindus and Muslims which might turn into a communal clash.⁸⁸

Incidentally, some of the Calcutta newspapers had described the Cooch Behar elections "Sham show" and the scrutiny of nominations "unfair and partial."⁸⁹ A. B. Chatterjee, Joint Secretary, Ministry of States in his note alleged that 'in Cooch Behar there were internal wranglings and considerable disaffection towards the present Chief Minister. He was told by Adviser to the Governor of Assam that the local Congress in Cooch Behar had complained that elections to the Cooch Behar State Assembly were being manoeuvred by the Chief Minister so that a majority of his party known as "Hitasadhani Sabha" was returned. All kind of executive was being brought to bear to secure this in order that if there was at any time any proposal for integration the members of the State Legislature (after the elections) would vote for integration with Assam'.⁹⁰ The Fortnightly report by the Adviser to the Governor of Assam dated 8th June, 1949 also mentioned that "His Excellency has reason to believe that there was manipulation in the conducting of the recent elections — hotly denied by the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar - and there is little doubt that the elected members will demand, (if they are not allowed an independent existence) either Central Administration, or in the last resort, merger with Assam. His Excellency has, accordingly, desired that the Ministry of States should instruct the Chief Minister to stay the summoning of the Assembly."⁹¹

As it was expected, all the twenty five elected members of the Legislative Council met in Cooch Behar on 15th June, 1949 and passed a resolution which was supported by twenty four members; only one member dissociated himself from it. They had laid emphasis in the resolution on the enlightened administration that had, throughout history, characterised the State and urged that its peculiar circumstances warranted that it should remain a separate entity. They also pointed out that "we cannot leave the matter without touching a point which has been pressing on us for some time past. A persistent propaganda has been going on from press and platform to get the State merged with West Bengal. As representatives of the people we should not now cross words with the propagandists in this connection, but we shall be failing in our duty if we do not state the fact that, situated as we are, we cannot subscribe to the idea, if thereby any basis for it, and solemnly declare that Cooch Behar people are dead against it."⁹²

Under these circumstances the Adviser to the Governor of Assam informed the Secretary, Ministry of States, Government of India that "Instructions were sent to the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar, as desired by the Ministry of States to the effect that the members recently elected should not be summoned to meet until further orders. It would appear from reports received however, that an informal meeting of elected members has already been held on 15th June, 1949."⁹³

Earlier, N. K. Rustomji, Adviser to the Governor of Assam had reported that 'the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar came on a visit to the Governor of Assam and was very aggrieved that Cooch Behar was likely to go to West Bengal. He had seen Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at Dehra Dun and seemed to have been told of the possible developments. According to the Chief Minister, this would mean the total sacrifice of six lakh of the real people of Cooch Behar to satisfy 40,000 outside Bengalis. He was anxious that the Assembly should be allowed to meet and considered its being not summoned would nullify the whole election.'⁹⁴ N. K. Rustomji also informed Mr. Vellodi, Secretary, Ministry of States that the Governor of Assam handed over to Mr. Shankar, P.A. to the Prime Minister of India, during his recent visit to Delhi, a brief note wherein he complained that "... our only source of information is, for all intents and purposes, the Chief Minister, and we cannot be cent per cent sure of his impartiality."⁹⁵ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel also made sharp criticism of the Chief Minister's partisan attitude. He wrote to Sri Prakasa, the Governor of Assam that there had been allegations of partisanship against Himmat Singh Maheswari (the Chief Minister) and from what he (Sri Prakasa) said those allegations were justified. Sardar Patel also pointed out that it was no concern of the Chief Minister as to whom the people of Cooch Behar would be handed over. The same stock of argument was used by the Britisher in respect of the minorities and the depressed classes, but the course of history had shown that what truth there was in that statement.⁹⁶

At this juncture one I. B. report from Ministry of Home Affairs dated 24th June, 1949 regarding the Cooch Behar State's topsy-turvy political development alarmed the Ministry of States, the Government of India. According to this report, the election of Cooch Behar State Council duly took place on 27th May, 1949. The Hitasadhani party members were reported to have captured all the seats. Out of 25 members of the Council about 10 Muslims (exact number was 9) had been returned. A cabinet was going to be formed on the 2nd July, 1949, with 5 Ministers among whom there would be 3 Hindus and 2 Muslims. The Education Minister Sri Satish Chandra Roy Singha was likely to be the Chief Minister in the new set up and the present Chief Minister was likely to be appointed as State Adviser. But the Muslim members were also trying to form a separate group to form the Ministry with the help of Jogen Mandal of Tufangang, Sitanath Roy of Dinhat and Marwari Member Giridharimal Boyed.

It was reported that since the partition, the Muslims of the State had been persistently trying to establish Muslim majority in the State. The Hitasadhani Sabha of which Khan Choudhuri Amanatullah was the President had practically become the main organisation for their activities to serve their purpose of establishing Muslim domination in the State and they had achieved appreciable success of the capture of about 10 seats by Muslims with Hitasadhani tickets. This had unnerved the local Hindus and the present condition had become such that they could not even freely express their views on any subject concerning state affairs. The Revenue Minister and the Chief Secretary, who were Muslims, were practically running the administration with other Muslim officials of the State. It was reported that the Muslims taking advantage of their position in the state were instigating the local people against the enlightened

Hindus who were domiciled Bengalees.

It was further reported that the Muslim immigrants were entertained and Hindu refugees of Eastern Pakistan were not allowed to own any land in the State. This was confirmed by a printed Handbill recently issued by one Kumar Charu Narayan of Natun Bazar, Cooch Behar, a distant relative of the present Maharaja inviting only East Bengal Muslims for settlement in his land.⁹⁷

The I. B. report mentioned above was received by the Ministry of States on 25th June, 1949. From this report it would appear to the Ministry of States that the situation in Cooch Behar was becoming more difficult.⁹⁸ The situation was further being complicated by the State's Chief Minister tendering his resignation letter to Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan on 9th July 1949 by saying that "For some time I have felt that my further stay in the State is likely to be source of embarrassment to Your Highness and to the Government of India. I have had the misfortune to draw upon myself the antagonism of some interested elements and I feel that I must put myself out of the way to render possible a dispassionate solution of the difficult problems affecting the future of the State and it's people. I therefore tender my resignation"⁹⁹

In view of the grave situation in Cooch Behar, the Ministry of States decided that V.P. Menon, Adviser to the Ministry of States should take up the case of Cooch Behar now and settle it's future.¹⁰⁰ Therefore V.P. Menon summoned Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan to Delhi for a discussion by a telegram dated 11th July, 1949, which runs as follows : "I am anxious to meet Your Highness as early as possible and shall be grateful if Your Highness could make it convenient to meet me at Delhi on twenty-sixth July along with your Chief Minister."¹⁰¹ Accordingly, the Maharaja with his Chief Minister came to Delhi and V. P. Menon had discussions with the Maharaja regarding the future of the Cooch Behar State. It was reported in the newspapers that the Government of India would shortly take over Cooch Behar which had been the subject of controversy in West Bengal and an official announcement of the decision was expected to be made later.¹⁰²

The news about proposed taking over of the Cooch Behar State by the Government of India evoked mixed reaction among the various groups in the State. It was reported that the leaders and supporters of the Cooch Behar Hitasadhani Sabha, a state sponsored Muslim-ridden organisation which was dominating the state administration, had been considerably dejected at the reported decision of the Government of India to take over and administer the State centrally. The Hitasadhani Sabha had lost its face with the natives of Cooch Behar who looked upon the sanctity of the ruling dynasty as a sort of religious institution. The liquidation of the Ruler would, therefore, affect their loyalty upon which the Hitasadhani Sabha was banking for so long. The Sabha was also afraid of losing its powers and privileges hitherto enjoyed. Moreover, it apprehended that the recent election which the Sabha had won with an

overwhelming majority by capturing 23 out of the 25 elected seats would be nullified with the ushering in of a new administrative set up by the Central Government.¹⁰³

The embarrassing condition of the Hitasadhani Sabha can also be gauged in a letter dated the 8th August from Amanatulla Ahmed, the President of the Proja Congress (formerly Hitasadhani Sabha) and Satish Chandra Roy Singha, the leader of the House, Cooch Behar Legislative Council to V. P. Menon, the Adviser to the Ministry of States, New Delhi. They told V. P. Menon that "the much talked of integration of Cooch Behar is after all going to take a definite shape. We are given to understand that decision has been taken to keep this State as a Centrally administered one for sometime. The entire people of Cooch Behar (excluding the microscopic Bengali element) are against the merger of the State with West Bengal. The decision of the States Ministry is most welcome to us as it signifies the negation of the claim of West Bengal on the merger of Cooch Behar with that Province. But the decision to keep it temporarily under the Centre has embarrassed us all"¹⁰⁴

On the other hand, there was a feeling of partial satisfaction among the Bengalees called outsiders, who constituted the intelligentsia of the State, over the proposed taking over of the State by the Central Government. They regarded it was a prelude to a merger with West Bengal provided that they could carry on a ceaseless agitation in this regard both from platform and through the Press. While such a movement was not considered feasible with the State by reason of the general ban on meetings and processions on the strength of the Cooch Behar Public Safety Act, the organisers were, therefore, already sponsoring an agitation in favour of a merger with West Bengal by utilizing the Calcutta Press and by holding meetings. The Cooch Behar People's Association, located at the G.B. Emporium, Central Avenue, Calcutta, were taking a leading part in the aforesaid movement from Calcutta. The Bengali elements of the State, too, were looking forward to the end of the feudal Government and the appointment of an Administrator for Cooch Behar and were harbouring the idea of launching a vigorous movement in favour of a merger with West Bengal.¹⁰⁵

But there was no sign of any open movement over the proposed administrative changes in the State of Cooch Behar. An attitude of "wait and see" appeared to prevail in every circle. Much seemed to depend on the selection of the Administrator and the finalisation of the settlement. It was also reported that the Maharaja was flying to Delhi on the 10th or 11th August, 1949 with his Chief Minister for signing the document. On the 6th August, 1949 the Maharaja called the leaders of the Hitasadhani Sabha for a secret parley, when he was reported to have intimated them of his prospective arrangement with the Central Government. The Hitasadhani Sabha leaders looked sullen on their returning from the parley.¹⁰⁶

It was after prolonged discussion that on the 28th August, 1949 an agreement was signed between C. Raja

Gopalachari, the Governor-General of India and Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan, which came to be known as the Cooch Behar Merger Agreement. As per terms of this Agreement, His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar ceded to the Dominion Government (Government of India) 'full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of the State,' and agreed to "to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government on the 12th day of September, 1949." It was stipulated that from the 12th September, 1949 the Government of India would be competent to govern the State in such a manner and through such agency as it might think fit. The Maharaja would continue to enjoy the same personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles as before. The Maharaja would with effect from the said day be entitled to receive for his lifetime annually for his privy purse the sum of rupees eight lakhs fifty thousand free of all taxes. The Maharaja would also be entitled to the full ownership, use and enjoyment of all private properties (as distinct from state properties) belonging to him on the date of this Agreement.¹⁰⁷

V. P. Menon, Adviser to the Government of India, Ministry of States, further wrote a D.O. Letter on the 30th August, 1949 to Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan to clarify some points raised by the Maharaja. He told the Maharaja that "It is the intention of the Government of India to administer for the present the territories of the Cooch Behar State as a centrally-administered area under a Chief Commissioner." Besides, 'all contracts and agreements entered into by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar before the date of the Merger Agreement will be honoured except in so far as any of these contracts or agreements is either repugnant to the provisions of any law made applicable to the State or inconsistent with the general policy of the Government.'¹⁰⁸

Cooch Behar Under the Chief Commissioner V.I. Nanjappa

(12th September, 1949 - 31st December, 1949)

The Indian Government appointed Mr. V. I. Nanjappa, I.C.S. as the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar State. Mr. Nanjappa was then the Revenue Secretary of the Bombay Government. Previously he was the Administrator of Kolhapur.¹⁰⁹ As Chief Commissioner-designate for Cooch Behar, V.I.Nanjappa arrived Cooch Behar town on 10th September, 1949, 1949 to take over the administration of the State.¹¹⁰ In Pursuence of the Merger Agreement the administration of Cooch Behar State was taken over by V.I. Nanjappa, the Chief Commissioner, on behalf of the Government of India, at an integration ceremony held at Cooch Behar Palace on the 12th September, 1949.¹¹¹ The occasion was marked by a message from Sardar Vallabhbai Patel, which runs as follows : "On the handing over of Cooch Behar to Central Administration, I send to its people my best wishes and assurance on behalf of the Government

of India that, though far, their interests and welfare will claim our close and intimate attention. I am fully aware of the many problems, political and economic, which affect the state and I am confident that with co-operation and assistance we will succeed in solving them in the best interest of the state and the country." Appreciating the Maharaja's gesture and spirit of sacrifice Sardar Patel further said, "to give up sovereignty over territory is no mean sacrifice. I am grateful to him for the spirit of accommodation and understanding which he has displayed and the prompt manner in which he accepted our advice."¹¹²

Speaking at the integration ceremony, the Chief Commissioner V.I. Nanjappa congratulated the Maharaja on his patriotism and statesmanship and the spirit of self-sacrifice in taking this courageous decision in the interest of the people. He assured the people of the State that 'all' existing beneficent schemes for the social, educational, economic and cultural development of the people, now in force in the State, would be continued, and that he would particularly ensure that the schemes with regard to the rehabilitation of refugees from Pakistan in our area shall be executed with the utmost vigour."¹¹³

On this occasion, Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan sent the following message to the people of Cooch Behar State which was read out : "On this solemn occasion which marks the end of long and happy association, my mother and I send you our very best wishes, my beloved people. Wherever we may be, we shall never forget you, your loyalty, and your devotion. We hope that you will always maintain the peace, good will and harmony which have been our common proud heritage. We shall always watch with keen interest your moral and material welfare and always pray for your happiness and prosperity."¹¹⁴

The integration ceremony marked the end of a long separate political entity of Cooch Behar State. Henceforth Cooch Behar became a centrally administered area. Thus it signified the end of the dynastic rule that had been existed for over four hundred years. It also signalled the beginning of an era of democratic rule on the other hand. In other words, the integration of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Union which completed the transition from monarchy to democracy was an epoch-making event. It has been reported that taking over of the State administration by the Government of India with V. I. Nanjappa as the Chief Commissioner had been followed by a definite improvement in the situation of Cooch Behar. The so-called popular ministry with a preponderance of the Hitasadhani elements was given a prompt go by with the signing of the papers. Since then the Chief Commissioner had no track with the Hitasadhani Sabha or its leaders who were so long dominating the state administration. During the change-over ceremony the declaration of the Government of India as well as the message of Sardar Patel were read out both in English and Bengali languages. The English signboards in the Courts and other offices had been changed into Bengali under the orders of the Chief Commissioner.¹¹⁵ He threw open the main Hindu temple of Cooch Behar to the Harijans with effect from 24th November, 1949. He took a keen interest in solving the refugee problem and in improving the administration

of the State generally. Thus the newly appointed Chief Commissioner for the State earned a name as an able and popular administrator.¹¹⁶ The above steps together with the virtual relegation of the Hitasadhani Sabha to the background had been largely appreciated by the people, particularly by the Bengalees and "Bhatias" (outsiders) who regarded them as signs of the early merger of the State with West Bengal.¹¹⁷

It is also important to note here that soon after the integration of Cooch Behar State with the Indian Dominion and the placement of the former as the part -C category of State, political leaders in power of the adjoining states such as West Bengal and Assam were once again deeply eager to merge Cooch Behar in their respective provincial territories. Such a kind of transitory situation gave rise to a process of bargaining between the Assamese and Bengali political leadership for justifying their respective claims to bring Cooch Behar to their own folds during the whole year of 1949.¹¹⁸ The claim of West Bengal over Cooch Behar received adequate support from the important political, social and business organisations excluding the Hitasadhani Sabha in Cooch Behar State. The Cooch Behar State Congress, the State Peoples' Conference, the Cooch Behar People's Association, the Communists and other leftists groups, business organizations like Marwari Association, the Bengal Trade Association supported the demand for integrating Cooch Behar with the Province of West Bengal. The parallel force actively operating in Cooch Behar argued for and supported the cause for merger of Cooch Behar with Assam. The Hitasadhani Sabha, a select group of elites in Cooch Behar Court was interested to merge the State of Cooch Behar with Assam. Assam Jatiya Mahasabha, the Assam Provincial Congress Committee and the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party were also in favour of merger of Cooch Behar with Assam. It is also interesting to note that Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan, as earlier mentioned, preferred Assam to West Bengal on this issue.

It has also been reported that the leading leaders of Hitasadhani Sabha attended a conference of the All India Gorkha League held at Darjeeling Town on the 30th October, 1949, with the object of working for the formation of Uttarkhand Pradesh comprising Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, Sikkim and Jalpaiguri. Satish Chandra Roy Singha, ex-Minister of Cooch Behar State, and Vice-President, Cooch Behar State Proja Congress (C.B.S.P.C — formerly the Hitasadhani Sabha), Jaladhar Saha, Secretary, C.B.S.P.C. and Moulvi Maziruddin Ahmed, Assistant Secretary, C.B.S.P.C., and others who were present at the conference made speeches claiming that they had applied to the Central Government of India desiring that Cooch Behar should be a Centrally administered area. But if their prayer did not materialise they desired that Cooch Behar should be united with 'Uttarkhand' province. These leaders also claimed that the people of Cooch Behar wanted to combine with the hillmen, for they were more like them than western Bengalis, socially, politically, and culturally. Hence, they did not like to merge in West Bengal.¹¹⁹

Having noticed such activities of the Hitasadhani Sabha leaders, Sardar Patel informed Jawaharlal Nehru that the local Hitasadhani Sabha was partly Muslim with its sympathies definitely with neighbouring area of East

Pakistan and partly consisting of some members of hill tribes who were looking to Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan for the formation of an Uttarkhand Pradesh.' Patel also expressed the view that the Government of India "should do nothing to encourage this kind of organisation in its mischievous tendencies."¹²⁰

At this juncture, V. P. Menon, the Adviser to the Government of India, Ministry of States, in a secret note on Cooch Behar dated 1st December, 1949 suggested that "The time has now come when we should consider the question of its merger in West Bengal." In this note he clarified the circumstances that would justify inevitably his above stand. He particularly cited the opinion of the Chief Commissioner V. I. Nanjappa who belonged to neither Assam nor Bengal. After a careful study of the situation in the State, Mr. Nanjappa was of the opinion that Cooch Behar should be merged in West Bengal and did not anticipate any trouble whatsoever. Therefore, V. P. Menon proposed that if Ministry of States would approve the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal, it should be effected with effect from 2nd January, 1950.¹²¹ But Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for States, felt the need for holding a discussion before taking any decision on the proposed merger and accordingly a discussion was held on 3rd December, 1949. Sardar Patel, V. P. Menon, Mr. A. B. Chatterjee, the Joint Secretary to the Ministry of States, Mr. Shankar, P.A. to the Prime Minister, Mr. V. I. Nanjappa and in the later part Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru participated in the discussion where it was decided that Cooch Behar should be merged with West Bengal on the 1st January, 1950. It was also decided that Mr. Nanjappa, the Chief Commissioner should continue in Cooch Behar even after its merger with West Bengal for a period of at least three months.¹²²

V. P. Menon communicated the aforesaid decision of the Ministry of States to Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan in a D.O. Letter dated 6th December, 1949. The letter runs as follows : "I am writing this to inform you that after careful consideration Sardar has decided to merge Cooch Behar in West Bengal. Sardar is convinced that this is in best interest of the people of Cooch Behar and of the country as a whole. The State will be maintained as a separate District with headquarters at Cooch Behar.

2. The balance in the treasury on the date of merger will be retained by the Central Government to be spent on development schemes in Cooch Behar for the benefit of the people of the State. Steps will also be taken to give representation to the people of the State in the West Bengal legislature as early as possible.

3. Sardar desires me to assure you that the rights and privileges guaranteed to you under the agreement will not be affected in the slightest by this administrative change."¹²³

In reply, Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan wrote a D.O. Letter dated 15th December, 1949 to V. P. Menon, Secretary to the Ministry of States and gave his assent to the decision taken by the Government of India regarding the

merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal.¹²⁴

V. P. Menon also conveyed the Indian Government's decision to merge Cooch Behar in West Bengal with effect from 1st January, 1950 to Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Premier of West Bengal in a D.O. letter dated 6th December, 1949.¹²⁵ In reply, Dr. B. C. Roy told V. P. Menon that he had placed the matter before the Cabinet and West Bengal Government agreed to all the conditions laid down in that letter.¹²⁶

Meanwhile, reports about the proposed merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal had been leaked out in the Press¹²⁷ and evoked protests from the local people who were demanding a plebiscite. The Ministry of States received a batch of telegrams protesting the proposed merger. This Ministry also received such a telegram from the President, the State Proja Congress (formerly called the Hitasadhani Sabha), Cooch Behar.¹²⁸ V. P. Menon, Secretary to the Ministry of States, in a telegram dated 9th December, 1949 warned the Chief Commissioner V. I. Nanjappa of this development so that he could handle the situation tactfully.¹²⁹ In replying to this, V. I. Nanjappa told V. P. Menon that some local Muslim leaders were displeased, as expected, with the news regarding the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal, which had been published in the Calcutta newspapers and these Muslims were sending telegrams to Delhi as if emanating from different persons. He assured V. P. Menon that he did not anticipate any incident, but he was quite alert to deal with the situation more tactfully. Besides, he was trying to impress the Maharaja of Cooch Behar that his position would not be affected in the slightest on account of this administrative change.¹³⁰

N. M. Buck, the Joint Secretary to the Ministry of States wrote a D.O. letter dated 13th December, 1949 to V. I. Nanjappa, the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar. The letter runs as follows : "we proposed to issue a Press Note on or about the 25th December, 1949 regarding the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. As you know, the merger is to take effect from the first January, 1950. Although for various reasons we do not propose to make a formal announcement earlier than the 25th December. You should quickly go ahead with all the arrangements for handing over the administration on the fixed date."¹³¹ A few days later in a D.O. letter dated 17th December, 1949 the Chief Commissioner Nanjappa informed N. M. Buck that he was going ahead with all the arrangements as desired by the Government of India regarding the handing over of the State administration to West Bengal.¹³²

In the meantime, publication of news relating to proposed merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal evoked protests from different sections of Cooch Behar and Assam as well. Jaladhar Saha, the Secretary of State Proja Congress, Cooch Behar sent a telegram to the States' Ministry, New Delhi, protesting against 'arrangement going on in Cooch Behar towards merger with West Bengal.'¹³³ In the same vein, Ambikagiri Raychoudhury, the General Secretary of Assam Jatiya Mahasabha sent a telegram to Jawaharlal Nehru and also to Sardar Patel. He pointed out that 'the States' Ministry's decision to merge Cooch Behar with West Bengal forthright in clear contradiction of Pandit

Nehru's public statement at Calcutta that Cooch Behar's future will be finally decided in accordance with the wishes of her people.' He appealed to the Government of India to 'decide Cooch Behar's future only after ascertaining the wishes of her people who are overwhelmingly in favour of merger with Assam.'¹³⁴ The Working Committee of the Assam provincial Congress Committee and the Executive Committee of the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party at a joint sitting held on 16th December, 1949, passed a resolution in which the Committee maintained that 'the pronouncement of the Prime Minister of India in a Calcutta meeting that the question of merger of Cooch Behar would be decided according to the wishes of the people is the real democratic method,' but they also pointed out that 'the merger of Cooch Behar to be made with West Bengal in spite of vehement protest of Cooch Behar people is an undemocratic way as this merger totally ignores the people's will.' Hence this Committee strongly urged on the Government of India 'to stay the question of merger with West Bengal and direct a plebiscite on this issue which would satisfy all on such a matter of great principle.' This resolution was sent to V.P. Menon, the Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of States and also to the Hon'ble Premier of Assam.¹³⁵

However, the Central Cabinet met on 28th December, 1949 and approved the merger of Cooch Behar in West Bengal. The report of the meeting is given below : "The Deputy Prime Minister stated that there was disagreement between West Bengal and Assam relating to the merger of Cooch Behar. Cooch Behar is a Bengali speaking area. Public opinion in West Bengal is strongly in favour of merger with that Province. The Central Government Officer in Cooch Behar and the local Congress Committee have also recommended merger with West Bengal. Assam Government is, however, opposed to this course of action. Ministry of States proposed to the West Bengal Government certain terms subject to which merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal on the 1st January, 1950. This was agreed to."¹³⁶ The Government of India issued a Press Note on 28th December, 1949 in this regard.¹³⁷

Cooch Bengal State was thus integrated with Indian Union under Cooch Behar Merger Agreement on 28th August, 1948. Then the state territory was made into a Chief Commissioner's province with effect from 12th September, 1949 and this state of affairs continued upto 31st December, 1949.¹³⁸ The States Merger (West Bengal) Order, 1949 had been signed by the Governor-General of India and the Order had been published in the Gazette India Extraordinary on the 31st December, 1949. It has been said in the aforesaid Order that "it is expedient to provide by order made under section 200A of the Government of India Act, 1935, for the administration of the said state (Cooch Behar) in all respects as if it formed part of the Province of West Bengal."¹³⁹ The West Bengal Government Home Department's Notification No. 3509 G.A., dated 1st January, 1950 which announces the merger of Cooch Behar with the Province states : "In exercise of the power conferred by sub-section (2) of section 7 of the code of Criminal Procedure 1898 (Act V of 1898), the Governor is pleased to declare that on and from the 1st January, 1950 the Chief Commissioner's Province of Cooch Behar be constituted into a district." Cooch Behar has also been placed within the Jurisdiction of the Presidency Division. The Administrator of Cooch Behar, V.I. Nanjappa, I.C.S., has been appointed until further

orders, as Magistrate and Collector of Cooch Behar district.¹⁴⁰ Immediately after, the Government of West Bengal 'exalted an Act called the Cooch Behar (Assimilation of State Laws) Act in 1950' in which all the Acts contained in the first schedule were assimilated to the laws of the State of West Bengal.¹⁴¹

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Premier of West Bengal, arrived in Cooch Behar Town on 31st December, 1949 by air from Darjeeling to take over the administration of the State on behalf of the West Bengal Government on the next day. Dr. Roy who was accompanied by Mr. J. N. Talukdar, the Commissioner of Presidency Division, was received at the airport by V. I. Nanjappa, the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar, Kumar Gautam Narayan of the Raj family, Mr. Lalit Mohan Bakshi, Chief Secretary to the Cooch Behar Government, Mr. Sukumar Sen, Chief Secretary of the West Bengal Government and Mr. S. Gupta, Inspector-General of Police, who had arrived in Cooch Behar from Calcutta earlier. Amantulla Ahmed, ex-Revenue Minister and Satish Chandra Roy Singha, ex-Education Minister and other leading Cooch Behar citizens were present at the airport to welcome Dr. B. C. Roy. As the Premier alighted from the plane, the state military band struck up the national anthem "Jana Gana Mana." He inspected a guard of honour provided by a contingent of the state military force. It was reported that the Maharaja of Cooch Behar would not be present during the function connected with the merger.¹⁴²

On the first January, 1950 Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy formally announced the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal at a largely attended meeting held at the Parade ground of Cooch Behar Town. Welcoming the citizens of Cooch Behar on their admission into the Province of West Bengal, Dr. Roy made a few important announcements at this meeting as desired by the Government of India. Dr. Roy said that Cooch Behar would be maintained as a separate district with headquarters at Cooch Behar. Representation would be given to the people of Cooch Behar in the Provincial Legislature on the population basis as soon as possible by means of nominations. Dr. Roy further said that the State servants would be absorbed in West Bengal Government Service on terms not less advantageous than those under the State regime.¹⁴³

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's Deputy Prime Minister, sent a message to the people of Cooch Behar on the occasion. Sardar Patel in his message said that 'the decision to merge the State with West Bengal was taken by the Government of India only after they were convinced that the interests of her people would be thus better served. The interests of the people of Cooch Behar and of the Country at large demand that the people should now take to the task of consolidation with West Bengal with faith and determination'. Sardar Patel expressed confidence that "the West Bengal Government would realize the special responsibility that owe to the people of Cooch Behar for their progress and prosperity". "I can assure them that the Central Government will continue to watch their future in West Bengal with lively interest." Sardar Patel's message was read out by V. I. Nanjappa, the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar, in English, and by Sukumar Sen, Chief Secretary to the West Bengal Government, in Bengali.¹⁴⁴

V. I. Nanjappa, the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar, welcoming the Premier Dr. B. C. Roy, said, "Today Cooch Behar has become part of West Bengal. The Government of India have taken this important decision after a very careful consideration of all the factors, in the best interests of all concerned. Although Cooch Behar was a distinct political and administrative unit until recently, it has always been geographically linguistically, culturally and economically a part of Bengal. Personally knowing Cooch Behar as I do I see a very bright future for Cooch Behar in West Bengal. Mr. Nanjappa further said that "it is our duty on this occasion to pay tribute to that great Indian leader and statesman Sardar Patel, the architect of India's unity, who is striving to make India strong and great. I must also congratulate H. H. Shri Jagaddipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur, Maharaja of Cooch Behar, for his self-sacrifice, far-sightedness and patriotism and for helping to bring about this closer union of Cooch Behar with Bengal."¹⁴⁵

Jagaddipendra Narayan, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, who was not able to be present on the occasion, in a message, read out at the aforesaid meeting, hoped that the Government of India's decision was in the best interests of the people of Cooch Behar and the country as a whole. The Maharaja further said, "I hope and pray that the past controversy on the issue of merger will now be forgotten and the people of Cooch Behar, who have every reason to be proud of the past heritage will be willing to march forward together with good will and amity. In doing so they will not only serve their best interests, but also of our beloved country."¹⁴⁶

Soon after the conclusion of the mass meeting a colourful ceremony of transfer took place in the Council Hall of the High Court on the bank of the famous Sagar Dighi. V. I. Nanjappa as the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar signed a document on behalf of the Government of India transferring the administration of Cooch Behar to Dr. B. C. Roy, the Premier of West Bengal. He then signed another document taking over the administration of Cooch Behar as its Administrator on behalf of the West Bengal Government. The Chief Secretary, the Inspector-General of Police, Presidency Division Commissioner and other high ranking civil and military officials were present at the transfer ceremony.¹⁴⁷

K. N. Katju, the Governor of West Bengal, in a broadcast from Calcutta on the "Merger of Cooch Behar" on the 1st January, 1950 said that 'the ties which bind the people of Cooch Behar and West Bengal are intimate and ancient, a common religion, a common language and a common tradition and long neighbourly relations; and experience has shown that these silken ties are the strongest which bind the people. It is true that Cooch Behar has been for centuries a separate political unit under the direct personal rule of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, but whatever may have been the history of Cooch Behar in British times, even administratively since 1773 the connection between Bengal and Cooch Behar has been close indeed.'

According to K. N. Katju, exigencies of a modern administration and popular demands on a democratic

state make it impossible for small units to function adequately, and considerations of security, safety and well-being all equally require large and well-knit units for administrative purposes. The merger of states into larger unions or neighbouring provinces was therefore a historic and political necessity'.¹⁴⁸ It is also well known that the Cooch Behar state has an area no greater than that of an Indian district. In view of Dr. Katju's above observation, it may safely be concluded that the merger of Cooch Behar in neighbouring provinces was a historic and political necessity. Cooch Behar's integration with the Indian Union as the Chief Commissioner's Province for the time being and later its merger with West Bengal as a district was perhaps a logical conclusion of history. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was also fully convinced as regards the justification of the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal. At a public meeting in Calcutta held on 16th January, 1949 Sardar Patel in his speech said that "... When the people of Bengal claimed Cooch Behar, I went into the whole question and came to the conclusion that their claim was just and proper. Then I tried my best to persuade anybody so as to make the process of merger easy. We succeeded in that, and Cooch Behar is now part of West Bengal."¹⁴⁹ It is learnt from the reports in the newspapers that the Central Government's decision about the merger of the State with West Bengal had created mixed feelings in the State. While one section was obviously jubilant, the other section claiming to represent the indigenous people, seemed full of resentment. Those against merger in West Bengal criticized the Centre's action in not having allowed the people to express their opinion on the question through a plebiscite. They further said that they would continue the agitation against the decision. They preferred administration by the Centre, and if that was not possible, they preferred merger in Assam rather than in Assam.¹⁵⁰

But the people of Cooch Behar as a whole acquiesced to the decision of merger which seemed a good beginning for both Cooch Behar and West Bengal. It has been clearly reflected by an 'Editorial Comment' of a famous English Daily dated 1st January, 1950, which runs as follows : "Merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal takes place today with minimum formality. The province, uncomfortably cramped, naturally welcomes an addition to its area and resources through the incorporation of a State whose landscape and predominantly Bengali speaking population closely resemble those of neighbouring Jalpaiguri. The people of the state seem, for the most part, equally, pleased over the change in their fortunes. Their fate hung for some time in the balance. Assam was eager for them; but its claim was, after due consideration, rejected by the Centre, and hard feelings should not persist."

"Cooch Behar has already passed through a transitional stage, having been Centrally administered since mid-September, and arrangements have been made to prolong the transition. The administration seemingly not be brought completely into line with that of other districts in the province until a few months elapsed. Provision made to safeguard the interests of the people and present officials seem just, and it may be expected that the riches of the state — surplus rice, jute, tea, timber and tobacco - will, when more fully exploited, contribute to the welfare of the new comers to the West Bengal's fold..."¹⁵¹

Conclusion : Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan was the 22nd descendant of the dynasty and 35 years old while the Cooch Behar State was merged with West Bengal as a district. He possessed an attractive personality and was very popular in Cooch Behar. Sri Prakasa, the Governor of Assam during his visit to Cooch Behar in March, 1949 held a talk with the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan informally. Then the Governor of Assam wrote, "He (the Maharaja) appeared to me to be a very decent young person who took great interest in the affairs of the State and mixed freely with every one. He seemed a very popular figure in Cooch Behar."¹⁵²

The people of Cooch Behar had a great reverence for Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan. To them His Highness represented godhood. It is believed that if the indigenous people was asked to vote for or against the Maharaja, they would all vote for him. The only hope of the State Proja Congress (formerly known the Hitasadhani Sabha) leadership was the Maharaja taking to politics but their hope, it is believed, had been completely shattered by the Maharaja, firstly by casting his opinion to join the Indian Union without any knowledge or consent of the leadership of the Proja Congress who were then in power and secondly by his temperamental disinclination towards politics. The Maharaja had made his best to introduce the modern type of administration in his State. He had always tried to remain a constitutional head leaving the administration to the charge of the chosen representatives of the people and successfully checked the attempt to declare Cooch Behar an independent State of his Ministers.¹⁵³

'Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan himself is a good speaker in Bengali. It has been rightly said that 'culturally Cooch Behar is an inseparable part of Bengal. The people of Cooch Behar are Bengalees. Bengali is their mother tongue. Bengali is the language of their Court and Ruler. But he expressed his willingness to merge Cooch Behar with Assam instead of West Bengal. It has been alleged that he made this preposterous statement under the venomous influence of the reactionary Hitasadhani Sabha leaders.¹⁵⁴ The main objective of the Hitasadhani Sabha now known as the State Praja Congress was to secure merger of Cooch Behar with Assam and its leadership had in its ranks former Muslims Ministers of the State. The main plank of their propaganda was distortion of the historical truth. It said that the indigenous population of Cooch Behar was more akin to the people of Assam than to the Bengalees. The fact is, nowever, the reverse.¹⁵⁵ However, he has found his way in rectifying his errors and scaled his approval to the merger of Cooch Behar. It has been rightly claimed that 'this historic decision will undoubtedly win him friendship and good will of the entire population of Cooch Behar in common with the people of Bengal.'²⁸⁴ Not only the people of Cooch Behar but also the people of the country will remain grateful to the Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan for his 'patriotism, far-sightedness and self-sacrifice.'¹⁵⁶

Apart from his popularity as a ruler, there were also some other attributes manifested in Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan. He was an ardent lover of sports. He played in various tournaments of Polo, Tennis, Cricket and Football at different centres, viz., Kashmir, Delhi, Meerut and Calcutta. He particularly distinguished himself on Polo with the

result that he had a handicap of three.¹⁵⁷ The Cooch Behar Association Football Cup Tournament was introduced by His Highness during 1939 - 1940.¹⁵⁸ The Cooch Behar Trophy for All India Inter School Trophy (now changed into under 19) bears the signature of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan, who was popularly known as "Bhaiya" in sports world.¹⁵⁹ His Highness was the patron of several sporting clubs and institutions in India, which depended a good deal on his support and sympathy towards their maintenance.¹⁶⁰ His Highness had been mainly instrumental in the improvement of Cricket in Bengal. He brought 'Bill' Hitch to India in 1935 and for three succeeding years. 'Many attribute Bengal's success in the Ranji Trophy to "Bill's untiring efforts, but we cannot forget the magnanimity that made those efforts possible.'¹⁶¹ Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan was a very keen all round sportsman. He was seen as an able polo player, a mature cricketer and an expert horse-rider, whether it is at Jaipur, Delhi, Calcutta or in England.¹⁶²

Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan died of a heart attack in Calcutta on 11th April, 1970. He was then 54 years old. Floral wreaths were placed on his body among others by M. M. Basu, Chief Secretary, and P. K. Sen, Commissioner of Police of Calcutta. The Maharaja of Burdwan also paid his last respects.¹⁶³ The body of Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan was flown to the Home town of Cooch Behar in a chartered plane from Calcutta on 12th April, 1970. A large number of people were present at the airport to pay their last respects to the departed Ruler. Wreaths were placed on the bier on behalf of the Army. In the afternoon a funeral procession was taken out with the body and the cremation took place at Rani Bagan on the bank of the Torsa river which hems the town. 'Yesterday offices and many shops at Cooch Behar and some other places in the district were closed soon after the news of the Maharaja's death was received'.¹⁶⁴ 'Obituary' which was published in a famous English Daily in this connection on 12th April, 1970 is given below :¹⁶⁵

"Lieutenant Colonel His Highness the Maharaja Sir Jagaddipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur was born in December, 1915. Educated at Harrow and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, the Maharaja succeeded to the Gadi in 1922. He was invested with full ruling powers in 1936. During World War II he was made an Honorary 2nd Lieutenant and was promoted in 1946 to the rank of a Lieutenant Colonel. He saw action with the 7th Light Cavalry in Burma and Malaya.

The Maharaja, who was described by people as a natural athlete, was Bengal's Captain for the Ranji Trophy three years in succession. In 1944-45, he steered the Bengal side to the final of the Ranji Trophy. A good polo player before an accident in Jaipur, he had at his best a handicap of three. In addition to polo, he followed the family tradition as a keen supporter of the Turf and rode on his horses at the Tollygunj Gymkhana Races.

He played a number of other games, especially tennis at which he excelled. During World War II, he raised football teams to play matches in Cooch Behar in aid of War Funds. ...The Maharaja is survived by his wife, two sisters and a nephew. One of the sisters is Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur and the other is the Maharani of Rewas in Madhya Pradesh."

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4. Cooch Behar Gazette, November 1, 1947, Part - 1, p. 121. And Bhattacharya, Durga Kinkar : op. cit, p. 12.
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6. Sarkar, Sumit : Modern India, 1885-1947, Macmillan, First published in 1983, several reprints, p. 140.
7. Dey, Jiban : 'Koch Bihar Rajye Krishak Andolan', in Madhuparni, edited by A. G. Ghose, Cooch Behar Special Number, 1990, p. 423.
8. Chakraborty, Jyotirmoy : op.cit, pp. 5-6.
9. Fortnightly report from Chief Minister, of Cooch Behar state, dated 22-1-1949 for the period ending 15th July, 1949. File No. 15 (8), P/49, 1949, Ministry of States, P- Branch (secret), p. 24, NAI.
10. Fortnightly report from H. Singh Chief Minister of C. B. state, for the period ending 31st January, 1949, File No. op. cit., pp. 29-30.
11. Ghosh, A. G. : 'Story of Integration of Cooch Behar State', op. cit, p. 36.
12. Bhattacharya, Sourindra nath : op. cit.
13. Roy, Anil : 'Koch Bihare Communist Andolan', Unpublished Personal Diary, Cooch Behar, 1986, p. 8.
14. Bhattacharya, Durga Kinkar : op. cit, p. 11.
15. Roy, Anil : op. cit. p. 20.
16. Chakravarty, Jyotirmoy : op. cit, p. 7.
17. Ghosh, A. G. : Story of Integration of Cooch Behar State, op. cit, p. 37.
18. Cooch Behar Darpan, a Bengali Fortnightly, Published by Cooch Behar State Press, 10th year, No. 3, Ashada, 1354 B. S., pp. 139-140.
19. *ibid*, p. 140.
20. Personal Interview with Binit Kumar Mukherjee. He was a Secretary of Cooch Behar Naba Bidhan Brahma Samaj. The information is quoted in Ghose, A. G.'s 'Story of Integration of Cooch Behar State with Indian Dominion', op. cit, p. 35.
21. Personal Interview with Paritosh Datta, Calcutta. A former Resident of Mekhligang and was a worker of I. P. T. A., Jalpaiguri. The information was quoted in Ghose, A. G., op. cit.
22. Ahmed, Abbas - Uddin, Amar Shilpi Jibaner Katha, Calcutta, p. 118.
23. Jiban Dey and Birendra Chandra Dey Sarkar's articles in different local Journals. This is quoted in Ghose, A. G., op. cit. pp. 34-35.
24. Ahmed, Abbas-Uddin, op. cit, p. 118.

25. Janamat, edited by Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal, A Bengali Weekly. 12th January, 1948.
26. File No. 15(8) - P/49, Ministry of States, P-Branch, PP. 43 ff. (preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi).
27. Das, Durga (edi), Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Navajivan Publishing House, Amedabad, First Edition, 1973, Vol. 7, Letter No. 459, dated the 29th June, 1948. p. 550.
28. The confidential letter dated March, 29, 1949 from Sri Prakasa, Governor of Assam, to Sardar Ballabhbai Patel, Ministry of States, File No. 15(8)-P/49, (secret), Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, pp. 16-17.
29. Das, Durga, Sardar Patel's Correspondence, op. cit, Vol. 7, Letter No. 461, Janamat, op. cit, 15th Kartick, 1355, B. E.
30. ibid, Letter No. 461 dated 26th July, 1948 from Secretary, the State Praja Mandal, Cooch Behar to Sardar Bhallavbhai Patel, Deputy Prime Ministers for States, New Delhi, pp. 551-52.
31. Janamat, op. cit, 31st Bhadra, 1355 B. E.
32. ibid.
33. Extract from Daily Summary of information of Assam, No. 12, dated 18th June, 1949, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ref. No. D. I. B., Memo No. 44/Is/49-(1) dated 25th June, 1949. NAI
34. 'Secret' Report dated 7th April, 1949 of Jalpaiguri District forwarded by the West Bengal I. B., Calcutta with their endorsement dated the 2nd May, 1949, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Ref. No. (1) 5059 - P/49.
35. Ghose, A. G. and Bhattacharya, Malay Shankar : 'Indian Nationalist Movement and the Maharajas of Cooch Behar State', in North Bengal University Review (Humanities), Vol. 7, No. 1, 1986, p. 70.
36. Dey, Jiban : 'Upekshita Cooch Beharer Kichhu Katha', Banga Sahitya Sammelan, 1381 B. E., p. 34; Mukherjee Hiren; India's Struggle for Freedom, Manisha, Calcutta, First Published 1946, 4th Edition, 1986, p. 294.
37. Chakravorty, Biman : Political History of Merger of the Princely States : A Study of Cooch Behar, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of North Bengal, 2001, p. 164. The Standstill Agreement and the Instrument of Accession provided the Indian States with the fullest autonomy over their administration except in matters of foreign policy, defence and communication. This extraordinary internal autonomy whetted the political ambitions of some Indian States. In the name of internal autonomy, some states even indulged in anti-India unity conspiracy. Thus a problem arose whether the states would join into the new Indian Union or not. Taking advantage of this situation, the Maharaja Gaikwar of Baroda State formed the West Indian Federation consisting the States of West India which complicated the integration process of India. Indira Devi, the Dowager Maharani of Cooch Behar, being the daughter of the Maharaja Gaikwar of Baroda and her son Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan were probably inspired by the formation of the West Indian Federation to maintain the separate identity of their state. — ibid, p. 157.
38. Das, Durga (edi.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, op. cit, Vol. 7, Letter No. 461 dated 26th July, 1948 from Radhakanta Sarkar, Secretary, the State Praja Mandal, Cooch Behar to Sardar B. Patel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for States, New Delhi, p. 551-552.
39. Ahmed, Abbas Uddin, op. cit. p. 204.
40. Das, Durga (edi.) : op. cit, Vol. 7, telegram No. 462, dated 4th August, 1948 from Secretary, Bamanhat Thana Congress, Gitaldaha to Sardar Patel, Home Minister, New Delhi, p. 552.
41. Das, Durga (edi.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, op. cit. Vol. 9, Letter No. 27 dated 28 December, 1949, p. 33.

42. File No. 15 (59) - Political / 1949, Govt. of India, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, 'secret' letter of V. P. Menon, dated 1.12.1949, p. 1.
43. The confidential letter dated the 29th March, 1949 from Sri Prakasa, Governor of Assam to Sardar B. Patel, op. cit, p. 17.
44. Das, Durga (edi.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, op. cit. Vol. 7 Letter No. 464, dated 4th october, 1948, p. 554.
45. The confidential letter dated the 29th March, 1949 from Sri Prakasa, Governor of Assam to Sardar B. Patel, op. cit, p. 18.
46. File No. 15 (8) - P/49, Ministry of States, 'P' - Branch, Correspondence Serial No. 1, p. 1.
47. Das, Durga (edi.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, op. cit, Vol. 8, Letter No. 408, p. 514.
48. ibid, Vol. letter No. 12, p. 14.
49. ibid, Vol. 8, letter No. 410, p. 516.
50. File No. 15 (8) - P/49, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, (correspondence section)
51. Chakravorty, Biman : op. cit., pp. 172-173.
52. A Secret Source Report dated 7th August, 1949, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Ref. No. D7491 - P/49.
53. Chakravorty, Chinmoyee : From the Jaws of Overjealous Police and Ambitious Politicians, Anmol publication, p. 32. The Evidence is quoted in Chakravorty, Biman : op. cit. p. 173.
54. The Nation, May 2, 1949.
55. Nutan Assamia, (Assamese Daily), 12th September, 1949. The evidence is quoted in Chakravorty, Biman : op. cit., pp. 181-182.
56. File No. 15(8) - P/49 (secret), 1949, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, p. 84.
57. Sardinia Assamia (Assamese Daily Newspaper), 18th June, 1949.
58. Nutan Assamia, 11th August, 1949.
59. ibid, 12th September, 1949.
60. Letter No. 110, dated the 8th August, 1949, File No. 15(8) - P/49, 1949, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, (secret), pp. 158-160.
61. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 29th July, 1949.
62. The confidential letter dated 29th March, 1949 from Sri Prakasa, Governor of Assam to Sardar B. Patel, op. cit., p. 17.
63. Maharaja Jagaddipendranarayan's D.O.Letter dated 15th December,1949, Cooch Behar Palace to V.P. Menon, Secretary, Ministry of States, Govt. of India, New Delhi, Secret File No.15(59)-Political/1949,Serial No.(8) p12
64. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 29th July, 1949.
65. The Ananda Bazar Patrika, 24th August, 1949.
66. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, 15th July, 1949.
67. Bordoloi, Gopinath's Lectures in Assam State Assembly, 11th August, 1949, as quoted in Biman Chakravorty, op. cit., p. 188.
68. Extract from Daily Summary of Information of West Bengal No. 102, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Ref. No. 44/35/49(1), 26 July, 1949. NAI
69. Das, Durga (edi.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, op. cit, Vol. 8, Letter No. 409 dated 16th April, 1949, p. 515.
70. ibid, Vol. 8, Letter No. 411, dated 26th June, 1949, p. 517.

71. *ibid*, Vol. 9, Telegram No. 13, dated 8th May, 1949, p. 15.
72. *ibid*, Vol. 7, Letter No. 460, dated 10th July, 1948, p. 550.
73. Extract from a D. O. Letter dated 13th April, 1949 from Sardar V. Patel to Sri Prakasa, Governor of Assam, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.
74. A (secret) Source Report dated 7th August, 1949, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Ref. No. D-7491-P/49. NAI
75. The Fortnightly Confidential Report by the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar State for the period ending 31st July, 1949. File No. 15(8) - P/49, Ministry of States, 'P' - Branch, pp. 138-140. NAI
76. D.O. No. C/7540/30-17, dated 16th September, 1949 from the Chief Commissioner of Cooch Behar to A. B. Chatterjee, Ministry of States, New Delhi. File No. - 15(68) - P-49, Govt. of India, Ministry of States, Political Branch, Correspondence.
77. *ibid*, for the period ending 31st July, 1949. *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.
78. *ibid*, for the period ending 15th January, 1949, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
79. *ibid*, dated 14th June, 1949, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
80. Extract from Secret and Personal D. O. Letter dated 13th April, 1949. File No. 15(8) - P/49, Secret, Ministry of States, P-Branch, p. 20.
81. Ref. No. G 7343 - 48 d/29.3.49. File No. 15(8) - P/49, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch.
82. D-3387 - P/49. File No. *op. cit.*
83. D. No. 4790-P/49, (9) FR. File No. *op. cit.*
84. DIB u/o No. SA/601(17) dated 23rd April, 1947, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, top secret, (copy of a report, dated 4.4.49 from a very reliable contact of one DIG. IB., C.I.D., West Bengal), File No. *op. cit.*
85. Fortnightly confidential report by the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar State for the period 1st June to 30th June, 1949 to the Secretary, Ministry of States, File No. *op. cit.* p. 195.
86. D. O. No. Sc/29/49, dated 27th July, 1949, office of the Adviser to the Governor of Assam, States Department, File No. *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 122.
87. Copy of a 'Secret' Report dated 7th April, 1949 of Jalpaiguri District forwarded by the West Bengal I. B., Calcutta, with their endorsement dated the 2nd May, 1949. D 5057-P/49, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, Secret, File No. *op. cit.* pp. 154-155. The following instructions were issued in November, 1947 for the preparation of Electoral roles :-
 - (a) Every person who is a Cooch Behari and who has attained the age of 21 years, whether male or female, should be put on the voter's list.
 - (b) Every non-Cooch Behari who has put in a residence of 20 years, whether male or female and has reached the age of 21 years should be enrolled as a voter. - D. O. No. Sc/29/49 dated 27th July, 1949, *op. cit.* p.118.
88. *ibid*, p. 155.
89. D. O. No. Sc/29/49 dated 27th July, 1949 from the office of the Adviser to the Governor of Assam, States Dept. to S. Narayanswamy, Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India, Ministry of States. New Delhi, D 6747-P/49, p. 118. NAI
90. D. 3387-P/49 serial No. 1, File No. 15(8)-P/49, Secret, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, p. 1.
91. Fortnightly Report from N. K. Rustomji, Adviser to the Governor of Assam to the Secretary, Govt of India, Ministry of States, file No. *op. cit.*, p. 55.
92. Fortnightly confidential report by the Chief Minister of Cooch Behar State for the Period 1st June to 30th June,

- 1949, File No. op. cit., pp. 195, 100-101. NAI
93. Letter No. 1/49/C - 1067-71, File no. op. cit, p. 73.
 94. Fortnightly report from N. K. Rustomji, op. cit, (Ref. No. 233) p. 58.
 95. D. O. No. 16/48/C - 962 dated 16th June, 1949, Secret, File No. op. cit. p. 14.
 96. Das, Durga (edi.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, op. cit, Vol. 9, Letter No. 34, dated 22nd June, 1949, pp. 42-43.
 97. Extract from Daily Summary of Information of Assam, No. 12, dated 18.6.49, received from Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs by Ministry of States on 25th June, 1949. File No. 15(8)-P/49(secret), 'P' Branch, p. 68.
 98. No. D. 5895 - P/49, dated 10th July, 1949 from Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Assam, Shillong.
 99. D. O. No. 1156/C dated Shillong, 19th July, 1949 from N. K. Rustomji, Adviser to the Governor of Assam to V. P. Menon, Adviser to the Ministry of States, New Delhi.
 100. D. 5895-P/49, Serial No. 16, File No. 15(8)-P/49, Ministry of States, Secret, P. Branch, p. 7.
 101. Menon Statesind, For Secretary, Ministry of States, dated 11th July, 1949. File No. op. cit, p. 8.
 102. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, English Daily, Calcutta, July 28, 1949.
 103. Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India. D. 7491 - P/49, File No. 15(8) - P/49, Ministry of States, secret, P-Branch, p. 148. (Copy of a resource report dated 7.8.49 on "A report on the Cooch Behar situation vis-a-vis the taking over by the Centre - Reaction of the Hitasadhani Sabha", received through Central Intelligence officer, Calcutta, under his endorsement dated the 9th August, 1949.) NAI
 104. Letter No. 110, dated 8th August, 1949, File No. op. cit, p. 158.
 105. Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, D-7491-P/49, File No. op. cit, pp. 148-49.
 106. *ibid*, p. 151.
 107. White Paper on Indian States, Ministry of States, Government of India, New Delhi, Revised Edition, 1950. Appendice XXIV, Cooch Behar Merger Agreement, pp. 212-213. NL. The full text of the Agreement has been appended at the end. Vide Appendix E - i
 108. Ministry of States, Government of India, D. O. No. F-15(19) - P/49, (secret), 'P' Branch. The letter in full has been appended is Appendix No. ...
 109. The Statesman, Calcutta, September 3, 1949.
 110. *ibid*, September 12, 1949.
 111. *ibid*, September 13, 1949, p. 7.
 112. Das, Durga (edi.) : Sardar Patel's Correspondence, op. cit, Vol. 7, Telegram No. 463, pp. 553-554.
 113. The Statesman, Calcutta, September 13, p. 7.
 114. *ibid*.
 115. Copy of a report dated 31st October, 1949, received from C. I. O., Calcutta regarding the situation in Cooch Behar. Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, File No. (64) - P/49, Secret, 1949, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, p-1.
 116. Copy of a source report dated 28th November, 1949 received from C. I. O., Calcutta, Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, File No. op. cit.
 117. Copy of a source report dated 31st October, 1949, received from C. I. O., Calcutta regarding the situation in Cooch Behar, op. cit.
 118. For instance, S. Narayanswamy, the Deputy Secretary, Ministry of States in a note dated 4th July, 1949 mentioned that the Premier of Assam had expressed his desire that Cooch Behar State should be merged with Assam

- province and not with West Bengal. - D 5785 - P/49. File No. 15(8) - P/49, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, Secret, Group I, serial No. (10), p. 8. NAI
119. Confidential D.O. No. 284C, dated November 22, 1949 from Chief Commissioner, Cooch Behar to Joint Secretary, Ministry of State, Government of India on 'Proceedings of a Conference of the All India Gorkha League,' File No. 15(62) - P/49, 1949, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch. NAI
120. Das, Durga (ed.), Sardar Patel Correspondence, 1945-50, Vol. 9, Letter No. 27, dated 28 December, 1949, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
121. File No. 15(59) - Political/49, Ministry of States, Govt. of India, Political Branch, Secret, p. 2. Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya is of the opinion that V.P. Menon's secret note played a significant role in shaping the opinion of the Indian Government about the future of Cooch Behar State - Confer Dr. Bhattacharyya's scholarly article, namely, "Merger of Cooch Behar : A Case Study of the Differences of Perspectives of the Governments of Assam and West Bengal." in Journal of the Asiatic Society, Vol. XLVIII, No. 4, Kolkata, 2004.
122. *ibid*, pp. 3-4.
123. File No. 15(59) - P/49, Ministry of States, Govt. of India, Secret, 'P' Branch, Correspondence, Serial No. (2), p. 3.
124. *ibid*, Serial No. (8), p. 12.
125. *ibid*.
126. *ibid*.
127. For instance, The Times of India, Bombay, dated 7th December, 1949 reported that the small but strategic Indian state of Cooch Behar, to the North of Eastern Pakistan and South of Bhutan, will merge with West Bengal on January 1st, 1950, it is tentatively learnt here. The Administrator is expected to continue to be in charge of the state even after its merger, in order to stabilise the administration and bring about co-ordination.
128. File No. 15(74) - P/49, Ministry of States, Govt. of India, secret, 'P' Branch, p. 1. NAI. The President of State Proja Congress, Cooch Behar, sent a telegram which was posted on December 6, 1949 to the Prime Minister, to the Secretary, States' Ministry and also to the President of the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi. The telegram reads : "Cooch Beharis Shocked at PTI Reporting From Delhi of Merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal Protest against Exparte Decision Demand plebiscite" — telegram No. 257, telegram received on 9.12.1949, File No. *ibid*, p. 3.
129. *ibid*. p. 3.
130. Letter No. S/ii dated 12th December, 1949 from V. I. Najappa to V. P. Menon, File No. op. cit, p. 6.
131. File No. 15(74) - P/49, op. cit.
132. Letter No. 278/C dated 17th December, 1949, File No. op. cit.
133. Telegram sent on 20.12.1949 from Jaladhar Saha, Secretary, State Proja Congress Cooch Behar to Private Secretary to Adviser, States' Ministry, New Delhi. File No. 15(74) - p/49, Ministry of States. Govt. of India, New Delhi, Political Branch, 1949.
134. Assam Tribune, Gauhati, December 14, 1949. This has been quoted in D.O. No. 103P, dated the 17th December, 1949 from Chief Commissioner, Cooch Behar to A.B. Chatterjee, Joint Secretary to the Govt. of India, Ministry of States, New Delhi. File No. Loc. cit.
135. Telegram sent on 20.12.1949. File No. Loc. cit.
136. Meeting of the Cabinet was held on Wednesday, 28.12.49, at 10.30 A.M. Serial case No. 477/63/49, File No. D/ 2/6 - P/50.

137. Press Note issued by the Press Information Bureau, Ministry of States, Govt. of India, R/1825/P/49. The full text of the Press Note has been appended at the end. Vide appendix No. E -(ii)
138. *ibid.*
139. White Paper on India States, *op. cit.*, Appendix XLVI, p. 309.
140. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, January, 2, 1950. p. 1. This order has been appended at the end ; vide Appendix E (iii)
141. Roy, B : West Bengal District Census Handbook, 1961 : Cooch Behar, pp. 6ff. It is to be noted that the Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of States in a letter No. D 261-P/50 dated 4th January, 1950, to Chief Secretaries of all Provincial Governments (excepting West Bengal), Chief Secretaries of all Unions, Chief Secretaries of all States, all Chief Commissioners, all regional Commissioners sent the message which is as follows : "I am directed to state that, with effect from the 1st January, 1950, Cooch Behar State which had been previously constituted into a Chief Commissioner's Province, merged with the Province of West Bengal. It is, therefore, requested that correspondence on all matters which were hitherto addressed to the Cooch Behar Administration may in future be addressed to the Government of West Bengal." — File No. 15(59) - Political/49, Secret, Ministry of States, 'P' Branch, p. 48.
142. Programmes of the visit of Hon'ble Dr. B. C. Roy, Premier of West Bengal, to Cooch Behar, on 31st December, 1949 and 1st January, 1950 on the occasion of the merger of Cooch Behar with the Province of West Bengal. File No. 15(59) - political / 1949, Ministry of States, Secret, Correspondence, p. 60. Also confer the Statesman, Calcutta, January 1, 1950, p. 1.
143. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, January 2, 1950, p. 1; Also see "Address by Hon'ble Dr. B. C. Roy, Premier of West Bengal, to Cooch Behar, on 31st December, of Cooch Behar with the Province of West Bengal, on the occasion of the Merger of the State of Cooch Behar with West Bengal," January 1, 1950, Govt. of West Bengal, p. 5. The said 'Address' has been appended at the end ; vide Appendix E (iv)
144. The Statesman, Calcutta, January 2, 1950, p. 1.
145. The Statesman, Calcutta, January 2, 1950, p. 7.
146. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, January 2, 1950, p. 5.
147. *ibid.*, p. 1, see also the Statesman, Calcutta, January 2, 1950, p. 1.
148. The Statesman, *op. cit.* (West Bengal Governor Dr. Katju's speech in a broadcast from Calcutta at the night of 1st January, 1950.
149. The Statesman, Calcutta, January 16, 1950. p. 1.
150. *ibid.*, January 1, 1950, p. 9.
151. *ibid.*, p. 8.
152. The confidential letter dated 29th March, 1949 from Sri Prakasa, Governor of Assam to Sardar Patel, *op. cit.* pp. 17-18.
153. Sen, R. G. : 'Cooch Behar comes into West Bengal...', The Amrita Bazar patrika, Calcutta, January 1, 1950, Magazine section, p. 9.
154. Roy, Sailen : 'A land of Wild Beauty, Song, Joy and Plenty', The Amrita Bazar Patrika, *op. cit.*, p. 10. In this connection, an interesting anecdote might be cited about the late father of the present Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan, — The late Maharaja Jitendra Narayan. Though well-versed in Bengali, Jitendra Narayan used to speak in English on ceremonial occasions. The author remembers him saying one day in an address before a gathering in the Cooch Behar Sahitya Sabha, "I feel more at home with the English speech when speaking before the

public. As a Bengalee however I deem it a disgrace on myself. Nevertheless, I cherish this hope that my son will in his time please the public with Bengali speeches." The late Maharaja's hope has been fulfilled. *ibid.*

155. Sen : R. G. : *op. cit.*

156. Roy, Sallen : *op. cit.*

157. 'Sporting India', A monthly journal devoted to world sports and screen, Vol. 1, No. 5, November 30, 1940. Cooch Behar supplement, p. 213 : Also confer the A. A. R. C. B. S., 1939-40, chapter 1, general, p. 2.

158. A. A. R. C. B. S., *op. cit.*

159. A. A. R. C. B. S., *op. cit.*, general and political, p. 4.

160. *ibid.*, 1939-40, chapter 1, general and political, p. 4.

161. *Sporting India*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

162. *The Assam Tribune*.

163. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, April 12, 1970, p. 1.

164. *ibid.*, April 13, 1970, p. 1.

165. *ibid.*, April 12, 1970, 'Obituary' on late Maharaja of Cooch Behar, p. 7.