



**FIRST  
SPARK  
OF  
REVOLUTION**

**ARUN CHANDRA GUHA**



# FIRST SPARK OF REVOLUTION

*THE EARLY PHASE OF INDIA'S STRUGGLE  
FOR INDEPENDENCE, 1900-1920*

ARUN CHANDRA GUHA



ORIENT LONGMAN  
BOMBAY MADRAS CALCUTTA NEW DELHI

*First published, 2 October 1971*

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**ORIENT LONGMAN LIMITED**

*Regd. Office:*  
50 Sundar Nagar  
New Delhi 3

*Regional Offices:*  
Nicol Road, Ballard Estate  
Bombay 1

17 Chittaranjan Avenue  
Calcutta 13

36A Mount Road  
Madras 2

3/5 Asaf Ali Road  
New Delhi 1

PRINTED IN INDIA  
BY S. N. GUHA RAY AT SREE SARASWATY PRESS LTD., 32 ACHARYA PRAFULLA  
CHANDRA ROAD, CALCUTTA 9 AND PUBLISHED BY W. H. PATWARDHAN,  
ORIENT LONGMAN LTD., 3/5 ASAF ALI ROAD, NEW DELHI 1

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TO

SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA SARASWATY  
(1884-1921)

*Who initiated me to the service of  
the country and the people  
and*

*Whose sacred memory has sustained me all these years  
of service and suffering*



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## FOREWORD

It was a movement aimed, deliberately and uniquely in the history of the world, at a transition—not a goal but a transition; a spark, that was to kindle the fire—not the fire itself. If you say there must have been a goal aimed at, yes, there was the vague, the vaguest of vague dreams, and you cannot aim at a haze, at a mist, with a gun in hand.

Indeed, such were the pioneers, the leaders, the devoted workers of what is known as the Indian Revolutionary Movement during the first two decades of the present century. Such were also the organisations that built up its workers—better described as thunderbolts that manifested themselves only to end themselves. The most representative pioneer was Swami Vivekananda; the most outstanding and active representative leader was Jatin Mukherjee. What was it that they taught their followers, the votaries of the cult?

“Be men. No more—Be Men.”

One of the songs that inspired the death-hungry devotees of those years sang: ‘Be men again, mourn not that your society and country is lost; be men again’. Can one take such feelings for those of a normal man or any normal community as we see it around us, especially today? Were not they, to whom these pioneers and leaders and litterateurs spoke, human beings with human forms? Yes, they were, of course, with human forms; but not yet with the rest that would go to constitute MAN.

And the organisations? The Cultural Society (the Anushilan Samiti), the Society for Self-culture (Atmonnati Samiti), Friends’ Society (Suhrid Samiti), Society of the Friends of the Country (Swadesh Bandhab Samiti), Society for Spiritual Uplift (Sadhana Samaj), Society of the Initiates (Brati Samiti), Society for the Culture of Puissance (Sakti Samiti) and a Society with a negative aim—a society launched to fight a particular Government measure—the Anti-Circular Society (the circular meant the Carlyle Circular of

the then Government of Bengal directed against students and teachers participating in political agitation) and an endless number of them. And out of this conglomeration darted forth one that dared give itself a positive name—the Jugantar, with a positive content—a New Age, a New Social Order. That itself smacked of revolution in those days. And that was unusual and imprudent to boot.

A unique situation ushered in a unique way—a novel search. Whoever heard of an entire community so completely given to such nerveless sloth, such inert slumber—in such total forgetfulness of its existence as an entity—of the mutual relation between the individual and his neighbour, as the Indian people of the past century or earlier centuries? Then came, as if dropped from the skies, a century of savants, saints, sannyasis, litterateurs—Rammohan and Ranade, Dayanand and Ramtirth, Vivekananda and Bankim, Tagore, Tilak and Arabinda. Did they teach anything positive and revolutionary? Yes, they taught many things, many bold and reckless things but they needed interpretation and interpreters. And there came a host of them, the common revolutionary workers of those days.

The most concrete, the most outspoken and yes, the most courageous shape that was given to the political ideal was given by Rabindranath, Arabinda, Brahmabandhab, Satish Mukherjee of the *Dawn* and Bepin Pal. It was Passive Resistance, the name culled by the last-named from European political literature. What was the shape proposed? The Indian people under Indian leadership and with Indian personnel were to organise themselves into an administration with proper branches to look after their own agriculture and industry, education and sanitation, litigation and policing, without any attempt at coming into clash with the existing British administration and simply ignoring it. Then its very existence—existence and growth of the indigenous administrative body—would be the greatest resistance to the foreign state imposed on the people. If they come ultimately into conflict, it would not be of the Indian people's seeking; rather the boot would be on the other leg. Then the people may come into violent struggle, may be a seemingly endless struggle, in which the self-suffering of the people will draw the sympathy of the entire nation, nay, of the world outside, even the Indian part of the British army. The nation itself may come

into being in the process. *Ex nihilo nihil*—out of nothing comes nothing.

In a scarcely known corner of the country appeared a practical idealist. It was Aswini Kumar Dutt of Barisal. With two institutions in his two hands, the Brojo Mohan Institution (an educational establishment—a recruiting ground of a national army, as it were) and the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti, he actually started building up an administrative set-up. The shadow government, so to say, began to look after local industry through what was then known as Swadeshi; national education; social uplift, that is, raising the social status of the age-old suppressed classes; Hindu-Muslim unity; arbitration courts; vigilance corps; and last but not least was Aswini Kumar's publicity and propaganda branch of the administration through the organisation of village meetings, *melas* (fairs) and *jatra* (a native form of theatrical performance).

His precursor in this line was Nabagopal Mitra. The ideas of *mela* and *jatra* were elaborated by Rabindranath Tagore. And Aswini Kumar had drawn his inspiration from the schoolmaster Rajnarayan Bose who was also the friend, philosopher and guide of Arabinda Ghosh. And in this regard Rajnarayan—it is worth mentioning here, by the way—was, in fact, the high priest who lit the sacrificial fire of the Indian revolutionary movement, the fire that sent forth sparks far and near. Aswini Kumar's leader was Surendra Nath, who had been the first to preach a nationhood of the races inhabiting the vast land, surrounded by the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean on the north and the south, and the Indus and the Salween to the West and the East. Later, however, the influence of Tilak and Arabinda was greater over Aswini Kumar. His spiritual guide and preceptor respectively were Swami Vivekananda and Bejoy Krishna Goswami. And the inspirer of the coming nation who thrilled Aswini Kumar was Sister Nivedita—a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and follower of Arabinda. She thrilled him by her presentation through him to the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti the flag inscribing the design of a thunderbolt supposedly made of the bones of the Rishi Dadhichi, cited in ancient Indian literature as a symbol of supreme sacrifice.

Mahatma Gandhi, just as the two decades were passing into history, accepted on an all-India scale the programme elaborated

by Rabindranath Tagore, Arabinda and others or as it had appeared in practical rudiments at Aswini Kumar's hands. Rather, it may be said, the idea was drawn in common of a self-ruled social order from the same Western source. Only there was an addendum in Gandhi's case—he would have the movement non-violent all through, relying on the ultimate victory of self-suffering and self-immolation. This also was drawn from one of the main European exponents of the idea, Count Leo Tolstoi. But that is jumping on to the branches while we are yet looking at the roots of the tree that grew up during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

It was Arabinda Ghosh who saw meanwhile the absurdity of the proposition. It has already been seen, there was one Aswini Kumar—and how many forces went to make that Aswini Kumar. And he, too, belonged to a corner of the country. And India is a vast country. How many centuries would it take to bring into being other Aswini Kumars for the rest of the land? Simple arithmetic made Arabinda ask himself: With whom are we going to set up the Indian administration, the Indian State? Why?—the Indian people. But where are they? The self-satisfied items of humanity that were crawling on the vast expanse called 'India'—did they know what they were, what was their due, or if they were human beings? Did they feel concerned with their own future, or with anything but the petty needs of the moment? Can this mass of jellyfish that had returned to its embryonic stage be expected, with any amount of sanity, to form its own State organisation? Yes, that precisely was what the so-called Indian people had been as if enchanted into it by some unseen sorcerer, and that stage continued till the first years of the present century. The warmth generated by the powerful anti-Partition (Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905) agitation and what came to be known as the Swadeshi movement hardly touched a part—not a large part at that—of the Indian people.

Arabinda who, as far back as 1893-94 while he imported his notion of a national upheaval, embracing even what he described as the Indian 'Proletariat'—far, far yet from germinating in a some-time-to-be industrialised India—felt what the real situation then was in the country, consulted Bal Gangadhar Tilak from Maharashtra and Lalā Lajpat Rai from Punjab and decided upon a plan and programme: *First* strike imagination into the people; it won't do

merely to agitate on the political plane. The people's heart must be touched layer after layer downwards. How ?

By violence—striking acts of violence—initially on individuals and by individuals, who by the manner of their action and manner of meeting the inevitable consequence would speak as if stirring from a million platforms at the same moment. But the target also must be well-chosen. Select only those who have incurred intense hatred of the few who may have been just opening their eyes after the monster Kumbhakarna's sleep.

In the wake of the Swadeshi movement, Arabinda came away from Baroda, became the head of the newly started National College started in Calcutta and soon also the editor of the daily *Bandemataram*. The limited but sudden agitation that was worked up, especially in Bengal against its partition, infuriated the hitherto complacent British Government. Disproportionate repression was let loose; the lathi was freely used on unarmed student volunteers; meetings were banned and broken up; the nationalist press was suppressed. Some of these papers were deliberately challenging in tone under instruction of Arabinda, the mentor of revolutionary Indian nationalism of those days. It was even said that he was informally the head of an editorial board that was to guide the policy of this group of papers. Kingsford, the Chief Presidency Magistrate, made himself odious in the process of all this oppression and suppression. The hatred attained a new depth when he publicly flogged the 14-year old student, Sushil Sen, for nothing more than shouting the sacred slogan "Bandemataram". The people did not dare speak out but in their heart of hearts prayed for condign reprisal. Their feeling emitted a deep sigh in a new song that made the iron enter the soul of the upper layer of the society: *Amaya bet mere ki ma bhulabee, Ami kee mayer shei chhele ?* (Will you make me forget my Mother by whipping me ? Am I such a worthless offspring of my Mother ?) In Kingsford, the victim was well-chosen.

Meanwhile Arabinda had set up his organisation on a rough and ready basis. Jatin Banerjee (later, Swami Niralamba—both of Bengal and Punjab) started the organisation. Arabinda's younger brother Barin with as mature a plan as feasible under the conditions of the day worked the plan with a meagre factory for manufacturing explosives and an apology for an armoury to collect firearms.

Armed with such poor weapons and without close and necessary watch and observation, two paragons of devotion and daring, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose, attacked Kingsford at Muzaffarpur where he had been transferred some time back for his personal safety. The plan miscarried; the youths victimised two innocent ladies in a vehicle looking similar to Kingsford's.

The end was achieved all the same. With unprecedented recklessness Tilak, in an elaborate and "highly philosophical article published in his paper, gave the true and proper significance of the bomb in the hand of a dependent and helpless people. No interpretation was, however, necessary. The joy of intellectual and awakened India knew no bounds; it began hoping that the people were gathering strength somewhere, somehow; the ignorant believed it was coming by God's grace, which was ultimately irresistible. That superstitious faith gave added strength. And Arabinda, it 'was whispered from mouth to ear, was a person of piety and was capable of working miracles. A series of striking events followed, while a trial was going on at Alipur of a large number of persons—including Arabinda who was ultimately acquitted—captured on suspicion that they had been behind the action of which Kingsford was the obvious and deserving victim. The most conspicuous act, unquestionably drawing everybody's admiration, was the assassination with firearms, inside a closely-guarded central prison, of the traitor Naren Gosain by the adorable martyrs Kanai Dutta and Satyen Bose. *A thrill vibrated every Indian soul. Faith and strength grew. Awakening percolated.*

Another soul-stirring incident followed. A second glorious martyrdom was achieved by the great Biren Datta Gupta, shooting dead, during court hours on the crowded corridor of the Calcutta High Court, a high police official who had made himself detestable by helping the prosecution with the supply of materials against the accused in the Alipur Trial.

In spite of apparent similarity in methods of work and organisation, two clear trends, however, emerged almost simultaneously and these were manifested in the two important groups of revolutionary workers in Bengal—the Anushilan Samiti (Dacca) and the Jugantar group. These may be summed up as 'shoot-and-run' and 'face-and-die'. Arabinda's life-giving creed, as inculcated by him,

was the latter. (Prafulla Chaki, after the Muzaffarpur bomb attack, was the first case of following the cult of face-and-die.) The example was set by Kanailal and Satyen who disposed of a traitor, before, so to say, the very eyes of Arabinda in the Harinbari (Alipur) Central Jail. Jatin Mukherjee expressed the idea in homely words—*Amra morbo, jar jagbe*: (We shall die to awaken the nation). Shooting and running might be suitable for an awakened people; a dead nation can come back to life only by facing death with courage.

Two conspicuous cases of martyrdom in accordance with this cult of 'face-and-die' were those of Charu Bose and Biren Datta Gupta. Their acts of heroism came to be known as having been inspired by Jatin Mukherjee. They shot dead in crowded court premises two important government agents in charge of conducting political trials. Later Jatin Mukherjee himself courted death along with Chittapriya Roy Choudhuri in a pitched battle in 1915. And Jatin Mukherjee's example was followed in subsequent years, particularly between 1930 and 1935 when India created an unparalleled record of martyrdom.

• We now pass on to the First World War stage. The vague notions, prevailing in the first decade, of an ultimate struggle for India's freedom drove a number of young men to Japan, Europe and America to study methods, contact diplomatic channels and, in many cases, to learn the use and manufacture of arms and explosives. It soon became apparent to these adventurous youths that the Germans were preparing for a war with the British Imperialist power. They sent messages home to the headquarters of the old *Jugantar*, till then a small and informal group.

Meanwhile, Arabinda, after his acquittal at the Alipur Bomb Trial, changed, like any Indian monk, his name, not, as is usual, into one ending in the suffix, "Ananda", but into "Sri Aurobindo", because he felt he had attained, by his efforts in prison, a higher spiritual realisation. Immediately after the High Court episode of Biren, however, Sri Aurobindo sought refuge in the then French-Indian colony of Pondicherry and lived as a recluse there until his demise in 1951. Jatindra Nath was arrested at the same time and put up for trial in what was known as the Howrah Conspiracy case but was discharged after a year.

Coming out of prison, he got the report from Europe of the

developments there. He consulted Sri Aurobindo through a messenger. There was perfect agreement that advantage must anyhow be taken of the coming war to stir up an armed conflict anywhere possible in India. The attempt was most likely to fail. It did not matter. Self-immolation by groups in scattered areas by itself would attain a new width and a new depth. That had been the primary aim all this while, not a large-scale revolutionary insurrection.

Previously, as the right hand man of Aurobindo, Jatin Banerjee (Niralamba Swami) had organised secret cells in different parts of the country, known but to few since 1902. Jatin Mukherjee also had some secret cells in some parts of Bengal. These cells, Mukherjee now calculated, would serve as nuclei for the proposed uprising. He now needed only to meet their leaders and discuss the plan. But before that he must meet his senior colleague, Niralamba Swami (Jatin Banerjee), now passing his days in retirement at Brindaban.

Jatin Mukherjee went to Brindaban, with his family, as if on a pilgrimage to that sacred place. Niralamba had meantime seen to the inception of revolutionary secret societies in the United Provinces, but more elaborately in Delhi and Punjab. They discussed the aim, plan and details and agreed with each other.

Back in Bengal, Jatindranath called Rashbehari Bose from Dehra Dun and got reports of the general situation in Upper India. Rashbehari, with his uncommon acumen, saw greater potentiality of a mutiny among the British Indian troops in that area. Jatindranath found no difficulty over the differing character of the proposed uprising in Upper India and elsewhere. Through his centre at the Chhatra Bhandar in Calcutta, he had previously had contacts with the Jat soldiers in the Fort William in Calcutta. Some of the over-enthusiastic among them were betrayed by their own colleagues and court-martialled while the Howrah case was going on. He, however, managed now to renew the contact through the Shibpur and Khidirpur groups of the Jugantar. Autonomous units always work better and with more limited chance of mischief in case of a betrayal, not unexpected in that stage of the country at the relevant period; and Rashbehari was left to work according to his own discretion; only the timing of the uprising was to be agreed upon at the last moment. No rigidity was insisted upon even in that direction.



Jatindranath was bold enough in his conception of a rough and ready plan of the uprising.

Now plans were drawn up for Bengal. Atul Ghosh, Bepin Ganguli and Naren Bhattacharya were to look after Calcutta. Swami Prajnanananda, Hemendra Kishore Acharya Choudhuri, Purna Chandra Das, Jatindra Mohan Roy, Bejoy Chandra Roy, Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, Narendra Mohan Ghosh Choudhuri and others were to take charge of the districts. Preparations were going on particularly to receive German arms and ammunition when news was received from abroad that some would soon be on the way to the different coasts of India. Hari Kumar Chakravarti meanwhile received according to plan, some money from abroad, at his firm in Calcutta.

But we are anticipating events. Details of the relation and treaty with Germany were first settled between Jatindranath on the one hand and Jadugopal Mukherji and Narendra Nath Bhattacharya (M. N. Roy) on the other and were communicated by Jadugopal to Biren Chattopadhyaya acting in close association with Champakaraman Pillay in the "Berlin Committee" they had earlier formed. A superb, ardent character was Chattopadhyaya. Provided one was not weak and vacillating, he would not let even an unwilling Indian slip. Hardayal was one such because, while in America, he had already become an Anarchist in faith. But Chattopadhyaya did make him return from Constantinople and join the Berlin Committee. Champakaraman was no less devoted and adroit and worked in perfect unison with Chattopadhyaya. The watchword settled between them in Europe and the Jugantar in India was "Chatto". The terms of the treaty with Germany, which excluded the possibility of any German forces coming towards India and confined German help to some officers, arms and money as proposed by the Berlin Committee were accepted by the German Foreign Office and the necessary treaty was signed. Channels both through the Eastern waters and the United States of America were decided to be tried for the transmission of the aid.

How the plan matured and worked apace, how the climax was reached and how it all fizzled out has been delineated in all yet-known details in the book by Shri Arun Chandra Guha which is now being published under the title *The First Spark of Revolution*.

Activities of a secret revolutionary organisation worked usually by a band of devoted, intelligent votaries of a noble cult are hardly ever divulged except through betrayal from within or treachery of friends. In the present case, it was Indian generosity—or, as the Western scientific mind would prefer to explain, lack of political experience and sagacity—that was responsible for the failure of the attempt at an uprising in India undertaken by the revolutionaries.

Revolutionaries from among many dependent people collected in the United States of America, till then a neutral country and all came close together in pursuit of a great ideal and functioned informally in an international revolutionary fraternity, so to say. Each looked with sympathy upon the goal of the other. And they had hardly any secrets from one another. But while Indians and some other people sought to free themselves, fighting the British with the help of Germany and her wartime allies, there were the Czechs and Slovaks and others trying to secure Anglo-French aid in different ways for the freedom of their own races. Thus the enemies of India were the friends of these races. This the Indians failed to recognise in their revolutionary enthusiasm. They paid the penalty. They were betrayed by political opportunists basically different from the idealists that the Indian revolutionaries were. The leaders of the Czechoslovaks committed the crime as such a matter of course that their great chief, Dr. Masaryk, disposed of the matter in just a short casual paragraph in his big volume, *The Making of a State*, devoted mostly to their internal squabbles.

The rest followed in natural sequence and Arun Chandra has described the known facts and factors, many facets of which Shri Guha, even though an intimate worker in and for the organisation making the glorious effort, did not and could not then know. Nay, more. The present writer of the "Foreword" has seen, at the National Archives at Delhi for years, scores of research scholars and professors from all over the world—from the U.S.A. and Canada, from Great Britain, from East Germany and U.S.S.R., from Australia and New Zealand and from many Indian universities—vainly searching for knowledge of the what, why and how of the preparations of those days.

There is another underlying, vital reason for this failure, which it will be worth while explaining here, by the way. It is extremely difficult, if at all possible, for a foreigner to appreciate the contents and

substance of the emotions and motives that inspired the activities of the Indian revolutionaries of the period under discussion. The reason lies in the revolutionary movement emanating, as explained by Arun Chandra, from the Indian Renaissance of the 19th century. This latter, again, it should be emphasised, was drawn mainly from ancient Indian culture. Understanding of that culture can hardly come from mere intellectual study, however broadbased and intense. It depends far more on ardent and arduous practice. Fundamental Indian culture abhors dogmas, tenets and commandments. It has, of course, been adorned by acquirements through the ages from contacts and invasions. Thereby it has doubtless been befitted for peoples of different levels of culture. But in the process it has become shrouded in various irrational garbs too, and has undergone a somewhat denominational shape and is now known as Hindu culture.

Original Indian culture is entirely rational and, as such, universal. But it has become almost impossible for a common foreigner with any amount of learning in the modern or Western sense to pierce through the garb. The paradox must at the same time be admitted that it was a number of Western scholars who, in the last and present centuries, considerably helped—nay, even inspired in certain spheres the resuscitation of the all but lost culture. That, however, is only an instance where the exception proves the rule. And that is also the inevitable process of the dialectic growth of human history, growth through conflict and co-operation. But some East European scholars, arguing from the nature of their own history, are liable to discover bourgeois or petty bourgeois symptoms in the early Indian revolutionary movement. Again, Western and Indian professors with some socialist leaning sometimes ascribe revivalism to the pioneers of the movement, such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. It should be noted that the socialist hue of these scholars is as deep as the Fabian.

All this, however, as has been said at the beginning of the last paragraph, is only *en passant*. We now come back to our topic. Arun Chandra has not spared himself, as his very make-up would not allow him to do. And surprising and unimaginable is the number of sources he has tapped. He has utilised the National and State Archives; he has consulted the research matter the different State Governments have published. He has approached known and unknown

colleagues of martyrs and erstwhile leaders and heroes. After the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published "First Spark of Revolution" in about 60 of its Sunday issues, many from Bengal and other states volunteered materials, which he got verified to the best of his ability. Still things remain undivulged. That is inevitable when the workers for a secret mission render service without seeking name and fame. The present writer was deeply involved in the movement and yet he has been arduously searching for such material but his success has been much more limited than his failure. He can blame no one; he himself did not in those days let his most intimate colleague unnecessarily know what he was about or who another companion was.

Reverting to the narration: a glorious endeavour met a glorious failure. Primarily betrayed by the Czechoslovaks, the Indo-German arrangement to import arms on a rather large scale into India was quickly unravelled to the French, British and Indian secret services, now working in close co-operation. From Bangkok to Hongkong, thence to New York and California, from California to Calcutta, actions followed in lightning succession. Largescale arrests took place, many were interned, many sentenced to long terms, many executed. Rashbehari, by his consummate skill and daring, fled the country and secured safe shelter in Japan, defying the combined effort of the British and Japanese secret service to ferret him out; Jadugopal, Amarendra Chatterjee, Atul Ghosh and several others managed to remain as underground workers within the frontiers of India for six or seven long years; M. N. Roy made his odyssey from Batavia to Shanghai, from New York to Mexico, from Mexico to Lenin's Russia, from U.S.S.R. to Afghanistan, from China to Germany and back to India.

And the supreme leader, Jatindranath!—with a few, very few colleagues, he retired to the jungles of the then Mayurbhanja State. He was hunted out there and pursued by hundreds of British forces and employees; nay, as fate would have it, it was mostly his own countrymen, innocent village folk—still in a primeval state of human existence, in total ignorance of the scintillating martyrdom several years back of Prafulla and Khudiram, Satyen and Kanai—who composed the gang in pursuit. Jatindranath, with four Casabiancas with him, hunted, harried and hungry for days, ultimately sheltered himself in what was to be the modern Thermopylae, a raised paddy-

field with a mound on it caused by some old ant-hills, surrounded by just a small bush, situated in an obscure hamlet, locally called Chashakhand. This Indian Leonidas with four Spartans, Chittapriya Roy Choudhuri, Niren Das Gupta, Manoranjan Sen Gupta and Jatish Pal, fought an utterly unequal fight with their Mauser pistols against British rifles, until the last bullet shell fell emptied on the ground and until Chittapriya fell dead, Jatindranath was fatally wounded and Jatish severely. Manoranjan and Niren later met the scaffold with the martyrs' joy and Jatish heard of his sentence of life transportation with good-humoured stoicism. That was the glorious tragedy—the brilliant failure of the attempt at an uprising of the Indian people during the First World War.

Yes, the failure sowed the seed of the Indian Revolution. The revolutionaries sowed the seed and left it to Gandhi to look after the harvest. The spark was ignited—the spark that was to kindle the fire of the Indian Revolution. The fulfilment of the seed underground, its death-hungering effort manifested itself in the seedling of the Indian Revolution that the world saw in the Non-Cooperation Movement of Gandhi in the wake of the great commotion of feeling caused by the First World War. The commotion was given a dreamy shape in the mind of the still sleepy Indian by the revolutionary workers, who had been no votaries of the cult of Ahimsa, or Non-Violence. They were cannon-balls that blew themselves up, with the loudest possible noise in order to disturb the age-old slumber of the people. They succeeded beyond measure. That was where lay the great glory of their defeat—it lay on the scaffolds of Poona and Lahore, Calcutta and Balasore and Mandalay, and on the twentieth century Haldighat of Chashakhand.

Yes, again. If you had the opportunity, you might ask Khudiram and Kanai and Satyen and they would say in one voice: Arabinda taught us the religion of seeking personal salvation through total self-annihilation. If you had the same opportunity to ask Manoranjan and Niren, each would declare with unperturbed confidence: Dada (Jatindranath) initiated us in the ultimate virtue of self-immolation for the country's emancipation. Country's emancipation? Where is it? I do not know. He knew and he could not and would not lie.

That is how it was a movement aiming at a transition and not a goal—a transition that would and did glide into the Indian Revolu-

tion. That is how again the thoughts and ideas and efforts and teachings of the leaders of the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century came to fruition. They churned the ocean of the culture of India that once was and recovered the nectar of the way of Indian life—the highest teaching of an ancient, a very very ancient people: Work but do not seek the fruit thereof.

Shri Arun Chandra Guha has devoted uncommon zeal and fatigueless labour and is now getting published in book form the history of the revolutionary movement during the first two decades of the twentieth century. He has wisely confined himself to the two decades. That period was not history but created history—the womb that produced the offspring which was born in 1921 and grew up through 1930, 1942 and 1947, is still growing and growing in strength in spite of temporary set-backs of indisposition, ill-health and serious disease that periods of history like the human body are liable to. Sri Guha's story ends where the Non-co-operation movement, the real beginning of the Indian Revolution, comes on the stage. Thus the volume is the story of a transition. And the labours that have produced *The Spark* are expected to kindle not merely an interest in the scarcely known history of the two decades but to imbue the rising generations with the character that the moulders of the heroes and the martyrs of those years sought to foster by their life and death in the Indian humanity that is yet to come.

Calcutta

BHUPENDRA KUMAR DUTTA

## A P O L O G I A

*The First Spark of Revolution*, which aspires to narrate the story of the revolutionary movement in India from 1900 up to 1920, cannot claim to be a book of research; nor is it a memoir of the author. It is more or less a record of the memories of the persons involved in the movement. The author himself participated in the movement from 1905-06 till the attainment of independence in 1947. But he has taken particular care not to project himself into the story. The revolutionary movement in India had its most hectic days during the period 1907 to 1917. Many of the important persons connected with that period are still living; many of them died during the last 4 or 5 years. I have drawn from my own memories regarding the incidents of that period and have taken the help of such of my colleagues as have been available to verify the facts. I have also referred to some documents to be found in the National Archives of India.

After my release from detention in June 1946, I was elected a Member of the Constituent Assembly. At this time I received several requests to write either on my jail experience or on the revolutionary movement. I politely declined, saying that those incidents connected with the movement, whether outside or inside jail, were part of my being and I could not as yet take a historian's attitude towards the incidents. But by the end of 1950 I had to yield to the persistent demand of Shri Joachim Alva, my colleague in the Constituent Assembly (Provisional Parliament). In the Republic Number of *Forum* in 1951 I wrote an article, 'A Chapter of My Prison Life'.

On my return to Delhi for the Budget session, I found some letters awaiting my arrival. Among these, there was one from Shri G. V. Mavlankar, Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Having read my article in *Forum*, he wrote me an enthusiastic letter with the request: "Please do continue the series . . . Such series are inspiring apart from being an important material for history." Yet, for about 10 years, I resisted all further requests.

Finally, I had to yield to the persistent requests of Shri Rabindra Narayan Chowdhury, the then News Editor, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. I had declined all along on the plea that I was not competent to write the story. One day he said: "I may concede that you are not quite competent to write the story and that you have not the time also. But one thing I can tell you: a few like you are still living. Among them, you, I feel, can put on record the experience of all of them. If you do not do it, the events will all be forgotten and there will be none to remember them." That made me yield; and I contributed 52 consecutive articles in the columns of the *Sunday Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

While writing the articles and while revising them after six years, I consulted my friends and colleagues as also the books written by some of the eminent participants in the revolutionary movement like Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, the editor of *Jugantar*, Jadu Gopal Mukherjee, Prabhat Kumar Ganguly and many others. I also read the memoirs written in Bengali by some of our important leaders like Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Upendranath Banerjee, Hemchandra Das and others. I consulted the Rowlatt Committee Report also. In fact, the Report contains a fairly correct narration of the main events of that movement, so far as it goes, though it is not complete or detailed. While revising the articles for publication in book form, I have taken every care to verify the facts, as narrated, from all possible sources. The story relating to Maharashtra was seen and revised by Shri T. R. Deogirikar, then a Member of the Rajya Sabha. The Madras chapter was seen and revised by Shri Nilkantha Brahmachari who was an important participant in the movement in Madras. It was subsequently further revised and elaborated by Dr. (Mrs.) Vijayalakshmi, Editor, *Tamil Freedom Movement*. Similarly, the Punjab chapters have been revised by three authoritative persons. Regarding the Bengal chapters, I have consulted many of my colleagues of the relevant period and districts. To all of them I express my thankfulness.

Though I have taken every care to avoid any wrong statement of facts, I cannot claim that I have been wholly successful in that. Nor is it possible for anyone to make such a claim on a subject like this. The events took place in secrecy; it was the practice not to keep any written record of anything. I have had to depend on



memories and some official reports, neither of which can be considered wholly free from error. Even for the same incident, recollections may be conflicting at such a distance of time; that is why I have tried to consult many memories to arrive as close to the factual position as far as possible.

The revolutionary movement in India is a subject to which our research workers have to devote their attention. They have to go through the records in the National Archives relating to this period and the police records of Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab and other States. I must confess I have neither the energy nor the patience to undertake that tremendous labour. My friend Shri Bhupendra Kumar Datta is almost a living reference book on the events of that period. He himself was an important participant in the movement and his memories are still quite vivid. Moreover, he worked intermittently in the National Archives for three or four years, disregarding his age and failing eye-sight. I have taken liberal help of the copious notes collected by him from the National Archives. I have also taken the help of some State Government publications like the Bihar Government publication on that state's part in the Freedom Movement and the Bombay Government publication on the part of Maharashtra.

Though the movement had its origin in Maharashtra, it did not develop such a wide organisation there as in Bengal. The Maharashtra movement practically ceased to exist after 1909-10 and its main centres of activity were Poona, Nasik and one or two other districts. In Punjab, the secret revolutionary movement had only a start about 1907-08; but did not make much progress. A second phase, initiated by Rashbehari Bose, culminated in the bomb attack on Lord Hardinge in Delhi in 1912. The third phase continued only for about three years, after the return of the *Komagata Maru* migrants in September 1914; and the movement there exhausted itself in brilliant flashes within a short time.

In Madras, the movement had only a short life in 1909-10. In U.P. and Bihar, up to 1920, the movement was more or less an overflow of the movement in Bengal, where it gathered great momentum all over the province and continued in full force up to 1916-17. I have, therefore, devoted more attention to Bengal than to the other provinces. The Rowlatt Committee Report also devoted most of its

pages to the movement in Bengal, and some to Maharashtra and Punjab. It dealt very briefly with the other provinces.

I have tried to deal with the activities of Indian revolutionaries abroad during the First World War. This was a brilliant chapter in the story of India's struggle for independence. For these six chapters very often I had to depend on the books of Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta and the records of the National Archives secured by Bhupendra Kumar Datta. I have also taken advantage of the memoirs and biographies of some important participants like Raja Mahendra Pratap, Shyamji Krishnavarma, Dr. Abinash Bhattacharya and others.

In narrating the events and ideas of this great movement, I have resisted the temptation of making the story sensational or romantic by introducing untrue events, or by highlighting some side-issues or by giving a wrong twist to them. I feel the present tendency in that line will create handicaps to a serious study which this movement rightly deserves. I have kept the narrative within the bounds of a serious and factual historical study. I have also tried to keep it free from personal or group malice and partisanship. History, after all, will do justice to all, and will not excuse anyone or any section for mistakes and erroneous policies and actions.

Before concluding, I would like to say a few words about the nature of the movement. In the book itself, I have tried to explain the social and philosophical background of the movement. The movement, as it manifested itself in Maharashtra and Bengal, may be compared with the Narodnik (Populist) movement of Czarist Russia, rather than with the Nihilist movement which followed the Narodnik movement there. There is an important publication named *Tilak and The Struggle for Indian Freedom* edited by Levkovsky, published in Russia on the centenary of Tilak's birth. It is a compilation of several articles contributed by eminent Russian authors. The book is immensely readable and useful; but it does not show a proper appreciation of the revolutionary movement in India. I quote a passage from that book: "Certain events which took place in the middle of 1908, particularly in Bengal, were a new manifestation of protest by the national forces against colonial rule. But these events—individual terrorist attacks—can by no means be called a higher stage in the liberation movement. This was an

incorrect, petty-bourgeois method of struggle, which, in the final analysis, hampered the growth of the mass movement. The terrorists erroneously believed that acts of individual terror could assist in promoting mass actions against the colonial authorities.”

It is wrong to assume that the Indian revolutionaries believed that acts of individual terrorism would directly promote mass action without which a real revolution was not possible; but they did believe that by courting suffering and sacrifice and by their acts of self-immolation, it would be possible for them to rouse the conscience of the nation. And in that regard their expectation was not falsified. The movement, as has been explained in the last chapter, brought in Gandhiji through his determination to resist the Rowlatt bills which came as a sequel to the revolutionary movement; and then came the mass action against the colonial authorities.

No national movement should be read in isolation from the preceding and the subsequent events in the history of that nation. The revolutionary movement in Bengal or in India is actually the product, not of the partition of Bengal in August 1905, but of the gradual emergence of the sense of national renaissance as manifested through the social and literary movements. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia has to be viewed in the background of Pushkin, Gogol, Gorky, Turgeniev, Dostoievsky, Tolstoy and other literary giants as also of the Dukhovors, Narodniks (Populists), Decembrists and the 1905 revolution. Similarly, the revolutionary movement in India (1906-1920) has to be viewed against the background of the great rising of 1857, the cultural and the political movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century and also in the perspective of the mass movement which began in 1920 and ended with the attainment of Indian independence in 1947.

It should also be mentioned that many of the aims and objectives of this great revolutionary movement, beginning from 1906 and ending in 1947, have not yet been fulfilled. Martyrs and workers of this movement did not undertake all these sufferings only for the political liberation which was achieved in 1947. The social and economic contents of the revolution have not been achieved to the satisfaction of the people. India has chosen the democratic method. As India has achieved her independence in a unique manner—basically through peaceful methods—so it is expected that her goal of

social and economic liberation will be achieved basically through democratic and peaceful methods."

I conclude my Apologia with the expectation that some scholars will undertake a more thorough research into the annals of the revolutionary movement of Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab and other provinces during the period from 1900 to 1920. I am conscious of my limitations; and I do not claim my book to be exhaustive or free from inaccuracies and omissions. I am sure, there are many more things to be mentioned; and there might have been some inaccuracies in my narration. But I have tried to the best of my ability to give a factual presentation of the story of a glorious movement in which thousands of young men courted suffering for the salvation of the country.

Many of our colleagues died in the course of the struggle and many were broken in health and died prematurely. Some are still living, in advanced age, weak in health, with eyes glazed by frustration. They dreamt of, and laboured for, a free India with a better picture than has turned out today. It was not so much a question of material prosperity as the elevation of human values and socio-economic standards which they expected in free India.

While writing these chapters and now while revising them, I had often to think of my friends and colleagues who, in the course of the struggle, disregarded their personal sufferings or those of their parents and other relatives and ignored all considerations of future prospects in their life. Many of them died, unknown and unmourned; many are still living, almost discarded, as misfits in the present socio-political set up. I wish the nation were inclined to treat them with a sense of gratitude, for they paved the way to India's independence. I pay my homage to those who are no longer in the realm of the living and love and regards to all my comrades and colleagues in the struggle for independence at a very pioneering stage.

Before concluding, I must acknowledge my debts to those who have helped me with suggestions and new facts. Many mistakes have been rectified and many gaps have been filled with their help and co-operation. Among them, I mention a few names: Surendra Mohan Ghose, Manoranjan Gupta, Jogendra Nath De Sarkar, Kalipada Bagchi, Aswini Kumar Ganguly, Satish Chandra Chakravarty. I have already spoken of the great help I have received

from Bhupendra Kumar Datta. In preparing the final manuscript for the press and in reading the proofs, my thanks are due to Sachindra Lal Ghosh—a friend and colleague, though much junior in age.

Buddha Purnima  
May 21, 1970

ARUN CHANDRA GUHA



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## Chapter One

# The Idea Seized Us

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In the early years of this century, the idea of revolt against British rule was floating in the air of the country in general and of the Province of Bengal in particular. This idea was not instilled in us but seemed to have seized our minds before we were aware of it. I was born in 1892 in a poor middle-class family at Barisal (now in East Bengal, Pakistan). My father was a clerk in the local collectorate. There was nothing in the family or the local environment to make me bold and ambitious enough to take up the task of driving the British out of India. My father, though rather poor, was highly respected in the locality on account of his modest, amiable and honest dealings and personal behaviour. My mother, too, was respected by the local people. She had about a dozen 'daughters' among the neighbours—Muslims and Hindus of all castes. I was mild-natured from my infancy. My mother used to narrate many incidents of my childhood to show how quiet and docile a child I was. In the locality, I enjoyed the reputation of being one of the mild and 'moral' boys. Any truant boy in our locality, occasionally staying out till quite late in the evening, would consider it the best excuse to tell his guardian that he had been with me; my reputation for a mild and innocent nature would save

him from further embarrassing questions. Neither my parents nor the local environments, therefore, directly contributed anything to making me a rebel against the mighty British rule.

Yet even before I attained the tenth year of my life, I felt in me the urge of revolt against the British. My first awareness of anti-British feeling in me was during the Boer War. That war started in 1899, when I was only 7 years old. During those days, boys of my age were not intellectually developed enough to grasp the significance of a political situation. For me, intellectual realisation of the politics of a nation under foreign rule had nothing to do with it. Nor was mine a unique case. This anti-British feeling was evident in almost all my playmates, though many did not join the ranks of rebels. In our games, there was always a rivalry as to which of us would stand for De Wet, Cronje or Botha, the generals of the rebel Boer army. There was among us a definite revulsion against playing the role of Buller, Roberts or Kitchener—three successive generals of the British.

Our source of information was the big-size Bengali weekly *Basumati* or *Hitabadi*. We did not always have an opportunity of reading the news ourselves; we would overhear the elders discussing the war news. Any victory of the Boers would appear to our elders and to us as our own victory, and every defeat of the British would make us jubilant. Even now I do not understand how this anti-British feeling was grafted in our minds at so early an age. Some years earlier, Hume and Wedderburn, British friends of India and of the Congress, had spoken of the 'revolutionary tendency' or 'seething revolt incubating in various districts' and of 'political discontent going underground' in Bengal. That spirit seized us right in our boyhood.

Another historical event occurred in February 1904 when Japan attacked the Russian-occupied Port Arthur. More than the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War enthused us as it was a war between a white European nation and a coloured Asian nation. In January 1905 came the news of the fall of Port Arthur. We came out of our classes; the school closed for the day. Aswini Kumar Dutt and at least one of our teachers addressed us. It was a day of jubilation—for a victory of Asia over Europe. The defeat and surrender of the Baltic fleet of Russia which was despatched to the Far East was the climax of the episode. And we enjoyed it intensely.

Then came the agitation against the partition of Bengal. I was



only about 12 years old at the time, not mature enough to understand the political implication of that move of the British Government. This movement, however, came to us as a direct action against British rule, the first public manifestation of the people's revolt against the British. The anti-partition agitation is a great landmark in the history of the nationalist movement of India. It marks a departure from the traditional political method of praying to the British Government. It was not only the first assertion of the people's right to be consulted, but it also had a sanction behind it to enforce the will of the people on the alien Government. The vow of boycott of British goods, and the consequent stress on the use of Swadeshi, was the sanction behind the people's demand.

Barisal was a quiet district town, without much of the hustle and bustle characteristic of a city and could not till then claim any eminence for political activities except that it had two first-grade colleges teaching up to the B.A. standard. The agitation against the partition of Bengal stirred even the placid life of Barisal. That it came into the mainstream of the public life of Bengal was due to one man, Aswini Kumar Dutt. How much we owe him ! I shall come to him later. In 1905 came the signal to resist the proposal of the British Government to partition Bengal. Though quite young, we all plunged into this movement simply out of an innate hatred of British rule. The force that was released in this movement spontaneously urged us on to something far greater than the annulment of the partition of Bengal. This was the first spark of the revolution, which gathered newer and newer flames year after year. It was the beginning of the resurgence of Indian nationhood. We, only about 12 or 13 years old, and even our juniors, were all swept off our feet by the waves of this movement. My first participation in this movement was for the collection of signatures to the mass petition protesting against the partition. It should be realised that in those days politics was not a common topic of discussion even among the elders. A boy of twelve years today knows much more about politics than a young man of sixteen or seventeen would have known in those days. But the anti-partition movement gave us a political topic for discussion. Then Surendra Nath Banerjea visited Barisal. A big procession took him to the compound of Braja Mohan College. From the raised plinth and stairs of the college building, he addressed us in English.

I could not follow his speech and yet, curiously enough, I did not fail to be infected by the passion of his utterances. It was in that meeting that we first heard the slogan *Bandemataram*. I could not really catch the exact word or its meaning, and after the meeting I asked some elderly men about it. I had, then, not read Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math*—“wherefrom this had been taken as the national slogan.

Another exciting thing was the solemn pledge taken on 7th August. In fact, the Government decision on partition was formally announced on 6th July, 1905. This was followed up by the publication of the official resolution dated 19th July in the Gazette. Immediately after the announcement of 6th July, Surendra Nath called a province-wide protest against the proposal. Rajas, maharajas, knights and other titled persons—as well as common men and political and public leaders—all gathered to protest against the measure. Not a single individual worth any public notice hesitated to record his protest. In fact, most of the initial meetings and conferences were held in the houses, and under the auspices, of Maharaja Tagore, Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya of Mymensingh, Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi and others. The final decision of boycott of British goods was informally taken at a conference in the Calcutta house of Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya.

The districts were the more active in this respect. District after district organised public meetings protesting against the partition proposal and asking people to boycott British goods, British courts, schools, etc. In Barisal there was a public meeting on 26th July, 1905, in which Aswini Kumar Dutt spoke in passionate and forceful language. A resolution advocating the boycott of British goods was passed. But the formal boycott pledge for the boycott of British goods was taken all over the province on the 7th August, 1905. At a public meeting held in the Town Hall of Calcutta and presided over by Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi of Cossimbazar, the boycott resolution was formally adopted. Mofussil districts also held meetings on 7th August to pass the boycott resolution. The nation stood up in a grim posture.

Thus a mighty agitation was born out of an administrative folly of the alien government; but that folly only furnished the occasion for the eruption of the forces that were growing in the womb of the nation's history. In the beginning, it was just a local agitation for the

redress of a wrong inflicted on the Bengali-speaking section of the Indian nation. But soon enough it attracted the attention of other sections of the nation. Perhaps Tilak was the first to appreciate the significance and potentialities of this movement. Under his leadership, the Maharashtrians of Bombay began to feel the impact of the intense feeling and passion of Bengal. The Congress could not remain indifferent to the movement particularly when it met at Calcutta in 1906.

Surendra Nath, the leader of the anti-partition movement, was then the dominant figure in the Congress. His influence and the dominating personality of Dadabhai Naoroji, President of the 1906 session, persuaded the Congress to bless the boycott of British goods and to accept the vow of Swadeshi. A resolution passed by this Congress declared that "the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest against the partition of that province was and is legitimate". By another resolution "this Congress accords its most cordial support to the Swadeshi movement and calls upon the people to stimulate production of indigenous articles by giving them preference over imported commodities even at some sacrifice." Yet another resolution lent support to the national education movement.

The word Swaraj was at this time a common slogan among us. It clearly indicated that behind the facade of the agitation for annulment of the partition of Bengal, there was a bigger demand—the demand for 'self-rule'. Dadabhai, in his presidential speech, made the demand for 'self-government or Swaraj'. He began his speech with a quotation from the then British Premier, Campbell-Bonnerman: "Good government could never be a substitute for government by the people themselves." A resolution was also passed in that session that the "system of government obtaining in the self-governing British colonies should be extended to India." This change in the tone of the Congress was due to the anti-partition agitation and the consequent Swadeshi and Boycott movement.

Mahatma Gandhi appreciated the importance of this movement in his book, *Hind Swaraj* (written in 1908): "What you call the real awakening took place after the partition of Bengal. For this we have to be thankful to Lord Curzon... The shock the British power received through the Partition has never been equalled by any other act... The people were ready to resist the partition. At that time,

feeling ran high. Many leading Bengalis were ready to lose their all. They knew their power; hence the conflagration. It is now well nigh unquenchable. The demand for the abrogation of the Partition is tantamount to a demand for Home Rule. Leaders in Bengal knew this. British officials realised this. . . . Hitherto we have considered that, for the redress of grievances, we must approach the Throne and if we get no redress we must sit still except that we may still petition. After the Partition, people saw that petitions must be backed by force and that they must be capable of suffering. This new spirit must be considered to be the chief result of the Partition.”

It is unfortunate, however, that Jawaharlal Nehru failed to give due appreciation to this movement. He has not even accorded proper recognition to Surendra Nath Banerjea, the unquestioned pioneer of the all-India national concept. His sense of history being swayed by prejudices, he failed to make a correct assessment of the history of a great movement which gradually unfolded into a national upsurge. It was a new thing in the politics of India—to devise a sanction behind our demand. This is what Gandhi has said: “Petitions must be backed by force.”

Another memorable date followed soon—the 16th of October—or the 30th of Aswin of the Bengali calendar. That was the day on which the partition proposal was to be given administrative effect. That was also the date fixed by the nation as a day of mourning. The entire province of Bengal went into mourning. It was observed as a day of *arandhan*—non-cooking—and consequently of fasting. All markets and shops were closed. This was the precursor to what subsequently became known as *hartal*. Early in the morning, we took our bath in the river, and then went out to tie *rakhi* on the wrists of all we met. Bands of people roamed over the town singing national songs. In our minds we felt an intense hatred towards the British, much stronger than the sense of mourning.

The anti-partition movement thus gave us: (1) a national demand: the annulment of partition, (2) a sanction: the boycott of British goods, courts and schools and the vow of Swadeshi, (3) a national cry: *Bandemataram*, (4) two national days, 7th August and 16th October, and (5) the lurking idea: Swaraj. It was this movement which gave us the urge for Swaraj, and this was voiced by the Congress of 1906 at Calcutta particularly by its President Dadabhai Naoroji.

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## Chapter Two

# Politics Behind Partition

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The anti-partition movement was practically the creation of one man: Surendra Nath Banerjea. The movement he created outgrew him in a few years. We differed from him in his later days; and I also had my small share in the move to beat him down. But as a student of history, I must recognise that not only was he the prime moving force behind the Anti-Partition and Swadeshi movement, but he also created the urge to give shape and form to the concept of Indian nationalism. It was he, and he alone, who first toured the whole of India to preach the gospel of Indian nationalism; and he started this campaign after the Jubilee Durbar of Delhi in 1877—eight years before the establishment of the Indian National Congress. People and princes were assembled in that Durbar; and that assembly of the people of India as a whole fired his imagination. The spectacle made him think of an Indian nationhood. Again, it was Surendra Nath who whipped up the passion and resentment of the Bengalees against the partition of Bengal. Others followed him in the movement; and many of them outpaced him in a few years' time. Even Bipin Chandra Pal, who shortly afterwards fought him most bitterly, acknowledged him as "the one man who did the pioneer's work of

building up Indian nationalism." But Surendra Nath could not have produced such a big movement if the nation had not been ready for it. He lighted the spark; the combustible elements all around caught fire, and the conflagration spread throughout the country.

By the end of the nineteenth century, trouble and unrest were chronic in Bengal. Its administration embraced the whole of Eastern India: Assam (till 1874), Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The Bengalees were traditionally loyal to the British Government until the Sepoy uprising of 1857, and received all favours from the British for their loyalty. But even before the Sepoy revolt, with the spread of western education, a spirit of nationalism was developing in Bengal. The establishment of the British India Association in 1851 and some other public bodies further helped the growth of political consciousness; the demand for political rights became much more vocal in Bengal than in any other part of India. Almost immediately after the Sepoy rising, Bengal witnessed the agitation against the British indigo-planters. This was perhaps the first direct mass action against British authority or the foreign exploiting capital. *The Hindu Patriot*, under the editorship of Harish Mukherjee, took up the cause of the peasants of Bengal. The characters and significance of this first agrarian movement in India deserves fuller study. It is regrettable that we have not given due appreciation to this movement and to its great leader Harish Mukherjee. We have let ourselves forget how he was persecuted by the British and how he died a martyr, and how the persecution continued even after his death.

The Bengalee middle class, in a sense a creation of the British Government, assumed the features of a Frankenstein in the eyes of the British Government. By the end of the nineteenth century, the main anxiety of the British Government was to curb the influence of the Bengalees in the administration of Bengal as well as India. The first step taken was to separate Assam under a Chief Commissioner, tagging with it the district of Goalpara, which was never a portion of Assam, but was one of the first districts ceded to the East India Company when the Dewani, of the Subah of Bengal was handed over to Clive by the Mughal Emperor in 1765; that district also came under the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis along with the other districts of Bengal. And again, after a few years, Sylhet was transferred to Assam. The separation of these two districts from

Bengal was effected in order to reduce the influence of the Bengalees.

The second step for checking Bengalee influence and for putting a curb on the political influence of the Bengalee middle class was the partition of Bengal in 1905. The proposal had more a political than an administrative motive. This is apparent from several despatches written by the then Viceroy, Lord Curzon, and his Councillor, on this proposal. Sir Andrew Fraser, who subsequently became the Lt. Governor of Bengal, was one of the first to suggest this. Lord Curzon wrote on 20th March, 1903, in support of his proposal: "I also believe that Eastern Bengal would not be so painfully prominent a factor in Bengal administration if this transfer was made." D. Ibbetson, a Member of the Viceroy's Council, on 23rd April, 1903, further explained it: "Sir Andrew Fraser is very strongly in favour of the transfer. He has discussed the matter with me; and his feeling is that the influence of Eastern Bengal in the politics of the province is great, out of all proportion to its real political importance, insomuch that the Bengalee altogether overshadows the Bihari, who is in everything save the use (or abuse) of language, immeasurably his superior. Sir Andrew regards it as an object of great political and administrative importance to diminish this influence by separating one of its great centres from the other."

Ibbetson also suggested the transfer of Berar to Bombay, of Sind to Punjab and of the Ganjam district and the agency tract (Oriya-speaking) of Madras Presidency to Bengal (of which Orissa proper was then a part) and of Chota Nagpur except Manbhum to the Central Provinces. Ibbetson's proposals were later modified because the Government proceeded with the fundamental idea of keeping different prospective trouble-makers separate from one another. The Mahrattas of Berar should not be allowed to associate with the Bombay Mahrattas since that would extend the scope of mischief-making potentialities of the Bombay Mahrattas. On 19th June, 1903, another Executive Councillor, Arundel, wrote: "In the papers now under disposal, we have agreed to ignore, for political reasons which the Honourable Sir D. Ibbetson admits to over-weigh all other considerations, the natural union of the Mahratta Brahmins of Berar with those of Bombay, by assigning Berar to the Central Provinces."

The same consideration weighed with the Government under the direct instruction of Lord Curzon that all the Oriya-speaking tracts, should not be amalgamated but kept separate. Arundel also wrote on the same day: "The political union of the Oriya-speaking race which is sought by the authors of this movement contains, in my opinion, elements of troubles and unrest from which we are at present free and should not be permitted without stronger reasons in its favour than any which have been put forward." As for Bengal, Lord Curzon agreed to the division on the same political grounds. In a Despatch dated 1st June 1903, Lord Curzon discussed the proposals of Ibbetson; and in sub-paragraph (iv) of paragraph 47 of that Despatch, he said that the incoming Lt. Governor of Bengal (Sir Andrew Fraser) "attaches utmost weight which cannot be absent from our consideration. He has represented to me that the advantage of severing these eastern districts of Bengal which are the hotbed of purely Bengalee movement, unfriendly, if not seditious in character, and dominating the whole tone of Bengal administration, will immeasurably outweigh any possible drawbacks; and not only does he urge the severance of these tracts of Bengal because of the character of the educated section of their inhabitants. . . ." It should be remembered that Bengal administration in those days meant the administration of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Chota Nagpur.

For the same reason, for which the Oriya-speaking tracts of Madras and Central Provinces were not allowed to be amalgamated with the Orissa Division and thus put under Bengal administration, or for which Berar was not transferred to the Presidency of Bombay, the eastern portion of Bengal was to be separated from Bengal and joined to Assam. The partition of Bengal under Curzon was thus a political move to divide the Bengali-speaking population and to minimise their influence in the administration. How political motives dominated their minds will be further evident from the following quotation from a Despatch of Ibbetson dated 23rd April 1903: "Mr. Fuller, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, also hesitates, but his hesitation arises from a different consideration. If Sir A. Fraser thinks that Dacca is too powerful to be allowed to remain a portion of Bengal, Mr. Fuller wonders whether it is not too powerful to be allowed to become a portion of Assam. He realises, what is probably



the fact, that the enlarged transfer (i.e. of the Division of Chittagong along with Dacca and Mymensingh) would mean that Assam would be annexed to Eastern Bengal rather than Eastern Bengal to Assam. It is not unnatural for a Chief Commissioner who takes pride in his province as it stands, to demur at such a result."

Thus, eastern Bengal was a problem to them in every way. As part of Bengal, it dominated the administration of the entire Presidency of Bengal thus causing anxiety; as a part of Assam, it threatened to dominate the administration of Assam. But anyhow, they decided on the latter course because the Bengal administration, from the political point of view, was much more important than the Assam administration; and thus the partition of Bengal came. The politics, which led to the 1905 partition of Bengal, continued to exercise its influence till the attainment of Independence with the result that East Bengal is no longer a part of India. It will not be appropriate here to go into the politics of that period. But this is the price Bengal had to pay for India's independence. It should be noted that the partition of 1905 failed to achieve the object of the rulers; rather, it created much more complicated problems and revolutionised the entire politics of India.

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## Chapter Three

# Partition and the Boycott Movement

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The scheme for the partition of Bengal was hatched in secrecy. The formal proposal, to transfer only the Chittagong Division and the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh of the Dacca Division from the administration of Bengal to that of Assam, was sent by the Government on 3rd December, 1903. Very soon, however, the proposal became known to the public; there were mass meetings all over Bengal, particularly in the affected districts, protesting against this division of Bengal. It was then that Lord Curzon visited East Bengal to gauge the intensity of public feeling. During this visit, he made a special attempt to win over Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya, generally known as the Maharaja of Mymensingh. Public resentment over the proposal was shared also by the landlords whose representative body, the Bengal Landholders' Association, protested against the scheme. In March 1904, there was a huge public meeting in the Calcutta Town Hall presided over by Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherjee of Uttarpara. The Raja family of Uttarpara was noted for its tradition of culture and benevolence. A representation was adopted at this meeting to be sent to the Government.

Even some British and Anglo-Indian newspapers disapproved

of the proposal. Among the European leaders in India, Sir Henry Cotton strongly opposed the idea. The question was raised in the Imperial Assembly and in the Bengal Council. The Government did not give any reply. Finally in the Bombay session of the Congress in 1904, a resolution was passed opposing the partition of Bengal. In the next two sessions of the Congress held in 1905 at Banaras and in 1906 at Calcutta, resolutions were passed strongly protesting against the partition and approving Swadeshi and boycott as legitimate means of fighting against it. Thus the issue did not remain only a local matter but was taken up by the Indian National Congress. On 10th January 1905, there was a protest meeting in the Calcutta Town Hall presided over by Sir Henry Cotton. On the basis of a report in a British journal that the Secretary of State for India had given his consent to the partition proposal, a member of the British Parliament asked if the news was true. The Government maintained a secretive silence and the Secretary of State replied that the matter was under consideration. But the Bengal public could not remain quiet; they arranged a mass petition to the British Government with over a lakh of signatures. That was in the middle of 1905 (May-June-July).

When the signatures were being collected, on the 6th of July the Indian papers published a Reuter news despatch that the Secretary of State had given his consent to the partition. On 7th July, 1905, there was a near formal announcement by the Government of India that a much bigger slice of Bengal was being taken out and tagged to Assam. It stated that the whole of the Chittagong and Dacca Divisions (the latter comprising four districts) and, except for Darjeeling district, all the other seven districts of the Rajshahi Division would be carved off from Bengal and amalgamated with Assam. The Dacca Division was the most populous and was richer than other Divisions of Bengal. On the 8th of July, a storm of protest was raised in the Bengal Legislative Council and some members denounced the Government in very strong language. Protest meetings were held in every town and hamlet with the aim of resisting the move by all possible peaceful means. It was also announced that the Mother (country) having been killed, the nation would be in mourning till the partition was annulled.

Boycott of all government functions and receptions, and of British

goods, was the universal demand of the people. This shows that the ground was prepared for a conflagration; only a spark was needed to kindle the fire of revolution. When Louis XVI of France, seeing the angry popular demonstration, exclaimed, "At last, a revolt!" he was told by his minister, "My Lord, it is not a revolt, it is a revolution!" Even Surendra Nath in his autobiography admitted that neither he nor any other leader was responsible for arousing the mass indignation that followed; the nursing-ground was there from which the revolutionaries inevitably drew their inspiration and support.

Then came the huge meeting on 7th August in the Town Hall at Calcutta. So big was the crowd that the organisers had to arrange for two over-flow meetings. The main meeting was presided over by Manindra Chandra Nandi, Maharaja of Cossimbazar, and the two over-flow meetings were presided over by Bhupendra Nath Basu and Ambica Charan Mazumdar, both eminent leaders of Bengal. Next day, an adjournment motion was moved in the British Parliament by Roberts to discuss the situation in the light of the protest meeting in Bengal. He said that such an important matter should not be decided on the basis of the consent and approval of the administration alone; it should also be approved by public opinion. The immensity of public resentment as demonstrated in the public meeting of 7th August gave a rude shock to the complacent stolidity of the Government. Yet the administration of Lord Curzon was determined to go through with the scheme. A formal announcement was gazetted in September that partition would be given effect to on 16th October. The new province would be called East Bengal & Assam with Dacca as its capital. Immediately hundreds of meetings were organised all over Bengal announcing boycott of British goods as the sanction behind the popular demand. For the first time, the nation had forged a sanction to enforce its demand.

In the beginning, the anti-partition agitation was not taken seriously by the Government or by the European community in India. In fact, the boycott resolution was ridiculed by Anglo-Indian papers. But the people of Bengal were far more in earnest about the movement than even the leaders had expected. The force of public opinion was so strong that none could keep away from the movement. Even men like Sir Gurudas Banerjee, Dr. Sir Nil Ratan Sarkar,

Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra, Dr. Pran Krishna Acharya and others who were temperamentally not inclined to politics or to anti-Government agitation, showed sympathy with the movement and joined some demonstrations. Practically all the Rajas and Maharajas of Bengal, except the Maharaja of Burdwan, lent their support to this movement, though they were very much dependent on the good grace of the British Government.

In mofussil districts enthusiasm reached a higher pitch. Almost every district had its own leader; noted amongst them were Aswini Kumar Dutt of Barisal, Ambica Charan Mazumdar of Faridpur, Ananda Roy of Dacca, Jatra Mohan Sen of Chittagong, Baikuntha Nath Sen of Berhampur, Jadu Nath Mazumdar of Jessore, Anath Bandhu Guha of Mymensingh, etc. Among them, Aswini Kumar Dutt occupied a unique position; we shall speak of him later on.

The vow of Swadeshi and boycott of British goods was taken solemnly throughout the province on 7th August. In about two months' time, the Puja season was to start; and that was the peak period for the sale of Manchester cloth. The tempo of agitation was so high that the importers of foreign cloth grew nervous and started cancelling orders. An appeal was made to Manchester by importers of foreign cloth in Calcutta to take this movement seriously and to persuade the Government in England to revise the decision about partition. In some places, there were bonfires of British cloth and other foreign goods. During the Puja season in Barisal there was almost a total embargo on the purchase of Manchester cloth. In other districts also, boycott of British cloth was rigidly observed. But according to social custom, clothes were to be distributed to everyone in each family during the Puja season; dhotis and sarees from the Bombay mills were procured. New handlooms were set up. Country-made dhotis in those days are comparable to the fine gunnies of today in their texture. But we were proud of those dhotis. A song went round: "The coarse cloth is the gift of the Mother, we should receive it on our heads." Picketing was resorted to on a very limited scale in the beginning.

Educational institutions were also to be boycotted and national educational institutions were to be started as a part of the programme of the Swadeshi movement. This programme was taken up more seriously when the Government started taking penal measures against

the teachers, the students and educational institutions. Students came out of their schools and stood by the Swadeshi movement. Even Government schools were not immune from the contagion. It should be noted here that even before the Swadeshi movement, one noted educationist, Satish Mukherjee, had started a society in 1902 called the Dawn Society. Its ideal was to build up a band of young-men imbued with the spirit of service. Lord Curzon's convocation speech at Calcutta University in February 1905 gave an impetus to the boycott of educational institutions. In that speech he had insulted all the Asiatic races by insinuating that they were habitual liars.

Student unrest in one form or another occurred all over the province; in fact, young students formed the spearhead of the movement. All the eminent educationists of Bengal were in favour of some kind of national education. Rabindranath advocated the idea in several meetings and discussions. *Sandhya*, the newspaper edited by Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, was most emphatic in denouncing the current system of education. In that atmosphere, student unrest received wide support from many eminent men of Bengal. Some noted cases of student unrest, e.g. in Madaripur (Faridpur), Banari-para (Barisal), Rangpur and some other places are worth mention. Kaliprasanna Das Gupta, the headmaster of the Madaripur School, clashed with the authorities for asserting his rights as the custodian of the discipline of his students when the District Magistrate threatened to punish them. Kaliprasanna resigned his job and, after some time, joined the National Council of Education at Calcutta. He is now a forgotten figure, but in those hectic days he played an important part and made considerable sacrifices for the national cause.

Repressive measures on the students were perhaps first let loose in Rangpur. A large number of students were fined Rs. 5 each for participating in the political movement in violation of the instructions sent by T. Emerson, the District Collector, to the Head Master of the local government school; more than one hundred students were expelled. So the leaders had to take up the challenge by setting up the first national school on 8th November, 1905. Ishan Chandra Chakravarty was the guiding spirit behind all these movements in Rangpur, though he was a government servant at the time. Braja Sundar Ray, Atul Chandra Gupta, Umesh Chandra Gupta and others were some of the leading figures there. The Rangpur national

school was founded with a handsome donation from the Raja of Kankina, a prominent landowner of the district. It should be mentioned here that the Chief Secretary of the Bengal Government, Carlyle, issued a secret circular to all the district magistrates on 10th October, 1905, prohibiting the students from participating in any political demonstration and asking the teachers to keep watch over the students and to report any violation of the instructions. In a few days' time, *The Statesman* published the circular and there was a storm of angry protests from press and platform all over Bengal.

Repressive measures against the teachers and students were also taken at Banaripara (Barisal). At Banaripara, the headmaster of the local school, Rajani Kanta Guha, was a member of the Swadesh Bandhav Samiti. His house was searched and some circulars of that Samiti and some papers and documents regarding the conduct of the political movement were found; but nothing of any incriminating nature was found. These papers only indicated how money was to be collected from the people and how to propagate the cult of boycott of foreign goods and Swadeshi. The students of Banaripara school, as also the B. M. School, were deprived, by Government order, of all merit scholarships. Banaripara had the first national school in the district of Barisal. Sir B. Fuller, the Lt. Governor of East Bengal and Assam, on his forced retirement in August 1906 wrote two letters to Aswini Kumar Dutt and to Rajani Kanta Guha, eulogising their courage and public spirit but requesting them to channelise these qualities of head and heart along better lines which, according to him, meant co-operation with the Government.

Similar repressive measures were taken against the teachers and the students in many other places, particularly in Jhalakati and Patuakhali (Barisal), Serajganj (Pabna) and Chandpur (Comilla). In all these places national schools were set up. The Chandpur national school continued for the longest period due to the munificent financial aid given by Hardayal Nag, the eminent leader of Chandpur. Other towns and districts also had their share of repression and counter-assertion of national rights by setting up samitis, national schools and volunteer corps.

A typical incident will give an indication of how the Government lost its senses and became unreasonably sensitive on even small matters. The Vice-Chancellor and the Syndicate of Calcutta University

appointed Mr. Rasul, Mr. Suhrawardy and Mr. Jayswal (belonging to Bihar); all eminent members of the Calcutta Bar, as lecturers in Law. After a few months, the Governor-General, in his capacity as the Chancellor of the University, objected to these appointments and demanded their dismissal as they were suspected of being sympathisers of the Swadeshi Movement. Except for Mr. Rasul, the other two were not even remotely connected with the movement. But the Government became so panicky that it was suspicious of almost everybody. Two notorious circulars were issued in October 1905—the Carlyle and the Lyons circulars—by the two Chief Secretaries of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam respectively. A similar circular was also issued by the Government of India known as the Risley's circular. They were particularly directed against the students who were in revolt. Teachers and professors were asked to take disciplinary action against any student participating in any political activities. In most of the cases the teachers and the professors declined to oblige the Government. The people of Bengal replied to this challenge by setting up the Anti-Circular Society.\*

Compulsion of circumstances forced the leaders to set up, the National Council of Education on the 1st of March 1906, Its Governing Body was composed of thirteen members, each eminent in his own sphere:

1. Rash Behari Ghose, M.A., D.L., Advocate (President of Indian National Congress at Surat, 1907), and the leader of the Advocates' Bar of the Calcutta High Court; subsequently knighted)—President.
2. Dr. P. K. Roy, retired Principal, Presidency College—Vice-President.
3. Rai Jatindra Nath Chaudhury, M.A., B.L. (landlord and a public man of eminence)—Treasurer.
4. A. Chaudhuri, M.A., B.A. (Cantab), Bar-at-Law (an eminent lawyer and subsequently a High Court Judge, later knighted).—Joint Secretary
5. Hirendra Nath Dutta, M.A., B.L., (Solicitor, a top leader of the Theosophical Society, writer and scholar).—Joint Secretary).

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\* See Appendix I.



6. Gooroodas Banerjee, M.A., B.L. (a retired judge of the Calcutta High Court; an ex-Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University; a scholar of eminence, later knighted).
7. A. Rasul, M.A.B.C.L. (Oxon) Bar-at-Law, a political leader.
8. Deva Prasad Sarvadhikary, M.A., B.L. (Solicitor—subsequently became Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University and was knighted).
9. Dr. Nil Ratan Sarkar, M.A., M.D. (the topmost medical practitioner in Calcutta—later on Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University and subsequently knighted).
10. Aurobindo Ghose (he became the Principal of the College).
11. Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, M.A. (Principal, Ripon College, a literary man of eminence).
12. Mon Mohan Bhattacharya, M.A. (Manager, Gauripur Estate, Mymensingh, a good organiser. His employer Brajendra Kishore Ray Chaudhury made a very handsome donation to the National Council of Education).
13. Satish Chandra Mukherjee, M.A., B.L. (founder-secretary of the Dawn Society—the pioneering institution for Swadeshi and a national system of education).

None of these 13 members except Aurobindo, who was an educationist at Baroda, was directly connected with the Swadeshi Movement and the anti-partition agitation. A. Rasul lent his support to the movement but not very actively. The Council was composed of 96 men selected from all spheres of Bengali society—all men of eminence in their respective fields of activity. It was deliberately kept free from the excitement of the current political agitation so that the members could evolve a pattern of education best suited for the intellectual and emotional development of the people of Bengal. In fact, not a single leader of the anti-partition movement, like Surendra Nath, Bipin Pal and others, was put in the governing body. Members were selected from both East and West Bengal. It was the embodiment of the cultural and emotional integration of the people of Bengal.

During these times, practically all the newspapers evinced great enthusiasm for the Swadeshi Movement and National Education. *The Bengalee* and *Amrita Bazar Patrika* were for the elders who could

read English. *Hitavadi*, *Basumati*, *Sanjivani* and *Bangabasi* were for the non-English-knowing and younger people. The Editor of *Hitavadi* was Kali Prasanna Kavyavisharad and that of *Sanjivani*, Krishna Kumar Mitra. Krishna Kumar was mild and modest by temperament, whereas Kavyavisharad was temperamentally impulsive and assertive. Both the editors played a considerable role in this movement. But the most powerful organs of national aspirations were the daily *Sandhya* of Bramhabandhav Upadhyaya and the weekly *Jugantar* of Bhupendra Nath Dutt. These two papers deserve special mention in the history of Bengali journalism. *Sandhya* was the first mass paper in India; every road-side vendor or shop-keeper vied with others to get his daily copy. It was written in colloquial and forceful language. Both *Sandhya* and *Jugantar* were direct and forthright in condemning the alien Government and in asserting national rights. Then came *Bande-mataram*, the English daily of Aurobindo Ghose and *Nava-Sakti*, the Bengali daily of Monoronjan Guha Thakurta. All these papers were devoted to the cause. Writers and contributors to these papers were usually common and there was mutual collaboration and no rivalry. Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, who was a forceful writer both in English and in Bengali, was an important link between all these papers.

The first assertion of nation's rights against the repressive measures of the Government was manifested in the formation of the Anti-Circular Society on November 4, 1905, particularly to fight the Carlyle circular. This was formed at a public meeting held in the College Square. Krishna Kumar Mitra was the president and Rama Kanta Roy—an engineer with foreign education—and Sachindra Prasad Basu were its *de facto* organisers. The aim of the organisation was to defy all such circulars. The spirit of defiance of these repressive steps with the consequent urge for national education was reorganised by the leaders. A meeting—particularly of students—was held (November 5) in the premises of the Dawn Society, with Rabindra Nath Tagore, Satish Chandra Mukherjee and Hirendra Nath Datta addressing the students. From this came the proposal for setting up a national university. In a meeting held on November 9, Subodh Chandra Mullick announced a donation of Rs. 1 lakh for a national university. The people gave him the title of Raja and he is still known as Raja Subodh Mullick. This was followed by a similar donation

from Brojendra Kishore Ray Chaudhury—a landlord of Mymensingh. Dr. Rashbehari Ghose also made a magnificent donation.

Then a meeting was convened in the office of the Bengal Landlords Association by Ashutosh Chaudhury. This meeting passed a resolution—"It is desirable and necessary that a National Council of Education should be at once established to organise a system of education—literary, scientific and technical—on national lines and under national control." The Council was formally established on the 11th March 1906. I have already narrated the formation of the Council. This was the outcome of the anti-national education policy of the Government. Different organisations in different districts developed independently, more or less with the same ideal: assertion of national rights and resistance to the repressive measures of the Government. They had an undercurrent nexus among themselves. Among the more noted organisations of this nature a few should be mentioned: Anushilan Samiti, started at Calcutta, with a branch subsequently at Dacca; Atmonnati Samiti of Calcutta; Swadesh Bandhav Samiti of Barisal; Sadhana Samaj and Suhrid Samiti of Mymensingh; Brati Samiti of Faridpur and Sakti Samiti of Calcutta-Hooghly.

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## Chapter Four

# The Men and the Movement in Barisal

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In the last chapter I have tried to give a picture of the mass momentum created by the partition of Bengal in 1905. All sections of the Bengalee elite—landlords, Rajas, Maharajas, British titleholders, barristers, lawyers, literary men, educationists, physicians—rose solidly in protest against this wicked measure. But in many places the movement came like a wave, and passed off smoothly. In spite of the wide appeal for Swadeshi and the boycott of British goods reaching down to the furthest villages, it can be said it was mostly a movement of the urban elite. Yet in most places, it touched also the rural people; and one conspicuous example of this was Barisal. It should be recognised that without appreciable support of the rural people the programme of Swadeshi and the boycott of British goods, would not have been successful. However, the movement became more mass-based and popular at Barisal. All this was due to the personality of Aswini Kumar Dutt. He was a great educationist and social worker. By temperament he was a man of religion. But the great national movement dragged him out of the seclusion of academic and spiritual life and brought him into its vortex. Bipin Chandra Pal said of him: "Aswini Kumar is the only person who

has a large and devoted following among the masses, while others of that period are, almost all without exception, leaders of the English-educated middle class only." That is why I am trying to give a picture of the man and his associates who gave a real mass character to the movement.

Barisal came into particular prominence after the session of the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1906. After that conference Kavyavisharad composed his famous song: "Barisal is hallowed today, by strokes of the lathi." Aswini Kumar, already occupying a unique position, became still more prominent among the leaders of the movement after this conference. What kind of man was he?

The son of a sub-judge of those days, in his early life he came under the influence of Keshab Chandra Sen, Rajnarayan Basu, Ram Tarfu Lahiri and Bijaya Krishna Goswami, all leaders of the Brahma Samaj. Having passed the M.A. and Law examinations, he declined to continue in the legal profession and devoted himself to the task of building up the Brojo Mohan Institution—school and college. This institution was a type by itself. Those who were selected either as teachers or as professors all came under his influence and became transformed into new men, as it were. Jagadish Chandra Mookerjee, belonging to Khulna district, was the Headmaster of the school, teaching English in the First and Second classes, Logic in the F.A. or I.A. and Astronomy in the B.A. classes—though he was himself only a graduate. Kali Prasanna Ghose, the Vice-Principal of the college who was again a mere graduate, used to teach Mathematics in the First and Second classes and History in the F.A. or I.A. and B.A. classes. Pandit Kalish Chandra Kavyavinod taught Sanskrit in both the school and the college classes. Jagadish Chandra was a man of ideal character and vast learning, highly devoted to religion; he was a bachelor and led a detached life. Kalish Pandit was the right-hand man of Aswini Kumar in organising that band, 'Little Brother of the Poor', for nursing the sick and helping the distressed.

Quiet, tender and of a religious temperament, Aswini Kumar was a real teacher of the young men of Barisal. In college classes he used to teach English; and Burke was a special subject for him to teach. He was deeply read in Emerson, the Vaishnava literature

of Bengal and the mediaeval Hindi literature of Kabir, Tulsidas, Dadu and others. The original works of Hafiz in Persian were a favourite study with him; and he was also versed in the spiritual literature of Christianity, Sufism, and Indian Bhakti cult. Shelley, Keats and Wordsworth were his favourite English poets. He was a powerful writer. His book *Bhakti-Yoga* ran into more than 12 editions in those days and was considered a best-seller in Bengali literature. His other books *Karma-Yoga*, *Prem* and *Durgotasava-Tatwa* were also very popular.

But the partition brought this man into the vortex of political activity. His moral and political influence was so great that the British authorities were quite afraid of him. In their despatches, the British administrators showered various abuses on him; they described him as a man of "mischievous influence and doing evil". The District Magistrate, Hughes-Buller, while recommending his detention under Regulation III of 1818, wrote: "I have no hesitation in saying that in the long course of agitation which has been going on in the district for two years, led by Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt, there is at the present moment hardly a single individual other than Government servants who is well-affected to the British Government. Even in the case of the Government servants, I have yet reason to doubt their thorough loyalty. I need hardly add that all administrative work is dislocated and the Superintendent of Police and I spend our time following the movement of the agitators." So the Magistrate considered "his further presence in the district a menace to tranquillity." He again wrote on 20th June, 1907: "If we exclude Calcutta leaders like Surendra Nath Banerjea and Bipin Chandra Pal, it will be difficult to find any other agitator in the two provinces of Bengal and Eastern Bengal & Assam, whose name is so often quoted and to whose words so much weight is attached." Among the offences counted against him, the District Magistrate stated that Aswini Kumar Dutt advocated: (a) boycott of British goods, (b) social boycott of the people who disobey the wishes of Swadeshi leaders, (c) inevitable ultimate success of the Swadeshi movement, (d) proper attitude to be adopted towards Government servants—which was, to have nothing to do with them, and (e) expulsion of the British from the motherland. The District Magistrate admitted that "Aswini Kumar's speeches have not, on the whole, been

characterised by the same violence and virulent hatred," as those of other speakers but Aswini Kumar's "influence as a leader of public opinion over every Hindu in the district, and even over many Mahomedans, is immense. In short, Aswini Kumar Dutt has become a firebrand and his present tours indicate that he is prepared at all hazards to continue his agitation against the Government. He is one of our enemies and the Government should beware of him."

In November 1908, Aswini Kumar Dutt was arrested under Regulation III of 1818 and taken to Lucknow for detention as a State prisoner. Prof. Satish Chatterjee was also arrested and detained in Bassein jail in Burma under similar circumstances. The seven other leaders arrested on the same day for detention under Regulation III of 1818 were: Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, Krishna Kumar Mitra, Sachin Bose, Subodh Chandra Mullick, Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, Pulin Das and Bhupesh Nag. The District Magistrate further recommended that the Brojo Mohan School and College, being 'his principal machinery', should be disaffiliated and his lands and estates including his moveable property should be taken possession of, and placed under the custody of the District Magistrate. The Government, however, did not accept these suggestions.

The Brojo Mohan School and College were truly Aswini Kumar's 'principal machinery'. The two institutions were not disaffiliated; but that was mainly due to Aswini Kumar's moral influence. Fuller—the Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal & Assam—insisted on the disaffiliation of the institution. So the University had to send eminent educationists to inspect the institution and report. First, came Dr. P. K. Roy—who had just retired as the Principal of the premier government college, the Presidency College. He was reputed to be a pro-government man. But his report did not justify disaffiliation. Then came Principal James and yet another European, Cunningham—a professor of the Presidency College. None could justify the proposal of disaffiliation. Cunningham was so charmed by the method of teaching in the institution and the character of Aswini Kumar, that his report was enthusiastically in support of the institution. Cunningham developed a deep personal regard for Aswini Kumar and he had to pay heavily for this. He was transferred to an unhealthy

station in the Central Province after he had protested against Dutt's deportation under Regulation III of 1818 in 1908. There Cunningham had a premature death.

The Government, however, did not hesitate to express its displeasure towards the institution. Year after year, merit scholarships to the students passing from that school and college were withheld. Deva Prasad Ghose—one of the most distinguished scholars of the Calcutta University—stood first both in the Entrance and the First Arts examinations; but he was not admitted to the scholarships. He subsequently became the Principal of a first-grade college, a member of the Rajya Sabha of the Parliament of India and President of the Jana Sangh. Another scholar who was refused scholarships was Dr Sukumar Dutta who also became the principal of a first-grade college and subsequently distinguished himself as a research scholar in Buddhism and a writer of distinction. Several others were deprived of scholarships that must have been theirs by right, because of their temerity in joining the Brojo Mohan Institution. An administrative circular was issued to debar any student of that institution from getting any Government Service; and that was at a time when middle-class parents considered government service to be the main objective of getting their sons educated.

Jagadish Mookherjee and Kalish Pandit were two important persons who influenced the young men of Barisal district. Jagadish Babu wielded his influence in a quiet manner, avoiding all public activities. His influence was mostly spiritual and moral. Kalish Pandit was more active and assertive in nature and his interest was mostly for social service. But the foremost amongst these teachers was a young man named Satish Chandra Mookherjee. After passing the Entrance Examination, he went to Dacca to study for the First Arts course. There he stayed with his elder brother who was a professor of History in Dacca College; but the atmosphere of that house not being quite congenial, he had to leave Dacca. He was the youngest member of the staff and possessed the lowest of academic qualifications; but his deep studies in Indian and Western Philosophy and History, his mastery over English, Sanskrit and Hindi and, above all, his personality, marked him out as the real leader of the young men of Barisal. He was the assistant secretary of the Swadeshi Bandhav Samiti.



With the promulgation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (January 1909), popularly known as the Samiti Act, Swadesh Bandhav and some other Samitis of other districts were declared illegal and were thus forced ostensibly to close their doors; but in fact most of them went underground. It was then that the genius of Satish Mookherjee came into full play. Through all hours of the day up to about 9 or 10 o'clock in the night, young men thronged around his cottage. After that, up to midnight he used to read and meditate. After a few years, he became a sanyasi and took the name of Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati. He died at the early age of about 36 in February 1921. During the period of his internment at Mahisadal in Midnapur district, he wrote a number of books, including a history of Vedanta Philosophy in three volumes. He organised a secret revolutionary society—the Barisal branch of the Jugantar Party. Within a short period, it extended its activities to Noakhali, Tipperah (Comilla), Faridpur, Chittagong and Sylhet and as far as Banaras.

Satish Chandra Chatterjee was a professor of Chemistry in the Brojo Mohan College. He was the secretary of the Swadesh Bandhav Samiti. During the early years of the Swadeshi movement in Barisal, he was of immense help to Aswini Kumar Dutt and was the real organiser of the Barisal Conference. Suren Mitra was a professor of Philosophy; his enthusiasm attracted the notice of all the leaders. He organised the volunteer force for the conference. Later on, Surendra Nath Banerjea took him into Ripon College as a teacher.

Rajani Kanta Guha was the Principal of Brojo Mohan College. He did not take much active part in the Swadeshi movement but had every sympathy for it. During the hectic days of the Barisal Conference, he took an active part in helping the delegates. During the days when the Brojo Mohan Institution was under the displeasure of the British Government, its financial position was very insecure; the number of students decreased. When we joined the I.A. classes in 1910, there were hardly 50 students, myself included, in the first year class. Rajani Guha was a brilliant scholar. He knew Latin and Greek; he translated the *Thoughts* of Marcus Aurelius and also the *Dialogues* of Plato on Socrates from the original Latin and Greek. When some students started taking transfer certificates on account of the apprehended closing down of the college, he addressed

us in the class: "You need not feel afraid that there would not be any professor to teach you here. After passing M.A., I worked for a year at Rs. 10 only per month and, if necessary, I shall do it again here." Temperamentally a calm and sedate man, he spoke with an emotion which impressed us all.

During those days, all the teachers of the institution were enthusiastic about the Swadeshi movement. I should mention here one of them—Tarini Sen. He taught English in the 4th class (class VII of the present day). After school hours, he would stay with us and read from the life of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Washington, William Tell etc. He would recount stories of Japanese heroism during the Russo-Japanese War. He also used to read us extracts from the sermons of Theodore Parker, Unitarian churchman of America. This will indicate how a teacher can inculcate the idea of patriotism in the mind of the students along with a moral and spiritual outlook.

Ultimately, it was an unequal struggle between the Brojo Mohan Institution and the mighty British Government. In 1911 Aswini Kumar Dutt, simply to save the Institution, agreed to certain terms of the Government and Principal Rajani Guha, Professor Satish Chatterjee and some teachers including Bhaba Ranjan Mazumdar, Shrish Chandra Das Gupta, Ram Chandra Das and Jnan Chakravarty were asked to leave the Institution. Rajani Guha and Satish Chatterjee joined the City College at Calcutta. Satish Mookherjee had already left the school to devote all his time and energy to organisational work and to intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

Aswini Kumar used to stress three virtues, *satya*, *prem* and *pavitrata*—truth, love and purity. We were all under the influence of Vivekananda and the vow of celibacy was common among the young men of those days. In Barisal, Aswini Kumar was very emphatic about celibacy; and so was Satish Chandra Mookherjee. A number of young men took the vow of celibacy and service to the country. That age was, so to say, an age of the assertion of the Indian ideal of purity and austerity over the European idea of luxury and indulgence. It should be remembered that there had been an age of encouraging even drinking and other western practices as signs of rising rationalism. This was the age of revolt against that previous revolt.

I should say something here about Ram Chandra Das and Shrish

Chandra Das Gupta, both teachers of the Brojo Mohan School. Ram Babu was an eloquent speaker and devoted all his time to preaching the cult of Swadeshi. Shrish Babu was a good organiser with an affectionate disposition who worked in the Swadesh Bandhav Samiti along with Satish Chandra Mookherjee. He was a bachelor who, in old age, had no one to look after him, and no means by which to support himself.

Suren Sen was an orator of eminence. His services were sought in other districts also. He was a teacher in Mymensingh and was one of the original members of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti. He also gave up his own profession and took up the work of preaching Swadeshi. Nishi Kanta Bose gave up his medical practice and joined Aswini Kumar's band. An eloquent speaker, he toured the district for the Swadeshi movement and organised relief work during the near-famine conditions there. Ultimately he left Barisal and joined the Social Service League of Dr. D. N. Maitra. They all suffered persecution by the Government. Practically all the leading lawyers of Barisal joined the movement; but after some time, as Government repression was intensified, they withdrew from active participation from the movement.

Rajani Chatterjee was another worker of the Swadesh Bandhav Samiti. Later on he organised the National School at Jhalakati. He then became the leader of that important trade centre of Barisal district. Durga Mohan Sen was the editor of *Barisal Hitaishi*. He was a man of sturdy character. By his blunt manner of speech he often unnecessarily courted unpopularity, but his patriotism was unquestioned. He was a powerful writer also. The reputation of his paper—*Barisal Hitaishi*—spread far beyond the borders of the district. All journalists of those days, including Motilal Ghose, Surendra Nath and others, entertained a high regard for him. He was convicted several times for his seditious writings. Today, he is about 95 years old, living in one of the refugee colonies in a suburb of Calcutta. Bhabaranjan Mazumdar, a teacher of the B.M. School, was a great friend of his. Bhabaranjan was a good singer; singing patriotic songs was a passion with him. He, too, was convicted for sedition—for publishing an anthology of national songs. On his release he came to Calcutta and started a cycle shop.

Another man to be mentioned in this connection is Mukunda Das.

His original name was Jagneswar De. His father was a class IV employee in a Government office. Jagneswar had hardly any school education. He was known in the town as a good singer, a wayward youth who had perhaps gone astray. With the beginning of the Swadeshi movement, he came under Aswini Kumar's influence and became virtually a new man. He took the name of Mukunda Das. He composed many songs and dramatic pieces in the line of *Jatra*. His transformation was little short of a miracle, and it was all due to Aswini Kumar Dutt. He soon became well-known throughout Bengal both as a composer of folk songs and as a singer. Recently, a film has been made of his life and activities.

Similarly Hem Mukherjee was almost a lost youth. But he had a natural ability to write poems. This attracted Aswini Kumar's attention. He used to explain to Hem the philosophy of Emerson, of Sufism and of the Vaishnava cult. Even though Hem had not much of a school education, he wrote a number of operas and ballads and became a preacher of the cult of Swadeshi. He was also invited to different districts to act as *Kathak* or village bard.

Aswini Kumar Dutt had moral fervour enough to influence all sorts of people. In the shadow of such a great man, we young men of Barisal grew up with the vow of Swadeshi and service to the country. Gradually, we became members of secret revolutionary societies. Aswini Kumar Dutt had a profound sympathy for the secret revolutionary societies but he did not openly associate with them. This was left to Satish Chandra Mookherjee, better known as Swami Prajnananda Saraswati. The development of the Samitis in Barisal and other districts will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

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## Chapter Five

# Cultural Background: The Renaissance

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Nowhere has the revolutionary idea developed without being preceded by a cultural renaissance, which is the nursing ground for any revolution. In Bengal, we had a renaissance or cultural revolution in the nineteenth century, which really nursed and fostered the idea of the political revolution which followed in the early years of this century. In this chapter, I shall try to furnish a brief picture of that cultural revolution.

Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), the Father of Modern India, first conceived the idea not only of an Indian renaissance and nationalism, but of a revolutionary movement against alien rule. He thought of building up a revolutionary movement, keeping the puppet Mughal Emperor in the forefront. Some of his recently published letters give a clear indication of this. In the early years of British rule in Bengal, just following the devastating famine of 1770, there was the Rising of the Sanyasis, which forms the background of the story of *Ananda Math* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. After that, till the rising of the Sepoys in 1857, there was not much activity on revolutionary lines in Bengal or anywhere in India. During the rising of 1857, Bengal's role was not very glorious. But the intelligent-

sia of Bengal did not fail to realise the implications of that rising. Harish Mukherjee wrote in *The Hindu Patriot* (in April, 1857): "It is no longer a mutiny but a rebellion." Later on he wrote: "The Sepoy Mutiny became the Indian rebellion." The mutiny was the first manifestation of an Indian nationhood. Political India did not miss this lesson.

Immediately after that rising had been quelled, there was a mass upsurge in Bengal against the indigo planters. The movement started in 1860 and continued for some years. The hero of this movement was Harish Mukherjee, the editor of *The Hindu Patriot*. The movement succeeded in getting an Indigo Commission appointed which revealed the nature and seriousness of the atrocities committed by the British indigo planters. Indigo cultivation in Bengal practically stopped after this.

Bengal was then passing through a cultural renaissance. On the one hand, it was avidly absorbing Western education and on the other, it nursed a Hindu revival. Devendranath Tagore's *Tattva-bodhini* was perhaps the most conspicuous organ of that revivalist movement. This periodical was more than a mere organ of the Brahmo Samaj. Akshaya Kumar Dutt, an uncompromising rationalist almost to the point of being an agnostic, was its virtual editor. Iswarchandra Vidyāsagar, one of the foremost intellectuals of that age, who was of a purely secular mind, was also on its editorial board. On political considerations, the Government curtailed the grant for Western-type education. There was public protest against it. Vidyasagar's protest took a constructive shape when he established the Metropolitan School, which grew into the present Vidyasagar College.

The renaissance and cultural revivalist movement was greatly helped by a galaxy of great men who lived in Bengal at this time. The one man whose help and encouragement was available for any progressive movement and action was Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Raja Rajendra Lall Mitra, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar and Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee, all made great contributions to this movement. Their memory deserves to be respected. The legacy of Mahendra Lal Sarkar is the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, now housed at Jadavpur. His contribution to the rationalist way of thinking was more than simply that of an institution. Rajendra Lall Mitra and Rev. Krishna Mohan Banerjee were

impressive intellectuals who, in a way, gave shape to the thinking of the young Bengal of those days. Both of them wrote extensively on various subjects. *Vividhartha Samgraha* (Collection of Miscellany), the weekly paper of Rajendra Lall Mitra, greatly stimulated the idea of a national revival. Both Rajendra Lall and Krishna Mohan were great linguists—having mastered Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, English, Latin, Greek and several Indian languages. Krishna Mohan, a disciple of Derozio, was a nationalist first and then a Christian. He translated a number of Sanskrit books into Bengali and wrote several tracts on Hindu philosophy, including a book on the six systems of Hindu Philosophy. Rajendra Lall was the first Indian President of the Asiatic Society which has made a unique contribution to India's cultural renaissance. As Chairman of the second session of the Congress (1886), he said: "We live not under a national government but under a foreign bureaucracy..." and so he demanded some form of Indian participation in the administration.

In the intellectual field the contribution of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was considerable both to constructive nationalism and to rationalism. He was not only a novelist who wrote *Ananda Math*; he was perhaps the first man in Bengal to write a series of articles about the peasants of Bengal and a complete booklet on socialism. Above all, his periodical, *Banga Darshan*, was the greatest force in the development of rationalism and a sense of national pride and honour. His writings in *Banga Darshan* show that he was not indifferent to the socio-economic problems of the country. His essays on Auguste Comte, on Hinduism, on Sri Krishna, on the Gita, all contributed to the growth of rationalism; and the cult of *nishkama karma* of the Gita, as explained and popularised by him, supplied the moral background to the Bengal revolutionaries and immensely helped the growth of revolutionary ideas. This cultural renaissance had the same influence on Indian politics as the French Encyclopaedists had on the French Revolution.

The idea of starting a secret revolutionary organisation perhaps dawned with Rajnarayan Basu and Nabo Gopal Mitra, who organised the Chaitra Mela in 1867, later known as the Hindu Mela or Jatiya Mela (National Fair). Nabo Gopal is another forgotten man who deserves to be remembered with gratitude. He

organised the 'National Paper', 'National Theatre', 'National Press', etc. Because of his enthusiasm for the word 'National', people used to call him 'national' Nabo Gopal. After the first Mela, Rajnarayan and Nabo Gopal organised a permanent committee of which Ganendra Nath Tagore became the Secretary and Nabo Gopal the Asstt. Secretary. But under cover of a public organisation, Nabo Gopal and Raj Narayan pursued the idea of a secret society, its aim being "to establish a feeling of healthy nationality and to promote works of national improvement by the national agency". Both of them belonged to the Brahma Samaj; but they were conscious of their being Hindus. Readers may be surprised to know that in this venture, they had not only the tacit blessings but also even the active support of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore. The Hindu Mela at the initial stage collected about Rs. 1400; the biggest individual contribution of Rs. 100 was from Maharshi Debendranath. Practically all the rich families of Calcutta contributed to this fund; but the members of the Tagore family contributed nearly 25 per cent of the total collection. The Brahma Samaj and its pioneers were directly or indirectly connected with the revolutionary movement in its early days.

In his student days Rajnarayan had come under the influence of Derozio, the inspiring spirit of the young men of that age. Derozio inculcated the spirit of complete disregard for social conventions and traditions; he went to the extent of advocating drinking, beef eating etc. After a short spell of this extreme form of rationalism, Rajnarayan swung to the other extreme and became a defender of Hindu religion. His lectures on the superiority of Hindu religion mark the rising tide of Hindu revivalism in Bengal.

Rajnarayan first started a society in Midnapur while he was the headmaster of the local high school: the Society for the Promotion of National Feeling. The Society did not go far. Then he started a society called the 'Society of Patriots' in collaboration with Jyotirindranath Tagore, an elder brother of Rabindranath. After this came the Hindu Mela or Jatiya Mela in 1867. There was a regular drive for composing national songs. This was the time when Hem Chandra Banerjee's *Bharat Sangeet*, Govinda Chandra Ray's song—"Oh Bharat! what numberless aeons shalt thou take to swim across the sea of misery!"—etc. were composed.



More or less during the same period, non-Brahmo orthodox sections of the Hindus also woke up to the idea of nationalism. Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya, Hem Chandra Banerjee and others used to meet at the house of Bankim Chandra at Chinsura. This was the period when Bankim Chandra composed *Ananda Math*, *Debi Choudhurani* and other novels giving broad hints to the young men as to what to do and how to do it. Dinabandhu Mitra, another high government official, wrote the epoch-making drama *Nil-Darpan* (The Mirror of Indigo), which gave a vivid picture of the oppressive measures of the indigo cultivators—all British. Harish Mukherjee of *The Hindu Patriot* took up the cause of the peasants against the indigo cultivators. Jogendra Nath Vidyabhusan, also a deputy magistrate, came into the picture at this time. Under the inspiration of Bankim Chandra on the one hand and Surendra Nath on the other, he wrote the biographies of Mazzini and Garibaldi and other historical books. His interest in Indian national revival did not end simply with the writing of these books; he took up the mission of preaching the gospel of Indian national revival and independence. In later days he took an active part in the formation of revolutionary societies. Bhudev Mukherjee's book, *The History of India As Seen in a Dream* also provided some food to the idealistic imagination of the young men. If the Third Battle of Panipat had not ended in the defeat of the Mahrattas, the history of India might have taken a different shape; Bhudev delineated that shape in his book. Another name deserving mention is that of Nabin Chandra Sen, also a deputy magistrate. His poems, particularly the one of the Battle of Plassey, also contributed to the renaissance in Bengal.

Surendra Nath, who in his later days was denounced as a moderate of moderates, was not so moderate in his earlier days. He led a regular campaign by preaching the ideals of Mazzini and Garibaldi. He and his friend Ananda Mohan Basu started working among the young men with the ideal of a national revolution and started the 'Students' Association' for this purpose. Ananda Mohan was reserved by temperament. He won honours in Mathematics from Cambridge and was perhaps the first Indian Wrangler. He is now known to the public only through the collegé that bears his name, but he deserves a better niche in the memory of the nation. By that time, Surendra Nath had organised the Indian Association in 1876.

Under the inspiration of Surendra Nath and Ananda Mohan, the Indian Association started organising the peasants of Bengal. Many Rayat Sabhas were organised, where they addressed the peasants and asked them to combine against the oppression of the zamindars. Rent Unions and Rayat Sabhas were organised under the direct guidance of the Indian Association and Surendra Nath. This agitation led to the revision of the Rent Act of those days. This shows that even in that very early stage, the leaders did not forget the interest of the masses.

Shib Nath Shastri also caught the same infection of revolutionary ideas. In 1876 a batch of young men including Bipin Chandra Pal and others took a vow under his inspiration, known as 'Dedication to the Cult of Fire' (*agni mantré diksha*).

Shib Nath Sastri and another devout Bramho, Ramtanu Lahiri also a teacher in a Government school—exercised tremendous influence on the young men of those days. Ramtanu was somewhat senior to Shib Nath. Both were by nature pious, quiet and essentially of religious temperament; and both were highly respected. Ramtanu's influence over the young men was not directly of political nature as of Shib Nath; his emphasis was more on the building up of moral character, a spirit of dedicated service to the people and of a pious and honest and simple life. Ramtanu was a teacher in Krishnagar, a district town; yet he attracted young men even from far off places.

Rajnarayan may be called the father of the revolutionary movement in Bengal as he was the first to organise two societies with revolutionary ideas. Of his two nephews, Jnanendra Nath Bose and Satyen Bose, the latter was hanged in the Alipore jail. Jnanendra Nath took a leading part in the formation of a revolutionary society in Midnapur, perhaps the first of its kind in Bengal. They both worked under the inspiration of Rajnarayan. Two of his grandsons by his daughter were Aurobindo and Barin Ghose, two pioneers of the revolutionary movement. One of his sons-in-law was Krishna Kumar Mitra, the editor of *Sanjivani*. What Midnapur and Bengal owed to the inspiration of Rajnarayan Bose in the revolutionary movement should find due recognition.

Another personality who lent direct support and encouragement to this movement was Sister Nivedita. She was directly in

contact with the workers of the secret revolutionary movement. On account of her political activities, she left the Belur Math, which she did not like to be injured on account of her political activities. She was such a devoted disciple of Swami Vivekananda that it was hardly conceivable that she did anything for which she had not received Swamiji's sanction. Swami Vivekananda may be called the embodiment of national aspirations. Though a Sanyasi, his sympathy for national emancipation will be evident from the fact that while at Paris, he contacted the famous Russian revolutionary exile, Prince Kropotkin, and discussed India's condition with him. The influence of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda on the development of revolutionary ideas is beyond question. The writings of Vivekananda nourished us spiritually and morally. In her later days, Nivedita stayed with Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, and for some time with Abanindranath Tagore. She and Count Okakura, the Japanese artist who came to India in 1901 as student of art and on a pilgrimage, worked in close association for spreading the idea of an Asian renaissance.\* Nivedita and Okakura had some part in persuading Abanindranath Tagore to take to his new technique of oriental art. These two also encouraged Acharya Jagadish Chandra in his pursuit of science against the heavy odds placed by the Government and by British scientists. It is not certain whether Jagadish Chandra knew what Okakura and Nivedita were doing in the political field; but it can be presumed that he also gave his tacit support to what was in the offing. Another member of the Tagore family, Surendra Nath Tagore took a direct part in this movement. These pioneers spread the spirit of revolution in the atmosphere. Thus the mantle of revolution was about our shoulders before we were aware of it.

In Maharashtra, the renaissance movement was initiated by Mahadev Govinda Ranade—a man of foresight and versatile genius.

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\*Okakura first came to India in 1901 to invite Swami Vivekananda to Japan. The Swami could not go to Japan as he was then seriously ill. Within a few days, Okakura became attracted to Nivedita. He remained in India for some time in close association with her. While in India, he wrote his famous book, *The Ideals of the East* which Nivedita edited. Okakura came to India again. During the first decade of this century, Okakura was considered one of the foremost exponents of the Asiatic cultural and political renaissance. Nivedita along with Okakura contributed much to the revival of oriental art through Abanindranath Tagore, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Nandalal Basu and others.

In his earlier years he was suspected of active sympathy with Phadke, the first Mahratta rebel against British rule. Born in 1842, Ranade was married at the age of twelve to a girl of nine, according to the social tradition of the time. But soon he realised the evils of such early marriage and started a social reform movement against early marriage and in favour of widow remarriage. The first socio-political organisation in Maharashtra—the Sarvajanic Sabha—was founded on his initiative in 1870 at Poona. He was perhaps the first to make a serious study of the economic exploitation of India, and he wrote several articles on the economic condition of India. He was the main organiser or inspirer of about 25 institutions—educational, literary, social and even industrial. Tilak, his junior by a few years, helped him in the Sarvajanic Sabha and in the foundation of the Deccan Education Society in 1885. Bhandarkar, Gokhalé and others joined the society; that led to the establishment of the Fergusson College. The Sarvajanic Sabha and the Deccan Education Society were the principal organisations for the cultural renaissance in Maharashtra. These two institutions supplied the sustaining force to the revolutionary movement which started in Maharashtra by the last decade of the last century.

In Punjab the cultural movement started with the socio-religious movement initiated by Swami Dayananda (1824-1883). He possessed a more dynamic personality than Ranade. While Ranade worked mainly for social reform, Dayanand placed greater emphasis on religious reform. He strongly attacked the traditional Hindu religion, its idolatry and polytheistic customs. His whirlwind lecture tours in Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and other parts of north India shook the placidity and complacency of Hindu society. The Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayananda, was an instrument of militant nationalism. Most of the Hindu leaders of Punjab were either members of the Arya Samaj or were highly influenced by it.

It should be noticed that the revolutionary movement in the early years of this century operated mainly in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab. In Madras the movement flared up for 2 or 3 years and it had some link with the cultural revivalism initiated by Subramania Bharati (1882-1921) who died at the early age of 39 years; and so he could not leave a more abiding influence on the political life of Madras.

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## Chapter Six

# Economic Background

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Lenin said: "It is not sufficient for the revolution that the exploited and the oppressed masses understand the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes; for the revolution, it is necessary the exploiter should not be able to rule as of old... Revolution is impossible without an all-national crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters." We should apply this dictum to Indian conditions before we are in a position to discuss the prospect of a revolution in India.

British rule came to India almost with the tacit co-operation of, and acceptance by, the people of India. During the later days of Moghul rule, the sense of security among the people was gradually shaken, as there was hardly any rule of law in the country. This situation was aggravated by the usurpation of power by the local satraps, the Nawabs, Wazirs, etc. and subsequently also by the rise of the Maratha and Sikh powers in different parts of India. Bengal was repeatedly attacked by Maratha hordes. The Nawab, sitting at Murshidabad, could not provide adequate protection against the depredation of the *Bargis* (Maratha invaders). Calcutta, under the East India Company, was considered a safe haven for many

because it afforded protection from the whimsical tyrannies of the officials of the Nawab of Murshidabad as also from the repeated raids of the Marathas. Moreover, under the British, there was no interference with the religious customs and traditions of the people. So British rule was considered, not only in Bengal but in many parts of India, as a relief from the anarchical conditions prevailing in India in this period.

But within a few years of British rule, the people started groaning under economic distress resulting from the policy of the East India Company backed by the British Parliament. Within 15 or 16 years after the Battle of Plassey, there was a famine in parts of Bengal. One-third of the people of the affected area—about 10 million—died in that famine. *The Imperial Gazetteer* (a Government publication) said of that famine: "The Hooghly every day rolled down thousands of corpses close to the porticoes and gardens of the English conquerors. The very streets of Calcutta were blocked by the dying and the dead." Banaras came under British rule in 1775 and within 9 years there was a devastating famine which even Warren Hastings ascribed to "a defective, if not a corrupt, and oppressive administration". Famine became almost a normal occurrence; and in each famine lakhs of people died. Perhaps there were famines even in the pre-British period; but then the Government, with its seat within the country, had to take cognizance of the distressed condition of the people and gave relief in some form or other. But during the early period of British rule, in famine years, there was no relaxation in the tax collection. It is found from Government reports that even in the famine years, tax collection was at least equal to, if not more than, that in the previous years; no relief was given.

Between 1770 and 1900—130 years—there were twenty-two famines; eighteen according to the report of the Famine Commission of 1880 and four after 1880. These were major famines which did not include localised scarcity of grains and consequent distress and starvation deaths. "In 1770, as we have seen, there was a famine in Bengal with 10,000,000 deaths; in 1783 in Madras; in 1784 in Upper India which left Oudh in a pitiable condition; in 1792 in Bombay and Madras; in 1803 in Bombay; in 1804 in northern India; in 1807 in Madras; in 1813 in Bombay; in 1823 in Madras; in 1833 in Madras, where in one district Guntur, 200,000 out of a

population of 500,000 perished and the dead lay unburied about Madras, Maslipatam and Nellore; in 1837 in north India, in which a calculation of 800,000 deaths was thought too low by the Famine Commission; in 1854 in Madras; in 1860 in northern India with about 200,000 deaths; in 1866 in Orissa and Madras—in Orissa about 1,000,000, a third of the population, died, in Madras about 450,000; in 1869 in north India about 1,200,000 deaths; in 1892, in Madras, Bengal and Rajputana; in 1896-97 in north India, Bengal, Madras and Bombay—the number of deaths not given; in 1889-90 in north India, Central Provinces and Bombay—the worst famine on record. In 1892 and 1897, Burma also suffered from famine. In 1896, bubonic plague broke out in Bombay and has slain its millions” (*How India Wrought for Freedom—Annie Besant*).

It should also be mentioned here that almost from the beginning, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution couched in the following language, year after year for several years: “Resolved that this Congress, concurring in the view set forth in the previous Congresses, affirms—that fully fifty millions of the population, a number yearly increasing, are dragging out a miserable existence on the very verge of starvation and, in every decade, several millions actually perish by starvation.” But no remedial measures were taken to give any relief to the people. Regarding the oppressive character of the Government, Macaulay, not noted for any very liberal ideas or for any love for India, wrote, “They (Indians) were accustomed to live under tyranny, but never under tyranny like this. That Government, oppressive as the most oppressive form of barbarian despotism, was strong with all the strength of civilisation.”

The policy of the British Government or of the East India Company was definitely to exploit India and to ruin her economy. Indian industries were deliberately ruined; agriculture was also neglected; yet year after year millions of sterling flowed from India to Britain as Home Charges. Manchester cloth used to cover our shame of nakedness; and Liverpool salt used to add taste to our meagre meals. This was in spite of the fact that India had been famous through the ages for her textiles and had produced salt enough for export. The British authorities conquered India and established the British Indian empire. For effecting this noble purpose, they had to wage several wars against the Indian princes as also against

Burma, Afghanistan, Nepal, China and other countries. The expenses of conducting all these wars were debited to India. Even the expense incurred in crushing the rising of the sepoys in 1857 was debited to India. Thus the Indian debt went on mounting; these were not internal debts, but debts to Britain. Interest on these debts was also to be paid out of the revenue of India.

The economic exploitation of India attracted the notice of British public men also. The economic condition of the masses was unbelievably low. The average annual income of an Indian was estimated at about Rs. 22, i.e. about Rs. 1.60 per month per head. That was the average. The people belonging to the lower strata of society must have earned a much lower income than the average. But England was growing progressively richer by this exploitation. The revenue of India as a whole was estimated at £44 million; more than half of that flowed out of India to Britain as Home Charges, for meeting administrative expenses, debt servicing, etc. This was in addition to what Britain earned by exporting textile, salt, etc., to India.

This state of affairs could not but have an effect on the intelligentsia as also the masses, even though the Indian masses are proverbially passive and mild. In the first year of the present century, three books came out which clearly depicted the economic exploitation of India by Britain and the consequent miseries of the people. It may simply be an accident that three eminent men published their books in the same year—1901; but these marked not only the beginning of the new century but also the beginning of a new consciousness in India. These three books are:

- (1) *The Economic History of India*—by Romesh Chandra Dutt, a retired ICS official (2 volumes).
- (2) *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*—by Dadabhai Naoroji, and
- (3) *Prosperous British India?*—by William Digby.

These three eminent men were not cheap agitators; they worked hard to authenticate their conclusions. All the three books are well documented and are still considered standard books on Indian Economics of that period.

In addition to deaths due to famines, there were also epidemic diseases taking a heavy toll of Indian lives. Plague, malaria and



cholera devastated village after village and town after town. Indian villages were converted into cesspools of poverty, ignorance, disease and filth. Illiteracy was the normal state; there was hardly any arrangement for drinking water—the primary necessity of any living creature. There was practically no arrangement for rural medical aid, in spite of all sorts of disease prevailing there. And about 90% of the people lived in villages. From this it will be clear that one of the two aspects mentioned by Lenin, namely that the oppressed masses “understand the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes”, was operating in India.

Now let us consider the other aspect, that of making the exploiters recognize their “inability to rule as of old”. That situation is more or less to be brought about by the affected people, i.e. the exploited. The political atmosphere in the country was gradually becoming more and more aggressive and assertive. There were agrarian riots all over the country—in Oudh, Bombay, Madras, Bengal and other places. Wedderburn, a high official, wrote: “These ill-starred measures of reaction, combined with Russian methods of police repression, brought India under Lord Lytton within a measurable distance of revolutionary outbreak.” The reactionary measures referred to were the Vernacular Press Act for curtailing the freedom of the Press, the Arms Act and the Act to curb the rights of local self-government, and the costly Durbar in 1877, when a fierce famine was raging over the country. Mention should also be made of the indigo riots and a kind of mass passive resistance organised by the peasants of Central Bengal which practically led to the stoppage of indigo cultivation in Bengal. The rulers felt that the old order could no longer continue. Even in England, there was a growing feeling that there was something seriously wrong in the methods of the Government of India.

Even before the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885, Surendra Nath Banerjea, rightly called the father of Indian nationalism, started preaching the gospel of Indian independence and the ideals of Mazzini and Garibaldi. The setting up of the British Indian Association, the Indian Association, the Sarvajanik Sabha and the Mahajan Sabha in different parts of the country indicated the rising surge of Indian nationalism. When the oppressor class felt the pressure of this movement, they in fact encouraged

the founding of the Indian National Congress by Alan Octavian Hume. The then Governor-General Lord Dufferin lent his support to this organisation as he thought it would provide a safety-valve and ease the rising tension. But he made a miscalculation and thus failed to make a proper assessment of the intensity of public feeling. Demand for some sort of self-government and direct participation in the administration of the country was being made even in the first half of the 19th century. I think the first demand in this respect was made by Raja Rammohan Roy in England. By the end of the 19th century, that demand assumed an intensity which it became difficult for the Government to ignore.

After the rising of the Sepoys, the British Parliament took over direct administration of the country and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 gave some assurance of a fair deal and expectation of equal treatment within the British Empire. This was due to the pressure exerted by the rising of the Sepoys. In between, there was a growing consciousness among public men of Britain who realised the unjust character of the British administration in India. Even Lord Roberts, after retiring as India's Commander-in-Chief, in a public speech in London referred to the "faults of the present un-British system of Government which unfortunately more than counterbalances the benefits." Even Lord Salisbury, a Secretary of State for India, admitted that the policy of the Government was that "India must be bled". I need not refer to the opinions of more enlightened and liberal public men of England like James Mill, John Bright, Bradlaugh and others. It was being freely admitted that British rule in India was not popular and could not be popular and that this system of government should not and could not continue.

It was against this background that the political thoughts and movements of this century were formed and shaped. Fifteen years of futility—that was the record of the Congress—generated, in the beginning of this century, a feeling that, to achieve real redress, India had to attain independence; and for that the Indians had to follow the path chalked out by the fighters of the French Revolution, of the American War of Independence and also of the Italian Liberation. The greatest influence came from the lives and activities of Mazzini and Garibaldi; "Carbonari" and "Young Italy" of Italy furnished the idea of secret societies of young Indians; that was mainly because

of the similarity of political conditions, i.e. subjugation under foreign rule. In the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, the fight was against their own people; but in Italy the fight was against a foreign power—Austria. The idea of secret societies and armed insurrection, and dacoity for collection of money came to fascinate Indian youth.

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## Chapter Seven

# Forces at Work

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Lenin is reported to have told the Central European communists that revolution cannot be imported in a portfolio from one country into another. It is true that any social upheaval is primarily an indigenous growth. But it is also true that its spirit spreads from country to country from region to region. In European history, the years 1830, 1848 and 1860 have become famous for widespread political unrest; so the years 1917-1919. Though a social upheaval mainly originates and develops from amongst the people of a country, yet ideas and happenings in neighbouring regions promote or retard its growth. The movement in Bengal was touched by influences from different regions and sources.

The closing years of the last century witnessed the emergence of a new life in Asia. Japan was coming to be recognised as a modern State with considerable military, technological and economic development. In China, Sun Yat Sen and his Young China bands were able to cause a stir in the placid Manchu Empire. Sun Yat Sen's autobiography narrated how he had faced persecution by the Manchu Government. In Turkey a secret society was formed—The Committee of Order and Progress—with the avowed object of

radically reforming the weak and reactionary Ottoman Government. It first met at Geneva in 1891. The exploits of Enver and Talaat—two leaders of the Young Turks—also had an influence on the young men of Bengal. These together exercised considerable influence on the trend of Indian youths' thinking.

Revolutionary ideas and activities were current in Maharashtra earlier than in other provinces. Maharashtra could not forget the exploits of Shivaji, the splendours of the Peshwas and the Maharashtra confederacy of the Gaikwad, Scindia, Holkar and Bhonsle. Nana Sahib, the disinherited adopted son of the last Peshwa, Baji Rao, became a legendary figure during the rising of the Sepoys. Taktia Tope, a Maratha, undoubtedly the most prominent military leader of that rising, and the heroic and pathetic career of Rani Lakshmi Bai, a Maratha princess, also stirred Maharashtra's imagination. In fact, the aggressive annexation policy, formulated by the Court of Directors of the East India Company and implemented by Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse, affected a number of Maratha states and princes—Satara, Nagpur, Tanjore, Jhansi and, lastly, the line of the Peshwas. So feelings in Maharashtra were hostile to the British, who in reality conquered India not from the Moghul Emperor, but from the Marathas and the Sikhs.

Ranade, who at this period was a subordinate judge and later became a judge of the Bombay High Court, may be called the first apostle of nationalism in Maharashtra. He and Chiplunkar inspired and organised the young men for national service. Ranade joined the Sarvajanic Sabha of Poona in 1871 which was organised the same year by a man named Joshi. It may be said that Aurobindo's revolutionary ideas were clarified by his contacts, which he developed during his stay at Baroda with the Maratha group and with Tilak.

Aurobindo is almost a miracle in our national struggle. His father, a civil surgeon in Bengal, sent his sons to England in their infancy with the idea of bringing them up after the English fashion; his father was anxious to ensure that his sons might not learn anything Indian. His younger brother, Barin, was in fact born on board a ship bound for England. But the rebel in Aurobindo and Barin asserted itself and moulded their future career in a way which their father could never have anticipated.

Aurobindo passed the I.C.S. examination in the theoretical papers

but was declared unfit in riding; that was suspected to be a political ruse. On his return to India he joined the Baroda ruler's service. Possibly the reputation of the Gaikwad house influenced his choice. While in Baroda, Aurobindo came in contact with the Chapekar group of Maharashtra revolutionaries and was formally initiated into the group. He met Tilak and they both recognised each other's political and spiritual affinity. Thus his latent revolutionary ideas and impulses took a definite direction. He wrote a series of articles in *Indu Prakash* of Poona, a journal which had sympathies with aggressive nationalism. So, some years later when he came to Bengal, he came not only as an extremist agitator but also as an apostle and inspirer of revolutionary activities.

In 1895, Tilak organised what was known as the Shivaji Utsav. It started in Maharashtra but quickly found a fertile soil in Bengal as well. This *utsav* was ceremoniously and enthusiastically observed in many places in Bengal. Even now I remember how enthusiastically this ceremony was observed in Barisal. This *utsav* was a direct inspiration for the young men to emulate the example of Shivaji. While Maharashtra influenced Bengal, it may be said that Bengal also influenced Maharashtra. In line with the Hindu Mela established in 1867, the Mitra Mela was started in 1899 in Maharashtra by the two Savarkar brothers. Even Ranade received his first inspiration from Rammohan and joined the Prarthana Samaj which was established in Bombay on the initiative of Keshab Chandra Sen. The *Bharat Sangeet* of Hem Chandra Banerjee, though composed to inspire young men against the existing British rule, was ostensibly based on a Maharashtrian story as if directed against the Muslim rule of the Middle Ages.

Before the end of the last century, a centre was established in London by Shyamji Krishnavarma, an inhabitant of Kathiawar. He was suspected of complicity in the Rand Murder of 1897 in Poona and escaped to England. Madame Cama, a Parsee lady, later on joined him. In January 1905 Shyamji established the India Home Rule Society in London and started a journal, *The Indian Sociologist*. From London, he carried on a campaign against British rule in India. One of his first recruits was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Shyamji's ideas were so extreme that even the democratic and liberal atmosphere of England could not tolerate them for long; the British

Parliament had to take notice of his activities. So in 1907, he transferred the centre of his activities to Paris, where S. R. Rana had, for some time, been working on almost the same lines. They joined together and published a journal called the *Socialist* in which they openly advocated armed rising against the British, and asked the young men to follow the example of the Russian Nihilists. The reputation of Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama was of a somewhat mythical nature; during the early years of this century, although we knew little of their ideas and activities, we heard their names in the distant corners of Bengal.

After the suppression of the Sepoy rising, many important leaders like Nana Sahib and others escaped arrest. About others who were reported to have been arrested, like Tantia Tope, the popular belief was that they had not been actually arrested. The fact remains that quite a large number of the leading participants of the rising escaped arrest and became sanyasis and fakirs and hid themselves in hills and jungles. These sanyasis and fakirs became the foci of revolutionary ideas; and some of them attracted large numbers of followers. They went about spreading discontent against the alien rule. The Government of India sent instructions to all the districts to keep watch over the movements of these sanyasis and fakirs. When the *samilis* were started, they were able to get the help of some upcountry men of mysterious antecedents as trainers in lathi, dagger and sword play.

In Dacca an old sanyasi was living almost incognito—known to the people as Dailananda—('Dail' is the Bengali word for pulses) as he was living in a pulses godown. His identity was disclosed when Bholananda Giri came to Dacca and recognised him. His real name was Tripurlinga Swamy. The people then built a temple and asked him to stay there. The place was subsequently known as Swamybagh (garden of the Swami—sanyasi). He used to preach in favour of armed revolution almost openly. Pulin Das was highly influenced by him. Tripurlinga was known to be a disciple of the great saint of Banaras—Trailanga Swami.

Another sanyasi named Agamya Guru Paramhansa toured the different regions of India propagating the idea of national independence. The Savarkar brothers were recruits to this cult. It was rumoured that even very eminent sanyasis like Bhaskarananda,

Trailanga Swami and others, particularly noted for their spiritual outlook and attitude of detachment from worldly affairs, were in sympathy with revolutionary activities. Many important pioneers of the movement in North Bengal were influenced by a sanyasi named Bhagirath Brahmachari. Most of these sanyasis came, as it were, from the unknown and disappeared again into the unknown. Hardly anything is known about the antecedents of these sanyasis and fakirs or about what happened to them subsequently. The most prominent amongst the sanyasis was Swami Vivekananda, who had almost a direct hand in this movement. It is said that at one time he tried to import arms. While in Europe, he contacted European revolutionaries and radical political thinkers like Kropotkin. His books were widely read and were a 'must' in the literature prescribed for the young men recruited to the revolutionary cult.

The Ramakrishna Mission, although it avoided politics as such, could not keep itself completely aloof from the current. Quite a number of the Swamis of the Mission used to go to the centre of the Anushilan Samiti in Calcutta and give lessons to the young men. It might be that the main theme of their teachings, as those of the other sanyasis, was the building up of moral character; but it would be idle to presume that these swamis were totally unaware of the real objectives of the Anushilan Samiti. The Ramakrishna Mission inspired the revolutionaries and also got a number of new brahmacharis and sanyasis from their ranks. Of the earlier members, the most prominent was Deva Brata Basu, who after his release from the Manicktola Bomb case joined the order of the Ramakrishna Mission, and subsequently became known as Prajnananda Swami.

Jatin Mukherjee, who was the leader of all the groups of Bengal (except the Dacca Anushilan Group) in the attempted armed rising during the First World War, was a favourite disciple of Swami Bholananda Giri. Giriji must have known all along what his devoted and dear disciple was doing. It is said that Bholanandaji used to caress Jatin, pressing him to his bosom as if he were a child. Nikhil Roy Maulick also became his disciple. Another sanyasi, Swoham Swami, initiated Jatin Banerjee into sanyas. There was still another man known as Keshavananda Swami who was originally a resident of Jessore. He too had a hand in the development of revolutionary societies.



Last, but by no means least, was Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya. A man of vision and profound intellect, he was impulsive by nature. His original name was Bhavani Banerjee and he was the nephew of Rev. Kali Charan Banerjee, an eminent Christian educationist and a nationalist; Gandhi had great admiration for Rev. Kali Charan Banerjee. Bhabani joined the Brahma Samaj and went to Sind as a preacher of the Samaj; but while working there he became a convert to Christianity, first to the Protestant Church and then to the Catholic, of which he became a monk. Even as a Christian, he lived like a Hindu sanyasi. After a few years, he became devoted to Vedanta philosophy without renouncing Christianity. But the Christian Church excommunicated him. Then he became a Vedantist sanyasi and assumed the new name Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya. He passed several years outside Bengal touring and preaching in different provinces of India; later he undertook a lecture tour to England, explaining the Vedanta philosophy at Oxford and Cambridge.

Frequent changes in his religion only reveal the restless and impatient nature and highly sensitive intellectualism of the man, and should not be taken as indicative of a volatile light-heartedness. He showed a grim determination in all that he undertook. When he returned to Bengal by the beginning of this century, he was a completely changed man. First he joined the Santiniketan (later-Viswabharati) school of Rabindranath Tagore, who entertained a high regard for Upadhyaya. He was there from the day of its formal inauguration in 1901. He had with him a follower from Sind, named Reva Chand, who devoted his life to the cause of national education by starting a non-conventional educational institution at Calcutta. He wrote a biography of Upadhyaya entitled *The Blade*. After only a year's stay, Brahmabandhav left Santiniketan. He started the daily paper *Sandhya* in 1904. At first *Sandhya* was just an ordinary paper with no distinctive feature and did not make much impact. But after the partition, *Sandhya* became the most powerful organ for propagating the ideas of national liberation. His writings were direct and suggestive of an open uprising as the only way to liberation. The nation can hardly afford to forget a man of such moral stature, intellectual greatness and devotion to service.

I should mention here another name—Tehalram Gangaram, probably a man from the North-Western Frontier. It is still a mystery

how and why he came to Calcutta. It is known that he went to Britain for the J.C.S. but was disqualified because of his bitter anti-British speeches. Then he came to Calcutta where he became a forceful inspirer of young men. He first came into prominence in 1905 by addressing an overflow gathering outside the Town Hall where a meeting was being held to protest against the convocation speech of Lord Curzon in which he had characterised all orientals as liars. After that, he used to hold street-corner and park meetings, using the most abusive and virulent language against the British. Twice he was assaulted by goondas, probably set on him by Government agents. Undaunted, he carried on the campaign. Young men organised themselves in bands of volunteers to act as his bodyguards. He was a great admirer of Motilal Ghose and his *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He used to read out portions of the *Patrika* to young men. He composed a national song in English which was regularly sung at all his meetings. An oath for national service was taken by the young audience after every meeting. What happened to him later is not known. Both his arrival and his disappearance remain a mystery.

Mention should also be made of the new intellectual trends—preaching the idea of an autonomous social order without the interference of the alien government. In fact, a new school grew up in Bengal which systematically preached the idea of building up passive resistance to the injustice of the alien government and also a self-reliant society. Bipin Chandra Pal was vehemently preaching this idea in his *New India* from the beginning of the century. That journal was a powerful thought organ of new Bengal that was evolving. Rabindra Nath in his essays also gave the same idea. When Tilak was convicted in 1898, he wrote an article—*Kantharodh* (Muzzling of the Voice). In his famous essay *Swadeshi Samaj* (An Indigenous Society), he urged the people to stand on their own legs, irrespective of what their rulers might do. He told the people to do things themselves according to their decision and needs without looking to the rulers. So the spirit of revolt was developing both organisationally and intellectually.

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## Chapter Eight

# Birth of Political Societies

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Speaking of the *samitis* or political societies of Bengal, the first name to come to mind is that of the Anushilan Samiti of Calcutta, founded by Pramatha Nath Mitra, better known as P. Mitra. Originally, it was not a secret society nor was it avowedly revolutionary in its aims. This samiti was started some time earlier but without any specific name, and came to be known as Anushilan in or about 1902. The ostensible purpose of founding this Samiti was to develop physical strength and courage among young Bengalee men. In those days, there were frequent clashes between Indians and Anglo-Indians, Europeans, and often European soldiers. Most of these clashes were provoked by the latter who insisted on getting privileged positions in parks, streets, public conveyances and other places. There was hardly any remedy in court for the aggrieved Indians, nor would the police give them any protection. On the contrary, Government agencies acted almost systematically in favour of the Anglo-Indians and Europeans and against Indians. This created the feeling that our young men must have proper physical training so that they might give a good account of themselves in such clashes. Physical culture societies began to sprout in and around

Calcutta as early as 1897. Anushilan was started virtually as a federation or co-ordinator of some of these *samitis*. But it would be wrong to say that the Anushilan Samiti was just a physical culture society and nothing more. It had also an intellectual side, as regular classes were held. It had even a political purpose though very incipient and undefined as yet.

Another such *samiti*, the Atmonnati, was started about 1900 by some young men, including Satish Mookherjee (not of the Dawn Society) and Nibaran Bhattacharya, both then students and later professors in Government colleges. There were, of course, other collaborators. This samiti was started at Khilat Chandra School near Wellington Square (now Subodh Mullick Square). Lathi play, boxing, wrestling and other forms of physical training were the main features of all these *samitis*. The Anushilan Samiti attracted greater attention and a larger number of persons, particularly after the partition of Bengal. P. Mitra was an intimate friend of Surendra Nath Banerjea who gave him all encouragement in the formation of the Anushilan Samiti. Mitra, on the other hand, had contacts with C. R. Das, Aurobindo and others of the younger generation. Sister Nivedita was also intimately connected with this samiti. P. Mitra became the President of the Anushilan Samiti; Satish Basu was the Secretary. The name and ideals of this samiti were taken from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's book of that name. The word means cultivation of the potential faculties of man. Atmonnati—the name of the other samiti—also meant the same thing, i.e. development of the self.

Among the organisers of the Anushilan Samiti in the initial and formative stage, we may mention Priyabrata Sarkar, Prof. Nalini Mitra, Suren Sen of Barisal (then a headmaster), Pulin Mukherjee, Suren Halder (Bar-at-Law), Manmatha Mitra and Sashibhushan Ray Chowdhury (an educationist). By that time, physical culture had been seriously taken up by the Bengalees as if with a determination to wipe out the slur of cowardice. A number of gymnastic clubs and circus parties were organised. Basack's Circus was one of them and another was Shyamakanta's Circus at Dacca. The latter was something more than a local organisation. Later on, Shyamakanta became a sanyasi and adopted the name Swoham Swamy. Even as a sanyasi, he was suspected by the Government of taking an interest in revolutionary politics. Sarala Devi (Ghosal), a niece of Rabindra Nath,

initiated the Veer-Astami celebrations. This Veer-Astami celebration was an important event in the development of revolutionary ideas and organisations. On the eighth day (Astami Day) of the Durga Puja, she started organising a show of physical feats—lathi play, sword and dagger play, jiu-jitsu etc. It should be noted here that Sarala Devi was a Brahmo by birth and religion; as such she should not have associated in the polytheistic and idolatrous Durga Puja. But political enthusiasm and fervour demolished all these small walls of separation. Under cover of physical culture, all these organisations had some ulterior political motives. The general atmosphere was surcharged with political tension which was being actively fostered by the political leaders of Bengal.

We find the Government of India (Home Political) reporting in October 1907 "The idea of establishing a physical force party amongst the Bengalis appears to have been first put into practical shape by Miss Sarala Devi Ghosal. . . . This lady has been for several years a strong supporter of the nationalist movement and by her marriage to Ram Bhuj Dutt, a Lahore Barrister, holding similar views, she became an important link between the agitators in Bengal and the Punjab. In 1904, inspired apparently by the result of the Russo-Japanese war, she opened an academy at Ballygunj, Calcutta, for the instruction of Bengali boys in fencing and jiu-jitsu. . . ." The movement was eagerly taken up and similar *akharas* were started, some in Calcutta and others in mofussil districts. These were not secret societies, but secret ideas operated in all these *akharas*.

Aurobindo, even while at Baroda, was thinking of starting a revolutionary society. He had developed some contacts with the revolutionaries of Maharashtra, particularly with the Chapekar Group which was responsible for the murder in 1897 of Rand, the Plague Commissioner, and of Lt. Ayerst who was accidentally shot while accompanying Rand. Aurobindo was in close contact with the trend of political thoughts and ideas in Bengal; almost every year he visited Bengal for some time.

Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour, the heroes of the Italian War of Liberation, were held in veneration by the young men of India at this time. In Italy, Mazzini was the inspirer, Garibaldi the organiser and Cavour the practical politician behind the movement. Victor Emmanuel, King of Sardinia, became the central figure in

the Italian war of independence and the first king of free Italy. Early Indian revolutionary idealists also thought of finding a Victor Emmanuel for India. Among the Native Princes, the reputation of the Gaikwad of Baroda was the highest particularly because of his recent clashes with the British Government. To some of the early revolutionaries the Gaikwad seemed to be the prospective Victor Emmanuel. The story runs that at Calcutta, during the Congress session in 1906, a definite proposal on that line was made by the late Satish Sen Gupta of Serampur to the Gaikwad, who smiled and asked: "Who is going to be your Garibaldi?" The matter ended there. It may be mentioned here that there was never any serious thought on that line.

Jatindra Nath Banerjee was a man of restless spirit who, roaming over different parts of India, went to Baroda, having been attracted by the reputation of the Gaikwad. There he came in contact with Aurobindo who found in Jatin a prospective colleague in his revolutionary work. Aurobindo helped him to get into the Baroda army under an assumed name, Jatindra Upadhyaya, as at that time Bengalis were not admitted to the army. Aurobindo and Jatindra Nath drew up many plans for the formation of revolutionary organisations in India. By about 1902, Jatindra Nath came to Bengal with a letter of introduction from Aurobindo to Sarala Devi, who put him in touch with P. Mitra, then engaged in organising a physical culture association. About a year later Barin was sent by Aurobindo to Calcutta. He too came into contact with P. Mitra and Jatin Banerjee and started working with them. Barin's impetuous temperament often caused embarrassment to his colleagues, and even to Aurobindo. It was under Barin's direction that some young men decided to commit a dacoity. Some of them went to Sister Nivedita to borrow her revolver for this purpose. Nivedita did not oblige them and reported the matter to Jatin. When those young men came back after an absence of two or three days, they were asked the reason for their absence, and they disclosed everything. Jatin took severe disciplinary measures against them.

The Anushilan Samiti had its first headquarters in a house rented by Jatin on Upper Circular Road near Sukea Street Police Outpost. Sarala Devi and Sister Nivedita were in close touch with the Samiti. Along with physical culture, the Samiti had an intellectual side too.

Various subjects were discussed, among which mention may be made of lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi, the American War of Independence, the Italian War of Liberation, the Sepoy Mutiny, Maratha and Sikh histories, the rise of the Dutch Republic, and Indian economics. Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, who later became famous for his book *Desher Katha*, narrating the story of the economic exploitation of India, gave lessons in economics. Deuskar was a Maharastrian but was naturalised in Bengal. He was a powerful writer in Bengali. His book supplied zeal and inspiration to us in our early years. Sister Nivedita, too, occasionally took classes. Mitra himself taught history. Some young barristers like C. R. Das, Suren Halder, Rajat Roy and Prabhat Kusum Roy Chaudhury were frequent visitors to the Samiti. Later on C. R. Das became its Vice-President, the other Vice-President being Aurobindo. A little before this, the head office of the Anushilan Samiti was shifted to 49, Cornwallis Street.

Thus re-organised, the Anushilan Samiti reached the peak of its activities during the years 1905 to 1908. Along with physical culture, regular classes were taken by some eminent persons, including C. R. Das (later Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das), Aurobindo, Sister Nivedita, Sakharam Deuskar, Swami Saradananda (later Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur) and others. Simultaneously, from 1906, the secret wing under Barin, Upen, Ullaskar and others began working in a garden house in Manicktola in the eastern suburb of the city; this was the activist group. P. Mitra was not told of the activities and objects of this group, though he suspected them of being engaged in some activities not approved by him. Aurobindo knew everything. Another man, Brahma Bandhav Upadhaya, used to visit both the places; in fact, he was one of the inspirers and guides. Anushilan could not proceed much further; it had its own heavy anchor which did not allow it to move forward in the revolutionary current. It carried on with its physical culture programme and some social service work until the Samitis Act was passed in 1908 and it was banned along with many other Samitis. This activist group of Manicktola Garden ultimately came to be known as the Jugantar Group—because of its weekly organ of that name.

Atmonnati was going on in its modest way as an organisation for physical culture. Revolutionary trends came into it with the advent

of Indra Nandi, who joined the secret activist group of Anushilan, that is, the Jugantar group. Indra Nandi, the son of a civil surgeon, sacrificed all the prospects of his life. One of his hands was blown off in a bomb explosion. Undeterred by this, he devoted his entire energy and resources to revolutionary activities. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to the Andamans. He passed his last days in utter misery—almost forsaken, forlorn and forgotten.

Atmonnati took a definite revolutionary turn when Bepin Ganguly became its leader. Among others who appeared prominently on the scene by 1913-14, mention should be made of Anukul Mukherjee, Harish Sikdar, Pravash De and Girin Banerjee. Girin Banerjee organised the Malanga Lane branch of the samiti. Though Bepin Ganguly and Anukul Mukherjee may be called the real organisers of the revolutionary wing of Atmonnati, Girin Banerjee, as a man, stood on a different plane. Not only by profession, but also by temperament, Girin was a teacher, a teacher of young men in general. Indra Nandi first supplied the link between Atmonnati and Jugantar; and that link was maintained all through.

By that time, another organisation grew up—not as a samiti but as a business concern—named Chhatra Bhandar. It was first started in August 1906 in a house on College Street and was subsequently transferred to Harrison Road. Pabitra Dutt was the man looking after this centre, though it was the result of the endeavours and collaboration of many; prominent among them were Nikhil Roy Maulick, Kaviraj Annada Ray, Abinash Chakravarty, Indra Nandi and others. It was a meeting place of young revolutionaries. It played a very important role in the functioning of Jugantar as a secret revolutionary organisation. It should be noted that there was inter-communication between all these organisations and units. Abinash Chakravarty, Annada Kaviraj, Sakharam, Brahmabandhab, Sashi Bhushan Roy Chaudhuri, Jatin Banerjee, Satish Sen Gupta, Indra Nandi and others were frequent visitors to all these units. We have it from the statement of Indra Nandi that by 1905, the Atmonnati group was under the spell of Jatin Banerjee, whose residence on Upper Circular Road became the meeting place of the revolutionary elements of Atmonnati as also Anushilan. This was the beginning of the Jugantar Party, which was then engaged in making bombs in the Manicktola garden. Another man appeared on



the scene just then; this was Jatin Mukherjee who later on became an outstanding figure in the revolutionary field.

I should refer to the activities of another society, the Dawn Society, which was founded in 1902 by an avowed moderate, Nagendra-Nath Ghose; but the real organiser was Satish Chandra Mukherjee, a lawyer. The main purpose of this society was to impart a better education to young men so that they could be soldiers of freedom. Satish Mukherjee was a man of saintly character. Primarily due to his personal charm, a number of brilliant students of the time joined the society. There was at the time a "growing feeling that traditional education was not of much worth." Lord Curzon's Universities Bill made Bengal and the whole of India discontented over the educational policy of the Government. So long Bengal had been eager for Western education; but gradually the defects of the education that was being imparted were being realised. The Dawn Society soon started publishing its own organ, *The Dawn*. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was an early recruit to this Society. He was then a student of the Presidency College at Calcutta and a boarder at the Eden Hindu Hostel. He cherished the highest regard for Satish Mukherjee. Prof. Benoy Sarkar, Prof. Rabi Ghose, Prof. Radha Kumud Mukherjee—all eminent teachers—came to be associated with Satish Mukherjee and the Dawn Society.

The Dawn Society was not a secret society or an avowedly revolutionary organisation. But it was certainly an organisation which nurtured the revolutionary spirit and the urge for independence. Most of its important members later on developed contacts with and sympathy for secret revolutionary organisations. Satish Mukherjee was not impulsive by nature, nor did he run after cheap publicity. He wanted to recruit young men of promise and then to build them up as torch-bearers of the new idealism in the service of the people. After the Non-cooperation movement, Rajen Babu (as he was then called) took him to the Sadaqat Asram, the headquarters of the Bihar Provincial Congress and Bihar Vidyapeeth at Patna.

None of these societies started as secret societies; they were all public and open organisations. But all of them, even the Dawn Society, had a tendency to develop some secret ideals and aims of

national resurgence. Secrecy came later on with the formation of the Jugantar group out of the Anushilan Samiti.

It should be mentioned here that all these societies encouraged the development of an intellectual outlook. They gave a great impetus to the study of what were then called 'out' books—i.e. books other than text-books. Every *mohalla* in a town and every village used to have a collection of some books. One may or may not call them libraries; with some improvised *almirahs* or book racks, each village or *mohalla* of a town somehow collected some books, mostly on moral and political subjects. It may be claimed that this was the beginning of the library movement in Bengal.

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## Chapter Nine

# Social Contents of the Movement

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Before going over to the next phase of the movement, we should make a social and political assessment of this national upsurge.

What did this movement stand for? What was the motivating urge? A social movement must have a social motive. A feeling of desperation over the prevalent state of affairs must be present as the prime mover of the social forces towards revolution. That was typified by the feeling of resentment against alien rule. The British Government stood before the people as the ultimate cause of all the ills the country was suffering. There was, firstly, a live apprehension of losing our culture and a feeling that our national entity and pride were being undermined by the foreign rulers. This feeling ran through the entire process of the Indian renaissance from Rammohan right down to Dayananda and Vivekananda.

There was, secondly, the economic urge. It was widely felt that India was being economically exploited by Britain, and that the latter had built her industry and economy on the ruins of India's economic prosperity. It was common talk that India's textile, salt, sugar and other industries had all been deliberately ruined for the economic and industrial development of Britain. The cause of the

Indian peasants and village craftsmen exercised the mind of the revolutionaries, though no clear picture of their future had yet emerged. Boycott of British goods was a negative and political aspect of the programme; the positive economic aspect was Swadeshi, i.e. the use of India-made goods, as distinct even from the use of non-British foreign goods.

In the training and discipline programme, there were a number of books for study on both these aspects. The *Gita*, the *Chandi*, the *Upanishads*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, books on Bramhacharya, Aswini Kumar Dutt's *Bhaktiyoga*, books on Ramakrishna and the writings and speeches of Vivekananda, lives of saints and sadhus like Trailanga Swami, Bhaskarananda Saraswati, Sri Chaitanya, Sisir Kumar Ghose's *Amiya Nimai Charit*, books of Swamis Ramatirth, Krishna-nanda and Nigamananda etc. were part of the usual curriculum for their training. These were intended to give the workers the necessary cultural, moral and spiritual background. In addition there were books on economics and politics. Digby's *Prosperous British India?*, Dadabhai Naoroji's *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, Romesh Dutt's *Economic History of India* in two volumes, Deuskar's *Desh Katha* were all intended to provide the economic urge to the workers. The history of Rajasthan, the life of Sivaji and history of the Marathas, the history of the Sikhs, Mazzini's works, Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, the lives of George Washington, Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin (his autobiography), Napoleon, etc., books on the French Revolution, the American War of Independence, the Italian War of Liberation, Durgadas Lahiri's *Swadhinatar Itihas* (History of Independence), Jogendra Vidyabhushan's books on Mazzini, Garibaldi, etc. were widely read for political inspiration.

It should not be supposed that training and discipline were intended to meet only the immediate needs, that is, to provide against the risks and pitfalls of a desperate course of life. Its main purpose was to provide the mental make-up for service and self-effacement. Social work, including service of the poor and the sick, formed an important part of their training. Revolutionaries should not be taken as ruthless, hard-hearted men. They were, on the contrary, required to cultivate sympathetic hearts to identify themselves with suffering humanity. The main idea of the training was to inculcate in the mind of the worker the Upanishadic ideal—

*Tena tyaktena bhunjitha* (Enjoy through renunciation). We were taught to take as our guiding principle—"To be rather than to do"—though we were members of an activist party. On the cultural side, the study of philosophy and poetry was also encouraged. Emerson, Whitman, Wordsworth and Browning were the favourite poets. Books of Thomas Paine, Thoreau, Tolstoi, Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite*, A<sup>2</sup> Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, and the sermons and preachings of Theodore Parker, were read and discussed. The works of Kropotkin, the anarchist, were popular with them; but Marx was almost unknown at the time. To the young readers of today many of these names would appear to be quite unknown; and it is with great difficulty that I can now recollect these names—and that, too, not all of them.

These supplied the intellectual and moral background of the movement and of the young men recruited to it. Physical culture, wrestling, lathi and sword play, boxing, etc. formed the preliminary training for physical fitness. Young recruits were often asked to go alone to the cremation or burial ground at midnight, particularly on *amabashya* (new moon) night, so that they might not have any lingering fear in their minds. Outbreaks of cholera were quite frequent—almost an annual feature—in those days. When the entire population was terror-stricken and scared during the epidemics, these young men would go out to attend on and nurse the victims of that dreadful disease. In those days, on account of the near unavailability of medical help, most of the cases proved fatal. Nursing cholera patients, particularly during epidemics, involved great risk. Small pox, malaria, pneumonia and typhoid were in those days not easily curable either. These, too, were on the list of diseases requiring the nursing service of the young men.

A vow of austerity and celibacy was almost compulsory for the young recruits. Bare feet, bare body, no combing of hair, washing their own clothes with soap, austere but strength-giving food—e.g., gram soaked in water, nuts etc.—were recommended. Practice in austerity would often go to absurd lengths. A book named *Samjam Shiksha* (Lesson in Self-control) was then in vogue which suggested that one should keep sweets like *rosogolla* and *rabri* in the mouth for a few minutes and then spit them out, instead of swallowing. This way the young men would learn to overcome temptation. There were some married young men in the cadre; they were enjoined to

live apart from their wives. There was little consideration for the young wives thus neglected by their husbands. These things may sound fantastic now; perhaps they are so in the present-day context. But the whole idea was that the worker in this movement must be above fear, above temptation, above any desire for ease and luxury. He must be tender and sympathetic to the suffering humanity but must at the same time be fearless, relentless, physically strong and bold in the discharge of his duties, which very often would be of a very grim and desperate nature.

This training had its natural repercussion on their mental make-up. They on their part were ready to sacrifice everything. But when they found that the surrounding world was not so responsive, it came as a rude shock to them. And it is not unnatural that in these circumstances, some broke down and fell from the peak of their idealism. These young men would often exhaust themselves in this mad idealistic urge—they would burn themselves out in raging flames, not in a simmering fire. And then only ashes were left which might prove a nuisance to the passerby. No one would give any thought to the fact that those were the ashes of a soul which had burnt itself in self-immolation on a self-lighted funeral pyre for the cause of the nation and society.

Those who lived even after their idealism was exhausted might appear to be just frail and fragile men of clay, often even worse than the ordinary man. They then became objects of ridicule and pity.

In the course of a judgment in a political case in the Calcutta High Court, Mr. Justice Mookerjee remarked that "the religious principles of absolute surrender to the Divine Will were employed by the designing and unscrupulous men, as potent means to influence unbalanced and weak-minded persons, and thus ultimately bend them to become instruments in the commission, of the nefarious crimes from which they might otherwise recoil with horror." The first part of the remark is true, i.e. the will of God was considered as the supreme force to guide all their activities; but they were not 'unbalanced and weak-minded persons'. Apart from the writings of Vivekananda and other religious teachers, Aurobindo's guidance and instructions were always a powerful force in this direction. His whole idea of Bhavani Mandir was that the will of Mother Shakti must guide all the workers of the movement. That is why the philosophy of *nishkama*

*karma*—as taught in the Gita\*, became the guiding principle of the revolutionaries. The Gita also taught them that they were only instruments—*nimitta matra*—in the hands of God who had really pre-ordained things as they would take place. Thus the range of this movement was wide enough to cover intellectuals and religious men; almost all the intellectual, moral and religious leaders of Bengal gave their blessings to this movement.

Regarding the range of the movement, there was hardly any man occupying an important position in the public life of Bengal who was not a supporter of the open Swadeshi and the secret revolutionary movements. Sisir Kumar Ghose created a tradition of nationalism which was imbibed by his younger brother Motilal Ghose. After his death Motilal Ghose took charge of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He was not a public orator or a public agitator; but he was regarded all through as a sympathiser of the extremist section. Between the two daily papers, *The Bengalee* of Surendra Nath Banerjee and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the latter was the favourite of the younger sections in the province. Aswini Kumar Dutt, Aurobindo and others had intimate contact with Motilal Ghose. Gooroodas Banerjee, an educationist, eminent lawyer and a judge of the Calcutta High Court and the first Indian Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University had sympathy for the movement and he was a member of the Governing Body of the National Council of Education. It can be said without fear of contradiction that he knew what the young men were doing and in that they had his blessings.

Sarada Charan Mitra, a typically polite, cultured gentleman, another judge of the Calcutta High Court, had his sympathy. That became apparent in a judgement for which he had to pay penalty. I have already mentioned the name of Girish Chandra Ghose, a great dramatist; and in this connection I may also mention the name of Amrita Lal Basu, another eminent dramatist, who through his plays, satires and humorous sketches contributed to the growth of national feeling and aspirations. Even a quiet savant like Pandit Kshiti Mohan Sen of Santiniketan had intimate contact with this movement. G. D. Birla and Prabhudayal Himatsingka—very respectable and successful industrialists as they are now—could not

\*Considered to be the highest moral ideal, enjoining upon everyone to do his duty without caring for the result—success or failure.

remain free from this contact and both of them were arrested or had warrants of arrest issued against them in connection with the secret revolutionary movement.

The name of Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose has already been mentioned. After the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie by Madan Lal Dhirga on July 1, 1909 in London, the Government somehow connected Sister Nivedita with Shyamji Krishnavarma, who was suspected as being behind the murder. When it became rather difficult for her to find suitable accommodation, it was Acharya Jagadish Chandra and his wife who then provided shelter to Sister Nivedita in their home.

I have already mentioned the part played by the Tagore family in the initial stage of this movement. In this connection, particular mention should be made of Jyotirindra Nath Tagore, whose enthusiasm for Swadeshi verged on an insatiable passion without a care for the necessity of realism which was often inherently lacking in some of his ventures. He incurred huge financial losses on some of these ventures which, according to his calculation, were expected to yield profits. Into the bargain, he received a lot of ridicule from friends and relatives. But he cared little for all these. Rabindranath himself, in his reminiscences, *Jeevan Smriti*, has mentioned some of his ventures. Jyotirindra Nath was not only an ardent supporter of the Swadeshi movement but had sympathy for the secret revolutionary movement also. Sarala Devi, his niece, was an active figure. His nephew Surendranath Tagore was not only an office-bearer of the Anushilan Samiti but made substantial and practical contribution towards the growth of the movement. The Ramakrishna Mission also could not keep itself quite aloof from the movement. Swami Brahma-nanda, the then president of Belur Math, Swami Saradananda and other Swamis from the Mission used to come to Anushilan Samiti's centre and take classes with the young men there; their discourses were, of course, mainly on purity of character. Quite a number of young men, after working for some time in this movement, subsequently joined the Order of the Ramakrishna Mission.

I should here say something about the persons who participated in the movement up to 1908. That would also give an indication of the social contents of the movement. Among the accused in the Alipore Bomb Case, Devabrata Basu joined the Ramakrishna Mission and



became Swami Prajnananda. Sudhir Sarkar and Nalini Gupta joined the Order of Aurobindo and became inmates of the Pondicherry Ashram. Nalini Gupta is reputed for his high intellect and is a good writer. Paresh Lahiri, Nikhileswar Roy Maulick and Hrishikesh Kanjilal joined the Order of Bholananda Giri and Paresh Lahiri as Mahadevananda Giri became the *Mandaleswar* or head of that Order. The subsequent Mandaleswar of that order is Swami Swarupananda, whose pre-sanyas name was Manmohan Ghose; he was an enthusiastic worker of the Barisal section of the Jugantar group. Nikhileswar Roy Moulick as a sanyasi took the name of Bhabananda Giri. Another gentleman named Satish Mukherji (not of Barisal) was convicted in an arms case, perhaps in Burdwan; later he became a sanyasi and took the name of Swami Muktananda. Among the other accused in the Alipore case, Sachin Sen joined the Ramakrishna Mission and died at an early age as a Brahmachari.

The names of other young men who subsequently joined the Order of Sanyasis need not be given here and it is not possible for me to give all the names. I have mentioned all these to show with what devotion these young men went into the movement. Most of them were men of talent; they took this path not out of any sense of frustration about material prospects in life but out of a spirit of service—service of the country being considered identical with worship of the Supreme Being. The ideal of *nishkama karma* of the Gita inspired these young men; when they felt, on account of either outward circumstances or inward change, that they could not continue their revolutionary work they did not like to go back to mundane life but chose to retire to a life of sanyas or renunciation.

It was this batch of young men who started the first working-men's institute—the Bangiya Sramajivi Vidyalaya—on Raja Dinendra Street; it was they who first took up the work of adult literacy both among the urban labour and the rural peasantry. They first initiated the programme of propaganda in rural areas through magic lantern demonstrations. Again this band of young men gave an impetus to a wider intellectual outlook by encouraging study of books not included in their academic curriculum. Thereby they helped the development of the library movement. They first started Swadeshi shops and co-operative societies. Mass education through literature was also vigorously pushed by them; pamphleteering was

widely in vogue. *Sandhya*, *Jugantar* and *Navashakti* gave a definite turn to the Bengali language, making it elastic enough to carry the message to the common people. These young men earnestly took up the task of setting up cottage industries—handloom, charka, conch-shell and coconut-shell buttons, nibs, pen-holders, ink, padlocks etc. Finally this movement raised the moral level of society and enunciated the message of service among young men which was first emphasised by Swami Vivekananda.

The first batch of young scientists who gathered round Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray came almost exclusively from the ranks of the revolutionaries. Meghnad Saha, Satyendra Nath Bose, Jatin Sett, Sailen Ghose, Rasik Lal Dutt, Jnan Ghose, Jnan Mukherji, Sisir Mitra, Bidhu Roy, Bires Ghosh and others were all directly or indirectly connected with the revolutionary organisation. Many of the talented scholars who, under the guidance of Ashutosh Mookerjee, built up the tradition of historical or economic research of Calcutta University were influenced by this movement. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Radha Kamal Mukherjee, Panchanan Sinha, Benoyendra N. Sen, Rabindra Narayan Ghosh and others all had contacts with, and were influenced by, the revolutionary movement of Bengal. Leading young lawyers and barristers like C. R. Das, Rajat Roy, B. C. Chatterjee, Suren Haldar, J. N. Roy, A. C. Banerji and Apurba Ghose were all frequent visitors to the centre of the Calcutta Anushilan and the offices of *Bandemataram*, *Jugantar*, *Sandhya* and *Navashakti*.

This was really a movement of the people of Bengal. The revolutionary movement, particularly as represented by the Jugantar group and its associates in different districts, developed with and out of the popular mass movement of Swadeshi and Swaraj. It touched the soul of the nation and thrilled the spirit of the people.

The impact of the Bengal agitation on the politics of India has not been properly appreciated by many of our subsequent leaders—except of course, Tilak and Gandhi. I have already quoted a passage from Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* which shows his keen appreciation of the movement. Lord Minto used to send periodical despatches to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley. These despatches had their effect on Morley. Once Minto wrote, "We all feel that we are mere sojourners in the land—only camping and on the march".

Morley wrote back: "Your way of putting this helps me to realise how intensely artificial and unnatural is our mighty Raj and it *sets one wondering whether it can possibly last. It surely cannot*; and our only business is to do what we can to make the next transition, whatever it may turn out to be, something of an improvement." Thus we see that the popular and mass character of the Bengal movement made the British realise for the first time that the British Raj could not be permanent and that one day it would end. So came the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1908 as a first step towards that transition. Its immediate objective was to rally the Moderates and, by introducing communal electorates, to put a wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims. The events of 1906-07 were the beginnings of a movement which was to culminate in 1947.

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## Chapter Ten

# Emergence of Jugantar

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Jatin Banerjee came to Calcutta in 1902 and contacted Sister Nivedita and Sarala Devi, as directed by Aurobindo. He took up his residence at 108 Upper Circular Road. He soon heard of P. Mitra of the Anushilan Samiti and got in contact with him and also with the Atmonnati Samiti. His contact with Anushilan became so intimate that the house on Upper Circular Road, where he was living, became the headquarters of the samiti. Aurobindo occasionally visited Bengal and used to stay, besides at Calcutta, either at Midnapur or Deoghar in the house of his maternal grandfather, Rajnarayan Basu. Barin went to Baroda in 1903 and there received his initiation into revolutionary work from Aurobindo. The oath administered to him, with a sword and a copy of the Gita in his hands, was, "As long as there is life in me and as long as India is not liberated from her chains of subjection, I will carry on the work of revolution. If at any time I disclose a single word or a single event of the society, or harm it in any way, it shall be at the cost of my life."

Aurobindo, though not openly in active politics, was in touch with the relevant persons and events of the day in Bengal. In fact, he was sending a monthly contribution for organising a secret revolu-

tionary society. He knew of the Anushilan and the Atmonnati societies. In 1903, he sent Barin to Calcutta, where he lived in the Upper Circular Road house of Jatin Banerjee, which had, by then, become the headquarters of Anushilan. But within a short time, troubles and dissensions arose between Jatin, Barin and P. Mitra. Aurobindo then came to Bengal in 1904 and asked Barin to return to Baroda. He set up a council with P. Mitra as president and with Nivedita, Jatin, C. R. Das and Suren Tagore as members. Aurobindo continued to give his guidance to the council. His idea was to gather a batch of young men who would take an active role in politics at the appropriate time. At this time, Indra Nandi, who was the *de facto* leader of Atmonnati, was in close touch with Jatin and the others.

As the anti-partition and the Swadeshi movements were gathering momentum, repression by the Government became widespread and indiscriminate. In every district, police violence was almost a daily occurrence. But these came into notice more prominently in Calcutta itself. The slogan *Bande Mataram*, though not yet legally banned, was actually prohibited; anyone who dared to shout *Bande Mataram* on the streets, ran the risk of being arrested or severely manhandled by the police. Particularly in Calcutta, more than the cry of *Bande Mataram*, picketing of shops selling British goods irritated the authorities and attracted severe repressive measures. Police violence on innocent people became the order of the day. As these reports poured in, the determination for reprisal grew stronger among bands of young men. Public meetings in protest against the atrocities gave vent to the public feeling and helped to rouse the young men. The eloquent speeches of Bipin Chandra Pal and the direct acts of defiance of Maulvi Liaquat Hosain encouraged and inspired young men to drastic and overt activities. Though Bipin Chandra Pal belonged to the extremist school and was a close associate of Aurobindo, he kept himself, more or less, aloof from any secret organisation or violent activity. In fact, in spite of his very intimate contact with Aurobindo and the group around him, he did not show or express any approval of secret activities in preparation for violence; neither did he denounce such activities.

Maulvi Liaquat Hosain organised groups of young men to march in procession on the streets of Calcutta shouting *Bande Mataram*. He took only selected young men who would not funk before the police

lathi charges and torture under arrest. Liaquat Hosain became a symbol of defiant nationalism. He suffered imprisonment on several occasions. Wherever there was any trouble, he would rush to the place; he courted imprisonment at Barisal also. Almost till the end of his life, every year, on the 30th day of the Bengali month of Asvin (16th October), he used to put *Rakhi* on the wrists of men he found in College Square and Beadon Square. In the later years of his life, he could not agree with the principles of Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement, particularly because of its emphasis on non-violence, and lived a lonely life ignored by everybody, sometimes ridiculed also for his opposition to the movement. But it is an obligation on us to recognise his services and pay our respect to the memory of this departed patriot.

For practical purposes, political workers formed three groups at this time. The Anushilan Samiti—of which P. Mitra was the President, Chittaranjan Das the Vice-President and Surendranath Tagore the Treasurer—continued to be the main organisation of the young workers; but it concerned itself mainly with physical and intellectual culture. Bipin Chandra Pal attracted a number of elder intellectuals to a political line akin to Parnell's passive resistance in Ireland. The third group consisting of enthusiastic young men was headed by Aurobindo. C. R. Das, Rajat Roy, B. C. Chatterjee and others were connected with all the three groups, which were more or less inter-linked. Barin came back to Bengal in 1905 and joined the Anushilan Samiti.

Within a short time, enthusiastic members of the Anushilan Samiti realised that under the guidance of P. Mitra and Satish Basu, the Samiti could not go ahead with a programme of secret revolutionary work. In a way, this band gradually seceded from the Anushilan Samiti. We have already stated how they started a secret centre in a garden in the Manicktola area for the manufacture of bombs. This group may be called the activist group and Aurobindo was in fact its leader and inspirer. This was the beginning of the Jugantar Party. Bhupen Dutt (younger brother of Swami Vivekananda), Barin, Devabrata Basu, Abinash Bhattacharya, Ullaskar Dutt and some others took an active part in organising this group.

This group had two sides—one wholly secret and generally engaged in collecting small arms and the manufacture of bombs in

the Manicktola garden; and the other conducting the weekly organ *Jugantar* which first came out in March 1906. It practically became the mouthpiece of the revolutionary ideas of the time. Its style was forceful and elegant; its appeal was suggestive of secret violent activities, and it directed its appeal not only to the heart but also to the head. Bhupen Dutt and Abinash Bhattacharya were the two important persons who undertook the responsibility of bringing out the journal. This group had close contact with Atmonnati—mainly through Indra Nandi.

The split in Anushilan did not come about suddenly. Jatin Banerjee was so enthusiastic about secret revolutionary activities that he soon grew disappointed with the working of the Samiti which was having its *akhra* or centre of physical culture at his rented house. Temperamental and ideological differences between him and Mitra became acute and it is reported that Mitra gave a virtual ultimatum to the boys to choose between him and Jatin. By that time Barin had returned to Bengal; he soon developed differences with Jatin. Barin had his differences with P. Mitra also. Jogen Vidyabhusana, a very senior and respected member, tried to mediate but failed. So Jatin had temperamental and political differences with P. Mitra on the one hand and with Barin on the other. He had a charming character and greater influence over young men. Something like personal jealousy seems to have developed between Jatin and Barin. To counteract Jatin's influence over the young men, some allegations of misuse of party funds and extravagance were made against him. In disgust, he left Bengal but before that he handed over his wife's gold necklace to Satish Basu to make good any loss he might have caused through extravagance. In spite of differences of opinion, P. Mitra entertained a high regard for Jatin's character. He was quite annoyed over the acceptance of the necklace of Jatin's wife. Jatin enjoyed the full confidence of Aurobindo and a majority of the younger members who regretted his departure. Satish Basu then became the principal organiser of the Anushilan Samiti and his emphasis was almost solely on physical culture and social work. He shifted the headquarters of the Samiti from the Circular Road house and ultimately it was housed at 49 Cornwallis Street.

After leaving Bengal, Jatin Banerji started on a tour of different provinces—Bihar, U.P. and Punjab. In the course of his tour, he

formed the nucleus of a party which subsequently developed into the Ghadr Party of the Punjab. Amongst the persons he contacted in Punjab should be mentioned the names of Lala Amirchand, a respected teacher at Delhi, Sardar Kishan Singh (father of Bhagat Singh), Lal Chand Falak (subsequently convicted in the Lahore conspiracy case of 1915), Lala Hardayal (then a student), Lala Amar Kishore (a noted lawyer), and others. Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai also came in contact with him. They took up the cause of the agrarian movement of the Doab and were deported under Regulation III of 1818. These contacts had far-reaching developments. Jatin worked for the Jugantar party and this is why Lala Hardayal gave his revolutionary centre at San Francisco the name, Jugantar Ashram. His printing press there was also known as Jugantar Press.

The nucleus of the group formed in Punjab by Jatin was later on contacted by Rash Behari Bose, who was sent to north India by the Jugantar Party after the police raid and arrests in the Manicktola garden. In fact, he was sent there by the leaders so that he might not be arrested. Sashibhusan Ray Chaudhuri was at the time a private tutor in the house of P. N. Tagore at Dehra Dun. When Rash Behari was asked to leave Bengal, Sashibhusan left the job and offered it to Rash Behari. The group in Delhi and Punjab was later organised by Rash Behari on aggressive revolutionary lines. This group was responsible for the bomb attack on Lord Hardinge in Delhi and other activities that formed the subject matter of the Delhi and Lahore conspiracy cases. It also played an important role in the Indo-German conspiracy during the First World War in collaboration with the Jugantar Party of Bengal.

A conference of the revolutionary workers of Bengal was held in Calcutta at the house of Subodh Mullick at the time of the Congress session of 1906. Representatives of different districts attended this conference; North Bengal, East Bengal and West Bengal were all represented. It was decided that overt revolutionary activities, particularly in the form of reprisals for police atrocities, should be seriously undertaken. After having established some contact with different districts in this conference, it became easier for the enthusiastic young leaders of the Jugantar group to build up a chain of organisations in different districts.



The initiative in starting the paper, *Jugantar*, was taken by Bhupen Dutt, Barin Ghose, Upen Banerjee, Devabrata Bose, Abinash Bhattacharya and Abinash Chakravarty and a few others though the inspiration came from Aurobindo, who was very eager to start on activist programme. The question of starting an organ of the revolutionaries had been under discussion for some time. Though P. Mitra did not like the idea, he could not oppose it openly. He tried first to dissuade the young enthusiasts and then to postpone the project on one plea or another. Money was the main hurdle. C. R. Das was approached and he sent about Rs. 30, not to those who were eager to start the paper but to P. Mitra, who, however, spent it for the *akhara*. The first offer of money was made by the North Bengal group which, in Calcutta, was then represented by two men—Annada Kaviraj and Abinash Chakravarty. Abinash Chakravarty was at the time a munsiff posted at Hooghly. Annada Kaviraj was in intimate contact with the nascent Jugantar group. His contribution to the formation of the revolutionary group was considerable. He and Abinash belonged to the district of Pabna (now in East Pakistan).

A young man named Manindra Lahiri, then a student in Ripon College, brought Rs. 200 from Rangpur (N. Bengal) for the paper. Subsequently they collected some small amounts totalling not more than Rs. 200 from Calcutta. With this small fund they started the *Jugantar* weekly. Among the earlier supporters of this venture, we should mention the names of some elderly men like Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, Abinash Chakravarty, Ganendranath Tagore, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, C. R. Das and Surendranath Tagore. Of course, Aurobindo was always the inspiring patron and guide of the group. Subsequently more money came from different sources and also from the sale proceeds which enabled them to purchase their own printing press later.

The starting of the weekly *Jugantar* is a very important landmark in the revolutionary movement of Bengal. The paper symbolised the aims and aspirations of the younger generation. It was started in March 1906 and was being printed at the Kamala Press. But in about two months time, the proprietor of the printing press became apprehensive of the tone and tenor of the journal and declined to print it. Then its printing was entrusted to Sadhana Press. After a

year, Bhupen Dutt was prosecuted (July 1907) for sedition as printer, publisher and editor of the paper. The press was also declared to be forfeited; but that order was set aside by the High Court on appeal. By that time the Jugantar group had become the actual proprietors of Sadhana Press. Within one year Abinash Bhattacharya, Nikhileswar Roy Maulick, Basanta Bhattacharya, Baikuntha Acharya and some others appeared either as owner of the press or printer or publisher or editor of the paper. One prosecution after another followed, and the press and the office of the paper inevitably shifted from one place to another.

Apart from *Jugantar*, three other papers also appeared. *Sandhya* a Bengali daily, appeared in 1904 under the editorship of Brahma-bandhab Upadhyaya. *Navashakti*, another Bengali daily, came out with Manoranjan Guha Thakurta as its editor. Then there was *Bandemataram*, the English daily, with Aurobindo as the main guiding and organising force. These four papers were published from different places with different editors and publishers. But they all belonged to the same political group; the writers and workers were also to a large extent common. They all preached the gospel of revolution and clustered round the Jugantar group. All these papers had a common editorial board with Aurobindo as Chairman and Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, Brahmabandhav, Shyamsundar Chakravarty, C. R. Das, B. C. Chatterjee and some others as members. Not all of them were in the thick of the movement; some stood on the periphery.

It should also be recognised that the Jugantar group or party developed more as a movement than as a rigid party organisation. In Calcutta and in the districts of Bengal, several samitis or organisations grew up with a vague idea of revolution or militant nationalism. Apart from the Anushilan Samiti and the Atmonnati Samiti, both of which I have already mentioned, in Calcutta and the suburbs there were the Brati Samiti organised by Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, the Bande Mataram Sampradaya of Suresh Samajpati, the Santan Sampradaya organised by Rajat Roy and others, the Anti-Circular Society of Krishna Kumar Mitra and Sachin Basu, the Maldah group of Radhesh Chandra Set which developed subsequently as the Grihastha group of Calcutta and so on. In the mofussil, practically every district had its own organisation. Barisal, Mymen-

singh, Faridpur, Midnapur, Khulna, Rangpur, Pabna, Jessore etc. had more or less well-organised bands of young men imbued with ideas of militant nationalism. In some districts, these organisations developed without any names, as in Midnapur and Jessore, but in others with distinct names as in Barisal (Swadesh Bandhab Samity), in Mymensingh (Sadhana Samaj and Suhrid Samiti) and so on. All these organisations in the different districts readily responded to the call of the Jugantar group of Calcutta, and they all, even without a preliminary discussion of terms and conditions, collaborated and sometimes coalesced as one organisation. In the districts, the organisations functioned not apart from, but more or less as the outcome of, the local political movements. As a matter of prudence, it was not made explicit at the time, but they all entertained the same definite idea of Indian independence to be achieved through a revolution. Anushilan kept apart from this current, devoting itself more to physical culture and building up a militant organisation. But there was again a difference between the Dacca and the Calcutta Anushilan. The latter was concerned with physical culture and social work, while the Dacca Anushilan concentrated on building up a militant group for armed rising and also for overt activities like dacoity and murder. It should not be taken to imply that Jugantar did not engage in such overt activities. On the analogy of the history of Italy's struggle for liberation, the Jugantar group may be compared with the Young Italy group of Mazzini. In this way was eventually formed the Jugantar Party which spearheaded the revolutionary movement in India from 1907 to 1917, culminating in the Indo-German "conspiracy" during the First World War. The beginning of this movement lay in the starting of the weekly paper *Jugantar* and the preparations for overt action in the Muraripukur garden in the Manicktola area.

The garden attracted other young men. Important among them were Hem Chandra Das, Upendra Nath Banerjee, Indranath Nandi and Ullaskar Dutt. These are all known names; and except Indranath, all have written their own memoirs. These young men contacted practically all the known personalities of Bengal. Surendra Nath Banerjee, Girish Chandra Ghose (dramatist), Subodh Mullick, Chittaranjan Das, Surya Kanta Acharya Chaudhuri, Brojendra Kishore Ray Chaudhury (both zamindars of Mymensingh), Swami

Saradananda, Aswini Kumar Dutt and many others were approached; and almost all of them knew what the young men were trying to do. Even Surendra Nath encouraged them, apologising for his old age and blessing the youth. Subodh Mullick and Chittaranjan practically became members of the group.

In 1906 P. Mitra, accompanied by Bipin Chandra Pal and Tarak Nath Das, made a tour of East Bengal districts and came to Dacca. There they came to be acquainted with Pulin Das and Ananda Chakravarty, a young lawyer, and the Dacca Anushilan Samiti was started. The charge of this Samiti was left in the hands of Pulin Das, but Ananda Chakravarty was made the chairman of the Dacca branch. Both the Calcutta and the Dacca Anushilan Samitis continued to be under the general supervision and control of P. Mitra; but gradually the two units became separate organisations. As P. Mitra could not agree with Barin and his friends at Calcutta, so he could not agree with the outlook and some of the activities of Pulin Das. In Calcutta also the two wings—the Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar—gradually drifted apart; similarly the Dacca Samiti also took its own course. With the development of the Jugantar group and expansion of its activities, the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti lost its lustre and most of its active workers were gradually drawn to the Jugantar group. But the Dacca Anushilan continued and extended its activities in the districts of East and North Bengal.

There was hardly anyone in Bengal to equal Pulin Das as an organiser. Under his able guidance, branches of the Anushilan Samiti were established in almost every village of East Bengal. It started with lathi and sword play; but that was only the initial stage. It had three different cadres of members—(1) those who had taken only the *Adya Pratijna* (first oath); (2) those with *Madhya Pratijna* (the middle oath) and lastly (3) those with the *Antya Pratijna* (the final oath). The first stage was for open physical culture and social work while the members taking the final oath formed the core of the secret organisation. As the Jugantar group developed along with the public movement and on the basis of the collaboration of different local samitis, it had not so much of formalities and rigidity in organisation.

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## Chapter Eleven

# The Pioneers

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The first band of enthusiastic young men who took the initiative in the bold and difficult task of establishing secret revolutionary societies practically disappeared from the scene within a few years. They were prosecuted in different cases. Some died prematurely either in prison or after coming out of prison; some, after long years of hard prison life, came back broken in health and spirit; some went into exile to foreign countries in pursuit of their cherished goal; some, again, became sanyasis or monks. In the subsequent politics of Bengal and of India, few of them had any important part to play. But that should not make us forget their sacrifice and their service. All that men hold near and dear to their heart were sacrificed by them for the country's cause. The future edifice of the national struggle was built only on their sacrifice, suffering and service. I propose here to give pen-pictures of some of these pioneers, particularly of those who are not well known to the public.

I should first mention Jatin Banerjee who was sent by Aurobindo from Baroda to Bengal in 1902 to organise a secret revolutionary society. He did pioneering work not only in Bengal but also in Bihar, U.P. and Punjab. He formed the nucleus of a revolutionary organisa-

tion in Punjab and Delhi which was later on available to Rash Behari. Hardayal and others were highly impressed by his ideas and personality. Subsequently he became a sanyasi and took the name of Niralamba Swami.

Bhupen Dutt and Barin were the two most important persons who took an active part in setting up the organisation. Ullaskar Dutt, Hem Das, Upen Banerjee, Devabrata Basu, Abinash Bhattacharya and others were also important workers. Among the next in line, might be mentioned Nikhil Roy Maulick, Kartik Dutt, Kiron Mukherjee and some others who took charge of the *Jugantar* weekly. Another name worth mentioning is that of Manabendranath Chatterjee who was associated with Brahmabandhav in the management of *Sandhya*. Amongst these Devabrata, Nikhil Roy Maulick and Manabendranath Chatterjee later became sanyasis, and assumed the names Prajnananda Swami, Bhabananda Swami and Vidyananda Swami respectively. Manabendra was prosecuted for sedition in the *Sandhya* case and was sentenced to imprisonment for two years. Among the elder generation, I have already mentioned P. Mitra, Abinash Chandra Chakravarty, Satish Basu, Shyamsunder Chakravarty, etc. I should add here names of some other persons who took an important part in the developing politics of the day.

Atin Basu came of a fairly well-to-do family and generously spent money for the cause as also for the needy workers. He started a Swadeshi cloth shop, Bharat Bhandar, but never conducted it as a business; it was used more as a meeting place of the political workers. He stood surety for many arrested political workers. Due to his political zeal, he exhausted his family fortunes. He and his son Amar were arrested in 1915 and were made state prisoners under Regulation III of 1818. After release in 1920, he was in great financial difficulties and often had to face severe hardship. Even then he continued to help needy workers. He organised the Simla Byayam Samiti. He died a few years ago at the age of about 90.

Haridas Halder came from the well-known Halder family of Kalighat. He was a powerful writer and was intimately associated with *Sandhya*, *Jugantar* and *Navashakti*. In later years he was an ardent supporter of the non-co-operation movement. He was also a writer of political, humorous and satirical essays. Hemendra Prasad Ghose was a member of the band of writers for these papers. He died

at the age of 90 in 1962; even at that age, his memories of those days were unimpaired. He was a mine of information about those hectic days. He was a noted journalist of Bengal with an equally facile pen in both Bengali and English.

It is imperative that I say something about Abinash Chakravarty. Sainly in character, fair and sober looking, tall and slim in figure, Abinash Chakravarty was an embodiment of all that culture could mean. He came of a fairly rich family of Pabna (East Bengal) and was appointed a munsiff some years before the movement started. He took an active interest in the revolutionary movement and gave every help in organising the party. He regularly contributed money. It is hardly possible to assess the total amount he paid for the organisation; it must have run into many thousands—may be more than Rs. 70,000. After the Manicktola Bomb Case, he was dismissed from Government service and started practising in the Calcutta High Court and became more active in revolutionary politics. By the beginning of 1909, virtually all the samitis were banned by the Government under the Criminal Law Amendment Act which was passed in December 1908 (popularly known as the Samitis Act). Most of the workers of these samitis became inactive as they found very little to do. They had all along engaged mostly in physical culture and in some relief work. The idea of revolution had not yet crystallised in the minds of many of the members; and so, on the banning of the samitis, they felt practically out of their occupation. Abinash Chakravarty used to go round and meet the workers and organisers of those samitis, urging them to combine under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee—the coming man—for a wider revolutionary movement. It has to be admitted that his roving activities in Calcutta and the neighbouring areas helped much in the formation of the nucleus of a secret revolutionary society under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee. He was a deeply learned man and drew up a blueprint of the future constitution of a free Indian Republic.

It can be said that when everything seemed to be in disarray after the Alipore case and the banning of the samitis, it was Abinash Chakravarty who gave shape to the amorphous idea of a revolutionary movement by putting it in a concrete form and under a definite leadership. In 1915 he was arrested under the war-time Defence of India Ordinance and confined in Midnapur Central Jail

by the end of 1916 under Regulation III of 1818. I had the privilege of being a co-prisoner with him in that jail. He was so quiet and calm by nature that during a conversation, his voice would hardly rise above a whisper.

After his release from jail in 1920, he was in great financial difficulties. I recollect how he would come of an evening,—sad and silent; we would realise his poverty—having no money even for purchasing the barest necessities of his household. We ourselves were then struggling for a means of livelihood; and at the same time, we were busy with the non-co-operation movement. We could spare at most a rupee or two at a time, and sometimes even less. Amongst us, Amar Krishna Ghose was somewhat solvent; he had just started his contractor's business and never stinted in helping him. Kiron Mukherjee (Kiron Da) also maintained contact with Abinash Babu. With Prof. Prabhas De, Abinash Babu started the Mahajan Bank which did not prove a successful venture and caused some damage to his reputation. Deshbandhu Das, after capturing Calcutta Corporation in 1923, put him up as the nominee of the Corporation on the Improvement Trust Tribunal. That gave him some financial relief. He died a few years later. Our memory of him is full of regard and respect, at the same time painful. When we think of his financial difficulties in the latter part of his life, we painfully realise the hardships of a man who, but for his passionate zeal for service to the people, could have passed a life of ease and comfort with a high social status. The man who exhausted himself financially for the cause of the country's revolutionary activities had to suffer so much privation. But who remembers him now !

The next man to come to my mind is Shyamsunder Chakravarty. He, too, came from Bharanga, a village in Pabna district, from the same family as Abinash Babu. Shyamsunder was a curious mixture of radicalism and conservatism. He liked to be called Pandit Shyamsunder Chakravarty. He wielded a powerful pen in both English and Bengali. He was well read in Sanskrit and Hindi literature and had a deep knowledge of both Indian and Western philosophy. He was intimately associated with *Bandemataram*, *Jugantar*, *Sandhya* and also *Navashakti*. He helped in editing all these papers as and when necessary. When I met him during the First World War, he was serving as an assistant to Surendra Nath Banerjee in editing *The Bengalee* and was



the *de facto* editor of its Bengali counterpart, *Bangalee*. Journalism at this time was not a paying profession; it was a mission of national service. He had to supplement his income by coaching B.A. students in Mathematics although he was not himself a graduate. In spite of his paltry income, he was generous in helping the hard pressed revolutionary workers. In July 1916, when mass arrests were taking place, news of torture in the police lockups got wide currency. The Sett brothers of Beadon Street (Naren Sett and his brothers) were arrested on the 1st July 1916. I saw Shyamsunder shedding tears over the difficulties that the children and the ladies of the family were experiencing. Next day he wrote an editorial in *Bangalee* with a quotation from Ram Prasad (the saint-poet of Bengal) as the caption, purporting to accuse the Holy Mother who had given sensibilities of heart but not the ability to satisfy them. Next day I was arrested. Within a few days, he too was arrested and interned at Kalimpong.

About Shyamsunder also our memories are tinged with pain. His venture in journalism and the publication of *The Servant* landed him in great financial difficulties. *The Servant* was a powerful organ and mouthpiece of the Non-co-operation movement, but not a financial success. In his later days, he drifted into a politics of obscurantism which few could understand and fewer accepted. But we cannot forget that he devoted all his energy, talents and resources to the cause. His tender heart would bleed at any news of political or revolutionary workers suffering physical tortures or privation due to financial difficulties. Without caring for his own needs, he would help any needy worker with such money as he could.

Neither Abinash nor Shyamsunder can be called consistent political thinkers or able organisers. But their hearts were pure; their sincerity was beyond doubt and their sacrifice and contribution to the cause deserve our recognition and appreciation.

Manoranjan Guha Thakurta had made a small fortune by working mica mines in Kodarma (Bihar); he spent it all in his political venture in Calcutta. He was a powerful speaker; his speeches were interspersed with anecdotes, humour and wit. His son Chittaranjan and Brojen Ganguly were severely assaulted by the police during the Barisal Conference in April 1906. That evening in a public meeting, presenting the wounded young men with bandaged heads and hands, Manoranjan made an inspiring speech at Barisal

In Calcutta he started a daily called *Navashakti*; it attained popularity but not financial success. *Navashakti*, along with *Jugantar*, *Sandhya* and *Bandemataram*, was a popular organ of militant nationalism.

I need not say much about Bhupen Dutt and Barin Ghose; they are quite well known and have narrated their own stories in their books. Dr. Bhupen Dutt died in 1962 at the age of nearly 81. The last time I saw him a few months before his death, I found the light in him flickering and dim. Both his eyesight and hearing were seriously affected. His memory, which even about a year earlier was fairly sharp, was fast declining. He was the first editor of *Jugantar*. The second issue of *Jugantar* published, as the editorial article, what can be called a manifesto setting forth the charter for the revolutionary groups of Bengal. It tried to give an idea of the socio-economic aim of the group. The manifesto reveals a clear tendency towards socialism. He was arrested in 1907 and prosecuted for sedition. He did not defend his case. When eminent barristers were preparing his defence, he made a statement in the court stating that he did "what I thought to be my duty to the country" and that the court "may mete out any punishment you may like". He was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. On the day of his conviction, there were stray riots in different parts of Calcutta, particularly near Beadon Square. A worthy brother of Swami Vivekananda, even in his old age he retained his idealism and did not compromise it for a life of comfort and ease.

I should mention also Ullaskar Dutt whose father, Dwijadas Dutt, was a high Government official and a learned man, both in science and philosophy, and an ardent nationalist. It was Ullaskar who actually experimented with and finally succeeded in manufacturing bombs. In fact, most of the bombs used till the time of the Alipore Bomb Case (May 1908) were made by him. Ullaskar lived the last few years of his life in his own humble way at Karimganj. He was convicted in the Manicktola Bomb case, sentenced to transportation for life and sent to the Andamans. It is stated that he was so disappointed at the conduct of his colleagues and seniors in the Andamans that the shock made him somewhat unbalanced in mind. He had a carefree attitude towards life and never bothered about his physical comforts.

Special mention should also be made of Hem Das who had an

outstanding personality. Coming from Midnapur, the birthplace of the secret society idea, he took up the dangerous life of a revolutionary early in his youth. He went to Paris to learn the science and art of bomb-making. When he came back with that knowledge, he became the expert in bomb-making in the Manicktola garden. He too did not like the docile and submissive attitude of some of the leading revolutionaries in the Andamans. He returned almost a cynic.

The life of a revolutionary is like a walk on the edge of a high precipice. At the height of idealism, a revolutionary rises to a pitch not easy to imagine, but when idealism wanes, he tumbles and falls deep down. Inspired by his idealism, he engages in activities repugnant to social conventions and the laws of the State. He has carefully to maintain secrecy not only in his activities, but also in his thoughts. He trusts none, but puts his life in the hands of many.

Tolstoy in his famous novel *Resurrection* has stated that prison life may have two divergent effects on a political worker; it may take him higher up or may pull him down. The revolutionary has to face privation outside, and to undergo not only physical discomforts but also mental torture in prison. More often than not, he finds that his sacrifices and his idealism are ridiculed rather than appreciated, and that men with lesser moral and intellectual virtues not only thrive financially but also rise in social esteem and political status. In his single-minded pursuit of political objectives, he neglects his relatives; he ignores all social conventions and contacts and desperately pursues his own ideas, which often prove to be mirages. But after some time, when he finds his family broken, his friends and relations ignoring him and society abandoning him or, at best, pitying him, it becomes difficult for him to maintain a sober, balanced and optimistic attitude. So it was not quite unnatural that men like Ullaskar, Hem Das, Kartik Dutt and others somewhat lost their mental equilibrium or became cynics and misanthropes, while still others renounced the world. Yet it would be ungrateful of the nation not to appreciate what it owes to them.

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## Chapter Twelve

# Organisation Takes Shape

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Organisational work in Calcutta started in right earnest after the 1906 conference in the house of Subodh Mullick. The conference was a landmark in the history of the revolutionary movement in Bengal. It was presided over by P. Mitra. Among those present were Aurobindo Ghose, Subodh Mullick, Abinash Chakravarty, Bhupen Dutt, Indra Nandi, Annada Kaviraj, Abinash Bhattacharya and others of Calcutta, Pulin Das and Nikhil Roy Maulick from Dacca, Lalit Chattopadhyaya and his nephew Jatindranath Mukherjee from Nadia, Jnan Basu from Midnapur, Paresh Lahiri from Mymensingh, and Bireshwar Mukherjee from Jessore. The participants were asked if they had already taken, or were ready to take, the oath of the party. The form and language of this oath had a denominational touch, based essentially on Hindu belief. It was administered in the name of some Hindu deity and of some Hindu scriptures. The oath was administered to those who had not already taken it. Each was asked to take charge of his own district. In this conference Aurobindo addressed the members and explained the necessity of money—which could, then, be secured only through dacoity. He of course said that whatever money might thus be obtained should be

regarded as loan from the victims of the dacoities to be repaid after independence. The suggestion was accepted unanimously. A similar conference was held in 1907 in the same house.

In the meantime, revolutionary workers from Calcutta started touring the districts. In this work, Jatin Banerjee and Barin were the most enthusiastic. Different districts also developed their own local organisations. Batches of workers from Calcutta, sometimes in collaboration with local workers, sometimes independently, started organising cells. The Dacca Anushilan remained aloof and retained its separate identity. The activist section of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti from then onward may be called the Jugantar group. Jugantar easily formed contacts in almost all the districts in East and North Bengal and in several other provinces. In fact, the existing samitis or organisations of those districts found in Jugantar an affinity of ideas and potentialities of developing as a revolutionary movement; and all willingly collaborated with Jugantar. This ready response of the existing local organisations to merge with Jugantar may be taken as significant of its difference of outlook and ideology from the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. At a very early stage, organisations were set up in Midnapur and in North Bengal, particularly Pabna and Rangpur. Naturally their link was through Calcutta which became the centre of all these organisations.

The conference of 1906, just mentioned, gave directives for the formation of revolutionary units in different districts. If any one was responsible for giving shape, form and method to the nebulous idea of revolutionary organisation, it was Aurobindo. He published a scheme entitled *Bhawani Mandir*—a name taken from Bankim's writings. According to Aurobindo, Bhawani is the universal Mother; but to Indians, Bhawani is personified in 'Bharat Mata' (Mother India). This book is an appeal for spiritual regeneration of the young men to follow the path of her *santans* (progeny)—a term used in Bankim's novel *Ananda Math* to signify a batch of devoted workers pledged to undertake all sorts of privation and suffering for the salvation and regeneration of the country. Batches of workers went out to Bihar, Orissa and to the districts of Bengal for establishing Bhawani Mandirs. He wanted these *mandirs* (temples) to be set up all over the country wherefrom dedicated volunteers would work

among, and serve the people. Any young man recruited to the organisation was put under strict discipline.

A regular campaign for recruiting young men also started. In selecting members meticulous care was taken to see that the organisation might not have any weak links in the form of undependable or unreliable members. Though there was general enthusiasm for the country's freedom, yet there were wide differences over the actual line to be taken. Rabindranath had just published his essay *Swadeshi Samaj*—The Indigenous Society—outlining the scheme of setting up a parallel government in every village and area. Bipin Pal had his own idea of passive resistance on the lines of Parnell. *Jugantar*—the weekly paper—was giving a lead and indicating the social and economic contents of the revolution. The core of the revolutionary party was being formed in the midst of all these intellectual and public discussions. Many did not agree with the method of achieving independence through secret preparation for an armed rising. So, in the process of recruiting members, intensive discussions took place involving arguments and cross-arguments. Schools, colleges, students' hostels and boarding houses, parks were allotted to different workers for recruitment of new members. Maintenance of secrecy and discipline was given the utmost importance. Members were not to disclose their identity or even their mutual acquaintance in public. Centres grew up in different quarters of Calcutta and different areas of the districts. Physical culture in the form of lathi, sword play, wrestling, jiu-jitsu, boxing, etc. was the common feature. A regular curriculum of study was decided—as stated earlier.

Jatin Banerjee gradually removed himself from the field due to differences with P. Mitra and Barin. Barin, who had greater drive and impulsiveness than most others was touring the different districts. Smuggling of small arms—revolvers and pistols—was encouraged. In those days, police vigilance was not so strict; the French authorities of Chandernagar in particular were rather lax in these matters. Some of the weapons are reported to have been collected from there. Underground publication of revolutionary literature was also undertaken. I think the first pamphlet of this nature was *Sonar Bangla*. It was secretly printed in the Sandhya press. Two other pamphlets which attracted public notice at the time were *Kah Pantha* (What is

the Way) and *Mukti Kon Pathe* (Which Way Freedom?). These pamphlets were published about 1907-1909.

Besides Barin, Bhupendra Nath Dutta, Hem Das and others went out to different districts. Bhupen also went to the Central Provinces and visited many towns there. Another man—Tarak Nath Das—also toured different districts of East Bengal and North Bengal. Then he went to Madras where he gathered a band of young men. They contacted particular people in the districts and in most of the places, they distributed some revolvers. I recollect that in the Barisal section of the revolutionaries, we used to entertain particular care and fondness for a revolver which had been given by Barin in 1907 to Satish Mukherjee, who later on became Swami Prajnānananda Saraswaty. In Mymensingh they contacted the workers of Sadhana Samaj and Suhrid Samiti and particularly Hemendra Kishore Acharya Chaudhuri. Hemendra's contribution, devotion and sacrifice for revolutionary work is unsurpassed. He had a jovial temperament and a genial heart. He has left an impress of deep respect and regard on whoever came in contact with him. He was loved and respected by many of the zamindars of the district. They used to help him with money and often gave him some of their unlicensed arms. Born in a rich family, he spurned a life of ease and comfort.

The organisers tried to set up some units which would be used more for shelter than for active revolutionary work. Devabrata Basu went to Orissa about the beginning of 1907. Barin, Jatin Banerjee, and Bhupen Dutt among others also went there to set up the nucleus of an organisation. Gopabandhu Das, the pioneer social and political worker of Orissa, came in contact with them. He was particularly influenced by Sashi Bhushan Ray Chaudhury who helped him in organising an open-air school—the Satyabadi School. Sashi Bhushan was the first man to organise a night school in his village, Teghara in 24 Parganas, for the day labourers; that school did useful service as a centre for literacy and vocational training. He initiated in Bengal what later came to be known as the night-school movement.

Smuggling of arms and manufacture of bombs were the two main tasks of the secret core of the party. All this required money. Voluntary contributions were found to be inadequate for the purpose. It should be mentioned here that many zamindars and landlords had sympathy with this movement and secretly helped it with money.

Subodh Mullick's role is well known. The Mymensingh zamindars, the Cossimbazar Maharaja, the Raja of Narajole in Midnapur, Misri Babu,<sup>o</sup> son of Raja Jaykrishna Mukherjee of Uttarpara, and many others entertained a warm admiration for the movement. Some used to contribute funds, while others were afraid of the Government's wrath. Gradually, with the stricter repressive measures of the Government, voluntary sources of finance dried up and money became scarce. Then the question was seriously discussed—where and how to get money. *Ananda Math* and *Devi Chaudhurani*, two famous novels of Bankim Chandra, inspired the young men to organise the revolutionary groups; and these two books gave them the clue about how to get money: it had to be snatched. History furnished justification by providing precedents. The Carbonari Group of Italy and even Garibaldi and his band of Red Shirts and the Russian Nihilists had taken recourse to this method. Shivaji's example was also cited in its defence in the 1906 conference of the revolutionaries where a decision was taken for committing dacoity.

During any future discussion on this issue, the following points were considered: (1) With intensified Government repression, public donations had already dried up and would 'dry up, leaving dacoity as the only source for getting the much-needed money; (2) it provided an opportunity for some training in guerilla fighting and for making young men bold and daring, and (3) it helped in keeping the atmosphere surcharged with political tension and reminding the public of the existence of the revolutionary parties.

Perhaps the first attempt to snatch money was made at Calcutta from a pedestrian and it failed. Another attempt was made in the district of Rangpur; practically all the young leaders went there, including Bhupen Dutt, Hem Das, Barin Ghose, Naren Gosain and others. Manindra Lahiri, the young student who had brought Rs. 200/- from Rangpur for starting the *Jugantar* weekly, was also in the batch. It ended in a fiasco. Later, Hem Das referred to this incident in a satirical manner (stealing the brass pot of a widow) in his autobiographical sketch. The first successful venture of this period was the looting of the Railway's money from Changripota station on the Diamond Harbour line (December, 1907). Naren Bhattacharya (later known as M. N. Roy) was in that venture. The next was the



Barrha dacoity (June 2, 1908). Nikhil Roy Maulick, Naren Bose and other workers from Calcutta went there. The Dacca branch of the Anushilan Samiti took a leading part in organising it and sent Sachindra Banerjee and Sashi Sarkar along with about 30 young men. This dacoity thrilled the whole of Bengal. Armed bands of young men raided a rich merchant's house in the district of Dacca and got away with a booty of about Rs. 20,000. The party went there in two boats and while returning, was chased by the villagers and police who went on firing at the boat. They came in a triumphant march to the river side, defying the villagers and the police who tried to catch them. One person was killed; his body was carried and thrown into the river. The rest safely boarded their boat which was waiting on the river. A part of the loot was taken to Pulin Das at Dacca but the major portion was brought to Calcutta and deposited with the Chhatra Bhandar with which Nikhil Roy Maulick was intimately connected. The next thrilling dacoity was the Rajendrapur train dacoity in which money was looted from a running train. Details of this case are narrated in another chapter.

While these developments were taking place, the movement was extending its activities in other spheres. Attempts were being made for the manufacture of bombs. Ullaskar had already successfully experimented with the manufacture of bombs. For this particular purpose, Hem Das went to Paris. He came of a fairly rich family of Midnapur. While in Paris he contacted Shyamji Krishna-varma and S. R. Rana. We find from Dr. Bhupen Dutt's narration that the first bomb was manufactured by one Bibhuti Chakravarty, who worked in a chemical or pharmaceutical firm, the Arya Chemical, and belonged to Nadia district. He was a student of chemistry under Professor Nibaran Bhattacharjee, who was one of the founders of Atmonnati Samiti. But there also the question of money arose. One gentleman, Jogesh Chandra Ghose, contributed Rs. 100/- for this purpose, and Bibhuti Chakravarty manufactured the first bomb; the shell for the bomb was made in a blacksmith's shop in Jhamapukur (Calcutta). Afterwards, Ullaskar Dutt started making bombs in the Manicktola garden. The manufacture of bombs started on a proper basis after the return of Hem Das in 1908. But shortly after that the whole batch was arrested.

I have already written about Atmonnati and how it developed

intimate contact with the Manicktola garden group. The organisation grew much beyond the initial conception of its founders. It was subsequently built up by Indra Nandi, Bepin Ganguli, Anukul Mukherjee, Girin Banerjee, Harish Sikdar and Prabhas De. Prabhas De was of a jovial and genial nature; he was a professor in Cooch-Bihar College when he was arrested in 1916. Satish De was another important member of the group; he was expelled from the Presidency College along with Subhash Bose in the Oaten assault case in 1915. In 1907, when Hindu-Muslim riots were inspired and encouraged by the Government in Jamalpur (Mymensingh), Indra Nandi, Bepin Ganguli and others of Atmonnati along with Sudhir Sarkar and Shishir Ghose of the main Jugantar went there with revolvers and rendered useful help to the distressed Hindus.

The year 1906 witnessed hectic activity by way of propaganda and publicity for creating a revolutionary atmosphere. The daily *Sandhya* had been in publication for over two years, but had not made a noticeable impact till the partition. Then came the Bengali weekly *Jugantar* in March 1906 and in August of the same year was started the English daily *Bandemataram: Navashakti* of Manoranjan Guha Thakurta was also started about the same time. Other existing papers, viz. *The Bengalee* of Surendra Nath, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Motilal Ghose, *Hitabadi* of Kaliprasanna Kavyvisarad and *Sanjibani* of Krishna Kumar Mitra, all joined in denouncing the alien rule. Of these papers, *Sandhya* and *Jugantar* were quite outspoken. *Jugantar* published an article *Welcome Unrest* openly declaring that unrest would have to be created—its “historical name is revolt.” Within a few months its circulation went up to 7000 and continued to rise rapidly to perhaps about 15,000. The paper openly declared that the revolutionaries would have to imitate the Russian revolutionaries who had their supporters and arms from among the ranks of the army. (This was only a year after the 1905 revolution in Russia.) In another article in *Jugantar*, the writer saw the rise of “future guerilla bands” from the dacoities that were being undertaken at the time.

*Sandhya* was similarly outspoken and blunt in denouncing the foreign rule. It wrote—“We want complete independence. . . . Swadeshi, boycott—all are meaningless to us if they are not the means of retrieving our whole and complete independence. . . . Rights granted by the Feringhis as favour, we shall spit at and reject. We shall

work out our own salvation." Similarly, in the *Bandemataram* both Bipin Chandra and Aurobindo preached the cult of passive resistance and the re-assertion of the national being. Bipin Pal was pre-eminently the apostle of passive resistance and of the idea of building up the nation's power of resisting the alien rulers. Aurobindo wrote, "It (the national movement) is national not only in the sense of political assertion against the domination of foreigners, but in the sense of a return upon our own national individuality." Aurobindo, as chairman of the common editorial board of all these papers, used to keep a clear line of demarcation in the tone of *Jugantar* and *Sandhya* on the one hand, both of which preached revolution and armed rising, and *Bandemataram* on the other which propagated national resistance and the re-assertion of national individuality.

Among the other publications, proscribed by the Government but yet secretly circulated, I should mention at least three: these are *Bhawani Mandir* (Temple of the Holy Mother), *Bartaman Rana-niti* (The Technique of Modern Fighting) and *Mukti Kon Pathe* (Which Way Freedom?). *Bhawani Mandir* was written by Aurobindo; it urged the people to acquire spiritual, moral, physical and also political strength. It need not be taken, as such, as a seditious book. The book was banned by the Government shortly after its publication. *Bartaman Rana-niti* (Technique of Modern Fighting) enjoined upon the young men to develop moral character and physical strength so that they could engage themselves in guerilla war. The book also described the weapons, armaments, bombs and explosives used in war in those days. This too was banned by the Government. The third book, *Mukti Kon Pathe* (Which Way Freedom), reported to be published by Kiron Mukherjee and his friends, was a collection of articles published in *Jugantar*. This book gave direct incitement to violence, fomenting unrest and preparation for armed rising. It denounced the moderate politics of the Congress. It urged the young men to be ready for a more serious type of work. It made a distinction between the usual agitational politics and the real undertaking which might lead to freedom. It said, "Therefore let these (usual agitations) be by no means disregarded. But if these agitations be joined in without the ideal of freedom being cherished in the heart, real strength and training will never be acquired from them. Therefore as members of the band will, on the one hand, stake their lives in increasing the

scope of the band, on the other, they should remain persevering and active in keeping the country in unrest by these undertakings and agitations.”

It may be noticed that in these publications more stress was being laid on acquiring moral and spiritual strength than on physical. The spirit of complete dedication and surrender to the will of the Almighty—as taught in the Gita—was the main theme of the political literature of the day. Along with this, the *Jugantar* weekly also gave some importance to the socio-economic problems to be solved on attainment of independence.

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## Chapter Thirteen

# Towards Overt Actions

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The prosecution of the *Jugantar* weekly was an important incident of those days. The editor, Bhupendra Nath Dutta, was arrested on 5th July, 1907, and prosecuted under Sec. 124. A (Sedition) of the Indian Penal Code. When Bhupen got the news that a warrant of arrest had been issued, he went to the *Jugantar* office and offered himself for arrest. The next day he was released on bail on the securities of two eminent citizens of Calcutta—Dr. Pran Krishna Acharya and Charu Chandra Mitra. He was prosecuted for the publication of two articles, viz. *Free from Fear* and *Big Stick Medicine*. The case was tried by the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Kingsford. The Government charge was that those two articles not only tried to bring the Government into contempt but also incited violence against it. Eminent lawyers came forward to defend the case, but Bhupen refused to defend the case and made a statement in the court: "I am solely responsible for all the articles in question. I have done what I have considered, in good faith, to be my duty to my country." He also asked the Government not to take the trouble and incur expenditure to prove "what I have no intention to deny". On 25th July he was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment.

Basanta Bhattacharya, the printer of *Jugantar*, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on September 2.

On Bhupen's conviction, there were wild demonstrations and stray riots in the city of Calcutta. Even the highest stratum of Bengali society was moved by this conviction. Some ladies of what may be called upper class Bengali society organised a meeting to honour Bhupendra Nath's mother. They assembled in the house of Dr. (later Sir) Nilratan Sarkar—the topmost medical man—whose wife organised the meeting; and the wife of another eminent doctor, Dr. Pran Krishna Acharya, presented an address to Bhupen's mother. The Government expected that the *Jugantar* would be suppressed by this conviction; but on the contrary, the tone of its writings became more extremist and anti-Government. It should be mentioned here that the whole philosophy of the movement was to exasperate the Government to take more and more repressive measures. Only then would the conscience of the nation be roused. Aurobindo and even the saintly Satish Mukherjee of the Dawn Society believed that the surest way to rouse the consciousness of the people was to get the Government to intensify its repression of Indian nationalists.

After the *Jugantar* case, a sedition case was started against *Bandemataram*. Aurobindo was prosecuted on a charge of sedition for an article, *Politics for Indians*, published in *Bandemataram* in September 1907. The printer and the manager of the paper were also prosecuted. By that time, Aurobindo had almost become an idol to the enthusiastic young men of Bengal; and his prosecution created a stir in the country. Bipin Chandra Pal, who was the editor of the paper for the first few issues, was cited as a prosecution witness apparently to prove that Aurobindo was the then editor and also the writer of that article. In those days it was not necessary to publish the name of the editor in any issue. In the court, Bipin Chandra declined either to take the oath or to give evidence. He defied the right of the British court to compel him to depose against his own friends and colleagues. In a public speech and in the columns of *Navashakti*, he explained why he had refused to depose. *Bandemataram* was his own child and the accused were his friends and colleagues. In a subsequent statement, he stated, "I honestly believe that prosecutions like that of the *Bandemataram* are calculated to stifle freedom of thought and speech in the country and interfere with civil advancement of the

people." Hence he could not help the alien government in their campaign of persecution against his own friends and colleagues. He was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment for disobeying the summons of the court. While in the original case Aurobindo was discharged, the printer Apūrba Bose was convicted. When Bipin Chandra was convicted, a huge crowd assembled in the court. There was excitement and commotion; and the police, as was usual on such occasions, used the lathi and the cane freely. Bipin Chandra was removed to the Buxar Central Jail in Bihar.

About the same time, a prosecution was launched against *Sandhya*. Brahmabandhab the editor, and the printer and publisher of *Sandhya* were prosecuted for sedition. The writings of *Sandhya* were always on the verge of sedition; any issue would have merited prosecution under a sedition charge. The offending article, published in August 1907, was captioned: "Now I have got entangled in the snare of love"—*Ebar theke gecchi premer daye*. This case proved very sensational. In a defiant mood, Brahmabandhab declared in the court: "I do not want to take any part in the trial and I am in no way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us." He took full responsibility for the paper *Sandhya* and for the article. He did all this, he said, "in carrying out my humble share in the God-appointed mission of Swaraj". Before coming to the court, he told his friends: "This *feringhi*\* court won't be able to convict me or to touch my body. Before that, like a worn-out shoe, I shall rather throw off my body." He wrote in *Sandhya* in a similar vein. And his words proved prophetic; before the end of the trial, he died of strangulated hernia. This added to the halo and popular regard for Brahmabandhab.

There was another case against *Sandhya* in February 1908. The printer, Mananbendra Chattopadhyaya, who declined to defend the case, was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. On his release he became a sanyasi and took the name of Swami Vidyananda. The attitude taken by Bhupen Dutt, Brahmabandhab and Bipin Chandra Pal in these prosecutions may be taken as an indication of the spirit of the movement—the spirit of defiance of and non-co-operation with the alien rule and court.

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\* An abusive term—meaning Europeans.

Skirmishes between the police and young men were frequent in those days. Arrest or conviction of any important leader or worker, search of any of the centres of these activities or even a sensational public speech, would occasion a clash of this nature. Some of the more serious clashes occurred on the days of the search of the *Jugantar* office and convictions of Bhupen Dutt and Bipin Chandra. Manindra Lahiri, that enthusiastic young man of Rangpur who brought the money initially necessary for starting *Jugantar*, and two or three of his friends were arrested in a skirmish in Mirzapur Street near the *Jugantar* office. They were then students in Ripon College. The charge against them was assault on the police and the Anglo-Indian sergeants. Surendra Nath called them before him and eulogised their courage and boldness. In one such clash, the hand of a sergeant was chopped off by some young men.

A case was also started against *Navashakti*, which closed down after the prosecution. But *Jugantar* and *Sandhya* continued. Baikuntha Acharya and three or four young men were successively convicted in the *Jugantar* cases. After Brahmabandhab's demise, Jatin Banerjee took charge of *Sandhya*; his first article was entitled: "I am not dead; I have come back." It was during this period that *Sandhya* faced the second prosecution in which its printer Manabendra was convicted and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Kiron Mukherjee, Atindranath Bose, Haridas Halder, Nikhilesh Roy Maulick, Taranath Ray Chaudhury and some others clustered round *Sandhya*. Taranath, who came from Noakhali, was then quite young; he was a devoted worker and later an enthusiastic advocate of the non-co-operation movement. He was a good writer also.

On the conviction of Bipin Pal, there were anti-government demonstrations in the court. Vociferous shouts of 'Bandemataram' in the court annoyed Kingsford. He asked Sergeant Huey to apprehend an enthusiastic young boy who was shouting 'Bandemataram'. Huey went to catch Sushil Sen who hit him in the face. Sushil was convicted for assaulting Huey, though the provocation was the shouting of 'Bandemataram'. Kingsford sentenced him to 15 strokes of the lash and his public flogging was personally supervised by the magistrate himself. With every lash, he continued to cry 'Bandemataram'. This incident, particularly because of the tender age of



Şushil and the barbarity of public whipping, created a wave of resentment all over the country. After this incident, Kavyavisharad composed his famous song, 'Make me forget my mother by flogging me ! Am I such an unworthy son of the Mother ?'

Repressive measures and persecution could not curb the spirit of revolt. *Jugantar*, *Sandhya*, *Bandemataram* and *Navashakti*—the organs of aggressive nationalism faced repeated prosecutions. When open publication of papers became impossible, secret pamphleteering became the vehicle of publicity. Secret leaflets and booklets were more outspoken in advocating violent actions against the foreign tyrants and their Indian agents. In the meantime the Jugantar group was preparing bombs in the Manicktola garden—then a suburb of Calcutta. The climax was on 30th April 1908, when the bombs burst at Muzaffarpur (Bihar).

This was the beginning of what may be called the campaign of terrorism but it would be wrong to designate the revolutionary groups by the name 'terrorists'. This was the name given by the British simply to give a bad name to the revolutionaries. Terrorism is a negative idea, while the programme undertaken by the revolutionaries was intended to carry on propaganda by action when speech had been muzzled. This was the political situation which Rabindranath Tagore described in the song: "Mother, I can't sing—the voice is muzzled by the administration." Young men were inspired and imbued with the idea of self-immolation rather than with the idea of killing others. Killing was the means to attain the ideal of immolation. They expected that their sacrifice at the altar of revolution would rouse the sleeping leviathan—the masses of India. Those were very, very different days from those that followed the two World Wars. The revolutionaries had a positive programme directed at a definite goal. But as pioneers and path-finders, they sometimes had to take recourse to acts of violence on individuals.

The Calcutta Anushilan Samiti gradually drifted into social service and physical culture. In 1907 there was the Ardhodaya Yoga, a very auspicious bathing ceremony in the Ganga. According to Hindu tradition, such an auspicious occasion comes once after many years. Lakhs of people gathered in Calcutta for a dip in the holy Ganga. The Anushilan Samiti organised a band of volunteers to help the pilgrims. Their service, devotion and efficiency attracted the

admiration of the public and even of Government officials. Although differences between the two groups had started simmering there was no open cleavage yet, and in this mission of service both the wings co-operated and took active part. The difference became sharp when the secret core of the Jugantar group decided to avenge the brutal flogging of Sushil Sen—a boy of tender age. A secret trial was held by the leaders of the Jugantar group and it was decided that Kingsford should die. It was stated that in this court three members were present—Aurobindo, Subodh Mullick and Charu Dutt, who was a member of the I.C.S. and continued in the service till his retirement many years after. This only proves that the revolutionary groups had attained a wide range of followers. The open anti-British movement that was then raging in Bengal had the full and active support not only of the ordinary people but also of the leading zamindars, doctors, educationists, barristers and lawyers. They had admiration for, and approved, the activities of the young revolutionaries.

Two young men were selected for this overt action: Khudiram Basu of Midnapur and Prafulla Chaki of Rangpur, both teenagers. Two years earlier (February 1906) Khudiram had been arrested for distributing a secret pamphlet called *Sonar Bangla* but was later acquitted of sedition charge. Prafulla and Khudiram were of an exceptionally enthusiastic and determined nature. Khudiram had earlier been sent to Assam to shoot Sir Bamfylde Fuller, but he was unable to track the Governor. Prafulla had been deputed to Darjeeling to take the life of Sir Andrew Fraser, Lt. Governor of Bengal. The Government was careful about Kingsford and transferred him from Calcutta to Muzaffarpur in Bihar. The Government later claimed that they had previous information of the attempt to be made by Khudiram and Prafulla. The two found at Muzaffarpur that Kingsford usually visited the Planters' Club in the evening. He was so careful about his life that he would not go out anywhere else. His coach was identified. In the evening of 30th April, 1908, they threw a bomb on a coach similar to that of Kingsford's. Unfortunately they made a mistake; that coach did not belong to Kingsford but to Mrs. Kennedy. And as a result Mrs. and Miss Kennedy were killed.

Both Khudiram and Prafulla fled the scene. They had to walk

a few miles to catch a train for Calcutta because Muzaffarpur station was not safe enough for them to board a train. At Wairā station both of them were tired, thirsty and hungry and for a while they were in search of some food and drink. Khudiram was suspected and arrested there. Prafulla reached Samastipur, 32 miles from Muzaffarpur and got into a railway compartment with a ticket for Mokama Ghat. The stationmaster of Samastipur had a suspicion that Prafulla was involved in some revolutionary acts. He helped him with fresh clothes and some money to purchase a ticket. He also advised Prafulla to change his soiled clothes and to have a bath. That man took compassion on Prafulla, knowing fully the dangers he was risking.

One Bengali police officer, Nandalal Banerji, was also travelling in the same compartment. Prafulla Chaki was worried about Khudiram and also a bit restless. The whole area was greatly excited over the Muzaffarpur incident and the escape of two young Bengali assailants. Nandalal suspected Prafulla and tried to arrest him. But Prafulla was quite alert; he put his revolver under his own chin and pulled the trigger after having admonished Nandalal that, being a Bengali, he should be ashamed of betraying a patriot. This happened on the Mokama station platform on 2nd May, 1908—the same day that largescale arrests started in Calcutta.

This incident stirred the whole of Bengal; its echo reached even the most distant corners of India. The Government agents chopped off the head of Prafulla to be produced as an exhibit in the Muzaffarpur trial. His decapitated body was brought to Calcutta and was interred somewhere on Free School Street. Thus ended the life of a brilliant young boy—one of the earliest martyrs of this century.

Khudiram was tried; the local bar was almost cowed down by the threats of the Government and hesitated to provide a suitable lawyer for his defence. Defence lawyers came from Midnapur and Rangpur. Ishan Chakravarty sent one lawyer from Rangpur—Satish Chandra Chakravarty—to defend Khudiram, who was sentenced to death and hanged in the Muzaffarpur jail. He walked without a care to the gallows and faced death with 'Bandemataram' on his lips on 19th August, 1908.

The two martyrs—both tender in age, both heroic in their deed and in their death—touched the heart of Bengal, particularly of the women of Bengal. Every Bengali mother felt as if she had lost her

own son in Khudiram and Prafulla. Sushil, Khudiram and Prafulla, all mere boys, set afoot a campaign of supreme self-sacrifice, self-immolation and retaliation for national humiliation. They inspired the nation to assert its dignity and rights.

It should be mentioned here that there was a prior attempt on Kingsford's life. A book parcel was sent to him by post; a bomb was put in the hole cut out in the book, with a spring which would make the bomb explode if the book was opened. But Kingsford did not open the packet and left it in a corner and thus escaped. It should be mentioned here that these bombs were made by Ullaskar Dutt. The two Lt. Governors of the two Bengals, Sir Andrew Fraser of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sir Bamfylde Fuller of East Bengal and Assam, also attracted the notice of the revolutionary groups because of the repressive policy followed in their respective territories. For some time these two were followed by the revolutionaries. Khudiram and Prafulla had been deputed to kill Fraser and Fuller respectively some time earlier but they could not get at their victims in the expected places.

In 1907 it was decided to wreck the train in which Sir Andrew Fraser was to travel. Two attempts to wreck the Governor's train near Chandernagore did not materialise; but a mine was laid under the railway track when the special train of the Governor was passing by Narayangarh (Midnapur) on 6th December, 1907. The bomb exploded when the train was passing over it and was derailed. But the Lt. Governor escaped without any injury. The Government had no idea then that this was engineered by the revolutionaries. They arrested a gang of coolies who were working on the railway line; in all seriousness they were prosecuted in the court and convicted. It was only after the statement of Barin Ghose in the Manicktola Bomb (Alipore Conspiracy) Case that the Government came to know that it had been done by the revolutionaries and the coolies were released from prison. Again on 7th November 1908, a young man named Jiten Roy Chaudhury shot at Andrew Fraser at a public meeting in the Y.M.C.A. Hall on College Street. But the shot missed the mark and the attempt failed. Jiten Roy Chaudhury, who went there prepared for death, was arrested and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. When this young man, full of promise for himself and his family, came back from prison, broken in health and spirit,

no one took any notice of him. He came from Khulna district. Having sacrificed all his life's prospects for the country, he simply slipped into oblivion. This is the lot of the pioneers in any revolutionary movement.

The revolutionaries were also after Sir Bamfylde Fuller. Some time in 1906 two attempts were made, but both proved more unsuccessful than the attempts at Fraser. Barin and Manindra Lahiri went to Gauhati in search of Fuller. When they were handling the revolver in the house where they were staying, the trigger went off suddenly, and the bullet hurt Manindra, fortunately only in the finger. He was medically treated; but the doctor suspected that they must have come for some revolutionary activity. So both came back without making the attempt.

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## Chapter Fourteen

# The Alipore Conspiracy Case

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The year 1908 is an important landmark in the development of revolutionary activities in Bengal and other parts of India. The revolutionaries had by that time mastered the art of manufacturing bombs. In the initial stage these were mostly of a crude nature. But the bombs that were thrown at Muzaffarpur or the mine laid under the railway track at Narayangarh to wreck Fraser's special train were quite powerful. Another bomb was thrown at Chandernagore aimed at the Mayor of the French enclave. The provisions of the Indian Arms Act not being operative in Chandernagore, it was easier to get small arms through that place. The revolutionaries did not fail to utilise that opportunity to procure arms from there. The British Government drew the attention of the French authorities to this and they issued an ordinance against illicit traffic in arms. The Mayor thus attracted the wrath of the revolutionaries. This bomb also was of a fairly good quality, but it missed the mark. Chandernagore continued till 1917, to be a safe place for securing arms and for shelter. Bombs were also manufactured there and despatched to different places according to plan.

From the latter part of 1907 a number of overt acts, including

dacoities, took place in East Bengal as well as West Bengal; but one important case in East Bengal was the attempt on the life of Allen, who was the District Magistrate of Dacca and who had become the target of the revolutionaries for his repressive measures. At Goaland, Allen was shot at and wounded but not killed. The revolutionaries were busy, not only with these overt activities, which they considered propaganda by action; they did not forget the role of propaganda through literature. *Jugantar* and *Sandhya* continued for some time, offering successive editors and printers for prosecution. Secret pamphlets and books were also published and widely distributed.

The Government could no longer remain indifferent to all these developments. Immediately after the Muzaffarpur bomb outrage, they decided to take drastic steps. On 2nd May, 1908, the police swooped down upon the house at 32 Muraripukur Road at Manicktola—usually known as the Manicktola garden—and carried out simultaneous searches in seven other houses, all in the northern part of the city. Aurobindo was residing at 23 Scott's Lane till he shifted to 48 Grey Street on 28th April. Both these houses were searched but nothing was found there. From all other places, some incriminating materials were found which were exhibited later in the court during the trial. One special feature of the finds was that no paper was found containing any plan or programme or names and addresses which might establish the existence of a conspiracy. The Muraripur house was the family property of Aurobindo and his brothers. It was the main centre of the *Jugantar* group and it housed the bomb factory of the group. In the Manicktola garden, the police found some rifles, revolvers, dynamite, some instruments for making cast-iron shells of bombs and some "objectionable" literature including the formula for manufacturing bombs. It is of interest to note that the same bomb formula was found at Nasik in the house of Ganesh Savarkar. In a house on Harrison Road, they found some boxes full of bombs and some chemicals for preparing explosives. In the Manicktola garden, they arrested 18 persons including Barin Ghose, Upen Banerjee, Ullaskar Dutt, Bibhuti Sarkar, Nalini Gupta, Sachin Sen, Paresch Maulik, Bejoy Nag and Purna Sen; four of those arrested who happened to be employees of the house were not put up for trial. Arrests were made in many other places in Calcutta.

and subsequently in different districts of the two Bengals. Aurobindo, Abinash Bhattacharya and others were arrested at the *Navashakti* office, 48 Grēy Street. Hem Chandra Das (who was the bomb expert after his training in Paris) was arrested in a house at Raja Navakissen Street. Kanailal Dutta was arrested at 15 Gopi Mohan Dutt Lane. The police recovered many pamphlets, leaflets, books, explosives, chemicals, bombs, bombshells, revolvers, rifles etc. from all these houses.

Barin Ghose made a confessional statement, taking on himself the sole responsibility for the whole thing; after him, eight other accused also made similar statements. In his statement Barin disclosed many names and places not known to the police. Many people were arrested on the basis of his statement, including Naren Gosain and Hrishikesh Kanjilal of Srirampur, Biren Ghose of Jessore, Krishna Jiban Sanyal of Malda and Sudhir Sarkar of Khulna. We have already mentioned the name of Sushil Sen. He and his two elder brothers, Hem Sen and Biren Sen, were also arrested. They were arrested in Baniachang village, in Sylhet district, to which they belonged. From their house some letters and documents, some explosives, a notebook containing a cipher code, instructions for making dynamite and bombs, maps etc. were found. Searches and arrests were made even in Deoghar, Jasidi, Malda and other distant places. Many other persons were also arrested, including among others Kiron Mukerjee, Jatin Banerjee, Indranath Nandi, Devabrata Basu, Nikhilesh Roy Maulick, Prof. Charu Roy of Chandernagore. Some of the arrested persons were discharged after preliminary enquiry. In all there were 33 accused in the case; they were prosecuted under Sections 143, 145, 150, 157, 120, 121.A, 122, 123 and 124 of the Indian Penal Code.

All these arrests and particularly the arrest of Aurobindo greatly excited the public. Having spent the formative years of his life from early boyhood to full maturity in England, Aurobindo was then leading a very simple and austere life with other workers. Even while he was in service at Baroda, he used to send to Calcutta the major portion of his salary for revolutionary work, living a very austere life. Austerity was a cult for the revolutionaries of those days; but the austere and dedicated life of Aurobindo was of a higher



order. This trial became famous as the Alipore Conspiracy (or Bomb) Case and was the first of a series of sensational conspiracy cases.

A similar case was started in Midnapur in which about a hundred were arrested and put on trial. One of the accused in this case was Narēndralal Khan, the Raja of Narajole. Since the time of Rajnarayan Baṣu, Midnapur had become an important centre of revolutionary activities. Even many rich persons of this district took an active interest in the formation of revolutionary societies. K. B. Dutt, son-in-law of Romesh Chandra Dutt and a barrister of Midnapur, was a public leader of the moderate school but was not without sympathy for these workers. Upen Maiti, a leading pleader of Midnapur, actively participated in this movement and was an accused in the case. Hem Das, Satyen Bose and his brother Jnan Bose and Khudiram all came from this district.

The Alipore Bomb Case dragged on for about two years. Norton, a leading English barrister, took the brief for the prosecution. The accused could not afford to pay for a first-rate lawyer; C. R. Das, who was also an associate, took up the defence of this case, particularly on account of his deep regard and admiration for Aurobindo. At this time he was a struggling lawyer and he took up the case almost as a labour of love.

Barin's statement, which led to the arrest of many others, was resented by some of the accused in the case. Naren Gosain took it particularly to heart. He also made a statement and subsequently turned an approver. He belonged to a rich and aristocratic family of Srirampur; perhaps he was not up to the desired standard in moral strength. Yet it may be safe to presume that the shock he had received on Barin's confession contributed greatly to his turning an approver. Two other important accused in the case, Hem Das and Ullaskar Dutt, were also shocked at Barin's conduct; and Ullaskar ultimately yielded to Barin's persuasion to make a similar statement. But he never reconciled himself to this position and it continued to rankle in his mind. Hem Das did not yield and remained stubborn. Barin perhaps thought that with their arrest there would be an end to the whole effort. So he felt, let the people know what they had tried to do so that they could take up the work anew with greater care and enthusiasm. On the other hand, the other accused argued that Barin might have been within his right to take the responsibility on

himself but there was no justification for his implicating others and mentioning the names of the persons who were not even arrested in the first round.

In the course of this trial, Kanailal Dutt and Satyen Bose killed Naren Gosain, the approver, with a revolver. This murder inside the jail, Harinbari Jail as it was then called, took the Government by surprise and enthused the people. Kanai was a young student from Chandernagore. His demeanour during the trial and his calmness even while mounting the gallows placed him at par with Khudiram. Satyen came from Midnapur and was not an accused in the Alipore case. He was in that jail in connection with another case. Portraits of Kanai, Khudiram, Prafulla and Satyen were printed and sold in lakhs.

A controversy has recently been raised as to who supplied the revolvers to Kanai and Satyen and how? Many claims have been made. We would rather not enter into this controversy; but to our knowledge most of the claims are based on partial help or some indirect association or simply subsequent possession of the knowledge of how it had happened. Two men, both dead, one some years ago and one recently, made no claims. One is Sirish Ghose and the other is Basanta Banerjee; both belonged to Chandernagore, both of them unostentatious, full of humility, and devoted to the cause. From the evidence available to us, we can safely say that these two gentlemen would be fully justified in claiming the credit for actually smuggling the revolver into the Alipore jail and we have verified it from all possible sources. But I would rather not go into that issue. I would only like it to be realised that it required great ingenuity and courage to import these dangerous weapons inside the prison. The nation should also appreciate how two promising young men calmly and coolly prepared themselves for death when they undertook and performed this grim and glorious duty. Kanai and Satyen were hanged for the killing of Naren Gosain. The judge, sentencing them to death, told them to file an appeal if they so desired. On that Kanai told the court defiantly: "There shall be no appeal." This was typical of the defiant spirit of the revolutionaries of those days.

In the Alipore case, the Sessions Judge, Beachcroft, delivered his judgement on 6th May, 1909. The accused were charged

with the offence of waging war against the King and were prosecuted under Sections 120, 121, 122 and 123 of the Indian Penal Code. Barin and Ullaskar were convicted and sentenced to death, Aurobindo was acquitted and others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. An appeal was filed in the High Court. Chief Justice Jenkins and Justice Carnduff heard the appeal. Here also C. R. Das defended the case, and the death penalty on Barin and Ullaskar was reduced to transportation for life in February 1910. The final outcome of the High Court appeal was that four accused—Barin, Upen, Ullaskar and Hem—were sentenced to transportation for life and ten others to terms varying from five to seven years of imprisonment. Others, including Aurobindo, were discharged.

In defending Aurobindo, C. R. Das displayed his best forensic skill—fine technical points pointing out the procedural and legal flaws of the prosecution, great emotional appeal and a warm regard for Aurobindo as a person of high moral and intellectual stature. In the peroration of his argument for the defence before the Sessions Court, C. R. Das said referring to Aurobindo: "My appeal to you is that a man like this, charged with the offence with which he has been charged, stands not only before the bar of this court, but stands before the bar of the High Court of History. My appeal to you is this, that long after the controversy will be hushed into silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation, will have ceased, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands. Therefore, I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court, but before the bar of the High Court of History." These were prophetic words which have since proved true in every respect. This case gave C. R. Das the opportunity to build up his reputation as an outstanding lawyer.

The Midnapur Conspiracy Case had about a hundred accused, mostly young men. Besides Raja Narendralal (one of the big landlords) and Upen Maiti (a senior pleader), there were Jamini Mullick (a zamindar), Devadas Karan (editor of a local weekly), Jogjiban Ghose, a student and many others. The case was defended by K. B. Dutt and Byomkesh Chakravarty, a leading barrister of Calcutta;

and the prosecution was conducted by S. P. Sinha, later Lord Sinha. There also the Government secured an approver. The case dragged on for some months. Ultimately the prosecution could not prove the charges and the case was withdrawn by the Government.

Searches and arrests in connection with the Alipore case disrupted the revolutionary Jugantar organisation for the time being. Perhaps this apprehension, of the collapse of the organisation after his arrest, had led Barin and the others to confess. The organisation, however, showed its resilience and virility. Within a short time, the *Jugantar* weekly reacted sharply to these arrests and published an editorial and a poem calling upon the people to struggle for national liberation. The editorial entitled *Abahan* (Invocation) was a call to the young men not to be cowed by these repressions and urged the people to take up a revolutionary programme. The poem was most exciting and thrilling. It was an invocation to the Mother (the motherland) to assert her might against the demons who had desecrated the temple and the materials for her worship. Immediately after the publication, Birendra Nath Banerjee was prosecuted as editor of *Jugantar* and was convicted. Under the new press law the publication of *Jugantar* was banned.

There was a temporary disruption in the ranks of the workers not yet arrested; but within a short time, they collected themselves again and chalked out their line of action. For the time being, there was no central organisation; but splinter groups took up the work. Kartik Dutt, Mokshada Charan Samadhyayi (a learned Vedic scholar), Prabhas De, Nikhileswar Roy Maulick, Kedar Chakraverty, Priyasankar Sen (both of Mymensingh), Kiron Chandra Mukherjee and others formed different groups. Kiron Mukherjee, a crippled and sickly man, was perhaps the most energetic and enthusiastic worker of the time and took a leading role in the publication of *Jugantar* as a secret pamphlet. Even subsequently when the Jugantar group was re-organised and was preparing for the Indo-German conspiracy during the First World War, it occasionally published a secret pamphlet in both Bengali and English under the name *Jugantar*.

Chhatra-Bhandar, the students' store which was started in 1906, was not so much a business centre as a meeting place of the revolutionary workers. Some professors and students connected with the

Chhatra-Bhandar—such as Bimal Chandra Dev, Ladli Mohan Mitra and others became very active during these days of organisational dispersion. There was another centre called the Mahesh Alaya—apparently a business shop. But these two were really used as meeting places. Another unit, again, apparently a business centre—Sramajibi Samabaya (Workers' Co-operative) under Amarendra Nath Chatterjee and Ram Chandra Mazumdar—also took a very active part in re-organising the party at a later stage. At this time appeared on the scene a leader to re-organise the party—Jatindra Nath Mukherjee. We shall say more about him later.

The year 1908 ended with two events important from the Government's point of view. In November, a Royal Proclamation was issued expanding the representative system of Government. Within a month the Secretary of State issued the proposal of reforms, known as the Morley-Minto reforms, allowing a greater number of elected representatives in the Legislative Council and also having a few Indian members in the Viceroy's Executive Council. This reform was motivated by two political aims—rallying the Moderates and placating the Muslims. This Reforms Act introduced separate electorates for the Muslims for the first time.

The other side of the shield of Government policy was repression. In December the same year, the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed by the Governor-General; it became better known as the Samitis Act. By this Act, all the important samitis of Bengal were declared unlawful and a form of summary trial for political offences was introduced. The Calcutta Anushilan Samiti was immediately declared banned. The Anushilan Samiti of Dacca, Swadesh Bandhav Samiti of Barisal, Brati Samiti of Faridpur, Suhrid Samiti and Sadhana Samaj of Mymensingh—were all declared unlawful in January 1909. All these samitis apparently closed down but in reality only went underground. Jugantar was never formed as a samiti and was not an organisation with a body corporate. It developed as a movement, not as an organisation with a rigid constitution and formal leadership. So there was no notification against the Jugantar party. But Swadesh Bandhav of Barisal, Sadhana and Suhrid of Mymensingh and other samitis of different districts which were banned formed integral parts of Jugantar—except the Dacca Anushilan Samiti.

A notable incident of this year (1908) was the arrest and detention, in November, of nine important leaders of Bengal under Regulation III of 1818. They were Aswini Kumar Dutt and Satish Chatterjee of Barisal, Pulin Das and Bhupesh Nag of Dacca, Shyamsurdar Chakravarty, Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, Subodh Mullick, Krishna Kumar Mitra and Sachindra Prasad Basu from Calcutta. They were all taken out of Bengal to distant places. With the end of the year the revolutionary movement in Bengal entered a more intensified phase of activity. New leadership and new techniques gradually developed.

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## Chapter Fifteen

# The Communal Turn in Politics

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Up to the eighth decade of the last century, the policy of the British Government was rather anti-Muslim and pro-Hindu. Though, even before the British conquest, the Muslim power was fast declining and disintegrating, yet the Muslims regarded the British to be the usurpers of the Muslim empire; the Marathas or the Sikhs could not establish and consolidate their rule over any considerable portion of India. It should be recognised that the Mughal empire with its emperor at Delhi—though reduced almost to a shadow of its past glory—had yet a glamour and a prestige. So even the rebel satraps—Muslim or Hindu—and the British would like to base their claim to rule over a particular region on a *sanad* received from the Mughal emperor. The rising of 1857 also had the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, as its central figure. After the suppression of the rising, the British became more suspicious about Muslim aspirations. So the British Government in India was always careful not to give any encouragement to Muslim aspirations.

Immediately after the suppression of the 1857 rising came the Wahabi movement amongst the Muslims, fanatical and bitterly anti-British. There were widespread skirmishes and disturbances in

different parts of the country. One Wahabi prisoner, Sher Khan, assassinated the then Governor-General, Lord Mayo, during the latter's visit to the Andamans. A judge of the Calcutta High Court was also murdered by a Wahabi. All these hardened the attitude of the British Government against the Muslims. On the other hand, the Muslims unwisely boycotted English education and all contacts with the British Government. The Hindus enjoyed in full measure its advantage, both in the educational field and in the Government services.

But there was a shift in the policy of the Government by about the end of the last century, more or less after the establishment of the Congress. The first Muslim leader to veer round in favour of the British Government was Sir Syed Ahmed, the founder of the Aligarh Anglo-Muslim College. With the rise of nationalism, particularly amongst the educated Hindus, the Government felt that it would be wise for them to placate the Muslims. A regular campaign against the Congress was started among the Muslims. The next man to help the Government in this regard was Agha Khan and then came Nawab Salimulla of Dacca. Lord Curzon's decision to partition Bengal was the direct result of the policy of placating the Muslims. In Dacca he publicly declared that East Bengal and Assam would be a Muslim majority province where Muslims would get full scope and opportunities.

The renaissance movement in India generally had the character of Hindu revivalism, whether in Bengal or in Punjab or in Maharashtra. Rammohan Roy and after him the Brahmo Samaj were pioneers of Hindu revivalism. As I have stated before, Devendranath Tagore and the organisers of the Hindu Mela were inspired with the idea of asserting the superiority of Hindu religion and culture vis-a-vis Christianity. The Arya Samaj movement of Swami Dayananda was an important social movement in Punjab; and that too was a Hindu movement, puritanical and at the same time assertive. The Shivaji Utsav initiated in Maharashtra was observed in other parts of India also. In Bengal, the Pratapditya Utsav was initiated on the same lines. The reaction of the Muslims to the observance of these as national ceremonies was naturally unfavourable. Similarly the Wahabi movement stood definitely for Islamic revivalism. So, in a way, there were two different streams in the flow of national life.



The samitis and organisations which developed in the first decade of this century were basically patterned on the Hindu conception of life. Oaths were administered in the name of some Hindu deity, sometimes in Sanskrit and in almost all cases before a picture or an image of a Hindu deity or before the *Gita*. Though except in the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, there was no definite ban on the recruitment of Muslim young men, there was a psychological barrier. The movement then was of the middle class; and the Muslim middle class had hardly developed then. So a gulf between the Hindus and Muslims existed and it manifested itself in the administration and in politics as well.

Yet it is a fact that the Swadeshi or the anti-partition movement was not consciously communal or anti-Muslim. Some eminent Muslim leaders were closely associated with the movement. A. Rasul, who presided over the Barisal Conference in 1906, was a respected Muslim leader. Because of his premature death and of his quiet and unassuming nature, he did not attract much public attention. I have already mentioned the name of Liaquat Hussain. There were other Muslim leaders who took an active part in the anti-partition and Swadeshi movements. Abul Kasim, Dr. Ghafoor, Abul Hussain, Deedar Bux and Ismail Siraji are some names that come to the mind. In Mymensingh district there were two brothers—the Ghaznavis, belonging to a family of big landlords; one brother was against the movement and the other was in favour. Fuller used to call the former the 'right' Ghaznavi and the latter, Abul Halim Ghaznavi, the 'wrong' Ghaznavi. The younger brother of Nawab Salimulla of Dacca, named Athiq Ullah, was also in favour of the movement. Even the Nawab of Dacca, Salimulla Khan, was initially against partition. But he was in great financial difficulty and the Government gave him a loan of £100,000 at a very low rate of interest and he was thus won over. This was a significant tactical victory for the Government. Another respected Muslim leader was Mujibur Rahman, who later founded and edited the weekly journal *The Muslim*. Fazlul Huq,\* then a young lawyer at Barisal, was against the movement.

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\* He was a stormy petrel in Bengal politics and later became Chief Minister of Bengal facing the opposition of the Muslim League. After independence and partition of India, he became the Governor of East Pakistan.

The leaders of the movement were fully conscious of the susceptibilities of the Muslims and every attempt was made to respect their feelings. Public meetings were often adjourned to give time for the Muslims to offer their *namaz*. Processions were asked to stop playing music and shouting slogans when passing by a mosque. In the rural areas in East Bengal, Muslims in distress were shown special consideration in regard to relief and help. It can be said that every attempt was made to remove the genuine grievances of the Muslims. Still it should not be overlooked that the over-all cultural background of the nationalist movement—open or secret—continued to be based on Hindu ideas and traditions. And it would be too much to expect the foreign imperialist government not to take advantage of this situation.

Then came what is known as the 'Command Performance'. By the middle of 1906, it became known that the British Government was contemplating some reforms in the administration. This was followed by the founding of the Muslim League on 30th December, 1906 at the house of Nawab Salimulla Khan of Dacca with the blessings of the Government. Morley, the Secretary of State for India, gave in the British Parliament some indication of the Government's readiness to meet the Muslim demands. The British bureaucrats and the Muslim leaders started joint manoeuvres to push the separatist claims of the Muslims. An insidious propaganda was initiated to create a demand for a separate Muslim nationality. This move had been in the offing for some years. Its beginning may be traced to Lord Mayo's (1869-72) policy of "counterpoise of natives against natives". In 1899, Sir Amir Ali, presiding over the Muslim Educational Conference at Calcutta, said, "The land of Hindustan is inhabited by different nations following different religions. They have no sense of unity and nationality". For years Theodore Beck, Principal of the Aligarh College, was the guide and mentor of Muslim politics. Immediately after the founding of the College, Beck gave the lead in denouncing the Congress and all that it stood for. It was he who first said that India contained two or more nations. In fact Beck, and after him, his successors, Morrison and Archbold, paved the path that was to lead to a sense of separate Muslim nationality and partition of the Indian sub-continent and the formation of Pakistan.

It was on a rather direct hint from the Viceregal House that the idea of a Muslim deputation was mooted. Principal Archbold of Aligarh took an active part in arranging this deputation. The Muslim elite had been to a certain extent won over to the Government and alienated from the Congress and the nationalist movement. The question then arose: what would the Muslims then do? They must be given a definite objective and also an organisation. Archbold worked as the go-between. He went to Simla and, after discussing the matter at the highest level, wrote to Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, a Muslim leader of the U.P.: "The Viceroy agrees to receive a deputation of the Muslims. . . . The time is short, if we want to build up a movement, we must hurry up." While promising every help and guidance to the Muslims, even to the extent of drafting the representation, he stipulated, "I must be in the background. They must come from you." The Muslim deputation led by the Agha Khan met the Viceroy on October 1, 1906, putting forward some demands—(1) due share in the services, (2) abolition of the competitive system in recruitment, (3) separate electorates in Municipal and local bodies, (4) representation of Muslim interest in legislatures, etc.

This is the beginning of the separatist politics of the Muslims. About this deputation, one high official of the Government of India wrote to Lady Minto, wife of the Viceroy: "A work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition." In December 1906, the Nawab of Dacca, speaking at the Muslim Educational Conference, appealed for the formation of a central Muslim political organisation. The Muslim League, founded in 1906, held its first session at Karachi in December 1907. It asked for separate electorates and a due share for the Muslims in the services. It also supported the partition of Bengal which had been condemned by the Congress. It should be recognised that even after this, there were a considerable number of leading Muslims who dissociated themselves from this Government-sponsored move. Mr. Mohammad Ali characterised the Muslim deputation and the demand for separate electorates as a 'command performance'.

Separate electorates emerged out of this in the Morley-Minto

Reforms of 1909. From that time, communal riots became a more or less regular feature throughout Bengal, particularly in East Bengal where the Muslims were in a majority. Fuller was the most outspoken protagonist of this new policy. He even indulged in the vulgarity of designating the Muslims as *Suo-Rani* (the favourite queen) as opposed to *Duo-Rani* (the neglected queen), meaning the Hindus, taking these two words from a Bengali folk tale. It became the policy of the Government to encourage the Muslims to be aggressive against their Hindu neighbours. In one case, a Muslim magistrate, trying some Muslim accused of rioting, said in his judgement, "There was not the least provocation for rioting; the common object of the rioters was evidently to molest the Hindus." It should also be realised that at this time the social, administrative and financial superiority lay with the Hindus. The Muslims as a community had good reason to feel exploited by Hindu zamindars, Hindu money-lenders and Hindu officials. But this position was the creation of the British Government which, having wronged the Muslims earlier, tried to take advantage of the situation. This feeling of grievance was directly encouraged by the administration.

There was a definite shift in the administrative policy of the Government. Appeasement of the Muslims which had started after the formation of the Indian National Congress took definite shape during the anti-partition agitation of Bengal; openly and blatantly, the Government proceeded on the line of 'Divide and Rule'. Sir Henry Cotton, a senior I.C.S. official, wrote then: "For the first time in history, religious feud was established between them (Hindus and Muslims) by the partition of the province. For the first time, the principle was enunciated in official circles: 'Divide and Rule'. The Mohammedans were officially favoured in every possible way." Nevins, a noted British writer, in his book *New Spirit in India* wrote: "The Mohammedans genuinely believed that the British were ready to forgive them for all excesses." Even Hindu officers were instructed to give special consideration to the Muslims and the European officers openly encouraged Muslim aggressiveness against the Hindus, including Hindu women. Crimes against Hindu women increased considerably during this period. Muslim religious puritanism was encouraged, even to the extent of defiling Hindu temples which housed idols, styling the Hindu temples as houses of idolatry, which

was repugnant to the Muslim religion. Another issue also cropped up: it was their objection to the playing of music near mosques or even near Muslim houses when they might be offering their *namaz*. Stone-throwing on processions shouting *Bandemataram* or singing national songs while passing by a mosque or through a Muslim quarter became a common affair. Thus through the wily designs of the British Government, communal feelings and problems entered into Indian politics. The revolutionary movement could not escape its repercussion, particularly when communal riots broke out very frequently.

Probably the first open clash occurred in Comilla (district Tippera) on the occasion of the visit of the Nawab of Dacca. A Hindu maid-servant engaged in cleaning the floor of a house with a broomstick heard the noise of the procession passing by the house. With the broom in her hand she came out and stood near the gate to the house to see the procession. It was interpreted that the Hindus were insulting the Muslim leader by showing him the broomstick. This story was deliberately circulated and a riot started with the looting of Hindu shops and arson. The Hindus could not get any protection from the Government; on the contrary Government officials helped the rioters.

At that stage a Hindu young man Nibaran Roy—who was a police constable—was reported to have used his revolver and killed a Muslim rioter, which had the salutary effect of quelling the riot. It was alleged that Nibaran was immediately caught by a Muslim, Makbul. But he was rescued by Mangal Singh, a sub-inspector of police, and a muktear named Dwaraka Nath Dey. Nibaran, Mangal and Dwaraka Nath were put on trial, for murder. The case created a commotion all over Bengal. In the search of the house of the three accused, no arms or incriminating materials were found. At the enquiry stage the local police disbelieved the statement of Makbul who was, in fact, the main prosecution witness. The Government took the failure of the local police to provide proper evidence as a serious lapse on their part; and Bryne, the Superintendent of Police, was departmentally punished. Yet the sessions judge sentenced Nibaran to death and the other two to transportation for life.

The sessions judge divided the witnesses into Muslim and Hindu and gave no credence to the evidence of the latter. In the High Court, the appeal was heard by Sarada Charan Mitra—a temporary judge—and Justice E. Fletcher. Justice

Mitra deprecated the attitude of the sessions judge in not giving any credence to the evidence of the Hindu witnesses, and said that this attitude "is open to severe criticism". Justice Mitra acquitted the three accused. Throughout East Bengal this acquittal was hailed with enthusiasm. I still recollect how, late in the evening, a telegram came to Barisal and immediately hand-bills were printed and distributed throughout the town. That must have been the experience in all East Bengal towns. But Justice Sarada Charan Mitra had to pay the penalty for this; he was not made a permanent judge of the High Court.

There were two assessors to assist the Sessions Judge. One of them, a Hindu, Rashbehari Chanda, found all the accused not guilty; but the Muslim assessor, Munshi Abdul Aziz, found all to be guilty. Even according to the Sessions Judge, the crowd only heard two gun-shots and the Muslim crowd saw that "Syed Ali, the deceased, came running down the lane and fell to the ground by a lamp post where he died without making any statement." Makbul was practically the only prosecution witness who did not see Nibaran shoot; Makbul stated that he had caught Nibaran with a gun but Nibaran was rescued by Mangal Singh. Even according to Makbul there were two persons in that lane with guns, Nibaran and Lalit (not an accused). But Makbul did not see any one of them using a gun. In the court Nibaran denied that he was in that particular lane at that time; there was no other witness to confirm Makbul's statement that he was there at that particular time. The Sessions Judge himself said, "Either this man (Lalit, a doctor) or Nibaran fired a shot that killed Syed Ali." He also stated in the judgement that who "fired the fatal shot will probably never be known". Yet he sentenced Nibaran to capital sentence. He disbelieved the police who, according to him, "all along appear to defend the accused". He did not even allow the European Superintendent of Police to appear as a witness.

In the High Court, Justice Sarada Mitra and Justice Ernest Fletcher acquitted all the accused and passed strictures on the Sessions Judge for not allowing the Superintendent of Police or any other European to depose. This aspect of the case attracted the attention of C. F. Andrews who issued a statement in the British Journal, *Spectator*: "The High Court in delivering judgement declared

(1) that the civilian judge was ignorant of law; (2) that the evidence of the prosecution was worthless; (3) that the judge himself had purposely withheld European witnesses who might have given evidence unfavourable to the prosecution." Then he criticised the attitude of the Sessions Judge and considered the last point to be a matter of serious consideration.

At about the same time came the Jamalpur riots in Mymensingh district. I shall describe this in a subsequent chapter. But here I would refer to another communal incident in the same district of Tippera. There was a famous Kali temple in a village named Meher within the Chandpur sub-division of the district. The priest there was a highly respected person whom many considered to be a saint. A rumour went round that during the annual fair, the Muslims would attack and desecrate the temple. Hindu volunteers from adjoining and even distant districts gathered there to defend the temple and fair which was to meet in January 1907. The Muslims tried to create some disorder but did not succeed.

Communal tension slowly became tangible in almost every district. All the districts except one or two had European district magistrates and European superintendents of police at that time. Any aggrieved Hindu approaching them for protection would be denied it because, as the officers would quite bluntly say—the Hindus were seditious. They would even ask the terror-stricken Hindus why they (Hindus) now looked to the British Government for protection when they wanted to oust them? It was also maliciously suggested that they had better seek protection from the extremist leaders of Calcutta. The politics of Bengal, or rather of the whole of India, continued to develop on these communal lines. The policy bluntly followed by the Government was to appease the Muslims and to win them over to the Government side. And that inevitably had some repercussions on the revolutionary groups also. Yet it would be wrong to infer that the revolutionary movement was influenced by communal feelings.

Regarding the communal policy of the Government, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, a very moderate leader, wrote in his famous book, *Indian National Evolution* (1917): "The Swadeshi-Boycott was rightly or wrongly started as the first open protest against this high-handed administration. But to add fuel to the fire, the fanatical

Mahomedan masses were incited by a class of designing people against the Hindus, and several cases of riot, pillage, desecration, sacrilege and outrage upon women took place in Eastern Bengal and the Punjab." These were the two regions with a Muslim majority. Then regarding the Government attempt to explain these riots as an outcome of the genuine grievances of the Muslims for the boycott and Swadeshi movement, he said, "In Eastern Bengal, one European Magistrate, who is now a member of the Bengal Government, openly said that 'the boycott was not the cause of the disturbances' as it could not possibly be, since the movement inured more to the direct benefit of the poor low-class Mussalmans who formed the bulk of the weavers and shoemakers in the country; while another Special Magistrate, a Mahomedan gentleman of culture and independence, trying a batch of these Mussalman rioters, remarked in his judgement that 'there was not the least provocation for rioting; the common object of the rioters was evidently to molest the Hindus'. In another case the same Magistrate observed, 'The evidence, adduced on the side of the prosecution, shows that on the date of the riot, the accused (a Mussalman) read over a notice to the crowd of Mussalmans and told them that the Government and the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca have passed orders to the effect that nobody would be punished for plundering and oppressing the Hindus'. So, after the Kali image was broken by the Mussalmans, the shops of the Hindu traders were also plundered. Another European Magistrate, in his report on another riot case, wrote that 'some Mussalmans proclaimed by beat of drum that the Government has permitted them to loot the Hindus'; while in an abduction case the Magistrate remarked that 'the outrages were due to an announcement that the Government had permitted the Mahomedans to marry Hindu widows in *Nika* form'."

Mazumdar then refers to the three days' riots in Calcutta in which rich Hindu merchants, mostly Marwaris, were plundered by the Muslim hooligans without practically any opposition from the Government. Mazumdar also refers to a red pamphlet circulated by a Mussalman: "It deliberately incited the Mussalmans against the Hindus on racial and religious grounds and upon the supposed bias of the Government in favour of Islam." Practically no step was taken against this Mussalman.



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## Chapter Sixteen

# Reorganisation of the Movement

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The lull of political depression was gradually passing away and the movement was being revived in different districts as also in Calcutta. The Calcutta Anushilan Samiti practically melted away as a revolutionary organisation. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti was developing more or less independently; and when the Calcutta Anushilan group ceased to be an effective organisation, there was no organic link between the Jugantar group of Calcutta and the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, at least for some years. On the other hand it took the Jugantar group of Calcutta some years to establish effective contacts with the different organisations in the districts, particularly with those of East Bengal.

In an earlier chapter I mentioned the newspapers published in 1905-06; I also narrated the story of the prosecution of *Jugantar*, *Sandhya*, *Navasakti* and *Bande Mataram*. *Bande Mataram* continued for some time after its first prosecution—not as a daily but as a weekly. *Sandhya* ceased publication after the second prosecution. *Navasakti* also stopped publication after its prosecution. But *Jugantar* carried on valiantly. Altogether it had five prosecutions—successive editors, printers and publishers courted prosecutions and imprisonment

one after another. Abinash Bhattacharya, who was associated with the paper from the beginning as its manager, was discharged in the 1907 case against *Jugantar*. After his release, a notice was published in *Jugantar* under his signature that the paper would have a new management. *Jugantar* was then published with Baikuntha Acharya as its printer and publisher. It continued its tradition of preaching the gospel of revolution; there was no change in the tone of its writings. Its third prosecution came in December 1907, Baikuntha was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 1,000. During the search of the office and the press, the police party practically looted and destroyed the press and its properties.

The financial condition of the paper became desperate; it had practically no money to pay for printing the paper. This situation was mostly due to the repeated raids, during which loot and destruction of property were the normal feature. It issued a public appeal for funds. But the police came and seized the receipt books and took away whatever money was found in its office. Then came the fourth prosecution. Bibhuti Bhushan Roy, its printer and publisher, was convicted and sent to jail. But *Jugantar* went on undaunted and declined to be cowed down. The fifth prosecution against its printer and publisher, Phanindra Nath Mitra, ended with his conviction. There were eight or nine offending articles cited in this case; viz., 'Court Death', 'What is the Real Truth', 'Conspiracy or the Will to Independence?', 'Who is the Revolutionary?', 'Who is the Assassin?' etc.

About this time, the Government proposed a new law—The Newspapers' (Incitement to Offences) Act (June 1908)—which authorised the Government to demand a security deposit from any printing press. Adamson, Secretary to the Government of India, while piloting the Bill said: "In spite of five prosecutions, *Jugantar* still exists and is as violent as ever." The last issue of the paper came out in the first week of July 1908, when under the provision of the new Act a heavy security deposit was demanded from the Sumati Press which was printing the paper. As the press was not in a position to deposit the security in cash the paper had to close down. *Jugantar* became the symbol of the revolutionary urge of the Jugantar group as Nikhileshwar Roy Maulick, Kartik Dutt and Kiron Mukherjee went on secretly publishing occasional issues of *Jugantar*. It continued

to be the rallying force of the revolutionary workers! The batch of workers who gathered round this paper gradually came to be known as the Jugantar group—the reorganised Jugantar section advocating secret revolutionary activities. Secret leaflets of the Jugantar group right up to 1917 were published under the name of *Jugantar*. The Anushilan Samiti (Dacca) was also expanding its organisation and its activities. It was reported that the Dacca Samiti had about 500 units or branches, mostly in the rural areas. It also occasionally published a secret pamphlet named *Swadhin Bharat*.

In East Bengal, almost all the districts had their local organisations. Though cut off from Calcutta, these local units did not cease to function, rather they were consolidating their position and expanding their branches. It should be remembered that by then the Criminal Law Amendment Act had been passed; several samitis were declared illegal under it, so the local units had to work secretly. In Barisal, Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty (till now known as Satish Mukherjee); in Mymensingh, Hemendra Kishore Acharya; in Jessore, Bejoy Roy; in North Bengal, Jatin Roy and Abinash Roy among others became active in their respective areas. But they acted in strict secrecy. Their organisations often had ramifications beyond their own districts. The Barisal organisation had its centres in Noakhali, Comilla, Chittagong, Sylhet and parts of Faridpur districts. The Mymensingh organisation too had branches in Comilla and Sylhet. The North Bengal organisation practically covered all the seven districts then included in North Bengal with the exception of Darjeeling district.

There were a number of cases of dacoity during the years 1909 to 1911; the more important among them being the Rajendrapur train dacoity in the district of Dacca, Nangla dacoity in the district of Khulna, at Haldia in Dacca district, at Dadpur in Barisal district, at Haludbari in Nadia district etc. There was not much difference in their technique or execution. These overt acts took place in very quick succession, sometimes on consecutive or alternate days.

We have already stated that the policy of dacoity was taken to with great mental reservations. But history furnished many precedents for undertaking dacoity for a political purpose.

We have seen that the *Jugantar* weekly published an article defending dacoity as a preparatory step for a future guerilla

uprising. It was further argued that the national government in embryo, as represented by these revolutionaries, was entitled to exact a levy on the people, and that it could be done only through these dacoities. In a secret pamphlet, this point of view was seriously put forward. We have stated earlier that in a conference in 1906, Aurobindo himself suggested this method of securing money. Nivedita also knew of this policy. Even when accepted as an admissible programme of work, in each case careful scrutiny was directed to be made as to the antecedents and financial position of the person whose house was to be looted.

When the central authority in Calcutta disappeared for all practical purposes, in most of the districts local groups became eager to demonstrate their enthusiasm for revolutionary work; and the easiest way for small groups of young men to get the mental satisfaction of having done some revolutionary work was to commit some dacoity somewhere. In such cases, there were sometimes deviations from the general principle of strict scrutiny. A few cases occurred which brought disrepute to the cause and the group. From the Rowlatt Committee report, we find that out of 250 confessions placed before it, only five stated to have committed dacoities with the object of private gain. Of the five persons referred to, three were taxi drivers who were not members of any revolutionary party but might have come in contact with some revolutionaries for some specific work. So it can be said that generally speaking, the political objective was kept in mind before undertaking any such overt action.

It should also be admitted that the money collected through dacoities was not in all cases put to the right use. In a few cases, the person or persons who were entrusted with the money played foul. The party was not inclined to ignore such lapses; severe, exemplary punishment was meted out to the delinquent members. In some cases, the participants did not observe scrupulous financial control in the expenditure of the money. In some other cases, at least a portion of the looted money was recovered by the police. It can now be said in retrospect that it would have been better if the undertaking of dacoities had not been necessary. During the early years of the movement enthusiastic men had contributed some money; but as Government repression became intense, contributions from people dwindled to little or nothing. The necessity for

money, on the other hand, increased with the tempo of Government repression and expansion of the party organisation and work. Money was again needed for maintaining underground party workers, who could not stay in their own houses. Moreover, a large number of cases were launched in the courts and the accused had to be defended. Even at concessional rates the lawyers' fees would amount to several thousand rupees in each case. It was not unusual for counsel for the defence to decline to appear in the court, unless a certain amount of money was paid in advance. In such circumstances, a fresh dacoity was the only means to get the money. Dacoity, as a method, moved in a sort of a vicious circle. It led to police investigation and arrests which led again to retaliatory action against the police officers or even against suspected comrades. All these meant more arrests and prosecutions and consequently need for more money for fighting the cases in court.

The number of political murders was thus on the increase. The necessity to do away with party members suspected of betrayal was perhaps the most tragic part of the activities of the revolutionaries. One such case occurred in June 1909. The Fatehjangpur killing of an innocent man was a notorious case of error in judgment and in commission. Priyanath Chatterjee was murdered in his village house, though the target was his brother, popularly known as Gabesh, who was suspected to be a police spy. The latter lived many years after the incident, doing business in Calcutta. Perhaps the original suspicion itself was not justified, and the mistaken murder of his brother was therefore doubly unjustified. A similar tragedy occurred in Mymensingh where one Sitangshu Sen was killed in 1910. This was motivated by internal rivalry between two groups of political workers. Both these murders were associated with groups of workers belonging to the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. Many such cases occurred in subsequent years, though they were very rare in the Jugantar party: perhaps two or three cases in all.

There was a basic distinction in the very nature of the two organisations—Anushilan and Jugantar—in spite of the apparent similarity of method and programme of work. As I have stated before, the Dacca Samiti was a compact centralised organisation. About Jugantar, I have generally avoided using the term 'party'; I have used the term 'group'. It developed less as a compact party or even

as a compact group, but more as a movement. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti, which grew up as a close-knit party, had its own formally recognised leader, its own constitution, its oaths and other formalities of initiation. But Jugantar had none of these. Dacca Anushilan always had some rigidity of organisation and outlook. Jugantar was different in both these respects, keeping its eye on the building up of a revolutionary force in the country. The Jugantar group developed more or less simultaneously with or out of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti which was not really a secret society. The organisers of Jugantar originally belonged to and used to frequent the *akhras* or gymnastic centres of the Calcutta Anushilan, but they never felt satisfied with the programme of the Calcutta Anushilan.

The Jugantar group, however, grew out of the enthusiasm for secret political activities—that is to say, as the manifestation of the urge to carry on armed revolutionary activities. In its initial stage Bhupendra Nath Dutta, Devabrata Bose, Abinash Bhattacharya, Ullaskar Dutta, Barin Ghose and others were important members; but it cannot be said that any of them was its leader. Aurobindo was the inspiring spirit, but not its leader in the sense that Pulin Das was the leader of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. The Calcutta Anushilan Samiti observed some formalities of oath-taking which became more rigid in the case of the Dacca Samiti. But the Jugantar group dispensed with all that except in certain localities in earlier years. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti had, stage by stage, three formalities of oath-taking. The wording of the oaths will clearly show the nature of that organisation. In the final oath, we find the following passage:

“I swear that I shall do all the work of the circle for the development of the Samiti, staking my life and everything I possess, I will carry out all its commands and will act in opposition to those who may act in opposition to the aforesaid circle and I will do injury to them to the utmost of my power.”

The emphasis is on the Samiti and its local centre,—‘the circle’, and there was no mention of the country or the nation. Allegiance to the Samiti and the circle was the prime feature of the oath. The recruit had to take the oath to do injury to those who might ‘act in opposition to the circle’. The term ‘them’ in the oath might include

a wide range of persons besides officials, spies and informers. This was the thin wedge of a very dangerous psychology and it was often interpreted to include other samitis and units.

During this period Jugantar, under the guidance of Jatin Mukherjee, took up the challenge of government repression. In reply to the repressive policy, Jugantar undertook a programme of carrying through a series of overt acts. The idea was to do these acts in quick succession, almost in an unbroken chain! Two bold acts, the killing of Nandalal Banerjee who had tried to arrest Prafulla Chaki and the murderous attack on the Lt. Governor of Bengal in the Overtoun Hall, took place at an interval of a couple of days in November 1908.

I must say that whatever was done either by the Dacca Anushilan Samiti or by the Jugantar group was done in good faith and generally not from any personal motive. This was conceded even by the Rowlett Committee. They might have committed mistakes or made wrong judgments and wrong assessments of the situation; but that should not be taken as an indication of any personal motive. In retrospect, and speaking especially in the role of a historian, I should take a dispassionate view. Both groups often committed mistakes and made wrong judgments and assessments. That, however, was inevitable in the situation as it developed. Even in open politics conducted by eminent public leaders, such wrong assessments and judgements have been made. Mahatma Gandhi on several occasions expressed regrets for wrong assessment of the situation. And this happened in spite of there being an eminent man like Gandhi at the helm, and of eminent public leaders in the provinces concerned to guide the movement. Many 'Himalayan blunders' have been recorded in the political annals of India as in those of any other country. Those young men did not have the benefit of mature leadership nor the opportunity of working after due deliberation and consultation, but rather had to work always under stress, strain and nervous tension. If they erred, such errors were not unnatural.

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## Chapter Seventeen

# Government Repression

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With the arrest of important leaders in the Alipore Conspiracy (Bomb) Case, the first phase of the movement practically came to an end. Repressive measures—searches, arrests, convictions, lathi charges etc.—followed in quick succession and had their reaction on the public mind. Popular enthusiasm received a severe jolt. In the first flush of enthusiasm, it had not been realised that revolution was a serious thing and that it was not to be undertaken in a light mood as if it were simply an expression of impulses and effusions. Many who thought of driving away the British, now realised that the British were not going to oblige them by withdrawing so easily from the country. And with this realisation came a phase of near-demoralisation and popular apathy to the movement. Those who were in the midst of the movement felt confused, not knowing what to do; and many were terrified and grew discreet.

During this period of disruption and virtual public demoralisation, two trends were in operation. One of these was in the line of constructive social work and the other was in the direction of re-organising the party and the movement: It may be stated here that Aurobindo along with other leaders preached two aspects of the



movement. One was that of organising bands of young men for secret violent work. And the other, of organising units and organisations for building up a self-reliant society. We have already stated what Sashi Bhushan Ray Choudhury was doing in that line. Arabinda Prakash Ghose, who resigned from the Hindu School (a government school) and joined the National Council of Education, was also an enthusiastic worker. He was alive when the Non-co-operation movement started and was an ardent participant in that movement. He worked with the utmost sincerity for national education, ignoring extreme poverty.

Others went round the villages and started rural libraries, nursing societies, gymnastic clubs etc. Seva samitis, both for nursing the sick and for rendering help to the distressed and indigent people, also came within the ambit of the programme. Some workers of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti started the Bengal Youngmen's Zamin-dari Co-operative Society on the advice of Justice Sarada Charan Mitra of the Calcutta High Court. The idea was to place revolutionary young men in the rural agricultural sector and make them work on a co-operative line. Organising small-scale cottage industries and swadeshi stores also engaged the attention of some of these workers.

Thus one group gradually drifted from the main current of revolutionary activities, maintaining, of course, sympathy for and contact with that work. This social service work served more than one purpose—viz. service to distressed humanity, keeping young men engaged in some useful work, attracting public admiration and sympathy for them and, lastly, providing cover for secret activities. All these will give an indication of the subtle working of the minds of these revolutionary young men; though directly and deeply involved in secret violent activities, there was a strong desire in them to come in contact with the masses through social service. This also helped the development of a spirit of dedication to the service of the people.

But the revolutionary movement was not allowed to die down or even to be diverted. Such a struggle cannot end in a vacuum; as the common adage has it, it goes on from sire to son. It only needed a leader who could rise to the occasion and infuse new life into the movement. Such a leader appeared in the person of Jatindranath Mukherjee. He was the nephew (sister's son) of Lalit Chatterjee

who was associated with the movement from its very beginning. Jatindranath was first seen at the 1906 conference of the revolutionaries of Bengal in the house of Raja Subodh Mullick along with his uncle Lalit Chatterjee. By then he had acquired some fame on two different counts. On one occasion, he had to grapple with a tiger which he ultimately killed with a knife, sustaining serious injuries to himself. On another occasion, he had a single-handed scuffle at the Santahar (now in East Pakistan) railway station with four British soldiers and gave them a good licking. Both these incidents had become widely known even before he came to the forefront.

Jatindranath was then employed in Government service as the personal assistant to Sir Henry Wheeler, Finance Secretary with the Government of Bengal. He was keeping contact with the Manicktola garden people. But he felt that Barin did not like his frequenting the garden. It is reported that Aurobindo instructed Jatindranath to avoid going to the garden and to keep himself aloof for some time before taking up active revolutionary work. Perhaps Aurobindo could anticipate that the first attempt would not proceed far; and so he asked Jatindranath to keep aloof and to form small units in different regions, so that after the failure of the first attempt, he could start on a bigger scale. When he was arrested in the Howrah Case in April 1911, he had to leave the Government job. After that, he started a contractor's business which gave him an opportunity to move around and establish contact with the remnants of the revolutionary organisations in different districts. He was a man of unusual talents; his warmth of heart and sincerity of purpose were manifest to anyone who approached him. He was a deeply religious man, and, as already stated, he was a disciple of Swami Bholananda Giri. It was his genius which gave shape and form to Jugantar with branches in almost all the districts of Bengal. He left it to his able colleague, Rash Behari Bose, to look after the organisation in Upper India, set up earlier by Jatindranath Banerjee (Niralamba Swami).

The cooperation of the several groups in the different districts, which had differences with Anushilan, came as a matter of course. After the Alipore Bomb Case, connection between the main Jugantar at Calcutta and the East Bengal districts became somewhat tenuous and irregular. The Calcutta unit also was in disarray for some time. Jatindranath took up the leadership immediately after the Alipore Case

(May 1908). Gradually these contacts and links were placed on a regular organisational basis primarily through his personal approach and idealism. He never asserted his leadership, but the party members in the different districts acclaimed him as their leader. He readily recognised the autonomy of the different district organisations and these quietly merged in the bigger body without any formalities. Thus Jugantar in a short time came to have ramifications in all the districts of East and North Bengal. In this period Abinash Chakravarty helped Jatindra Nath much; he asked everyone to rally round Jatin.

Jatin realised that some acts of daring and desperate self-sacrifice were necessary to revive the confidence of the people in the movement. So he organised four daring overt acts during this period. These brought him into the limelight of revolutionary leadership although hardly anybody outside the innermost circle ever suspected his connection with those acts. Secrecy was absolute in those days—particularly with Jatin. This may be called the beginning of the re-organised Jugantar after the temporary collapse of the party. All the targets of these four attempted killings were persons conspicuously connected with the recent arrests and the Alipore Bomb trial.

On November 7, 1908 a young man Jiten Roy Chaudhury shot at Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, in a public meeting in Overtoun Hall. Fraser escaped with minor injury; Jiten was arrested on the spot. He went there prepared for arrest and the highest penalty. Two days later, Nandalal Banerjee, who tried to arrest Prafulla Chaki after the Muzaffarpur bomb burst, was killed in Serpentine Lane, Calcutta. This was one of the charges in the Howrah Conspiracy case. Lalit Chakravarty, the approver in that case, stated this was done at the instance of Jatin Mukherjee by a young man, Gunendra Gupta, with the help of a revolver stolen from an insurance agent and handed over to Hem Sen of Netra—one of the organisers of Chhatra Bhandar. It was also reported that Naren Bose and Naren Bhattacharya and Bhushan Mitra—were also in the conspiracy of this murder. Gunendra was not arrested after the murder.

The most daring overt acts of those days were the murder of Ashutosh Biswas (10th February, 1909), public prosecutor, who conducted the prosecution of Kanai and Satyen for the killing of

Naren Gossain and of Samsul Alam, the police officer who conducted the Alipore Case, on 24th January, 1910. Kanai and Satyen were then the two most popular idols in Bengal. Avenging their execution was, therefore, calculated to have a psychological repercussion on the minds of the police and was expected to help in removing the depression generated by the Alipore Case.

Charu Basu, a young man, shot Ashutosh Biswas in broad daylight as he was coming out of the Alipore court, and before the eyes of many people thronging round the court. It is reported that one hand of Charu was crippled and paralysed and he could not use that hand properly. Yet he was so determined that in spite of this physical handicap he undertook this bold venture and the revolver was tied to his hand with a string. This incident on 10th February 1909 sent a wave of thrill throughout the country. During his trial he did not defend himself. A young barrister was asked by the Government to defend him but Charu declined the offer. When he was committed to sessions, he said that he did not want a prolonged trial and that the sooner he was hanged the better. In the spirit of the *Gita*, he said that he was just an instrument (*nimitta matram*) in the execution of an act which had already been ordained by God. He mounted the scaffold bravely and his martyrdom helped to arouse the drooping spirits of the revolutionary workers.

On 24th January, 1910 Biren Datta Gupta shot dead Samsul Alam, Deputy Superintendent of Police in the Calcutta High Court. One can imagine with what determination a young man, in broad daylight, could go up the stairs of the busy Calcutta High Court to shoot an important police officer, guarded and protected. Previously another young man was commissioned to do this work; on two occasions, he had tried but failed. Then with the approval of Jatin, Atul Ghose selected Biren for this task. While Samsul Alam was going up the stairs, Biren shot him at point-blank range, and he fell immediately. Another young man accompanying Biren was Satish Sarkar of Rajshahi. It was reported that Satish used to attend the court daily while the Alipore Case was going on. He knew Samsul Alam well and identified him to Biren who actually shot him. Satish escaped; later, he took sanyas and took the name of Nirban Swami. The revolver that was used in this case was a stolen one. It had been stolen by Suresh Mazumdar, later founder of the Ananda Bazar group

of newspapers. Suresh, quite a young man then, came under the magnetic charm of Jatin Mukherjee. The revolver was the property of a Government officer of Orissa who was staying at a friend's house in Calcutta. Suresh, who used to frequent that house, had quietly removed the revolver for revolutionary work.

During the trial Biren took a very bold and defiant stand. He refused to defend his case. He told the court that he would not say a word. He was tried by the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court and went undefended. Nishith Sen, then a young barrister, was asked by the court to defend the accused but Biren declined to accept his service and did not agree to be defended. He was condemned to death and received the sentence with calm dignity and the same spirit of dedication and boldness as was shown by the other young man, Charu Basu.

While he was in the condemned cell, awaiting execution, a trick was played on him. Police officers used to visit him occasionally. One day a police officer showed him a paper which purported to say that some important men had denounced him and betrayed him. Biren got excited and said, "I do not care for the opinion of the whole world if I have the confidence of one man and one man only." In his excitement, he lost his power of self-inhibition. The police officer took advantage of it and cajoled him to disclose the name of that one man, and he was no other than Jatin Mukherjee. Somehow he admitted that Jatin had commissioned him to do this task. By that time, Jatin Mukherjee had been arrested and was an under-trial prisoner in Howrah jail. The police brought Jatin before Biren in the Presidency Jail, expecting that Biren would further implicate Jatin. On seeing Jatin, Biren broke down. Jatin consoled him and gave him indications of his affection and confidence. The drooping spirit of Biren revived. Next day Biren was hanged. He walked up to the scaffold with boldness and dignity, confident of the trust and affection of his leader Jatin Mukherjee. One year apart, Biren followed the path and example of Charu Basu.

We have heard of many third-degree methods being used in different countries. Physical torture of a very inhuman and diabolical type in the police lock-up was not unknown in Bengal. It is reported that in 1916, a lady, Nanibala Devi, arrested at Peshawar for complicity with, and providing shelter to, some underground

leaders of the Indo-German plot and other operations, was stripped naked and chilli powder was introduced into her private parts. She withstood all that. But there was another third degree method, an insidious and slow one, much more subtle and dangerous than physical torture and privation. In 1916, a young man was kept for 14 days in a police lock-up (as was then the practice). He was subjected to physical torture, privation and other forms of oppression, all of which he bravely withstood. But at last he opened his mouth under a subtler third degree method. He was told, while he was in an excited mood, that 'X' (a leader whom he respected very much) was arrested in a brothel and was found suffering from syphilis. The young man roared in protest and said, "I know him too well. I shall never believe such calumny against him." Until then he had denied any acquaintance with that leader. Biren also was subjected to such subtle third-degree interrogation. A young man under serious nervous tension, excited and awaiting his execution, would naturally be effusive if something was said to wound his susceptibilities. Yet he only admitted his intimacy with Jatin and nothing more.

In May 1909, the sessions trial of the Alipore Case was over. Aurobindo was acquitted. After his release, his first utterance was at Uttarpara. This speech became an important political testament of those days. It had political significance, of course; but it had a greater spiritual and religious significance. Perhaps it was a forecast of Aurobindo's life that was soon to follow. The same theme was repeated in his speeches in Beadon Square in Calcutta, in Barisal town and at the Barisal District Political Conference at Jhalakathi. The main theme of these speeches was that during the course of his trial and in his prison-cell, Aurobindo had realised the immanence of God. "Everything appeared as Vasudeva\* before me either in the court or in the prison cell." In a public speech in Collège Square at Calcutta, he asked the young men to court suffering. His idea was to put more emphasis on a spirit of service and self-immolation than on an urge to retaliate with violent acts.

Soon he started two periodicals, *Dharma* in Bengali and

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\* Another name of Lord Krishna

*The Karmayogin* in English. Aurobindo had been brought up in England from his childhood and his knowledge of Bengal was almost nil. It was with some effort that Aurobindo gained sufficient knowledge of the Bengali language to edit a periodical. Among those who helped and tutored him in this regard one name has been frequently mentioned, that of Dinendra Kumar Roy, the wellknown writer of detective thrillers. Through these two organs Aurobindo propagated his philosophy of national work and national aspirations. The 'doctrine of service' was the principle and the philosophy of all political work. In December that year he wrote an article, *To My Countrymen*, in *The Karmayogin*. It was rumoured that for this article, a warrant of arrest was being issued against him. He escaped from Calcutta to Chandernagar and then to Pondicherry. Before leaving Chandernagar he gave his moral and intellectual support to the revolutionary movement, which immensely helped its re-organisation.

Aurobindo's escape from Calcutta was a thrilling episode. Information of his impending arrest and deportation under Regulation III of 1818 was first conveyed by Sister Nivedita, who insisted on his moving out of Calcutta. Other friends also made the same request. Aurobindo waited for some days. Perhaps by that time the Government dropped the idea of deporting him and preferred to wait for a suitable occasion to prosecute him for sedition. One evening, while he was working in the *Karmayogin* office, a young man brought the news that the Government had decided to arrest him for sedition. As he was then writing signed articles in *The Karmayogin*, it would not have been difficult for Government to arrest him on a suitable excuse. The young man also conveyed the desire of some friends that he should escape to Chandernagar. Aurobindo meditated for a few minutes and felt that he had received the command (*adesh*) in his inner being that he should go over to that French settlement on the other side of the river Hooghly.

He decided to leave for Chandernagar immediately. Within a few minutes he got on to a boat on the Ganga. Before leaving, he sent a message to Sister Nivedita asking her to take over charge of *The Karmayogin*. He lived in Chandernagar for a few days, changing his residence several times. All the time he was solely absorbed in meditation or *tapasya*. This was the end of his active political life as well as his connection with the journals, *The Karmayogin*

(English) and *Dharma* (Bengali). After a few days, some young men of Uttarpara (not far from Chandernagar) took him in a boat to Calcutta to board the French ship, the *Dupleix*, under a pseudonym. When he reached Pondicherry, his identity was disclosed and he did not have an easy life there for quite a long time.

Let us revert to our story. I have already mentioned that some workers of the Jugantar group had set up a shop—Chhatra Bhandar (Students' Store)—in August 1906 as a rallying centre for the workers. After the searches and arrests of May 1908 this centre became very active but it took its real shape some time after 1907. Under the camouflage of a business shop, the Bhandar became the nucleus of the reorganised Jugantar party. Jatin Mukherjee was at this time intimately connected with Chhatra Bhandar. This group became the spearhead of the revolutionary activities of that period. The workers of this group were intimately connected with the four murders mentioned earlier. Moreover, this group is assumed to have organised a series of dacoities including those of Raita (Dt. Nadia—29.11.1908), Mashupur (Dt. Hooghly—27.2.1909), Netra (Dt. 24-Parganas—23.4.1909), Nangala (Dt. Khulna—16.8.1909), Hogalbunia (Dt. Khulna—24.9.1909), Hazudbari (Dt. Nadia—28.10.1909), etc. up to the middle of 1910. Besides, this group had a hand in the famous Barrah dacoity on 2nd June, 1908, in collaboration with the Dacca Anushilan. A detailed account of this dacoity has been given elsewhere.

All these dacoities provided scope for the display of boldness and a spirit of reckless defiance of repression to the young men concerned and kept the political atmosphere charged with excitement. The public appreciated that the revolutionary party had not become defunct with the arrest and trial of the leaders in the Alipore Case. Money, which was necessary for the work and organisation of the party, also was made available through these dacoities.

Chhatra Bhandar became the focal point of the Jugantar party. Pabitra Dutta, Nikhileshwar Roy Maulick, Kartik Dutta and Indra Nandi were the organisers of this group; but actually Nikhileshwar was the moving spirit and helpmate of Jatin Mukherjee. The workers of the Atmonnati group also used to visit this centre. The sphere of activities of the Chhatra Bhandar workers was fairly extensive, going beyond Calcutta also to the neighbouring districts,



e.g. 24-Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia, Jessore and Khulna, and also to some extent in the districts of Pabna and Rangpur in North Bengal. Different groups were working in different places; sometimes there was more than one group in the same district. For the time being, other districts of East Bengal had lost organisational contact with Calcutta. During this period of confusion and disruption Abinash Chakravarty in his quiet manner asked the workers to rally round Jatin Mukherjee.

While writing on this period of political depression, it would be appropriate to mention another great name, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Of all the public political leaders of the day, Tilak alone was an unfailing supporter of the revolutionary activities of the young men. Tilak was not a man of light disposition or a demagogue. A man of vast and deep learning, he would have been esteemed in any free country as a great scholar and patriot. When, on an earlier occasion he was convicted and sent to prison, a man like Max Mueller interceded on his behalf with Queen Victoria to effect his early release. Max Mueller was immensely impressed by his two books, *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* and *The Orion*. While studying Vedic literature, Tilak found mention of many stars and constellations; he interpreted these astronomical references for fixing the date of the composition of the Vedas and the original home of the Aryans. All his opinions in that regard might not now seem acceptable; but surely it was a new venture on a line which required a profound knowledge of astronomy and a deep study of Vedic literature. The bold defence of their actions by a man like Tilak immensely helped in the re-organisation of the group. Revolutionary organisations soon took shape in Bengal.

The Government was ruthless in suppressing the movement and would not give the revolutionaries any breathing time. A number of prosecutions followed one after another in quick succession. We have already mentioned the Midnapur Conspiracy Case. B. Chakravarty defended this case along with K. B. Dutta. The main case fizzled out; but three of the accused were detained on a separate charge. One of them was Jogjivan Ghose who belonged to a family which suffered repeatedly and contributed a number of workers to the cause. The other two were Santosh Kumar Das and Suren Mukherjee. The accused were each sentenced to 10 years' imprison-

ment. Other important cases of the period were the Khulna Conspiracy Case. Then came the Howrah Conspiracy Case and the Dacca Conspiracy Case. It became a serious problem for the workers to finance the defence of the accused. Most of the lawyers were afraid to take up the brief on behalf of the accused. C. R. Das, who had defended the accused in the Alipore Conspiracy Case, took up the defence in the Dacca Conspiracy Case also. Another prominent lawyer who fearlessly defended the revolutionaries during their court trial was J. N. Roy. <sup>6</sup>

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## Chapter Eighteen

# Three Conspiracy Cases

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It took the revolutionaries about two years to regroup their loose-knit organisation after the stunning blows of repression in 1908; 1909 and 1910 were years of frantic activity for them. A series of dacoities and some murders took place. Local organisations in different districts, which grew up more or less independently, also took an initiative in these overt activities. But the two main groups which took a prominent part in these activities were the Dacca Anushilan Samiti and the re-organised Jugantar group under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee.

Acquisition of arms was also an important item of work. Chandernagar, being a French settlement, was an important centre for the smuggling of arms and for providing a safe refuge. Two other sources of obtaining arms were also exploited. The Anglo-Indians and the ordinary goondas of Calcutta were willing to sell small arms on payment of a good price. Sailors of foreign ships and sometimes British soldiers in Fort William also supplied small arms for a good price. The soldiers were a better source for the supply of arms and ammunition. All these people were acting purely from a mercenary motive; yet they, in a way, helped the work of the revolutionaries

for whom, however, it was a dangerous game. The Anglo-Indians, the goondas, the sailors and the soldiers were often contacted by the Intelligence Branch police who paid them handsomely; and not often they worked as police traps and betrayed the revolutionary workers to the police by inviting them to some assigned place to receive arms. Quite frequently the earnest money paid for the supply of arms to the Anglo-Indians or to the goondas was lost as no arms were supplied and the money was not returned. They used to extort a very high price for the arms supplied.

Another source of procurement of arms was theft; revolvers and rifles were stolen on a number of occasions from the houses or *kutcheries* of big zamindars or of persons enjoying Government favour and confidence. The revolver which was used by Biren Datta Gupta in his attack on Samsul Alam was, in fact, stolen, as mentioned before, from the baggage of a Government official on a sojourn to Calcutta by a relative of the officer. The Nawab of Dacca had *kutcheries* in every district in East Bengal and most of these *kutcheries* had rifles or guns for the protection of their collected revenue. At least in two districts, rifles were stolen from the Nawab's *kutchery*, one from Comilla and another from the house of the local European manager of the Dacca Nawab at Barisal. The latter was believed to have been committed by the Barisal section of the Jugantar group. Bombs were also being manufactured, though mostly of the crude type and with coconut shells. Bombs, or to be more correct, crackers were often used to scare away the local people, for which the sound and smoke of a cracker was enough. On many occasions bombs or even crackers were used for scaring away the villagers during a dacoity or an attack or a murder.

While the revolutionaries were re-organising and intensifying their activities, the Government also was tightening their repressive measures. I have already referred to the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, under which several samitis or associations were banned. In the same year the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act was passed, empowering the Government to forfeit any printing press publishing a newspaper. In 1910 the Indian Press Act was passed under which security could be demanded from any press. This Act in particular led some papers like *Jugantar* to take

recourse to underground publication. The Government also started some conspiracy cases.

Three important cases were instituted after the Alipore Bomb Case, viz: the Howrah, the Khulna and the Dacca Conspiracy Cases. In these cases, a large number of political workers were put up for trial and the charge was conspiracy to wage war against the King as well as dacoity and murder committed in furtherance of that objective. While these, on the one hand, caused some dislocation in the organisation, and some breaks in the link, on the other hand, the newspaper reports of the arrests and searches and, more particularly, of the court proceedings very often helped the public to know all that was done in secrecy. That again promoted a new fervour among the prospective young recruits.

The Howrah Conspiracy Case was started in March 1910. It had about 46 accused including Jatin Mukherjee, Naren Bhattacharya (later known as M. N. Roy), Taranath Ray Choudhury (Noakhali), Nani Gopal Sen Gupta (Howrah), Hem Chandra Sen (the well-known *charan* or bard of 24-Parganas), Lalit Chatterjee (of Nadia, maternal uncle of Jatin), Kartik Dutt, Baren Basu, Charu Ghose and others. They were charged with dacoities at Bighati, Raita, Morehal, Netra, Haludbari, etc.,—all committed with the political motive of waging war against the King. One accused, Satish Sarkar of Rajshahi, remained underground and avoided arrest. Another, Charu Charan Ghose of Chetla, a suburb of Calcutta, who had played an important part in those early days, died in jail during the course of the trial. The accused were tried under the newly enacted Criminal Law Amendment Act which had dispensed with many of the provisions of the Evidence Act and had also abolished the right to appeal.

One of the charges against the accused in the Howrah case was tampering with the loyalty of the soldiers. I have said elsewhere that Nikhileshwar Ray Maulick had contacts with the 10th Jat Regiment posted in Fort William. The contact was first established by Naren Chatterjee, an absconding accused in the Howrah case. As the soldiers were afraid to cross the Ganga to come to Howrah, the contact was maintained by Sarat Mitra of Kidderpore and the Chhatra Bhandar group. In those days tampering with the loyalty of soldiers was considered a serious charge. Some Jat soldiers were court-martialled after some time.

Six of the accused in this case were convicted in a separate case—the Haludbari dacoity case. One of these was Kartik Dutt whose name I have mentioned earlier. All other accused in the Howrah case were discharged in April 1911. The trial went on for over a year—from March 1910 to April, 1911. This case is an important landmark in the history of the Jugantar group. Till this time, Jugantar was not an integrated organisation. That very fact led to the failure of the prosecution case. The charges in this case were disjointed; the case failed mainly because no definite link could be established between the accused gathered from different districts. It was always difficult to prove by circumstantial evidence the participation of the number of individuals in any conspiracy when they were working in different places and under different commands. In this case there were two approvers—Lalit Chakravarty and Jatin Hazra; even then the links could not be established to prove the charge of conspiracy.

During the under-trial period, Jatin availed of the desired opportunity of linking up the disjointed threads of the organisation and emerged as the leader of the revolutionary organisation. It should not be presumed that before this Jatin was inactive; in fact, even from 1906-07 he was actively organising the second line of the Jugantar section, particularly in the districts included in the then Presidency Division of Bengal, i.e. 24 Parganas, Nadia, Khulna and Jessore. He was still in Government service; and that naturally handicapped his movement and activity. But during the Howrah Conspiracy Case, he became widely known as the leader of this section; and in jail he had an opportunity of infusing more cohesion and a sense of oneness among the different groups from which the accused were drawn. It may even be said that it was during his stay in the Howrah jail as an under-trial prisoner along with others that he got the opportunity to effect a cohesion among the loosely connected units of different districts.

The Khulna Conspiracy Case was instituted in 1910 on the basis of some dacoities committed mostly in the district of Khulna and Jessore. Though a large number of educated youngmen were arrested and prosecuted, seventeen were sent to the High Court for trial. The prosecution tried to base their case mainly on four dacoities—two in Khulna and two in Jessore. None of these dacoities were in any way noteworthy. For one dacoity—Mahisa

in Jessore—five young men were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment ranging from three to six years each. In the Khulna Conspiracy Case also, the prosecution failed to prove the charge of conspiracy and all the 17 accused were discharged. One of the accused in this case, Sachin Mitra, was convicted in the Mahisa dacoity case. Sachin Mitra subsequently started a publishing house known as Kamala Book Depot.

There were a number of dacoities committed in the district of Khulna and Jessore. In Khulna district, Nangla and Hogulbania dacoities were committed in 1909; and Nandanpur dacoity in 1910. In Jessore, three dacoities were committed in Bikara (1909), Dhulgram and Mahisha in 1910. Some of these were mentioned in the Khulna Conspiracy case. For Nangla, a separate conspiracy case was instituted at Jessore in 1909—i.e. some months before the Khulna case. Many houses at Calcutta were searched in connection with the Nangla Conspiracy case. In the lower court there were 16 accused; three were discharged and 13 were sent up to the sessions. Of these, 11 were convicted on a charge of conspiracy and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment ranging from 7 years to 2 years. Among the important accused were Bidhubhusan De, Aswini Kumar Basu, Brojendra Nath Dutta and Kalidas Ghose. Among the incriminating papers and documents produced were several copies of *Mukti Kon Pathe*, *Vartaman Rananiti*, a diary and some letters of Bidhu Dey. It may be mentioned that *Mukti Kon Pathe* and *Vartaman Rananiti* were produced also in the Dacca Conspiracy case. I may also mention; that this was perhaps the only case against the workers of Jugantar where a diary or incriminating letters could be produced in court.

Then we come to the Dacca Conspiracy Case. Before we go into the case, we should say something about the activities of the Anushilan Samiti, which formed the subject matter of the case. They had by then committed a number of murders and dacoities. Some of the important dacoities we have already mentioned. Pulin Das was arrested in 1908 along with some others on the charge of enticing a young boy. Sukumar Chakravarty, an accused in that case, made a confessional statement and was released on bail. Nothing was heard about him after that; it was suspected that he was murdered; and this was corroborated by some later confessions. Two other members

of the party, Keshab De and Ananda Prasad Ghose, were also believed to have been murdered on suspicion of supplying information to the police.

The Samiti, in the mean time, committed a number of dacoities particularly in the districts of Dacca, Faridpur, Barisal and Tipperah—all in East Bengal. The Sonarang National School (Dt. Dacca) was an important centre of the Anushilan Samiti. Some of the dacoities were organised and planned by the inmates of that school. Rabi Sen, an important leader of the Anushilan Samiti, was an inmate of the Sonarang National School. Makhan Lal Sen was the guiding spirit not only of that school but also of the Anushilan Samiti during the absence of Pulin Das in detention. The Sonarang postal loot case was an important event of the time in which a peon was assaulted and his bag containing money orders etc. was looted. Against the background of these overt activities, the Dacca Conspiracy Case was started in July 1910.

The Dacca Conspiracy Case started in July 1910. Originally there were 55 accused, of which two had died before the case started; only 44 accused could be arrested and put up for trial. Among the absconding accused, Trailokya Chakravarty and Amrita Hazra were important workers of the Anushilan party. On the Government side, two barristers, P. L. Roy and N. Gupta, besides some local lawyers were engaged. The case of the accused was taken up by some local lawyers. Pulin Das has stated in his autobiography that during the trial, some of the accused started criticising the work of the party, particularly the purpose and utility of some of the murders and dacoities committed by the party. Difference of outlook among the accused became known even to the prosecution. In the lower court about 400 witnesses were produced by the prosecution, including a cousin of Pulin Das, the main accused. The lower court discharged two or three accused and the case was then referred to the sessions when C. R. Das came to defend the accused with the help of local lawyers. The main charge was conspiracy for which dacoities and murders had been committed. The session court sentenced Pulin Das, Ashutosh Das Gupta and Jyotirmaya Roy to transportation for life, some others transportation ranging from seven to ten years and some to terms of imprisonment. About 10 or 12 were acquitted, including Lalit Ray, a local pleader, Nalini Guha, Dhiren Sen and others.



The case then went to the High Court which took cognisance of the documents placed by the prosecution. The documents were evidently incriminating. The forms and wordings of the three oaths, a printed document entitled "Duties of the *Sampadak*" (Secretary), some maps, village notes, notifications, instructions etc.—all these definitely tended to prove that there was a conspiracy. Justice Mukharjee (Ashutosh) and two European judges heard the appeal. Pulin got seven years' transportation, Ashutosh and Jyotirmaya got six years each, and others lesser terms of imprisonment. Some were released. This case gave a rude shock to the Anushilan party.

These cases placed a number of workers in long detention as the trial of each case continued for over a year, and the Dacca case ended with the imprisonment of important workers for long terms. For a time the organisation suffered a setback. After Pulin Das, Makhan Sen took up the leadership of the Dacca Anushilan party; but he soon deviated from the path so long chalked out and followed by Pulin Das. It took about two years for Naren Sen, the next leader to pick up the reins of the organisation.

With the release of Jatin Mukherjee after the Howrah case, the Jugantar organisation took a different shape as Jatin immediately started reorganising the party. Some of the discharged accused in the Howrah and the Khulna cases were readily available to him. It was during this case that Naren Bhattacharya was particularly attracted to Jatin. Subsequently he wrote about Jatin that it was his personality which attracted him. He wrote: "I have the privilege of meeting outstanding personalities of our time; these are great men. Jatinda was a good man; and I am still to find a better." He further said—"He was our Dada but the Commander-in-Chief also." It was during this time that Jatin went on a pilgrimage and at Hardwar he took his spiritual initiation from Bholananda Giri. Giri told Jatin,—for him the only religion was to serve the nation and to try for its liberation. He then went to Brindaban to meet Swami Niralamba—or Jatin Banerjee as he was known before taking sanyas. Swamiji gave him the necessary instructions and links of the units set up by him in U.P. and Punjab. On return to Calcutta, he took up the reorganisation of Jugantar in right earnest.

During the years 1908, 1909 and 1910, a number of dacoities took place mostly in East and some in West Bengal. Some of these

dacoities were the joint venture of the Dacca Anushilan and Jugantar. Two important cases were the Barha and Rajendrapur dacoities. In two other dacoities committed on August 15 and September 16, 1908, in two distant districts, the groups had common members and a common technique. Armed bands of young men went to the two houses—one at Bajitpur (Dt. Mymensingh) and the other at Bighati (Dt. Hooghly)—posing as policemen wanting to search the houses. After getting entry into the house, the young men disclosed their intentions and looted the houses. In the trial, four young men were convicted in the Bajitpur case of whom two were also committed to the sessions for the Bighati case. As they had already been convicted, their prosecution was not pursued in the latter case.

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## Chapter Nineteen

### Activities of Anushilan (1911-1914)

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The Dacca Anushilan Samiti was particularly active during the years 1911-1914, the activities being confined mostly to the four districts of Dacca Division. We shall mention here only some of the important cases. At Sonarang (Dacca District), a postal peon was seized and his bag containing money, insured articles and registered letters etc. was snatched away (July 1911). As I have said before, Sonarang was an important centre of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti and the Sonarang National School was one of their main units. Fourteen teachers and students of the school were prosecuted for assaulting the postman and seven of them were ultimately punished. Vigorous police investigation was started in this case and led to three murders at Sonarang within a short time. Rasual Dewan, who was suspected to have helped the police in this case, his brother and another man were murdered.

Another murder was committed in a village within the sub-division of Munshiganj in Dacca district. Manmohan Dey, who was a prosecution witness in the Dacca Conspiracy Case and also in another political case at Munshiganj, was murdered in April, 1911. One police sub-inspector named Rajkumar was murdered in Mymen-

singh in June 1911. The same year another notable case took place in Barisal on 11th December, the date of the coronation of King George V. Monomohan Ghose was an important police inspector at Dacca and took an active part in conducting the Dacca Conspiracy Case. Perhaps for his personal safety, he had been transferred to Barisal; and on the evening of that day, when Monomohan was engaged in looking after the celebrations of the King's Coronation and people were jubilant over the revocation of the partition of Bengal, he was murdered on a public street of Barisal. That also was ascribed to the members of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti.

Gradually revolutionary activities were being intensified and the number of overt activities was on the increase. The Press in general was anti-government and strongly condemned the repressive policy pursued by the police. In February 1910 the Indian Press Act was passed, empowering the Government to demand security from publishers of newspapers and keepers of printing presses. This necessitated the beginning of secret pamphleteering and circulation of secret and seditious books and pamphlets. In 1911 another Act calculated to further curtail the rights of the people was passed: the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act. Under this Act the Government was empowered to prevent the holding of any meeting or to declare it illegal.

This year (1911) also witnessed another memorable Government action—the re-union of the two Bengals and the annulment of the 1905-partition of Bengal. On 11th December, 1911—his Coronation day—the new King, George V, announced the annulment of partition as a Coronation gift. This step satisfied Surendra Nath Banerjea and the moderates but not the extremists or the young revolutionaries. Politically speaking, from the point of view of Bengal's interest, the step was worse than the partition of Bengal. It removed the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi and separated considerable Bengali-speaking tracts from Bengal. Some of these were included in the newly created province of Bihar and Orissa and some others in Assam. In a way this was the thin edge of the final partition of Bengal in 1947. Though Surendra Nath took it as the culmination of his life's mission and was highly pleased, the people, generally speaking, were not appeased by this act. Anyhow, they were jubilant, because they saw in it the people's victory over the

British bureaucracy. Partition of Bengal, which was repeatedly declared by Morley, the Secretary of State for India, as a "settled fact" had been unsettled. This success intensified the zeal of the revolutionaries for further action and greater sacrifice.

The years 1908 to 1912 were also important in the revolutionary history of the world. In China, Sun Yat-Sen raised the flag of revolution. The last Manchu emperor was dethroned and China was declared a republic. In Turkey, the Young Turks staged a sort of revolution. Sultan Abdul Hamid was deposed and a constitution was granted. But the European Christian powers did not like a revitalised Turkey; they preferred to keep it as the "sick man of Europe"—as Turkey was then called. And the Balkan War resulted in further dismemberment of Turkey which aroused indignation in Asia—particularly in the Muslim countries. The attempt of the Young Turks, though not quite successful, made an impression on international politics. This helped the growth of a Muslim revolutionary group in north-western India. The revolutionary movement in Russia even after the unsuccessful attempt in 1905 was attracting public attention. In Persia also, there were signs of a new stirring. "Bast"\* was organised in mosques and the Majlis—the Parliament—was granted in 1906. The trouble did not end there. The Shah tried to go back on his pledge to the people. Repression continued till the Vizier was assassinated and the Shah abdicated in 1909. All these encouraged the young men of Bengal and the whole of India in their aggressive politics. It should be mentioned that any sign of revivalism or revolt in any Asian country was carefully observed by the revolutionaries of Bengal.

The Anushilan Samiti had by this time established branches in practically all the districts of East and North Bengal. It has been estimated that the Samiti had about 500 branches mostly in East Bengal. There were local groups, too, working in all these districts and serious clashes developed between these groups and the highly centralised Anushilan organisation, causing many unpleasant incidents. These local groups in different districts felt more and more alienated from the Anushilan Samiti and psychologically became more integrated with the Jugantar group of Calcutta.

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\* It is something like a stay-in strike of the people withdrawing from their houses and business places and taking shelter in some public place.

Negotiations between different local groups on the one hand and Anushilan on the other frequently took place in almost all these districts, but ended in failure and resulted in more embittered relations. Gradually by 1910-12, in practically all the districts of East and North Bengal, a sense of hostility and bitter rivalry developed between these local groups and the branches of Anushilan Samiti working in those districts; of course, there were cases of occasional collaboration also.

Some of the leading members of the Calcutta Jugantar group were more liberally inclined and more cordial in their dealings with these local groups. It was practically Jatin Mukherjee's genius which built up what soon became known as the Jugantar Party and which undertook an all-India rising with German help during the First World War. His two lieutenants, Atul Krishna Ghose and Jadugopal Mukherjee, had the breadth of mind to treat the mofussil groups with a friendly and helpful attitude. Atul Ghose took an important part in cementing the organisation. Jadugopal Mukherjee came into prominence first during the Damodar flood relief operations and subsequently in the Indo-German conspiracy. In fact, the whole thread of Indo-German conspiracy was in his hands. Intellectually as well as emotionally, he was a man of high calibre.

But I should not anticipate events. I need not mention all the dacoities that took place during 1911-1914. They were all more or less of the same type. At least four or five dacoities were committed by the Anushilan Samiti within the district of Barisal during two or three years—not only for money but also for taking away guns. One important dacoity, which figured in the Barisal Conspiracy Case, was committed at Nangalbandh near Dacca (November 1912); that involved an armed clash between the villagers and a group of young revolutionaries.

In 1911 and 1912 a number of overt acts took place, mostly in East Bengal, and the majority of them were undertaken by the Anushilan Samiti. Jugantar also had its ramifications in the different districts of East Bengal and some of the dacoities in East Bengal were attributed to these different groups, particularly the Barisal and the Mymensingh groups. In North Bengal, organisation was developing but there was no overt activity worth mentioning after 1908 in North Bengal.

I should mention some of the murders committed during these three years. One Sarada Chakravarty somehow incurred the displeasure of the workers of the local revolutionary group, of which he was perhaps a member. He was murdered at Feni (Noakhali) in June 1912. Another murder in the same year (September) in Dacca was that of Ratilal Roy, a police constable, who had played an important role in the investigation of the Dacca Conspiracy Case and was engaged in watching the movement of political workers. An inspector of police, Bankim Choudhury, was murdered in September 1913 at Mymensingh. Like Monomohan Ghose, he also had taken a prominent part in investigations against the Anushilan Samiti. A bomb was thrown at him one evening in his house and he was instantly killed. Two other murders were committed in June and July 1914. In Chittagong town one man suspected to be a police informer was murdered in June 1914; and in July, in Dacca town, another man, a police constable, was similarly murdered. All these were at the time believed to be the work of the Anushilan Samiti.

The Anushilan Samiti started its organisation in other districts with renewed vigour around 1911. The murder of Monomohan Ghose in December 1911 was its first important overt act at Barisal. It also committed some dacoities in quick succession in the district; within five weeks in April-May 1912, three dacoities were committed by their members. The Jugantar group of Barisal, organised by Satish Chandra Mukherjee, was developing on a somewhat different line. There was a radical difference of outlook between the two groups working at Barisal. Within a year or so, the Barisal branch of Anushilan attracted police notice. One member, Rajani Das, even before his arrest, disclosed the secrets to the police. His confession led to the starting of the Barisal Conspiracy Case in 1913 with 26 accused. In the meantime, another member of the party, Girin Das, was arrested at Dacca with looted property, arms, ammunition and incriminating documents. He was actually handed over to the police by his father, a high government servant, with all these materials. In his house some important papers were found, including a list of Samiti members, accounts of money obtained from three dacoities in Barisal district and a report of the progress made by the Samiti in certain districts. These were produced in court as important documents showing the complicity of the accused in the conspiracy.

Before moving to another topic, I should say something about the internal conflict of the Anushilan Samiti. During the detention of Pulin Das under Regulation III, some difference of opinion developed among top men of the party. Makhan Lal Sen, who was a prominent member of the Samiti, became its leader after the conviction of Pulin Das in the Dacca Conspiracy Case. But within a short time, he found that there was a fundamental divergence of ideas and outlook between him and the other important members of the group. By that time he had shifted to Calcutta from his village residence of Sonarang. He revived his old acquaintance with Debarata Basu, now Swami Prajnananda of the Ramakrishna Mission. He suggested that the annulment of the Partition should be made an occasion for a drastic reversal of policy and technique of the working of Anushilan. He convened a conference at Calcutta where he pleaded for a complete change of policy and programme. He proposed to the members that Anushilan should work more as a social service organisation than as a secret party for violent revolutionary activities. His idea was practically to make Anushilan an adjunct of the Ramakrishna Mission. Other leaders of the Samiti could not, however, agree to this proposal. After a bitter controversy, he left the party or was ousted from it and Naren Sen (subsequently a sanyasi of the Ramakrishna order) became the leader of the Samiti. But it took him the best part of two years to re-organise the party and establish his leadership. Makhan Sen was an able organiser, as was proved by his subsequent activities in other fields too. He took an important part in organising relief work in the Damodar floods of 1913 where he had to work along with workers of the Jugantar Party. While at Calcutta, he came in contact with Amarendra Nath Chatterjee and Jatin Mukherjee and used to frequent the Sramajibi Samabaya, about which we shall speak in a subsequent chapter.

All the mofussil revolutionary groups gradually shifted their headquarters to Calcutta. For many reasons Calcutta was a more convenient place for secret activities than small mofussil towns. For procuring arms and for providing shelter to absconders, Calcutta was far more suitable. Anushilan Samiti did not at this time shift its headquarters to Calcutta but extended its activities to the city and some of their important absconders moved to Calcutta.



Some of them, including Amrita Hazra, came in contact with Atul Ghose of Jugantar. Amrita Hazra was a man of amiable personality and of honest convictions. He asked Atul to teach him bomb-making and the latter introduced him to Manindra Nayak of Chandernagar, who taught him how to make bombs. Till then the Anushilan Samiti did not possess bombs.

This explains the similarity between the bombs found at Rajabazar in Calcutta and those used in Lahore, Delhi etc. by the Jugantar group. On a sudden raid on a house in Rajabazar, some cigarette tins in the process of being manufactured into bombs were discovered and some workers were also arrested. The police also seized some incriminating papers, including names and addresses. Amrita had got these names and addresses through his contact with Manindra and had written them down in his note-book. The clue found there led to the arrest at Delhi of Dinanath who made damaging statements to the police. That led to the disclosures of the part played by Rash Behari in the Hardinge bomb incident of December 1912 and the subsequent Delhi Conspiracy Case in which Dinanath appeared as a King's witness. The Rajabazar Bomb Case, started in November 1913, did not take a long time and ended in the conviction of Amrita Hazra, who was sentenced to transportation for fifteen years. There were five other accused; except one, all the four were convicted to various terms of imprisonment. They were tried under Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code and The Explosives Act. The accused filed appeals to the High Court—which confirmed the conviction but reduced the sentences. In almost all these cases the police could seize and produce a number of note-books and documents along with arms and ammunition.

I should mention here the rise of another local organisation. Purna Das, like many other revolutionaries of those days, originally had some connection with Anushilan. But he could not agree with it in many matters and started organising his own unit at Madaripur, a sub-division of Faridpur district in East Bengal. Purna Das was a brilliant student and, after passing the Matriculation examination in 1910, took up the organisational work in right earnest. This group committed three dacoities—all in the adjacent district of Dacca (1912)—so that the police might not connect them with these actions. This group furnished some of the best specimens of

revolutionary workers. I shall have to mention them in subsequent chapters. They worked as a unit of Jugantar.

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## Chapter Twenty.

# Emergence of New Jugantar

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The Howrah and Dacca Conspiracy cases temporarily left both Jugantar and Anushilan in disarray. Jugantar could recoup itself somewhat easily as its leaders were acquitted; but Anushilan had its important leaders convicted in the Dacca case; so it took its members some time to set the organisation in order. For Jugantar, Jatin Mukherjee was the acknowledged leader shortly after the Howrah Conspiracy Case. After his acquittal he immediately started re-arranging the party. Both Anushilan and Jugantar showed remarkable resilience then.

While East Bengal was very active in violent and overt activities during the years 1908 to 1910, West Bengal districts were more concerned with re-organising the party, i.e. the Jugantar group. But Calcutta saw a number of exciting overt actions, bold in conception and daring in execution; and in some of these there were significant acts of self-immolation. All these were works of Jugantar under Jatin Mukherjee's leadership, and these supplied the material for the Howrah Case (March 1911). Re-organisation of Jugantar started after the collapse of the case in April 1912 and the release of Jatin.

Various district units in East Bengal which subsequently merged

with the Jugantar group were busy setting up their organisations in a proper form. For about two years after 1912, it was more or less the general policy of the central unit at Calcutta not to divert its activities to dacoities and murders. During the years 1912 to 1914, Jugantar groups everywhere were more concerned with consolidating their organisation than with committing overt acts. The revolutionary incidents during this period, whether dacoities or murders, were mostly the work of the Anushilan party; they were much more active than Jugantar. One remarkable feature with Jugantar was that, at least up to 1916, there was hardly any case of murder of a party member suspected of betrayal.

Jatin Mukherjee took up the business of a contractor as a means of livelihood but more as a cover for his secret activities. Within a short time he extended his business; he secured some big contracts from the Jessore-Jhenaidah Light Railway. In connection with that work, he had to make trips to different areas of Jessore and Khulna districts. He expected a good profit from this business; but as he was more busy with organising the Jugantar group, he left his business mostly to an employee who ultimately cheated him to the tune of Rs. 40,000/-. He expected that with the money earned from these contract works, it would be possible for him to build up the organisation; but that expectation was not fulfilled, and he was hard pressed for money not so much for his family as for the organisation.

The years 1911 and 1912 passed without much overt activity on the part of the workers belonging to the Calcutta section of the Jugantar group. By that time the East Bengal units had sent their representative workers to Calcutta to pick up the lost contact with the main Jugantar. Barisal, Mymensingh and North Bengal units—all had set up active cells at Calcutta. They were highly annoyed with the activities of Anushilan in their respective areas, and this furnished a common urge for all of them to find congenial associates at Calcutta. Of the Barisal unit, Naren Ghosh Chaudhury, the second man to Swami Prajnanananda, was at this time living at Calcutta. He had to leave Barisal and Noakhali on account of persistent harassment by the police; so he was sent to Calcutta to work in a new and wider field. And in fact, it was his dynamic personality and his generous and energetic nature which made it possible for the Barisal unit to come to a workable understanding with the Mymen-

singh, North Bengal and the Atmonnati groups at Calcutta even before formal contact with the main Jugantar unit. It was during this period that Naren was able to establish personal contact with Hemendra Kishore, the leader of the Mymensingh group, and with Bepin Ganguli and Anukul Mukherjee of Atmonnati. At this time Aswini Ganguly of the Barisal group too, was in Calcutta; he played an important role in developing contacts with different groups.

On behalf of the Mymensingh Group, Manindra Chaudhury—then a student at Calcutta—tried to built up contact with other units. Hemendra Kishore himself also used to visit Calcutta frequently. Naresh Chaudhury also was in Calcutta for some years as also Surendra Mohan Ghose. They picked up contacts with different units. From North Bengal, Jogendra Nath De Sarkar was playing the same role.

Apart from developing the party organisation, the Jugantar units were trying to secure small arms. Chandernagar and Calcutta were the two main places where arms smuggling was a profession for some sections of the people, mostly the goondas, smugglers, Anglo-Indians, soldiers and sailors. Every revolutionary group had to maintain a cell in Calcutta for securing arms. Jugantar was also engaged in the manufacture of bombs. These were picric acid bombs that were subsequently used in many overt activities not only in Bengal but in different parts of India. These were mostly made by Manindra Nayak of Chandernagar. The mofussil branches of Jugantar, like the Barisal and Mymensingh groups, committed a few dacoities; they had to find money somehow even if only for organisational work. In 1913 another incident occurred in Bengal, which provided an opportunity for the revolutionary workers in general and the Jugantar groups in particular to organise themselves. There was a flood on the Damodar river which caused a terrible havoc in the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur and Hooghly in August-September 1913. Relief organisations were almost immediately set up in Calcutta. Apart from the Ramakrishna Mission, the revolutionaries of Calcutta also set up their own relief organisations. The Sramajibi Samabaya of Amar Chatterjee became one of the main centres of the relief operations by the Jugantar group. Practically up to the early months of 1916 many workers of Jugantar were engaged in relief operations. It may be mentioned here that

in those days, the Government had only one concern—to maintain law and order; it hardly rendered any relief during such natural catastrophes.

Workers from different districts joined in this work. It was here that they came to know the workers of Calcutta more intimately. It may be said that the proper foundation of Jugantar, which took the lead in the Indo-German conspiracy, was laid in Bengal during the Damodar flood relief operations. Among the prominent revolutionaries engaged in this work may be mentioned the names of Jatin Mukherjee, Jadugopal Mukherji, Amarendranath Chatterjee, Makhan Lal Sen, Atul Ghose, Hari Kumar Chakravarty, Satcowri Banerjee, Manoranjan Gupta, Aswini Kumar Ganguly, Bhupendra Kumar Dutt and others. Jadugopal played an important role here. In fact, it was his broadness of mind and intellect which attracted the mofussil workers and removed all doubts and suspicions which East Bengal people in general entertained about Calcutta and West Bengal leaders. The police had somehow got information that behind the facade of relief work, Jatin and other workers were forging a powerful revolutionary organisation. After the mass arrests in 1916, almost every arrested young man was asked one question: whether he had been in the Damodar flood relief. That was taken as a proof of his complicity in revolutionary conspiracy.

Here I should say a few words about the Sramajibi Samabaya which was started in 1908 on Harrison Road by Amarendranath Chatterjee and Khirod Ganguly. Though it was started as a business concern, it developed into a centre of revolutionary activity. In fact, as a connecting link and meeting place of Jugantar, it took the place of Chhatra Bhandar which had, by then, been wound up. Amarendranath came from Uttarpara and, because of his saintly character, was a highly respected citizen of the neighbourhood. The Samabaya served as a link between the Jugantar group of Calcutta and the groups of Chandernagar and Chinsura. Srish Ghose, Naren Banerjee and others of Chandernagar and Jatin Mukherjee, all used to come and meet there. Makhan Sen also used to come here; at that time he had totally dissociated himself from Anushilan.

Through this unit, a link was also maintained with Rash Behari Bose at Dehra Dun. Rash Behari was originally connected with the Manicktola Garden group. After the searches and arrests in connec-

tion with the Alipore case, he was advised by his colleagues to leave Bengal; accordingly he went to Dehra Dun. Later he maintained his connections with both the Chandernagar group and the Sramajibi Sambaya. That was the reason of his asking the Jugantar people connected with the Sramajibi Samabaya to send him a reliable man with bombs. Amar Chatterjee sent Basanta Biswas to him with bombs to be thrown at Lord Hardinge the 23rd December, 1912. Basanta Biswas and Manmatha Biswas were two brothers employed in the Sramajivi Samabaya.

Before coming to the Delhi incident, I should mention here another incident which occurred in Sylhet (Assam). In that district a religious organisation developed under the leadership of Swami Dayananda. This was known as the Arunachal Asram, near Jagatsi. The aims and objects of this *asram* were moral and spiritual uplift of man and there was no direct politics in it. They used to hold *kirtans* (community singing of devotional songs) which often continued non-stop for twentyfour hours or even longer. One of the important members of this group was Mahendra De, who, while a student in Calcutta, used regularly to attend the Calcutta Anushilan Sapti centre. He was a member of the Sadhana Samaj of Mymensingh and had been a teacher in the national school at Kishoreganj (Mymensingh) for some time. He was related to Sushil Sen and his brothers of Sylhet. The Arunachal Asram laid great importance on purity of character. At the same time, it came in for some public criticism, particularly for the free mixing of men and women that was allowed there during the *kirtans* and religious discourses. There was public resentment also about the *Asram's* practice of disregarding all caste distinctions. In a sense, some of the public did not like the social reforms attempted by the *Asram* through *kirtans* and inter-dining. This public criticism might have given a handle to the Government whose real intention was to suppress this mission for political reasons. All of a sudden, Gordon of the Indian Civil Service raided this monastery with an armed police force. There was opposition to the raid of the armed forces, from the members and the supporters of the monastery, who freely used *trisuls*,\* lathis and other weapons. Their

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\*Something like the trident, usually carried by monks and ascetics roaming in wild areas.

opposition came particularly when the police party started indiscriminate assaults on the people assembled there and did not spare even women, many of whom were assaulted and otherwise molested. Mahendra was shot dead in the skirmish.

The outrage was condemned by all sections of the people. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and other papers strongly criticised the savage ruthlessness of the incident. The Central Government demanded a security of Rs. 5000/- from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Gordon, the chief culprit in this tragic incident attracted the vengeance of the revolutionaries who decided to kill him. There was an attempt to kill him by throwing a bomb; but the bomb exploded before it was thrown and killed the assailant on the spot. His identity could not be ascertained for some years. The name of this young martyr was Jiten Bhattacharya, also a member of Sadhana Samaj of Mymensingh. This happened on 27th March, 1913, in Maulavi Bazar, a sub-divisional town of Sylhet district. Gordon was transferred from Assam to Punjab. But the Bengal revolutionaries did not let him off even there. Basanta Biswas was deputed to kill Gordon on 17th May, 1913. He placed a time-bomb in the Lawrence Gardens in Lahore. Unfortunately the bomb did not explode at the proper time. Gordon escaped but an innocent orderly was killed.

In November 1912, members of Anushilan decided to commit a dacoity in the district of Tipperah which had its headquarters at Comilla. The Government had previous intimation of this through a letter written to the son of a sub-inspector of police; that boy was a member of Anushilan. When they gathered in a house at night the police party apprehended twelve young men with two revolvers, one gun, some masks and a slip of paper with the names of persons to whom some arms and duties were allotted. They were prosecuted and ten of them were convicted.

On the Jugantar side, during these two years, there were some overt acts including murder attempted murder and dacoity. In February 1911, Srish Chakravarty, a head constable attached to the Calcutta C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department) was shot dead. He was selected as a victim for his part in the investigation of some political cases. On 2nd March, a bomb was thrown at a motor car which was expected to carry Denham, a top officer of the C.I.D. The bomb did not explode and the occupant of the car,



an European gentleman, escaped. Nani Gopal Mukherjee, a boy of 16 years, was arrested on the spot. In Midnapur, on 13th December, a picric acid bomb was thrown into the room where the informer Abdul Rehman used to sleep. But that night he was sleeping elsewhere. The explosion blew a deep hole in the wall of the room. Besides these, the Jugantar group of East Bengal committed a few dacoities. In short, the Jugantar group everywhere was more concerned with re-organising its units than with overt acts.

It has already been mentioned that during this period, workers of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti had some contacts with the Jugantar group, particularly through Atul Ghose who introduced Amrita Hazra of Anushilan to Manindra Nayak of the Chandernagar group. During this period there was no water-tight aloofness between the Dacca Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar in so far as the latter was concerned. The contact, however, was not of an intimate nature and was limited only to casual exchange of help and assistance mostly at Calcutta. By this time, in Chandernagar, Motilal Ray also came into the picture; his group and the original Chandernagar group of Charu Roy, Srish Ghose, Naren Banerjee and Basanta Banerjee often worked in collaboration though retaining their separate identities. Motilal Ray was not very active politically but he provided absconders with shelter and supplied small arms on regular payment. Thus Anushilan workers had some contacts with the Motilal Ray group or the Prabartak group as it was generally known.

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## Chapter Twenty-one

# Mofussil Units Merging with Jugantar: Hooghly, Midnapore, Jessore-Khulna

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Under Jatin Mukherjee's leadership, Jugantar easily spread its organisation to different districts of Bengal, particularly East and North Bengal. In almost all these districts, there were some local groups functioning from 1905-06. Side by side with these, the Dacca Anushilan Samiti also gradually established its branches in the districts of East as well as North Bengal. As already stated, because of the character of the Anushilan organisation, conflicts soon developed between the branches of the Anushilan Samiti and the local revolutionary organisations in different districts. It must be admitted that Anushilan was better organised—a centralised body with branches and ramifications in practically the entire province. The local groups developed around local leaders and local political movements. Thus, these had stronger roots in the localities and had greater contacts with local political development and personalities. In many districts, the local public leaders would consider Anushilan as a foreign growth out of context with the local situation, while the local groups enjoyed the patronage of local public leaders—as being formed and conducted out of local movements.

Important among such local groups were the North Bengal

group, the Barisal group, the Mymensingh group, the Madaripur group, etc. Besides those in East and North Bengal, in West Bengal also there were some local groups, e.g. in Jessore-Khulna (then a part of West Bengal), Hooghly, Midnapur, South 24-Parganas etc. All these had some prior contacts with the Jugantar group of Manicktola Garden. They readily accepted the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee and merged into one organisation which became the reorganised Jugantar\*. Apart from the personality of Jatin Mukherjee some other factors helped the merger of these groups; one was their differences with, and dislike of, Anushilan and the consequent urge for some congenial affiliation; another was the Indo-German conspiracy during the First World War. But the main factor which facilitated these mergers was the basic uniformity of outlook and the federative nature of Jugantar, which precluded a rigid centralised control. I shall now give short notes on these mofussil groups.

I shall start with the Hooghly-Chinsura group. I have mentioned before that it was in the house of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, while he was a Deputy Magistrate at Chinsura, that eminent literary men of Bengal like Jogendra Vidyabhusan, Bhudeb Mukherjee, Nabin Chandra Sen, Hem Chandra Bandopadhyay and others used to meet. Except for Hem Chandra, they were all government servants holding very high posts and were stationed at or near about Chinsura. In the usual course, they were later on transferred to other places; but they left a tradition of national aspiration in Chinsura. It was under the inspiration and advice of those patriotic writers that a young man, Tincowri Chatterjee, started gymnasiums and physical culture centres with a background of revolutionary ideas at Chandernagar, Chinsura and Serampore. Revolutionary groups started being formed out of these centres. Mokshada Charan Samadhyayee, Satish Sen, Preonath Karar and others came from these centres.

Immediately after the partition in 1905, physical culture societies, night schools, etc. were organised with great enthusiasm at Chinsura and Chandernagar, as in other parts of Bengal. Prof. Charu Chandra Roy of Chandernagar may be called the pioneer in organising the revolutionary group in Chandernagar, particularly in its Gondalpara suburb. As usual, in these samitis of Chandernagar

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\*More appropriately it should be spelt as Yugantar—which means change from an age or period to a new one.

and Chinsura, along with physical culture there were courses in moral and religious teaching. This group had the advantage of having the influence of the cultural and political revivalist movement initiated by Bankim and others—as mentioned before. Among others, the famous *tantrik* saint, Tara Khepa, used to hold religious classes and discourses on the Gita and the Chandi. He often openly advocated rebellion against British rule.

Upen Banerjee, Rishikesh Kanjilal, Kanailal Dutta and others gathered round him. They were all arrested in the Alipore Bomb Case. Upen and Rishikesh were convicted and Kanailal was hanged for the murder of Naren Goswami. Prof. Charu Roy was discharged. Satish Chandra Sen of Serampur came in contact with this movement while a student there. Subsequently Ashu Das, a nephew of Kanailal Dutt, also came into the movement. Other important members were Surendra Nath Boral (subsequently a sanyasi, known as Ananda Acharya) and Sarat Mukherjee who subsequently became a doctor and a Congress leader in Birbhum. Suren Boral went abroad as a monk and established an *asram* in the north of Norway, in an ice-bound region. Bhupati Mazumdar was another important member of this group. Mokshada Charan Samadhyayee and Preonath Karar soon shifted to Banaras, where they contacted Sarada Maitra of Rangpur and formed the nucleus of a revolutionary organisation. Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty of Barisal later made contact with this group.

Another important member of this group was Jiten Lahiri who after independence was a member of the Lok Sabha for some years. Before the First World War, he went abroad for higher scientific studies and came back after the formation of the Berlin Committee in 1914 with the information of German aid to India. For some years preceding the First World War, the Bengal revolutionaries were expecting some arrangement with the Germans for military aid. He brought definite information of the Indo-German link-up for which Jatin Mukherjee and Jadugopal Mukherjee were waiting. Now with greater earnestness, they took up the task of preparing the Jugantar group for this work. Another important name in the Chandernagar-Chinsura group is that of Amarendranath Chattopadhyaya of Uttarpara. He took a very important part in the organisation of the Jugantar party and the Indo-German conspiracy.

Ratan Mani Chatterjee, also a member of this group, became particularly prominent during the Non-co-operation and the Civil Disobedience movements. He is now one of the noted Gandhian workers in Bengal. For some years, he was President of the Hooghly District Congress Committee.

Some other important members of the Chandernagar-Chinsura group were Srish Ghosh, Naren Banerjee and Basanta Banerjee. Rash Behari Bose also belonged to this group. At first this group had no organic contact with the Prabartak group which was actually formed after 1910 by Motilal Roy. In fact, in the earlier years, it was the Gondalpara group, i.e. the Chandernagar group organised by Prof. Charu Roy, Srish Ghose and Naren Banerjee, which took a positive part in revolutionary activities. It is now known that Srish Ghose and Basanta Banerjee of this group supplied revolvers to Kanailal Dutt and Satyen Basu in the Alipore jail for the murder of Naren Goswami. This group had very intimate links with the Chinsura group and they worked together. It may not be irrelevant to refer again to the important role played by, among others, Satish Sen, Ashutosh Das, Naren Banerjee, Srish Ghose in developing a healthy moral and political outlook amongst the young men not only of Chandernagar and Chinsura but also of Calcutta. Jatin Mukherjee easily received the full support of this group in the re-organised Jugantar Party. The Prabartak group, which was more a religious and business organisation than a revolutionary one, maintained its separate identity to an extent but had contacts with both Jugantar and Anushilan as and when convenient. As both these parties considered Chandernagar a safe refuge for absconders and a convenient place for the procurement of arms, their workers were eager to cultivate close relationships with the Prabartak group. For historical and geographical reasons, Jugantar workers had more frequent contacts with that group than the Anushilan workers. Manindra Nayak, the bomb expert, was a resident of Chandernagar; as such he also furnished an inducement for both the groups to frequent Chandernagar, which thus became a convenient resort for the revolutionary workers of Bengal, particularly between 1910 and 1916.

Since the days of Rajnarayan Basu, Midnapur had become a centre of revolutionary activities. Barin often came to Midnapur ostensibly to see his relatives but actually to organise a revolutionary

group. Rajnarayan Basu was the maternal grandfather of Aurobindo and Barin while Satyen Basu and Jnan Basu of Midnapur were his grandnephews, and as such, cousins of Aurobindo and Barin. Jnan Basu, an able organiser, took the initiative in organising a revolutionary society even prior to the partition. We have already mentioned how Midnapur played an important role up to 1908. In revolutionary politics the contribution of this district was outstanding in West Bengal. In successive Congress movements also the record of sacrifice and sufferings of this district has remained unsurpassed. Khudiram Basu, who came from Midnapur, was one of the first two martyrs along with Prafulla Chaki. Hem Das, who belonged to Midnapur, and who sold part of his property to procure the necessary money to go to France to learn how to make bombs, was an important accused in the Alipore Bomb Case. In fact, in the Manicktala garden, Hem Das was the bomb expert of the party, although before his return from Paris Ullaskar was the bomb expert there. Almost simultaneously with the Alipore Case, there was the Midnapur Conspiracy Case, with about 100 accused. I have already narrated the story of this case, which failed. But after the Alipore and the Midnapur conspiracy cases, there was hardly any revolutionary organisation left in Midnapur. It is strange that Midnapur, which was so prominent for revolutionary activities in the earlier years, almost went into oblivion in the political annals of Bengal till the Non-co-operation movement. Even then, Midnapur's role was mainly on the Gandhian line of non-violence. But after 1930, Midnapur again flared up in revolutionary zeal and in quick succession three district magistrates were shot dead in Midnapur town. Midnapur's role in the 'Quit India' movement of 1942-43 is also well known. Matangini Hazra, the woman martyr, appeared like a sudden flash on the field, fully prepared for self-immolation. But the role played by Satish Samanta and Ajoy Mukherjee in establishing a parallel National Government in Tamluk sub-division in 1942 was a protracted and organised effort. Under their leadership, Tamluk gained a unique position in Bengal during the 'Quit India' movement. It may be mentioned here that Satish Samanta received his political initiation from Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati of Barisal, who was interned in Tamluk (1917-1920) during the First World War.

Jessore and Khulna came into the current of revolutionary

activities even during the earlier years. I have said something about the Khulna Conspiracy Case which was based on some overt activities in the two districts of Khulna and Jessore. After the partition, a samiti was established in Jessore district in the village of Alka by Bidhu Dey and Sudhir Dey, both recruits of Bejoy Roy, who was the real leader of Jessore during this period and up to the end of the Non-co-operation movement. Hiralal Roy and Bisweswar Bhattacharya were his associates and helpers. In Khulna, Sisir Ghose of village Sagardari was a very important organiser of the district. As usual, physical culture, moral and religious teachings, reading of political books etc. were the common features of the programmes of all these groups. Similarly, groups or samitis were organised in other parts of the two districts. The Jessore-Khulna groups were in contact with the Manicktala Garden group of Barin and others. Thus it came to be that in the Alipore Bomb Case there were a number of accused from these two districts. Kiron Mukherjee, Sachin Mitra, Bidhu De, Sudhir Sarkar (now in Pondichery Aurobindo Asram), Kalidas Ghose and Satish Chakravarty were the important revolutionary workers in these two districts. Hemanta Mazumdar was also another member of this group; he was by temperament and vocation a teacher. His idea was to train up batches of young men devoted to the service of man and society. I have already spoken of Kiron Mukherjee. He withheld nothing for himself, but dedicated himself wholly to the service of the country. Though he belonged to Jessore and passed his early life in Khulna, his political contacts developed mostly in Calcutta where he played an important role.

In 1907, Bhupendra Nath Dutt went to Jessore but did not find the atmosphere there congenial. Then he went to Magura (a sub-divisional town of Jessore) where he stayed in the house of Hiralal Roy, who subsequently became an important worker of the Jugantar group in Calcutta and in the Sundarban areas. It is said that Hiralal Roy brought Jatin Mukherjee into the Calcutta Anushilan circle through Jatin's maternal uncle Lalit Chattopadhyay. Srish Roy, a pleader of Magura, was also sympathetic. For many years he took a great interest in building up the organisation. This gentleman was the uncle of Satyen Sen, an important accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Satyen received his education at Magura and subsequently became a devoted follower of Bejoy Roy. He went abroad

for higher studies. He was one of the first few to bring the news of German help during the First World War. He and Pingley (a Marathi young man) came together from abroad with the news of Indo-German collaboration and both were accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. The approver knew both of them; but for some unfathomable reason, he did not identify Satyen. Pingley was sentenced to death and Satyen was acquitted. He died at an early age in 1921, just after dedicating himself to the Non-co-operation movement. Another important worker of this group was Adhar Laskar, who also went to the U.S.A. Satyen and Adhar both worked in the Jugantar Asram of Lala Hardayal in the U.S.A. When Satyen came back with the news of German help, Adhar Laskar remained there to work with the Gadhri party in the U.S.A.

Jessore prided itself on Pratapaditya and Sitaram Roy, two of the twelve Bhuians (feudal potentates) of Bengal in the 17th century who fought against the Moghul occupation. Jadunath Bhattacharya, who wrote a biography of Sitaram Roy, was also a supporter of the movement. Bejoy Roy, who was an ayurvedic practitioner in Calcutta, became the real organiser of a compact group in the district. Among his more important followers in the districts Bibhuti Dev Roy, Satyen Sen, Adhar Laskar and Srish Sen may be mentioned. Through a member of his group, he managed to get a considerable amount of money from a zamindar's office; with this money he sent Satyen, Adhar, Srish, Tarak Das and others to foreign countries ostensibly for higher studies but really for political work. That member defalcated a few thousand rupees of the zamindar (landlord) under whom he was serving, made over the money to Bejoy Roy for party work and disappeared into oblivion. Such devoted service was not very rare in those days. Bejoy Roy became an ardent supporter of the Non-co-operation movement after his release from detention in 1920. In fact he organised the Jessore Congress organisation. The later batch of workers of Jessore, including the junior Bejoy Roy of Bandabilla satyagraha fame, were all recruited and trained by him.

Another notable name in this connection is that of Bhupendra Kumar Dutt. In 1913 he joined Daulatpur College as an I.A. student and showed his talents and energy in organising a group there. Bhupendra Kumar had his school education at Faridpur where he



joined the Anushilan organisation. But he found himself unable to agree with the methods and outlook of the organisation. While studying in Daulatpur College, he came in contact with Sashibhushan Ray Chaudhury. This college had at that time a number of Jugantar men on the staff, e.g. Dr. Amulya Chandra Ukil, Manindra Nath Sett, Sashibhushan and Sarat Chandra Ghose. Mani Sett and Sashibhushan particularly attracted Bhupendra Kumar, who then joined the Jugantar group. Jatin Mukherjee was at this time touring these districts frequently, ostensibly as a contractor. He was impressed by Bhupen's talents and ability. His subsequent career in the revolutionary movement cannot be mentioned in a short chapter. After his release in 1920 he became a staunch supporter of the Non-cooperation movement and established the Satyasram at Daulatpur for social and political work and also for training a band of young men. After the death of Bejoy Roy (senior), he had to take charge of the Jessore organisation and of the Jessore Congress. Until the dissolution of the parliamentary system of Government in Pakistan, he was a member of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly and Parliament as well as the East Bengal Assembly.

After the Khulna Conspiracy Case, the district could not develop any revolutionary organisation till the formation of the Daulatpur group in 1913-14. But Khulna contributed some important workers who played a significant part outside Khulna. As a student, first in Berhampur and then in Calcutta, Satish Chakravarty contributed to the revolutionary movement in an appreciable measure. During the First World War, along with Jadugopal, Amarendranath and Atul, he escaped arrest by evading the police witch-hunt. In spite of a big reward announced for their arrests, they could not be apprehended. In 1921, the warrants of arrest were withdrawn; but even then Satish could be contacted only after more than a year. Subsequently he proved to be an able organiser of the Congress; and his was the guiding hand behind the Provincial Congress Committee for many years up to the end of the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-32. When in 1930 the Congress was declared illegal, he organised an underground contact service of the provincial Congress with the district Congress Committees on the one hand and the All India Congress on the other. All these bodies, declared illegal, had by then gone underground. Organisational contacts with these

bodies were of great importance in guiding the movement. Satish Chakraverty undertook this very difficult and important task.

Sailen Ghose and Brajen Dutt, both important members of Jugantar, also came from Jessore. Sailen was appointed a professor of the Science College of Calcutta University which was shortly to be started when a warrant of arrest was issued against him. He absconded and smuggled himself out of India by the end of 1916. In the U.S.A. he figured prominently in the Indo-German conspiracy. Brajendranath Dutta, better known by his nickname Jaga Dutta, was reputed for his efficiency and an unruffled spirit even during very exciting operations. He was a medical student but could not finish the course as he was arrested in July 1916 under Regulation III of 1818. He took part in many daring acts. After his release in 1920, he completed his medical course and took his degree. Later he settled in North Bengal as a doctor.

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## Chapter Twenty-two

# Mofussil Units Merging: 24-Parganas, Howrah, Nadia

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It is time to speak about the 24-Parganas groups. The most important group in this district belonged to the southern part of the district. M. N. Roy, originally known as Narendra Nath Bhattacharya\*, was a leading member of this group. But the seniormost and the more important member was Hari Kumar Chakravarty, the well-known revolutionary leader of Bengal; he may be called the doyen of this group. Before tracing the development of this group, it is pertinent to give an outline of the political background of that area. We earlier mentioned the names of Shibnath Shastri and Rajnarayan Basu, two important leaders of the Brahmo Samaj. Both of them were originally teachers in government educational institutions and belonged to this area. These two were pioneers of secret societies in Bengal. As early as in the latter part of the last century, it will be recalled, Shibnath Shastri used to administer to young men an oath of service for and dedication to the cause of the country.

In the 1870s Shibnath Shastri started a secret society in Calcutta

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\*It may be stated that in Bengali, Narendra and Manabendra convey the same meaning—lord of man.

to which a number of young men of the time were attracted. Among them were Bipin Chandra Pal, Dr. Sundari Mohan Das and Tarakishore Choudhuri (later in life, a sanyasi and saint under the name of Santdas Babaji). Drawing blood by pricking their chests, these youngmen took the following oath: "Self-rule is the only God-ordained rule for every country. However, considering the present conditions and the future welfare of the country, we shall abide by the laws and rules of the Government; but however afflicted by poverty, we shall never accept any service under this Government." This vow was something like the vow of non-co-operation with the Government. These young men had also to take a vow of learning riding, rifle practice and other physical feats. It will thus be realised that this society was not of a purely non-violent nature. Rajnarayan played his part mostly in Midnapur where he was the headmaster of the government high school.

This part of the 24-Parganas district was also noted for its part in the intellectual and cultural renaissance in the 19th century. It was the native village of Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan, who was the editor of *Somprakash*, one of the oldest newspapers of Bengal, started by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the great educationist and social reformer of the nineteenth century. He selected Dwarakanath as its editor and the latter, who along with Iswarchandra was a teacher in the Sanskrit College which was a government institution, developed the paper to its great eminence. *Somprakash* had great influence over the social, intellectual, political and literary development of Bengal in the latter part of the 19th century; almost all the literary men of Bengal, including Vidyasagar, were frequent contributors to this paper. In 1878 Lord Lytton, the then Viceroy of India, passed the Vernacular Press Act for controlling the Indian-language papers. The Act required every Indian language paper to sign a bond. With the concurrence of Ishwarchandra, Dwarakanath refused to sign the bond, and *Somprakash* stopped publication. It was then that the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was converted into an English paper to avoid the rigours of this Act.

Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan was a man of independent spirit and of attractive personality; he became one of the central figures of the new awakening in Calcutta as also in his part of the country. Rajnarayan Basu, though settled in Midnapur, used to visit his

native place occasionally, particularly to meet Shibnath Shastri and Dwarakanath. Rajnarayan was only about five years younger than Dwarakanath but was older than Shibnath by about 21 years. They were both born in the village of Changripota. This area thus developed a tradition of political and cultural awakening. Hari Kumar Chakravarty, who belonged to the family of Dwarakanath, took advantage of this atmosphere. He spent his childhood in Assam with his father and occasionally visited his native village. He and Naren Bhattacharya (M. N. Roy) were the main organisers of this centre in South 24-Parganas.

In this connection I should mention the name of Hem Chandra Sen of Netra. He was an early associate of Shibnath Shastri, and perhaps under the latter's inspiration started preaching to youngmen the gospel of patriotism and service to the nation. He was a good singer and adopted the career of a *swadeshi charan* (a bard singing patriotic songs in folk tunes). Anticipating subsequent events, I should mention here that it was Hem Chandra Sen who organised the murder of Nandalal Banerjee, the police officer who tried to arrest Profulla Chaki for the Muzaffarpur bomb outrage. In fact it was he who took Harikumar, Naren (M. N. Roy), Saileswar Bose and others to Shibnath Shastri.

Other notable members of this group were Phani Chakravarty, Saileswar Bose and Satcowri Banerjee. They used to meet occasionally in the house of Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan (Hari Kumar Chakravarty's parental house). Dwarakanath, though a Sanskrit scholar, used to encourage these young men in their political ideals and aspirations. They held classes for the study of Vivekananda, the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi and other revolutionary literature. About 1906 they started coming to Calcutta and attending the centre of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti. In fact, Hari Kumar and Naren left their family homes and used to live in the Samiti premises at Calcutta. Though Naren had a more energetic personality, Hari Kumar was a better organiser, particularly because of his loving and generous nature. In his later life, he was known as Hari-da amongst the political workers all over Bengal irrespective of party or ideological affiliation. Naren was more resourceful and ready-witted to meet any emergency; but he was considered too clever by his colleagues. As such, he could not attract or at least hold together

young men to form an organisation. Another prominent worker of this group was Satcowri Banerjee, a little younger than Hari Kumar and Naren. A tall, calm and quiet person, he had the rare quality of an organiser, intelligent and at the same time generous and never perturbed. Later, he played an important part in drawing "closer the different units that gathered round Jatin Mukherjee to form the Jugantar Party. He met a premature death during his detention in 1935.

What may be called the first political dacoity of Bengal was committed by this group around 1906. The dacoity was successful in execution, though the amount of money obtained was small. But it gave an indication of the attitude of the members of this group. This dacoity was not carried out in a private house, but was aimed at the Changripota railway station. It was the Railway's money which they wanted to loot. Mokshada Samadhyayee was the main inspirer behind this dacoity. Samadhyayee was at this time something like a roving organiser; his restless spirit and indomitable energy took him from place to place—from Hooghly, Calcutta, 24-Parganas, to the districts of East Bengal and also to Benaras. Samadhyayee, a Vedic Sanskrit scholar, utterly selfless and completely devoted to the revolutionary cause, was rather a misfit for work of this nature. In normal circumstances, he would have been engaged in academic work—particularly research in Vedic literature; but he was drawn into the vortex of revolutionary politics.

After the Alipore bomb case, this group like most other groups almost lost its link with the Calcutta organisation. Hari Kumar purchased a small business firm, Harry & Sons, for about Rs. 250. Originally it was intended to provide means for his own livelihood. Satcowri started attending an homoeopathic college. Naren was roaming about and got entangled in the Howrah Conspiracy Case. While an undertrial prisoner in Howrah jail, he developed intimacy with Jatin Mukherjee who was also an accused in that case. As stated earlier, the case fizzled out and the accused were all discharged. Some other members of this group were also accused in the Howrah case including Hem Sen, Rajani Bhattacharya and Sarat Mitra (of the Kidderpore group). Naren played an important part in the re-organisation of the Jugantar unit as a lieutenant of Jatin Mukherjee.

Even before this case, while living in the Anushilan house at

49, Cornwallis Street, particularly with Mokshada Samadhyayee, Naren Bhattacharya was trying to form a real revolutionary group. Neither Naren nor Mokshada had much admiration for Satish Bose, the Secretary of the Anushilan Samiti. They were in a way maintaining a separate organisation and Naren started his Narkeldanga group, with the outstanding help of Saileswar Bose who was then living near about Narkeldanga—then an eastern suburb of Calcutta—but he actually belonged to South 24-Parganas and was a member of the group which developed there.

After the Howrah case, this group again became more active under the inspiration of Jatin Mukherjee. In the meantime another member, Phani Chakravarty, became acquainted with Jatin Mukherjee at Darjeeling. So through Phani and Naren, Jatin started taking an interest in this organisation and frequently visited this area, which was not far off from Diamond Harbour and the Sundarbans (the Gangetic delta forest area). Jatin used to take these young men to the forest for rifle practice. Hem Sen, the seniormost member, also became acquainted with Jatin and soon developed high regard for his qualities of head and heart.

Hari Kumar's Harry & Sons later developed into a centre of political activity along with the Sramajibi Samabaya. During the First World War, Harry & Sons set up an establishment at Balasore (Orissa) under the name 'Universal Emporium', with a definite political motive. The main political function of Harry & Sons was to keep contact with Indian revolutionaries abroad engaged in the Indo-German conspiracy. During this War, the revolutionaries planned a chain of organisations from Calcutta to Balasore. A cloth shop was started at Chakradharpur (in Behar) under Bejoy Chakravarty and further south-west a small workshop under Bholanath Chatterjee; at Sambalpur, a third establishment was started with Panchugopal Banerjee. Some more centres linked up with Balasore were also started. It was a period of hectic political activity and during this period, three members of this South 24-Parganas group, viz. Naren, Hari Kumar and Satcowri, played very important roles.

Now let us look at another organisation at Kidderpore within the district of 24-Parganas. Kidderpore, the dock area, was then a suburb of Calcutta. The group was originally started by Dr. Sarat Mitra assisted by his two brothers—Satish and Suresh—in about

1905-06. By this time Ashu Ghosh, too, started a branch of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti at Kidderpore. Thus there were two separate groups working at Kidderpore; but there was close cooperation and collaboration between the two, particularly over physical culture activities. Sarat Mitra's group may be considered as an extension of Chhatra Bhandar, while Ashu Babu's group was an extension of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti. Sarat Mitra's group had some contacts with Nani Sengupta's group at Shibpur (Dist. Howrah) which also was an offshoot of Chhatra Bhandar. The most important member and, in a way, the organiser of the latter group was Nani, who in this period played a very prominent part in organising revolutionary groups. He, too, was one of the principal accused in the Howrah Conspiracy Case.

Naren Chatterjee of the Shibpur group, even in those earlier days, tried to establish contacts with the military establishments in Fort William and, in fact, he contacted the 10th Jat Regiment stationed at the Fort. Naren used to take some of the soldiers to Shibpur to put them in contact with Nani, the leader of the Shibpur group; but the soldiers did not like to take the risk of crossing the Hooghly river to go over to the Shibpur side. So Naren Chatterji put them in contact with Sarat Mitra's group in Kidderpore. When the Howrah Conspiracy Case was instituted, there was a warrant against Naren Chatterji also, but he absconded and avoided arrest. Sarat Mitra and others were in jail as accused in the Howrah case; so Naren Chatterji put the soldiers in contact with Ashu Ghosh. Nikhileswar Roy Maulick, an important member of the Chhatra Bhandar group, was guiding Naren in these dealings with the soldiers. After the Howrah case, the Kidderpore group under the leadership of Ashu Ghosh, and Durga Bose on behalf of the Howrah group, maintained contact with the soldiers up to the First World War. Through these soldiers at Fort William, Naren Chatterji was able to establish contact with soldiers in other parts of India, particularly in Northern India like Benaras, Nainital, Lahore, Peshawar, etc. The Government somehow got scent of these contacts; some soldiers at Fort William were court-martialled. One of them disclosed the connection with Naren, who absconded for some time. It may not be quite out of place here to mention his future career. He was a frequent visitor to the house of Dr. Sarat Mitra who had a young widowed sister. Naren subsequently



married that widow; it was not only a widow marriage but also an inter-caste marriage. This was too much for the social conditions of the time.

The Kidderpore group, which was an offshoot of Chhatra Bhandar, gradually became integrated with the Jugantar organisation and all along maintained some contact with the soldiers as also the Sikh taxi drivers of Calcutta. The contact established by this group with the soldiers posted in Punjab was in addition to the contact made through Rash Behari Bose; a second line of contact was thought necessary in case the first one failed. Their contact with the Sikh drivers was very helpful in the series of taxi dacoities in the city of Calcutta in 1915-16 to which we shall refer in due course. These contacts with the army as early as 1908-09 will give an indication of the trend of the movement; its organisers had even then the idea of an armed rising in which the Indian soldiers also would join.

These two groups of 24-Parganas, particularly the South 24-Parganas group, lent great support to Jatin Mukherjee in the re-organisation of the Jugantar unit. In fact that was the first unit to give Jatin Mukherjee full support in the re-organisation move. Calcutta was, of course, the centre of all their activities. In connection with the re-organisation, the role of Jadugopal Mukherjee is rather well known; but the great role played by Atul Krishna Ghosh during the years 1912 to 1916 needs to be recognised. He was a worthy lieutenant of Jatin Mukherjee in broadness of mind and appreciative attitude towards other units. In fact, his geniality, frankness and unfailing readiness to assist other groups was very helpful in resolving many initial difficulties in bringing together different units to form an integrated Jugantar organisation. He used to maintain contact not only with the different East Bengal units of Jugantar but also with the Dacca Anushilan. In some cases, his generous dealings were not reciprocated and he had to suffer criticism from his colleagues for what they called his unreasoned goodness. Jadugopal and Atul, in fact, formed the core of the party's headquarters at Calcutta.

We have spoken so far about South 24-Parganas. But on the north of Calcutta, there is a big area which may be called North 24-Parganas. This area was not very important in the political movement. The Atmonnati group had some units in this area, parti-

cularly at Baranagar and Halishahar. But just north of it lies Nadia district which supplied a number of leading workers in the revolutionary movement. The area between Nadia and Calcutta thus had an overflow of some of the workers and their activities from both sides. But no definite organisation developed in that area. To Nadia district belonged Lalit Chatterjee, uncle of Jatin Mukherjee, who took an important part in the revolutionary movement as early as 1904-05. Subsequently he settled down as a legal practitioner in Krishnagar, the headquarters of the district. Another pioneer of the revolutionary movement, Jogendra Vidyabhushan, also belonged to Nadia district about five miles from the northern border of 24-Parganas. Atul Ghosh also belonged to Nadia district. It may be recalled that the first bomb to be manufactured by this revolutionary group was made by Bibhuti Chakravarty who belonged to Nadia district. Bibhuti apparently had links with the Jugantar group of Barin as also with the Atmonnati group where he came in contact with Prof. Nibaran Bhattacharya.

As I have stated earlier, there was no water-tight division between these two groups; in fact Nibaran Bhattacharya, Indra Nandi and many other members of Atmonnati frequently visited the Jugantar centre. Nibaran helped Bibhuti in the manufacture of that bomb. The shell was made in the small shop of a follower of Jatin Banerjee, one of the pioneers of Jugantar as a secret revolutionary group. It was a very crude bomb. Yet it was with this bomb that Barin sent his men to Shillong and Gauhati for killing Sir Bamfylde Fuller. As a matter of fact Hem Das, who later became the bomb expert of the Jugantar group, himself went with that bomb for the murder of Fuller. But by the time the party reached Shillong, Fuller had left that place, so they could not get him. Even before this, there was an attempt on the life of a European missionary named Rev. Hicken in Krishnagar—almost at the same time as the attempt on Allen, District Magistrate of Dacca. The attack on Hicken was attributed at that time to the Jugantar group. It may be mentioned that Jatin Mukherjee and Atul Ghose both belonged to Nadia, though their sphere of activity was mostly in Calcutta and other districts.

Another group grew up in Nadia district connected with Amarendra Nath Chatterjee. Jnan Biswas, Basanta Biswas and

Manmatha Biswas all belonged to this group. Basanta Biswas took an important part in Delhi and Punjab and was hanged in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Manmatha Biswas and Nalini Kar, another important worker of Jugantar, coming from Nadia, were declared proclaimed offenders as they evaded arrest in 1915-16. They kept themselves in hiding till 1921 when warrants against them were withdrawn. This group worked in Nadia till the First World War and even later on. Continuity of the Nadia group of Jugantar was subsequently maintained by Tarakdas Banerjee, who became prominent in the district with the advent of the Non-co-operation movement. He met a tragic death in a jeep accident during the second general election in the district in 1956. Another important member of this group was Ananta Hari Mitra who was prosecuted in the Dakshineswar Bomb Case and was subsequently hanged for the murder of a police officer in Alipore jail (1926-27).

Thus Nadia played an important part in the revolutionary movement and subsequently in the Congress movement also. In this connection I should also mention some of the important dacoities of this period which were committed in Nadia district. Both Haludbari and Raita dacoities were committed in this district. The Haludbari dacoity figured prominently in the Howrah Conspiracy Case. Two other important dacoities in the district were committed in 1914-15 at Pragpur and Shibpur. Both these were very bold in execution and created a great sensation. These were committed for money which was badly needed for the preparation of the armed rising during the First World War. I shall deal with these two cases later on.

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## Chapter Twenty-three

# Mofussil Units Merging: North Bengal

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North Bengal districts played an important role from the earliest years of the revolutionary movement. Intimate links between North Bengal and the Calcutta organisations were established at a very early stage of revolutionary movement. Abinash Chakravarty, Annada Kaviraj and Shyamsundar Chakravarty furnished the contact between the Calcutta and the North Bengal organisations. It is stated that Abinash Chakravarty received his first inspiration from the writings of Rajani Kanta Gupta, the historian of the Sepoy Rising of 1857. In his analysis and narration of that episode, Rajani differed from the British historians like Kaye, Malleson and others. His work is a landmark in historical research in India. It was widely read by the young revolutionaries.

I have also spoken about Manindra Nath Lahiri, who brought Rs. 200 from Rangpur to help the organisation in starting *Jugantar*, the weekly organ of the militant group. Another young man of North Bengal, Paresh Maulick, was also intimately connected with this movement from the very beginning; he was an accused in the Alipore case and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Rangpur became the centre of the North Bengal organisation in the initial stages.

The Bandhab Samiti was started in 1904 under the inspiration of Abinash Chakravarty but its local control and guidance remained with Ishan Chakravarty. As was the case with all other samitis, this was also apparently an organisation for physical culture; but its real business was political and revolutionary.

Abinash Chakravarty and Annada Kaviraj belonged to the core of the Jugantar group. Their role in the formative stage has been narrated in earlier chapters. The Rangpur organisation ramified into other districts of North Bengal—e.g. Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri. Serajganj—a sub-divisional town and a business centre in the district of Pabna—also came into prominence. “Sir Bamfylde Fuller insisted on the disaffiliation of the Serajganj schools because the teachers and students publicly took part in politics.” (*Bandemataram*, May 8, 1907). The Government did not agree and this was one of the reasons for the resignation of Sir Bamfylde Fuller. Serajganj also had a national school. As a protest against the Lyon Circular, imposing a ban on student participation in politics, a strike was organised in the Government high school and the technical school at Rangpur. Under the guidance of Ishan Chakravarty and Kamini Kumār Kar, the superintendent of the national school, a batch of young men formed the nucleus of the Rangpur revolutionary group. Jatin Roy of Bogra and Abinash Roy of Rangpur appeared on the scene within a few years. Then they took the leadership of revolutionary organisations in North Bengal.

Among the local organisers in North Bengal, the first place belongs to Ishan Chakravarty. He was a government servant at the time. Immediately after the Manicktala search and arrest of the leaders at Calcutta, several houses were searched in Rangpur. Ishan and some others were arrested but were discharged after a short time. After this, Ishan had to leave government service. A man of quiet and unassuming nature and saintly character, he worked silently till his death some years after the Non-co-operation movement, in which he took a leading part. It was he who trained up Prafulla Chakravarty and Prafulla Chaki—the two martyrs contributed by Rangpur. Prafulla Chakravarty was Ishan's own son and was killed in experimenting with a bomb. Another son of his, Suresh Chakravarty, was subsequently in the movement; later he joined the Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry and was a noted writer in the

twenties. The Rangpur organisation had its ramifications in some parts of Assam also, e.g. Dhubri, Gauhati, etc. It is appropriate to mention here that in connection with the famous Alipore Bomb Case, a number of young men were arrested from North Bengal, namely Paresh Maulik, Krishnajiban Sanyal, Nalini Gupta, Naren Baksi, Manindra Nath Lahiri, Ashutosh Mazumdar and Ishan Chakravarty. All of these, except perhaps two, were put in the dock in that case.

In their relentless pursuit of Fuller, Lt.-Governor of East Bengal and Assam, the leaders of Jugantar chose Rangpur as a convenient halt. We have already stated how both Barin Ghose and Hem Das went to Rangpur for this purpose and failed. Barin visited Rangpur in 1906 and 1907. He was highly impressed by a number of young men there. Among them mention may be made of Prafulla Chaki, Prafulla Chakravarty, Krishnajiban Sanyal, Manindra Lahiri and Nalini Gupta. But Barin was particularly impressed by the intelligence and enthusiasm of Prafulla Chakravarty and Prafulla Chaki. They were brought to Calcutta. How Chaki died is well known and has been narrated in a previous chapter. The circumstances in which Prafulla Chakravarty died are not, however, generally known. Some time in the latter part of 1907, he was sent to Deoghar for experimenting with the bomb prepared by Hem Das in the Manicktala garden. The lonely hilly area was considered a suitable place for testing the efficacy of the bombs. But before it was thrown, the bomb burst in Prafulla Chakravarty's hand. His body was torn to pieces. But Ishan Chakravarty remained unperturbed and unflinchingly worked for the cause of the country's freedom till his death at a ripe old age. Of this batch, special mention should be made of Nalini Gupta. He has rightly earned the reputation of a thoughtful and powerful writer. At present he is practically managing the Aurobindo Asram at Pondicherry as its Secretary.

We next come to the Pabna group, another district of North Bengal. Abinash Chakravarty, Annada Kaviraj and Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, three pioneers of the revolutionary movement, all belonged to Pabna. They attracted large numbers of young students in Calcutta hailing from the districts of North Bengal. The local organisation of Pabna Sammelani (Pabna Union) developed with

the starting of the Swadeshi Movement. Jatindra Narayan Roy was deputed from Rangpur for organisational work at Pabna. Pabna Sammelani was taking an active part in political organisation. Speaking about Pabna, we should not miss the name of Rajani Kanta Sen, the famous poet who received his inspiration for national regeneration from the Rangpur group. His patriotic and devotional songs are permanent assets of Bengali literature. Revolutionary workers of North Bengal jointly spread the gospel of revolution to the different districts of North Bengal, like Dinajpur, Pabna, Maldah, Bogra, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and Rajsahi. But the organisation at Rangpur became more active and compact, particularly because of the national school set up there. This school used to attract young students from other North Bengal districts when they were expelled from the regular schools. Prafulla Chaki, originally an inhabitant of Bogra, was expelled from his school there for his political activities; and he came to Rangpur to join the national school.

In 1907 there was an attempt to commit a dacoity near Rangpur town. Hem Das, Barin and Naren Gossain went there from Calcutta for that operation. It ended in a fiasco; Hem Das described this incident as the theft of a widow's brass pot (*ghati*). It was then that the two Prafullas, Chakravarty and Chaki, were taken to Calcutta. Other leading workers of North Bengal included Abinash Roy, Krishnajiban Sanyal and Upen Roy of Rangpur, Kshitish Sarkar of Serajganj, Jogendra Chakravarty and Jyotish Roy of Dinajpur, Bipin Ghosh and Baladevananda Giri of Maldah and Jatin Roy of Bogra. The national school group in Rangpur attracted a number of enthusiastic workers, including the late Prof. Brajasundar Roy, Atul Chandra Gupta (later well-known as an eminent jurist and thoughtful writer) and others; though not directly connected with revolutionary work, they all created an atmosphere and helped to train a batch of young men devoted to national service.

Another important worker of Rangpur was Sarada Charan Maitra of Naldanga in Rangpur. His main centre of activity was Kashi or Banaras where he came in intimate contact with Satish Mukherjee of Barisal, who later became Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty. At the request of Sarada Maitra, Satish Mukherjee visited Rangpur with Aswini Ganguly. He stayed there for some days. This was in 1911. A new contact was established. Monmohan

Ghose, subsequently Swami Swarupananda, head of the Bholagiri Math, also went there under the directive of Satish Mukherjee.

After the Alipore case, Rangpur like other districts of North and East Bengal lost contact with Calcutta. But the work of organisation continued. In about 1910-11, they tried to revive contacts with Calcutta. Abinash Ray and Upen Roy came to Calcutta for that purpose. Upen Roy later on went to Dehra Dun and made contact with Rash Behari Bose. Upen Roy was a man of high idealism and lived a life of service and devotion to the cause. After independence, he lived in the Narkeldanga quarter of Calcutta and started a social service organisation. Young men of the ward still cherish his memory with deep respect and reverence. Rangpur all along maintained its reputation for secret revolutionary organisation. Kalipada Bagchi proved to be an able organiser both for the secret movement and for the Congress. Kalipada along with Mohini Sinha collected a fine batch of young men at Rangpur. This group played an important part in the Non-co-operation movement and in all subsequent movements under the leadership of the Congress. It was a real pleasure to see the organisation functioning at Rangpur up to 1940, after which, during the Second World War, all its workers were arrested.

In Maldah district, Bipin Behari Ghose gradually became an organiser of the revolutionary group as also an advocate of educational and cultural revival. He may be called the founder of the Grihasta group of which the late Prof. Benoy-Kumar Sarkar was an important member. It was Bipin who revived the Gambhira celebrations of Maldah along with revolutionary activities. Gambhira is a folk ceremony of Maldah devoted to dance, music, handicrafts, etc. It was celebrated with enthusiasm by the *Adivasis* (the tribals) of the district. Bipin Ghose with all his cultural activities became a centre of attraction for educated young men like Benoy Sarkar who had connections also with the Dawn Society. Swami Baladevananda Giri was a sanyasi and a *Mahant* (abbot) of a *Math*. He took an unremitting interest in revolutionary activities; and during the Non-co-operation movement, he was an ardent supporter of the movement. In fact, for all Congress matters in Maldah, Deshbandhu C. R. Das and others used to rely on Baladevananda Giri. Though a sanyasi, he had a keen political sense and good organising ability.

Jatin Roy of Bogra was, by vocation as well as by temperament,



an educationist. Like Sashi Bhushan Ray Chowdhury, he was inclined more to educational and social work than to violent revolutionary activities. In fact, both of them were personally a little repulsed by anything violent; they would often avoid being dragged into any discussion on those matters and would rather refer such matters to someone else for consultation and decision. Yet Jatin Roy was an important link in the revolutionary movement; he had full sympathy with and support for that movement. And it was he who organised the Bogra group which took an important part in the Indo-German conspiracy. To all the workers of North Bengal, he was the revered Jatinda—a never-failing friend, guide and affectionate elder. Jogen De Sarkar, who is still living, may be called the leading member of the Bogra section. He is a scientist and an expert in explosives. In that capacity he helped the manufacture of the T.N.T. bombs which were thrown on Tegart in August 1930. A man of parts and of culture as he was, he could not fully utilise his talents in any direction primarily due to his goodness. Around 1913-16, it appeared that Abinash Roy and Jogen De Sarkar were leading two different groups of North Bengal which, though not hostile, were yet not mutually very co-operative either. But both the groups cooperated with the Calcutta Jugantar group. It was in the Calcutta organisation that they found a common platform. The Bogra group had also direct contact at Calcutta with the Barisal group in 1914-16. Another notable member of the Bogra group was Satish Sarkar, a good-natured man.

Speaking about the Jugantar organisation in North Bengal, we should say a few words about some men who at one time played an important part. Gopen Roy, Kshitish Sanyal and Ashutosh Lahiri were convicted in the Pragpur Dacoity Case of 1915. Kshitish Sanyal belonged to Nadia but was associated with the North Bengal group. Gopen Roy came from Pabna. After his release from a long term of imprisonment, he was again arrested in January 1924 under Regulation III of 1818. Ashutosh Lahiri subsequently joined the Hindu Mahasabha. Jatin Hui, belonging to Sirajganj, was arrested in Burma with a revolver in 1915 and was convicted. At this juncture, Burma, Singapore and Siam (now Thailand) were important bases for the Indo-German conspiracy. Jatin Hui was suspected of participation in that work. Satindranath Das Gupta and his elder brother Birendra-

nath Das Gupta belonged to Jalpaiguri. Satindra was arrested and detained during the First World War. Birendra went abroad and played a very important role in connection with the Indo-German conspiracy and was in close touch with the Berlin Committee. Mrinmoy Das Gupta and his elder brother Badal belonged to Bogra and worked under Jatin Roy and Jogen De Sarkar.

In the earlier years (1904-08), revolutionary organisations did not shape up strongly in Rajshahi town, and in the district; but Natore, a sub-division of the district, had an effective group of revolutionary workers of the Jugantar group. Satish Sarkar, a leading worker of the Jugantar organisation at Calcutta, was from Natore. He played a very important part there. He is still living as a sanyasi and is now blind. Naren Bakshi—an accused in the Alipore case—also belonged to the Natore sub-division of Rajshahi.

Another important member of the Jugantar group of North Bengal was Satyapriya Banerjee of Rajshahi. He was the son of the well-known educationist, Kumudini Kanta Banerjee, Principal of the Rajshahi Government College. In his early youth, he came under the influence of Jatin Roy of Bogra and joined the Jugantar group of revolutionaries. Years later he joined the 'Forward Bloc' and for some years was a member of Parliament. He took an active interest in labour work and was a noted labour leader. He was of a genial nature and could be a pleasant companion even if there were sharp differences in politics. Another important worker of this group was Dhiren Ghatak, working mostly as a lieutenant of Jatin Ray of Bogra.

The Dacca Anushilan Samiti had its organisations in all the North Bengal districts, particularly in Rangpur, Rajshahi and Pabna. In Rajshahi, Anushilan had a very good and sincere organiser in Prabhas Lahiri. Prabhas and his younger brother Jitesh Lahiri, organised the Anushilan unit at Rajshahi and other districts of North Bengal. After the partition of 1947 Prabhas remained for some years in Pakistan. He was for some time a minister in East Pakistan. Unlike his other colleagues of Anushilan, he joined the Non-co-operation movement and took a prominent part in Rajshahi politics. In Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri, neither Jugantar nor Anushilan had any strong organisation; both the groups had some small units there. Prabhas Lahiri may be called the doyen of the Anushilan organisation in

Rajshahi and in North Bengal. In Pabna also, they had a fairly good unit; and after 1911-12, Jugantar also had a good organisation there. It was from North Bengal that Anushilan spread its organisation to some regions of Assam.

Before concluding this chapter on North Bengal, I feel I should refer to Akshaya Kumar Maitra, a noted historian of the day. He wrote a book on Siraj-ud-daulah, the last independent Nawab of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa. British historians have painted him in the darkest colours and have circulated the myth of the Black Hole Tragedy. Akshaya Kumar proved with the help of authentic documents that the story of the Black Hole Tragedy was fictitious and that Siraj was not really such a devil as British historians had tried to make out. According to Akshaya Kumar, Siraj-ud-daulah with all his youthful lapses, was a patriot, and clearly visualised the dark designs of the British. So he had tried to thwart them. This book of Akshaya Kumar on Siraj-ud-daulah was widely read in revolutionary circles. Akshaya Kumar also contributed considerably to the growth of the revolutionary spirit in Bengal. In fact, he gave his tacit support to the movement.

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## Chapter Twenty-four

# Barisal in the Anti-partition Agitation

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Immediately after the partition, Barisal came into prominence for political unrest. Lord Morley, the then Secretary of State, said that he had three worries in India, viz., the frontiers, the army, and Barisal. This was mostly due to Aswini Kumar Dutt whose eminence as a leader was recognised not only by the public but also by the Government. As he considered legal practice to be repugnant to his moral values, he gave up the practice after a very short time and preferred to work as a teacher in the Brojo Mohan School and College. The B. M. Institution (i.e. the school and the college) was his tool for implementing his moral and social ideas and ideals. He was not a mere agitator, he was also an educationist with high moral standards; he was revered as a saintly person throughout Bengal. But his ability as an organiser of a political movement came into prominence during the anti-partition or Swadeshi movement. The main vehicle of his political activity was the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti.

We have already mentioned the name of the Little Brothers of the Poor. It was a volunteer squad for rendering social service. Barisal was at that time notorious for its annual outbreaks of cholera and

epidemic. The poor patients were mostly left uncared for. The volunteers of the Little Brothers of the Poor used to nurse and attend them. As some epidemics were highly contagious, nursing was a risky job; yet under Aswini Kumar's inspiration young men used to undertake it gladly. Pandit Kalish Chandra was placed in charge of this squad, though Aswini Kumar himself used to supervise the work and often to visit the patients. Apart from this, the organisation used to help the poor, the distressed and the sick with food, money and medicine.

The Swadesh Bandhab Samiti was organised on 6th August 1905. In some very important features, it was distinct from the many other samitis that were coming up almost everywhere in Bengal. Most of the other samitis, including the Anushilan Samiti of Calcutta, Suhrid Samiti of Mymensingh and subsequently the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca, gave greater importance to physical culture. Swadesh Bandhab Samiti did not give it that importance. Its objects were self-dependence—to develop, as far as possible, a self-reliant society. Removal of social and economic difficulties of the people of the district was an important item in its programme. To attain these objects, the Samiti took in hand the following items of work:

- (1) Reduction of litigation by introducing arbitration;
- (2) Swadeshi and boycott, to help indigenous industry;
- (3) Temperance;
- (4) Female education and abolition of dowry;
- (5) Health;
- (6) Provision of drinking water in the rural areas;
- (7) Removal of the disabilities of lower caste Hindus,
- (8) Physical culture for youth.

This Samiti had 159 branches working all over the district. It also had a number of paid workers. In 1906 there was a famine in Barisal. The Samiti collected Rs. 65,000 and also some quantity of rice to help the famine-stricken people. Help came from remote parts of Bengal and even from outside Bengal. The famine provided an occasion to the Samiti for working among the masses, mostly Muslims. In recognition of the help the district received from outside in its hour of distress, Aswini Kumar thought it necessary to help other

areas in similar distress. The Samiti sent four volunteers to Orissa to do relief work during the famine raging there. It also sent four volunteers to U.P. at the request of Lala Lajpat Rai to work there under the supervision of Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya for famine relief work in the province. It appointed four doctors when an epidemic of small-pox and cholera broke out in the district. These doctors went round the villages, rendering the necessary medical aid to the distressed villagers.

Aswini Kumar Dutt was the founder and president of this Samiti, but the main organising hands were those of Prof. Satish Chatterjee and, subsequently, a young teacher named Satish Chandra Mukherjee; they were respectively Secretary and Asstt. Secretary of the Samiti. In the face of Government repression all over the district, this Samiti undertook the task of upholding the morale of the people. The Samiti held 360 sittings in one year; and wherever there was any Government repression, workers of the Samiti were to be found rushing there to stand by the suffering people. In these meetings, various problems and subjects were discussed. It is interesting to note that even as early as 1906-07, in one meeting Suren Sen referred to Marx's *Capital* and, adducing some arguments from the book, stated that boycott of British goods might be considered malicious from a moral point of view but it was justified and legal from a political point of view. He described boycott as a fencing for the protection of our indigenous industries and the cult of Swadeshi. It was stated that Swadeshi was the end and boycott was the means. In at least two meetings, there was an attempt to define Swaraj and speaker after speaker often referred to the American War of Independence and the goal of complete independence. At such stages, Aswini Kumar Dutt used to put some check over these extreme ideas. He tried to induce the people to accept Swaraj as embodied in the resolution of the Congress held in Calcutta in 1906—a form of colonial self-government.

We find from Government reports that repeated references were made to social reforms in the proceedings of the Samiti. At least on two occasions it was stated that without social reforms or a social revolution, political independence was impossible. The principal items of social reforms advocated according to the Government report, were: (1) Abolition of the caste system or at least the removal of the

disabilities of the Namasudras and the lower castes. The Namasudras were considered to be the fighting class among the Bengalees; but they were not allowed to avail of the services of the priests, washermen and barbers, who were serving the high-caste people. The Samiti advocated that these disabilities of the Namasudras should be removed. (2) Landlords, including Upendra Sen who was Vice-President of the Samiti, advocated the right of the Namasudras to enjoy the services of the washermen and the barbers. Upen Sen gave practical shape to this in his village. Suren Sen advocated that the caste system should be abolished and said that there could be no political reform without social reform. Other items of social reforms advocated were: remarriage of Hindu widows, abolition of early marriage and dowry in marriage, temperance and similar other items. The item of temperance received much attention from the workers of the Samiti and there was picketing before liquor shops.

There was an epidemic of smallpox in some villages; and the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti sent doctors to go to the affected areas. These doctors rendered all the necessary medical and hygienic assistance to the rural people. It is significant that the workers of the movement were not motivated by a narrow outlook of simply undoing the partition of Bengal nor even simply by a patriotic zeal for ending an alien rule. They had also socio-economic ideas of far-reaching effect—ideas which even now we have not been able to implement.

On boycott and Swadeshi, the workers of the Samiti were very active. Bengal, though a maritime province, was like other provinces of India receiving its salt from Liverpool; and cloth was coming from Manchester, in spite of the fact that Bengal used to be famous for its cotton and silk textiles. The workers of the Samiti persuaded the traders to stop the indent of British salt and cloth. Jhalakati and Nalchiti were two important business centres of the district. The traders in these two business centres as also in Barisal town, with the exception of one or two, stopped indenting British cloth or salt. It should be mentioned here that this was done mainly through persuasion, or at the most, through threat of social ostracism. Of course, there were a few cases of Liverpool salt being thrown into the river and also several incidents of bonfire of British

cloth. These were often performed as a sort of a ceremony to signify nation's earnestness regarding boycott. In most of the cases, the salt or the cloth was voluntarily given away by the merchants to be thrown into the water or burnt as material for public demonstration. Though there were some cases of violent seizure and destruction of foreign goods, boycott of British goods was mostly effected through the moral influence of Aswini Kumar Dutt and his co-workers. The Government officers of Barisal district were seriously perturbed at the almost complete stoppage of the import of British goods in the district. It made the Government furious; Gurkha and Pathan soldiers were stationed in Barisal town and even in some villages and in the two business centres, Jhalakati and Nalchiti. Gurkha and Pathan armed men were practically let loose on the unarmed and helpless people. Stories of their oppression were coming out almost daily.

Oppression of the people of Barisal attracted the attention of the whole of India. One soldier was reported to have committed a criminal assault on a sweeper girl. The case was reported in various newspapers of the two Bengals; but somehow the wrath of the East Bengal and Assam Government fell on *Janasakti* of Sylhet. The editor was threatened and was asked to publish a contradiction of the report. The editor, on the contrary, after making proper enquiries, reiterated the earlier information with greater emphasis. The Government stopped all advertisements to that paper. This action drew the attention even of Gokhale who raised quite a storm in the then Imperial Council. At last, the Central Government intervened in the matter and the Lt. Governor of East Bengal and Assam had to modify the order stopping all Government advertisements in that paper.

There were cases of indiscriminate assault on the people, particularly at Banaripara, Jhalakati, Nalchiti and many other places, including Barisal town. Indignant protests rose from all parts of the two provinces of Bengal and East Bengal-and-Assam as well as other parts of India. There was hardly any rule of law in the province of East Bengal and Assam; the autocratic Lt. Governor, Sir Bamfylde Fuller, poured his fullest wrath on Barisal. Unable to curb the spirit of the people by repressive measures, the Government of East Bengal and Assam grew still more infuriated and imposed punitive tax on the people at different places. Barisal was a relatively poor district.



Few people had the cash to pay the punitive tax. The workers of Swadesh Bandhab Samiti went round not only within but also outside the district and even outside the province to collect money for paying the punitive tax. Workers went as far away as the distant districts of North Bengal for collection. Public response was very generous and enough money was collected to pay the punitive tax on behalf of the people. Simply for their refusal to import foreign goods, the merchants of Jhalakati and Nalchiti were subjected to punitive tax. But they gladly paid the punitive levy rather than import foreign goods. The workers of the Samiti used to sell indigenous salt, then known as *karkach*.

The Samiti was not content simply with doing this political and social work. It also had a programme of helping indigenous industries. It started an oil mill at Nalchiti and set up a number of handlooms in different villages. But the most important feat of the Samiti in this respect was the establishment of the Co-operative Navigation Co., whose vessels were expected to ply between Calcutta, Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal, Narayanganj and Serajgunj with headquarters at Barisal. It should be mentioned here that Barisal had then, and till now has, no railway. It is a riverain district and its main communication was and still is through river. A British-owned company, known as the Joint Steamer Company, provided the main means of communication between Barisal and other parts of the two Provinces of Bengal, including Calcutta and East Bengal and Assam. One had to go by steamer from Barisal to Dacca, the then capital of the Province of East Bengal and Assam, and for a journey from Barisal to Calcutta, one had to go up to Khulna by steamer; similarly to Chittagong and Faridpur. The Joint Steamer Company misbehaved with the passengers. Its European officers were haughty and insolent in temper and behaviour. So the leaders of Barisal moved to start a steamer company—the Co-operative Navigation Co. The Government authorities were, of course, sure that this infant company with hardly any finance would not be able to secure an adequate fleet of steamers, or even if it were, to stand competition with the well-established Joint Steamer Co. Government reports and despatches of those days stated that there was no reason to worry about this new steamer company. It chartered a steamer which could work only for a short time. The Joint Steamer Co. resorted

to all unfair means to beat this new company which had to close down almost before it could have a real start.

The Government took serious notice of the activities of the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti. Mr. P. C. Lyon, Chief Secretary of the East Bengal and Assam Government, reported to the Central Government in September 1908: "It will be seen that, as has already been reported to the Government of India, the organisation of the agitation in the interior of Bakargunj is far superior to that which has been observed in any other district of the Province. The Bandhab Samiti, which professed admirable objects, is undoubtedly allied to revolutionary societies and is an agent for the dissemination of sedition, has over 150 branches in different parts of the District and does a great deal of work in spreading disaffection among the masses." Mr. Lyon went on to refer to "a desire for independence of the British Government in all its branches, a feeling which naturally engenders anti-British propaganda at the ordinary meetings of the Samiti and its branches." He further observed: "As remarked by the Magistrate, the provisions of the Risley Circular were entirely set at naught during the proceedings of the meeting (of the Samiti)..... There can be little doubt that the Bandhab Samiti, under the guidance of Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt, is doing grievous harm in spreading racial hatred among the lower classes and false information as to the Government's proceedings and instructions." The Government report continues to cite instance after instance of undesirable and seditious activities of the Samiti.

While on the part of the Government, there was nothing but condemnation of and wrath against this Samiti, on that of the public there was whole-hearted support. Through the activities of the Samiti, Barisal attained an almost international reputation. We have already referred to Lord Morley's three anxieties about India, of which Barisal was one. Chidambaram Pillai on the eve of his being sent to jail, stated that he would make Tirunelvely a second Barisal. Tilak, Aurobindo, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal—in short, all the extremist leaders of India—as well as Surendranath Banerjea and other important Moderate leaders evinced great interest in the developments in Barisal. Even Gokhale took up the case of Barisal in the then Imperial Council. Keir Hardie and Nevinson, eminent socialist leaders of Britain, came all the way from England,

especially to study the situation in Barisal at first hand. Sister Nivedita also visited Barisal; and she contributed some articles to *The Modern Review* eulogising the work that was being done by Swadesh Bandhab Samiti. Aurobindo, almost immediately after his release from jail, went to Barisal and also to Jhalakati.

The cult of Swadesh Bandhab Samiti was forcefully put in the design of a banner by Sister Nivedita, who presented it to the Samiti. The flag contained the emblem of the thunderbolt made with the bones of Dadhichi, the saint who laid down his life and gave his bones for the making of the thunderbolt for the destruction of the evil demon *Vritra*; and she told the workers that if they could not die for others, no thunderbolt would be made out of their bones. It may be mentioned here that this flag which was presented to Swadesh Bandhab Samiti by Nivedita was the first flag conceived as the national flag of India. It was impressed on the workers that repression was almost an inevitable phase in any national struggle; and the workers of the Samiti realised this both intellectually and emotionally. The cult of courting suffering which alone could lead to ultimate victory was preached among the young men of Barisal. At the same time, the idea of social revolution and social work was also being propagated. It was in this background that the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti became the nucleus of the revolutionary party in Barisal when, in January 1909, it was declared illegal along with the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca, the Brati Samiti of Faridpur and the Sadhana Samaj and Suhrid Samiti of Mymensingh.

This was effected by the order of the Government of East Bengal and Assam under the powers conferred by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, recently passed. The Bengal Government also declared the Anushilan Samiti of Calcutta illegal. It will be recalled that in 1905 and 1906 almost all the districts of the two provinces of Bengal had similar Samitis which furnished the main working force to the anti-partition and Swadeshi agitation. These samitis or clubs were associations of young men—for their physical, moral and intellectual development. Almost all these samitis and their rural branches had some stock of books and some implements for physical culture; and there were also occasional arrangements for religious and moral discourses and study of books. These samitis thus made the beginning of a rural library movement. They also advocated social

reforms and the removal of social disabilities based on a rigid caste system. The organisers also tried to advance the cause of communal amity. These samitis tried to inculcate the idea of national service among the young men. From and through these samitis, some young men were picked up for revolutionary secret society work. The predominant principle impressed on the selected young men was the cult of self-immolation—voluntary suffering out of which a new force would be generated for the salvation of the country. These samitis, in fact, set afoot a programme of cultural, moral and political awakening among young men.

Another speciality of the Barisal movement was Hindu-Muslim unity. It should be stated here that the British Government resorted to the policy of partition simply to reduce the Hindu Bengalees into a minority in the new province. In East Bengal and Assam, it was being propagated that the partition was intended to relieve the Muslims from the tyranny of the Hindu majority. In almost all the districts of East Bengal, agents of the British Government fomented communal disturbances. But no such trouble occurred in Barisal; and this was solely due to Aswini Kumar Dutt and the workers of the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti. Maulavi Liaquat Hossain, one of the stormy petrels of the anti-partition agitation of Bengal, made several visits to Barisal, and he was ultimately arrested and convicted at Barisal. Among the local Muslims, Sayyid Mohammad Hossain, son of the Nawab of Saistabad, and Mohammad Ismail, another Muslim landlord (who was later a member of the Imperial Assembly at Delhi for many years), were with Aswini Kumar in this movement.

What has been stated about Barisal may be taken, more or less, as typical of all other districts; only the ideas and policies were more intensified and more thoroughly implemented in Barisal.

Barisal acquired the distinction of having made a serious effort to give a practical shape to the idea of self-sufficient village units and to build up a chain of people's organisations to satisfy their local needs and to settle their small conflicts—including settlement of litigation through *panchayat* courts. Rabindranath also preached the idea of self-reliant village community in his famous essay *Swadeshi Samaj*. Bipin Pal was preaching this idea for some years through his own weekly journal—*New India*. This idea of a self-reliant society was being preached in Bengal through different media by several

leaders including Bramhabandhab, Nivedita, Satish Mukherjee (of Dawn), Rabindra Nath and Bipin Pal. Only Aswini Kumar Dutt tried to give it practical shape in Barisal. That was why the government reports mentioned Barisal as "the most advanced area" of the province. The police reports also referred to the folk theatre or *jatra* party organised under the special guidance of Aswini Kumar in support of the Swadeshi movement and in ridicule of the government measures and the popularity enjoyed by these *jatra* parties throughout the two provinces of Bengal.

It may be stated here that in national education, which was considered an essential step for building up a self-reliant society, Barisal was not lagging behind. For all practical purposes, the Brojo Mohan Institution was a national institution—as it disregarded the obnoxious directives of the Government circulars. National schools were set up also in Banaripara, Jhalakati, Nalchiti, Bhola and Patuakhali. Rajani Guha, the headmaster of the local school at Banaripara, took the initiative in converting the existing school into a national school. He was an energetic worker and suffered Government persecution for his devoted service. The merchants of Jhalakati and Nalchiti contributed for setting up a national school. Rajani Kar—a leading local pleader—practically took the responsibility of the national school at Bhola. Similarly in Patuakhali, the pleaders and muktears collectively started the national school.

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## Chapter Twenty-five

# Bengal Provincial Conference 1906

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An important landmark in the history of Bengal during the hectic days of anti-partition and Swadeshi movement was the session of the Provincial Conference at Barisal in 1906. The partition came into effect on 16th October, 1905, a few months after the Mymensingh Conference held in April of the same year. By that time, it became public knowledge that partition of Bengal was being effected on the date fixed. The venue of the next annual session was, therefore, an important issue before the Conference authorities. Barisal having already come into prominence in the anti-partition agitation, a suggestion was made that the session might be held in that town.

The Barisal delegates did not feel very enthusiastic. Mymensingh was a rich district with its many wealthy landlords and zamindars. Barisal was a poor man's district with hardly any big merchants or big landlords. The economy of the district was mostly of sustenance agriculture. Barisal's rice, known as Balam rice, was famous throughout Bengal and was being exported to other parts of Bengal, especially to Calcutta. The district produced enough agricultural commodities to feed her people and also to export a certain quantity

to enable the cultivators to purchase other necessary commodities. Cash crops, such as jute, did not come into much prominence at the time. Considering the financial liabilities, the delegates were afraid to call the Conference at Barisal. Suren Sen, who belonged to Barisal but was serving in Mymensingh as headmaster of a school, persuaded the Barisal delegates to agree and invite the next session. Aswini Kumar Dutt was not present at the Mymensingh session.

Once the decision was made, Aswini Kumar took up the proposal with his usual seriousness and earnestness. One thing to be noted in Barisal was that everybody who counted with the public was an earnest supporter of the anti-partition agitation, mainly through the influence of Aswini Kumar Dutt. In about six months came the Puja vacation and batches of workers were sent round the villages to propagate the special significance of this Conference to be held at Barisal, and also to enlist members for the reception committee. A few months later, a reception committee was formed with Aswini Kumar as Chairman and Rajani Das, prominent lawyer, as Secretary. All the leading lawyers of Barisal and also some local landlords enlisted themselves as members of the reception committee; it should again be mentioned that the Barisal landlords were all small landholders. Practically all the big landlords holding large estates in Barisal district belonged to other districts like Dacca, Mymensingh and some West Bengal districts; and all their income went out of the district. With the earnest efforts of all and mainly through small contributions from ordinary people sufficient funds were collected for the Conference.

A session of the Provincial Conference usually attracted about 150 to 200 delegates and a few hundred visitors. But so great was the enthusiasm whipped up within the district (of which Barisal was the headquarters town) as well as in other districts of Bengal that a very big pandal capable of accommodating about 8000 people including delegates and visitors had to be set up. By the time the Conference was to begin the political atmosphere of Bengal and Barisal became quite agitated. Barisal had by then attracted the attention not only of the whole of Bengal but also of India, because of the repressive measures heaped on the district. The number of delegates from different districts went up to about 700, and visitors came from every village of the district. Barisal was a modest town with few pucca

buildings; most of the houses had thatched roofs and hence provided small accommodation. It became difficult for the reception committee to accommodate so many delegates. However, enthusiasm ran so high that a little physical inconvenience or discomfort for two or three days was not of much consequence. Surendra Nath Mitra, a professor of B.M. College, was made captain of the batch of volunteers and another professor, Satish Chandra Chatterjee, became one of the four Assistant Secretaries.

Aswini Kumar Dutt made a public declaration that any student of the Brojo Mohan School and College (of which he was then the proprietor) might join the volunteer batch and that he was ready to face any consequence to the Brojo Mohan Institution that might follow from that. This was in spite of the Lyon Circular prohibiting students from taking part in any political meeting and demonstration. Over 300 volunteers were enrolled, a large percentage of them being students from B.M. School and College. The remaining few came mostly from the clerks (*mohurars*) of local pleaders and muktears. All was ready for the reception of the President of the Conference and other eminent leaders of Bengal. Abdul Rasool, Bar-at-Law of Calcutta High Court, was nominated as the President of the Conference; and it was known that, beginning with Surendranath Banerjea, all the eminent leaders of Bengal would join the session. President-elect Rasool came with his wife, an English lady.

As preparations were being perfected, the Government's wrath also grew proportionately. Already there was a ban throughout East Bengal and Assam on the shouting of *Bande Mataram* in public. There was also a ban in Barisal on any procession or demonstration in the public streets. The Secretary of the reception committee, Rajani Das, approached the District Magistrate, Emerson, for permission to lead the delegates in procession with *mashals* or lighted torches from the steamer station to their respective residences or to the Raja Bahadur Haveli—the usual place for holding all public meetings in Barisal. The steamer was to arrive in the early hours of the night. There was no electricity then at Barisal; hence the necessity of *mashals* to light the way for delegates for half a mile from the steamer station to the Haveli. Emerson curtly refused permission. The Commissioner of Dacca Division, Mr. Le-mesurier, was then on a visit to Barisal town. Some years earlier, he had been District



Magistrate of Barisal and had developed some intimacy with and esteem for Aswini Kumar Dutt. Aswini Kumar approached Le-mesurier for permission for the procession. Le-mesurier asked Aswini Kumar to see Emerson in the matter. Aswini Kumar was hesitant, but Le-mesurier assured Aswini Kumar that any district magistrate of Barisal must have high regard for Aswini Kumar. So, he argued, there should not be any hesitation on the part of Aswini Kumar to meet him. When Aswini Kumar approached Emerson, he also was curtly dismissed.

The Conference was to be held on 14th and 15th April, 1906. It was Easter Vacation and also the start of the Bengali New Year. Delegates started coming one or two days before the Conference date. Surendranath Banerjea, Bipin Chandra Pal, Kali Prasanna Kavyabisharad, Bhupendra Nath Bose, Motilal Ghose, Abdul Halim Ghaznavi, Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, Bramhabandhab Upadhyaya, Krishna Kumar Mitra, Subodh Kumar Mullick, Aurobindo Ghose and others came in different batches through different routes, but all by steamer. The delegates arrived mostly by two routes—from Calcutta and West Bengal via Khulna and from Dacca and East Bengal and Assam via Narayanganj and Chandpur. On Government instruction, the two steamers reached Barisal on 13th April at the same time in spite of the fact that there was a normal difference of over two hours. The two steamers arrived at about 9 o'clock at night. As soon as the steamers arrived at the ghat, Aswini Kumar Dutt boarded one of them; there was hurried and heated discussion whether *Bande Mataram* should be shouted in the open street while proceeding from the steamer station. Aswini Kumar pleaded with the delegates not to shout *Bande Mataram* as that would mean the disruption of all their efforts to hold a successful conference. Surendra Nath also agreed with Aswini Kumar; and it was decided that they would not shout *Bande Mataram*; but some members would not agree.

As the steamer carrying the leaders and delegates was passing through the rivers from Khulna to Barisal—a distance of little over 100 miles—the villagers standing by the riverside in many places greeted the delegates with shouts of *Bande Mataram* and the delegates also responded with the same greeting. The same experience was shared by the delegates coming from Dacca via Chandpur. They

were thus emotionally tuned to an excited mental state. Krishna Kumar Mitra and the volunteers of the Anti-Circular Society of Calcutta, headed by Sachin Bose, particularly insisted that in spite of the complete ban on the shouting of *Bande Mataram* throughout the Province of East Bengal and Assam, at least in Barisal they should disobey that ban. Krishna Kumar Mitra could not reconcile himself to the decision of not shouting *Bande Mataram*; he declined the hospitality of the reception committee. He and some members of the Anti-Circular Society accepted the hospitality of Rajani Kanta Guha, Principal of the B.M. College, who, although consistently withholding himself from the limelight of active politics, as a staunch patriot shared the feelings of Krishna Kumar Mitra, who vowed a solemn pledge that unless they were allowed to shout *Bande Mataram* on the streets of Barisal, they would not touch any food, and, in fact, that night they did not.

Before this, there was another incident which was indicative of the temper of the local authority. One day the local volunteers gathered for a practice parade, in a playground by the steamer station known as the Judge's Field, which was Government property but was generally used as the public playground. Kemp, the Police Superintendent, saw some young men in uniform parading and taking drill and he objected to this as an unauthorised intrusion on Government land. He rushed there and asked under whose orders they had assembled there and whose men they were. Surendra Nath Mitra, captain of the volunteer batch, came forward to say that they were his men and that if anything was wrong, it was his responsibility. Kemp asked him in a haughty and angry tone: "Don't you know this is my field? Who gave you the permission to enter this field?" Surendra Nath said, "In that case, I withdraw my men. But I know it is a public playground." Kemp asked his men to take down the names of the young men and threatened prosecution for encroachment on Government property. This was typical of the prevailing temper of the bureaucracy in Bengal, particularly in Barisal.

On 13th April late at night an informal reception was accorded to Shri Rasool, the President-elect of the Conference, Surendra Nath Banerjea and other leaders. All along the route from the steamer ghat to Raja Bahadur Haveli, people marched in silence and rushed up to the carriage to have a look at Surendra Nath.

There was more than adequate police arrangement. In the meeting at the Haveli, the pent-up enthusiasm of the people burst into shouts of *Bande Mataram* for about 10 minutes. Aswini Kumar welcomed the leaders on behalf of the poor inhabitants of Barisal. Surendra Nath spoke a few words. The meeting then quietly dispersed. The leaders went to the respective houses designated for their stay; but Krishna Kumar Mitra and the Anti-Circular Society volunteers went to the house of Principal Rajani Guha.

Next day, the delegates, along with the President-elect and other leaders, were to assemble at and march from Raja Bahadur Haveli to the conference pandal; they marched in grim silence. While the batch led by Krishna Kumar Mitra was approaching the entrance of the Haveli, Kemp, riding his horse, struck a lathi blow on the face of Phani Banerjee, Assistant Secretary of the Anti-Circular Society. Phani bled profusely. This was the first bloodshed not only in connection with the Conference, but perhaps in connection with the whole movement. But the real scuffle started after some time; as soon as the workers of the Anti-Circular Society came out of Raja Bahadur Haveli, Haynes, Asstt. Superintendent of Police, charged his horse on them. Kemp, the Superintendent of Police, snatched the *Bande Mataram* badge from the chest of Sachin Bose, the Secretary of the Society. In fact these two officers themselves started the assault on the volunteers; and the police force imitated them and cried, "Got the order—beat them all." ("Huqum mil giya—Maro shalo-ko") Thus started a scene of indiscriminate assaults, lathi charges and horse charges on the unarmed volunteers, who not till then burst out into full-throated shouts of *Bande Mataram*. Some among the volunteers fell into the roadside tanks and drains. Even there they were assaulted. But the more vigorous the assault, the more vociferous and enthusiastic were their shouts of *Bande Mataram*. At that stage, one officer felt that the thing had gone too far. He asked the police to stop; otherwise some of the volunteers might even die. Surendra Nath was arrested on the street and taken to the Magistrate's bungalow. Aswini Kumar and two other leaders accompanied Surendra Nath; others went to the Conference pandal.

The Conference met in a sullen and grim atmosphere. The only business done was the reading of the speeches of Aswini Kumar Dutt, Chairman of the Reception Committee, and of Abdul Rasool, Presi-

dent of the Conference, and the passing of one resolution. As Aswini Kumar was with Surendra Nath in the Magistrate's house, his speech was read by another member of the reception committee. Abdul Rasool being in weak health, his speech was read by Ghaznavi, a zamindar and a delegate from Mymensingh. After the speeches, Motilal Ghose of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* moved a resolution condemning the unwarranted assaults and opining that not only in Barisal but in the entire Province of East Bengal and Assam the reign of law had ceased to operate. The resolution further declared that in view of that position, the Conference would refrain from discussing any proposals requiring Government intervention or any appeal to such an irresponsible government in any matter, but would confine its deliberations only to topics connected with and designed to develop self-reliance among the people. In the midst of this discussion, Surendra Nath and other leaders returned from the house of the Magistrate. The huge audience broke out into exuberant shouts of *Bande Mataram*. The resolution was unanimously carried and the Conference dispersed for the day with a vow of boycott of foreign cloth.

In the evening there was another meeting in Raja Bahadur Haveli. Three of the volunteers were severely injured: Brojendranath Ganguly, Chittaranjan Guha Thakurta and Phani Bhusan Banerjee. Chittaranjan was the eldest son of Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, one of the eminent leaders of the movement. A fluent speaker and powerful writer, he held a distinct position in the movement in Calcutta; and he was from the district of Barisal. Before the big gathering Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, standing by the side of the three wounded volunteers swathed in bandages, said that he was proud of his son Chittaranjan. The pitch of excitement can only be imagined. The present writer, then a young boy, was present at that meeting.

He was also present at the open session of the Conference next day which started at 11 A.M. with the national song *Bande Mataram* and some other patriotic songs. After four resolutions had been accepted, Kemp appeared at the gate with a batch of policemen. The volunteer at the gate refused him entry unless he produced a ticket or a permit from the captain. Then he sent information to the Secretary of the reception committee (Rajani Das) who came to the gate. Kemp showed him some papers and Rajani

Das took him inside the pandal. By that time, the Conference had already passed four resolutions condemning the arrest of Surendra Nath near the Haveli, on partition of Bengal, on National Education and on Swadeshi. Kemp came in and stood on the platform. The audience became excited and started shouting *Bande Mataram*. Kemp, not feeling quite safe, moved up to Surendra Nath and said, "I hope I am safe when I am near you." Volunteers and the audience insisted on Kemp saying *Bande Mataram*. Ultimately he had to shout *Bande Mataram* as he was visibly afraid of the angry crowd.

Kemp asked the leaders to give a guarantee that after the Conference, no one would shout *Bande Mataram*. The leaders refused to give any such pledge. He said in that case the Conference could not be allowed to continue. There was difference of opinion among the leaders. Then Kemp made a formal declaration: "The orders of the Government are that after the meeting is over, there should be no cry of *Bande Mataram* in public streets. If your leaders can give the undertaking, I shall allow the meeting to proceed. Your leaders say that they can't and won't take the responsibility. Therefore all I can say to you is to disperse. This may be done in either of two ways. By the aid of the police or going away quietly. I trust you will do the latter." There were a large number of ladies present in the pandal; the leaders were particularly worried about them. After some excited discussion they decided to disperse. After this J. Chaudhuri with tearful eyes and a choked voice appealed to the audience to disperse. He said, "Even if the Conference is not allowed to be held here, let the Conference be held in every house, in every man's heart; let fire be kindled everywhere and in that fire all British-made goods will be burnt for ever." Thus ended the Conference.

Most of the important leaders including Surendra Nath, Kali Prasanna, Bipin Pal, Bramhbandhav remained in Barisal for two or three days. They addressed public meetings and held in-door discussions. It should be noted here that Aurobindo took no prominent part during or after the conference—though he was in the front rank in the procession which was dispersed with lathi-charge. After the conference, he toured through different areas of East Bengal along with Bipin Pal. Practically, it was his first experience of rural and mofussil Bengal. The scene and the excitement of the conference and

his tour in East Bengal "gave Shri Aurobindo a firsthand knowledge of the political situation in the country."\* He was then still in the Baroda service and was on leave. He returned to Baroda in June only to tender his resignation there and to return to Calcutta for plunging himself fully into politics.

Surendra Nath Banerjea, arrested on the previous day, was brought before Emerson, the District Magistrate. It will be recalled that Surendra Nath had been a member of the Indian Civil Service from which he had resigned some years earlier. Having been brought before the Magistrate, he made a move to occupy an empty chair, but Emerson in an insulting manner ordered him, "Stand up, you are a prisoner." Surendra Nath kept standing, saying, "I have not come here to be insulted." He was first charged under Sec. 107 I.P.C. which would bind him to keep the peace for one year. But the proceedings under Section 107 were "dropped as the occurrences of 14.4.1906 made action under Sec. 144 necessary and Sec. 107 was no longer necessary."

The first of these trials took place in the bungalow of the District Magistrate and in the presence of some leaders of Barisal. Surendra Nath was asked to make a statement and the court recorded his statement as follows:

"The accused admits that:—'rows of two and three were proceeding from Raja Bahadur's Haveli to the place of meeting and some behind were shouting *Bande Mataram*. We wanted to test the legality of the order prohibiting the shouting of *Bande Mataram* in the streets. Then the District Superintendent of Police told me I was under arrest and I at once surrendered and have come here'.

Read over to the accused and admitted."

On this statement, the District Magistrate directed him to pay a fine of Rs. 200 or in default to go to jail for one month. But in the course of the hearing, Emerson remarked, "This is disgraceful," and on that Surendra Nath said, "I protest against such a remark. A remark of this kind ought not to come from the court." Emerson, who was almost mad with fury, retorted, "Keep quiet. This is contempt of court and I shall draw up contempt proceedings against you." Surendra Nath replied, "I have done nothing wrong. Do just

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\* *The Liberator* by Sisir Kumar Mitra.

as you please," and Emerson gave him an opportunity to apologise. Surendra Nath said, "I respectfully decline to apologise; I have done nothing wrong." He was fined Rs. 200 for contempt of court. Surendra Nath paid Rs. 400 to the District Magistrate and appeared before the Conference. All this to Surendra Nath, the undisputed leader of two Bengals in the anti-partition and the Swades'ai movement, and also an eminent all-India leader !

In connection with the Barisal Conference, a number of cases were instituted both by the Government and by the public. The police high-handedness during those few days was taken note of, and it attracted the attention of all the leaders assembled in Barisal. Satish Chandra Mukherjee (who later on became famous as Swami Prajnananananda Saraswaty) filed a formal complaint in the court of a Deputy Magistrate that while he was going to the Conference pandal with copies of the printed speech of the President, the Asstt. Superintendent of Police, Mr. Haynes, and another European officer had snatched them away from his hands. The Deputy Magistrate sent the case to the District Magistrate who dismissed the case under Sec. 203 Cr. P.C. observing that "this took place apparently at the illegal procession. The taking of the paper is a trivial incident and the complainant had no right to be in an illegal procession. Struck off, Sec. 202 Cr. P.C." The case went up to the High Court, which ordered a retrial. At the retrial, the trying Deputy Magistrate observed, "it was not perhaps quite proper for the A.D.S.P. to snatch away the pamphlets from the complainant's hands after the latter had expressed his unwillingness to give it. But the pamphlets were meant for free distribution that afternoon, although after the speech had been read. If the A.D.S.P. had waited till then, complainant would probably have willingly given him a copy. Perhaps the complainant did not expect such a treatment from a gentleman of the position of the A.D.S.P. He was not then engaged in stopping a procession under the order of any superior authority. But it is, after all, a trivial incident and is covered by Sec. 95 I.P.C. The case is therefore dismissed under Sec. 203 Cr. P.C."

Another case in this connection was filed by an Assistant Secretary of the Reception Committee, Haranath Ghose, against the Superintendent of Police, Kemp, for illegally dispersing the Conference. The trying Deputy Magistrate referred the case to the

District Magistrate, saying, "This is a complaint against the S.P.; submitted to the District Magistrate." The District Magistrate Emerson wrote, "Dismissed Sec. 203 C.P.C. The meeting was dispersed by my order under Sec. 144 C.P.C."

Surendra Nath Banerjea's case also went up to the High Court. The trying judge Cargill ultimately allowed the appeal, saying, "We set aside the order complained of, and direct that the fine, if paid, be refunded." The Judge also noted the very insulting manner in which the District Magistrate treated a man of eminence like Surendra Nath Banerjea. It may be interesting for the readers to know that when Surendra Nath became a Minister in 1921, this very Emerson had to serve under Surendra Nath as the Secretary of the Department.

The Conference ended in complete confusion. It could not pass all the resolutions; but it remained as a beacon light for the whole movement. The enthusiasm which was created in Barisal spread to both the provinces of Bengal and East Bengal and Assam through the delegates coming from the two provinces; and all that happened subsequently in Barisal was in the context of the excitement created by this Conference. Then came the Gurkha and Pathan soldiers, the police and punitive taxes, indiscriminate beating, lathi charges and assaults on innocent citizens.



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## Chapter Twenty-six

# Revolutionary Organisation in Barisal

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As I have already stated, Swadesh Bandhab Samiti was started on 6th August, 1905, i.e. more than 2 months before the partition of Bengal which took place on 16th October, 1905. The literal meaning of this name is "a society of the well-wishers of the country". This organisation practically organised the political agitation in Barisal. Moreover, it became the nucleus of the revolutionary organisation there. Aswini Kumar Dutt, the acclaimed leader of Barisal, was the President of the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti; from that position he controlled the ideas and activities of this Samiti, but only as far as its public activities were concerned. The Samiti, almost from its very inception, had two wings—the public and the secret. Prof. Satish Chatterjee, who was the Secretary of the Samiti and Satish Chandra Mukherjee, the Asstt. Secretary of the Samiti, were really the guiding spirit of the organisation in so far as they controlled the secret activities of the Samiti. Satish Mukherjee, who was the youngest of all, had to come in direct contact with the young men of the town. It was he who mainly organised the revolutionary wing of Swadesh Bandhab Samiti.

A few months after the Provincial Conference at Barisal, a

District Conference was held in the Brojomohan College Hall. Surendra Nath Banerjea and some other leaders from Calcutta and from other parts of Bengal attended that Conference. Another important and significant person who joined this Conference was Satish Chandra Bose, the Secretary of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti. He brought with him a batch of young men expert in physical feats, lathi play both of small and big size, dagger and sword play; all these were demonstrated at the time of the conference. Contact with the Calcutta organisation was thus established.

By about 1906, at the request of Satish Mukherjee, Pulin Das of Dacca sent one Jatin Das to Barisal to teach lathi play. But he soon started persuading the young men to sign the pledge (*Adya Pratijna*) of the Anushilan Samiti, which occasioned a difference of opinion and a subsequent split. Jatin Das then left for Dacca. Satish took steps to build up the organisation on his own lines. As already stated, Swadesh Bandhab Samiti did not lay much stress on physical culture; in fact there was no *akhra* attached to the samitis. Satish also followed that line—laying greater importance on social service and the intellectual and moral development of young men. Some time after that, Barindra Kumar Ghose visited Barisal. As expected, he first went to Aswini Kumar and apprised him of the purpose of his visit—i.e. to form the nucleus of a revolutionary organisation at Barisal. Aswini Kumar told him that for these matters Barin should meet the younger Satish. Accordingly, he met Satish Chandra Mukherjee to whom, after some discussion, he handed over a revolver. This was some time in early 1907 or late 1906 and may be said to be the first contact of the secret organisation of Barisal with Calcutta. Satish Mukherjee was living in the office of the Samiti, and had opportunities to come into intimate and frequent contact with the workers, not only of the town but also of the rural areas of the district.

Naren Ghosh Choudhury, who belonged to Noakhali district, was expelled from the school in his native village Dattapara for participating in the political movement. So he came to Barisal (1907-8) to join B. M. School, where he came in contact with Satish Chandra Mukherjee. Naren's was a dedicated soul, full of energy, and he was extremely resourceful. The combination of Satish Chandra Mukherjee and Naren was of special importance in the formation of

the revolutionary group at Barisal. Among other early recruits to this group were Aswini Ganguly, Jogen Bose, Manomohan Ghose (later Swarupananda Giri—head of the Bholananda Giri order), Radhika Sen (later Swami Satchindananda Giri).

In November 1908, Aswini Kumar Dutt and Satish Chandra Chatterjee were arrested under Regulation III of 1818. Detention under the Regulation did not require any formality of a trial. And in January 1909, Swadēsh Bandhab Samiti along with Sadhana Samaj and Suhrid Samiti of Mymensingh, Anushilan Samiti of Dacca etc., was declared an illegal organisation. The house in which the office of the Samiti was located was occupied by the police and Satish Mukherjee, who was living there, had to shift to a small vacant plot of land where he built a small hut of his own. This became the centre of the Barisal revolutionary organisation, which always considered itself to be a part of the Jugantar group of Calcutta. He lived there till 1914; and these were the formative years of the revolutionary organisation not only at Barisal, but throughout Bengal.

By 1908, the organisation had spread its bed-roots to different parts of East Bengal and had also established contacts with the Calcutta organisation. In these earlier years, the activities of Aswini Ganguly and Manomohan Ghose along with Naren Ghose Choudhuri were of special importance. From Noakhali and also from some parts of Chittagong district, Naren was immediately able to bring a batch of young men into the organisation. Some of the important members of this batch were Satyendra Chandra Mitra who later made a mark in the Central Legislative Assembly and was Chairman of the Upper House of the Bengal Legislature; Nagen Guha Ray, noted for his literary talents; Kshitish Chaudhury, one-time Chairman, Noakhali Municipality; Hem Das, a zamindar of Chittagong, and others. During the 1908 famine in U.P. and Orissa, Satish Chandra Mukherjee sent two batches of volunteers with some money for relief work in U.P. to work under the guidance of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and in Orissa to work with some young men including Godavarish Misra. Aswini Ganguly, on his way back from U.P. relief work, halted for some days in Banaras and made contact with some local workers, including Sachin Sanyal. From U.P. he went to Orissa, where he developed close relations with young

Godavarish Misra, who subsequently became a prominent figure in Orissa politics. It should be noted that these were most exciting days because of the Muzaffarpur bomb incident and the Alipore Bomb Case.

It was mainly through the enterprise of Naren Ghose Choudhury that the organisation spread in Comilla and Sylhet. In Comilla they had the help and support of an influential person, Basanta Kumar Majumdar, a small zamindar in the district. His enthusiasm for revolutionary work made him lose almost all his property, and in later years he had to face considerable financial difficulties. He played a big role in the Non-co-operation movement at Calcutta along with his wife Hemaprova Majumdar, as trusted lieutenants of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. Basanta Kumar possessed a noble heart and an unlimited store of enthusiasm. He had a worthy wife in Hemaprova.

In Sylhet, Jnan Dhar took up the work of organising the party. Of a quiet and calm disposition and deeply devoted to his work, he used to discharge his duties in an unassuming manner. He hardly ever moved out of his home village. The Sen brothers of Baniachang, viz. Hem Sen, Biren, Sushil and Kanti, had their connections with the Barisal group through the Sylhet organisation, while at Calcutta they developed direct contact with the Jugantar group of Calcutta and played an important role there. I shall speak about them later on. Srish Chandra Dutt, who later became a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, was also an important member of the group. Ananga Mohan Dam, who was suspected to be the leader of the students' organisation in the Presidency College in the now famous Oaten assault case (1916), also came in contact with the Barisal group through the Sylhet organisation. The assault by the students of the Presidency College, Calcutta, on Prof. Oaten was an important incident in the politics of those hectic days. Oaten as a teacher was unnecessarily prone to offend the national sentiments of the students, so they decided to teach him a lesson. Subhas Chandra Bose was also involved in this incident. A number of students from the Presidency College, including Ananga Dam, Subhas, Satish Dey and some others, were expelled on suspicion of being involved in this case.

The Barisal group established some contact at Banaras also.

Satish Chandra Mukherjee (later Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty) was a frequent visitor to Banaras, particularly in connection with his study of Sanskrit and Indian philosophical subjects. There he came in contact with Saradacharan Maitra, a man of religious but highly patriotic disposition who belonged to Rangpur district. Through him the Barisal group had some contacts in Rangpur district also but these did not develop much.

In the neighbouring district of Faridpur, the Barisal group was able to get a batch of devoted workers through Nikhil Ranjan Guha Ray who, though belonging to Faridpur, was a student at Barisal. This group operated only in one part of Faridpur district, i.e., Idilpur Pargana. Nikhil Guha Ray is a type by himself. Thoroughly honest, extremely austere in his personal life, an enthusiastic teacher of young men, his own standard of devotion to duty and moral sense often made him look whimsical and even a little tyrannical. He had the distinction of having been sent to the Andamans twice—first in 1915 in the Sibpur dacoity case, and subsequently during the movement of the thirties. After independence he started a school for the poor at Calcutta.

In 1909, after passing the Entrance examination, Manoranjan Gupta came to Barisal from his village home. Manoranjan easily won the admiration of Satish Mukherjee and Aswini Kumar Dutta. He was considered to be a very efficient worker, a man of high moral standard and a good organiser. While studying in B. M. College, he took an active part in spreading the organisation and in many overt activities for securing money. Naren and Manoranjan complemented each other in every respect. Naren was impulsive, restless and endowed with an unlimited power of initiative; Manoranjan on the other hand was calm, calculating, determined and grim. Among other important members of this group at Barisal were Satin Sen and Sudhir Das Gupta (later Professor, Scottish Church College).

The Barisal group, like many other district organisations, had earlier contacts with the Calcutta organisation; but after the Alipur Bomb Case, the Calcutta organisation lost contact with many of the mofussil organisations, particularly with the East Bengal units. In fact, in the wake of arrests and searches after the Muzaffarpur bomb explosion, the Calcutta central organisation was seriously

disorganised, stray and disjointed cells and groups were still trying to develop an organised movement. We have already seen, how contact with different East Bengal units was re-established by about 1912-14. In 1913 the devastating floods of the Damodar river affecting the districts of Midnapur, Hooghly and Burdwan provided an opportunity to Manoranjan, Aswini Ganguly and others to go out for relief work in different parts of the affected areas; and there Manoranjan came in contact, among others, with Jadugopal Mukherjee, one of the top men of the Calcutta section of Jugantar. The acquaintance developed into intimacy and political comradeship.

Narendra Mohan Ghosh Choudhury was such a restless spirit that he could not evade police attention for long. He was prosecuted under Sect on 109 of the Cr.P.C., i.e., for bad livelihood. This section of the law was very often used against political workers though it was originally intended to be used against professional criminals and habitual offenders. After his release from conviction, he was sent to Calcutta for his personal safety as well as for picking up contacts with Calcutta and other districts. That was in 1912; and there he picked up contact with Bepin Ganguly and Anukul Mukherjee of the Atmonnati group. When Manoranjan also shifted to Calcutta after 1914, his earlier contact with Jadugopal Mukherjee greatly helped him in establishing contact with Jatin Mukherjee, Atul Ghosh and others. The Barisal group thus had independent contact with the two main groups of Calcutta—the Atmonnati and also the main Jugantar group. For all practical purposes, Atmonnati was a section of the Jugantar Party. It was at Calcutta that the Barisal group came into prominence and took part in many important overt activities of Jugantar in Calcutta, such as the murder of Suresh Mukherjee, the police inspector, near Cornwallis Square, and of Girin Banerjee near Masjidbari Street etc.

In reference to the Barisal group a few words must be said about Satin Sen. He had an extremely restless spirit and indomitable courage. He was of such a determined nature that no amount of personal suffering would deter him from the path or action decided upon by him. He did not care for any consequences that might follow and was not always amenable to party discipline. After some time, he almost broke with the main Barisal group but not completely.

He took a prominent part in the Non-co-operation movement of 1921, the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-32 and the Quit India movement of 1942. After independence and the 1947-partition, he decided to stay over in Barisal which became a part of East Pakistan. There also he came repeatedly in conflict with the authorities and ultimately met a premature death in a Pakistani prison. The circumstances of his death and the treatment he received during his detention in jail led many to believe that it might have been a case of political murder. He was a type by himself and even now his memory evokes admiration and awe. The present writer had the good fortune of enjoying his personal friendship notwithstanding occasional political differences.

On behalf of the Barisal group Naren made contact with the Mymensingh group which, too, following the arrests in the Alipore Bomb Case, had lost contact with the Calcutta organisation. On first acquaintance itself Hemendra Kishore Acharya, the leader of the Mymensingh group, was greatly impressed by Naren's personality, energy and resourcefulness. For the next three years these two groups worked in close collaboration in Calcutta and other places. Naren made a similar impression on Jadugopal Mukherjee and Jatin Mukherjee. Jadugopal used to think that he would be the Garibaldi of India's war of liberation during the First World War. With another group, too, the Barisal group developed intimate and independent contact; this was the Bogra group of North Bengal which grew around the personality of Jatin Roy. Jogen De Sarkar, of whom we have spoken elsewhere, was a law student at Calcutta; he was the leader of this group—next, of course, to Jatin Roy who was residing at Bogra. Naren picked up contact with Jogen and it developed into political intimacy.

I must also say something about Satish Chandra Mukherjee who later took *sanyas* under the name of Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati. He was the guiding spirit of the Barisal organisation. He frequently used to go to Banaras and there, too, he built up the nucleus of an organisation. He had occasion also to meet Rash Behari Bose there. Radhika Sen was mostly available to assist him at Banaras. In 1913-14, he stayed for some time in Calcutta. There everyone was impressed with his personality, intellect and spiritualism. In him we saw an unusual combination of *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma* (knowledge,

devotion and work). During a short life span of only 36 years, he had mastered a commanding knowledge of English, Hindi and Sanskrit. It was a wonder to us how he could find time to master the intricacies of Vedic Sanskrit grammar. We have seen him shedding tears while chanting Sanskrit hymns (*stotras*) to Hindu gods and goddesses. We have seen him sitting almost immobile and entranced in *dhyana* (meditation). We have seen him deeply engaged in revolutionary work, taking interest even in the minutest details, yet leaving the initiative to his lieutenants. And we have also seen him deeply absorbed in the study of abstruse philosophical books in original Sanskrit.

During the war, he was interned at Mahisadal within the district of Midnapur. There also he gathered round him a batch of workers, the most important among whom was Satish Chandra Samanta, later a member of the Lok Sabha, and Haripada Ghosal, the headmaster of the school, a highly learned man. Haripada later became the founder and Principal of Uluberia College in the district of Howrah. During the period of his internment in that remote village, there was no possibility of getting the required reference books etc. Yet Prajnanananda wrote a three volume history of Vedanta Philosophy, a treatise on politics (*Rajneeti*) and a small book called *Sabalata O Durbalata* (Strength and Weakness). Besides these, he wrote another book which ran into about 2000 pages called *Karmatatwa* (Philosophy of Work)—on the lines of comparative ethics. We shall have occasion later on to refer to his activities, but it should be remembered that he was the central figure of the Barisal group of Jugantar and a very important leader of the party. Jadugopal Mukherjee had very high regard for him.

I should also mention here the activity of another revolutionary party, the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. As was the custom with this Samiti, it put up its own men to develop an organisation in Barisal district under the complete control of its Dacca headquarters. From as early as 1907-08, some young men came from Dacca to organise the Anushilan Samiti though not with much success. Jatin Ghose was sent from Dacca by about 1910 for this purpose. During 1910-14 they had gathered a number of young workers and committed some dacoities for collection of money. One of their important overt activities was the murder of Manmohan Ghose, an inspector



of police, in 1911 during the Coronation celebration of King George V. Subsequently in 1913, the Barisal Conspiracy case began, in which almost all the leading members of the Anushilan Samiti, even those belonging to Dacca, Mymensingh and other districts, were sent up for trial. Some of the principal accused remainēd absconding during the trial and were tried in a subsequent supplementary conspiracy case. These two conspiracy cases seriously affected the organisation of the Anushilan Samiti, almost all the top leaders having been convicted. I have spoken about these two cases in another place. Jatin Roy—commonly known as Fega Roy—was a prominent member of the Anushilan from Barisal. An austere man, unsparing in enforcing discipline upon younger members, sincere and honest, he kept himself aloof from any public activity. The Anushilan Samiti in Barisal, as in most other districts, never became an integral part of the public life of Barisal. It was something like an extraneous organisation working under directions from other districts and behind the public gaze.

Prior to this conspiracy case, one member of the Anushilan Samiti came from Dacca to discuss the prospects of amalgamation with the Barisal organisation. For two days the discussion continued with Satish Chandra Mukherjee and proved futile. Satish Mukherjee insisted on some points, e.g., that there should not be any oath for the members, that there should not be any name of the organisation, that there should be autonomy for the local unit, and some other items. But the emissary of the Anushilan Samiti could not agree to any of these as the Samiti was insistent on retaining the name of the Anushilan Samiti, on not agreeable to allow any local autonomy, and to do away with the oath administered to all members. One special feature of the Jugantar was that there was no name attached to it. In fact, the name Jugantar was simply hurled at the organisation and it stuck. It was only during the First World War that the Jugantar workers accepted the name Jugantar Party. In this organisation, there was no formal oath for membership. Whereas the Jugantar organisation was a voluntary, informal federation of autonomous units developed in different districts, Anushilan was a centralised and rigid organisation with monolithic control and very strict discipline. One of the terms of the organisation was that no Muslim was to be admitted to the

organisation, whereas Jugantar made no such discrimination. The difference in outlook between the two organisations was fundamental and was evident in almost all the districts. That was the reason why the district units could not combine with the Anushilan Samiti, but later combined to form what gradually came to be known as the Jugantar Party.

Before concluding this chapter, I should say a few words about the Uttar Shabajpur section of the Barisal group of Jugantar. This area was almost at the southern end of the district. The main strength of this unit was the Kar family; practically every adult member of that family, in a way, was associated with the organisation. Whenever there was any difficulty about money or men, you sent word to them, and you got the required money or men. Abala Kanta Kar and his uncle, Harapasanna Kar, were the two main organisers. The organisation there was almost a mass organisation, particularly due to the local influence of the Kar family. The local people—mostly Muslim—knew what they were engaged in; yet they were readily helping them. Harapasanna was unusually tall and strong for a Bengali; Abala was the main active figure. Harapasanna was known in revolutionary circles as Hammer because of his physical strength and more because of his fame as being able to break open any iron safe by using the hammer in the course of a dacoity. Harapasanna is dead; Abala is now a blind man of 80. They continued to be important political workers and took prominent part in all the Congress movements, right up to the 1942 Quit India movement.

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## Chapter Twenty-seven

# Mymensingh Organisation

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The organisation in Mymensingh, the biggest district of Bengal, developed from the nucleus of some local organisations, one of which was started quite some time before partition. Suhrid Samiti was started as a benevolent institution in 1900 by Kedar Chakravarty, who was inspired by Sarala Devi, a niece of Rabindranath Tagore. Its main function was physical culture and rural development work. Though it originally started at Calcutta, soon it shifted its unit to Mymensingh. Kedar Chakravarty, who was the Secretary, had a dominating personality; and its President, Harihar Chakravarty, a local pleader, was more or less its titular head. Kedar was a very good organiser—efficient, resourceful and energetic. He gave Suhrid Samiti a wide base and established branches in important places in the district and also some branches in Dacca, Noakhali, Sylhet and Tipperah districts. Among others, Sitangsu Bhusan Sen, Jotindra Kumar Neogy and Brojen Ganguly (mentioned earlier in connection with the Barisal Conference) were important members of the Samiti. Brojen had a very sweet and resonant voice and was known all over Bengal as the bard of the nationalist movement. In the beginning, Suhrid Samiti did not seem to have any

marked political aspirations, but with the inauguration of the anti-partition and Swadeshi movement, it developed into a political organisation.

As we have mentioned earlier, the Tagore family may be called one of the pioneers of the secret society movement in Bengal. Sarala was an enthusiastic member of the group that took an active interest in organising secret societies. She initiated the Birastami ceremony which has been described earlier. In line with the Sivaji Utsab of Maharashtra, Bengal also started the Pratapaditya Utsab to commemorate the valiant deeds of Pratapaditya, who fought against the Mughal invaders of Bengal and died a prisoner at their hands at Delhi. Sarala Devi had a prominent part in starting the ceremony.

It is reported that Kedar Chakravarty had contacts with Sarala Devi while he was a student at Calcutta in about 1897 and that the idea of starting Suhrid Samiti was conceived at Calcutta. But the Samiti took its real shape at Mymensingh. In the meantime Sarala Devi had to go to Mysore on a teaching assignment. On her return to Calcutta in 1905, Sarala Devi had a long discussion with Kedar Chakravarty and others; and it was then that Suhrid Samiti took a definite turn to the political cult of organising batches of young men for the service of the nation. When she went to Mymensingh for the session of the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1905, she gave further impetus for organising the Samiti. After this Kedar built up the Samiti with branches in rural areas as a revolutionary organisation.

In the police report, whereas Aswini Kumar Dutt was treated with some respect and regard, Kedar Chakravarty was always mentioned as having gained importance "disproportionate to his character and attainments"; and the police report also recorded that he was not regarded with any respect by the public. Anyhow, he played a historic role in the development of the movement in Mymensingh; moreover, we need not take the police report as the true estimate of the man.

In 1906 Aurobindo Ghose, Subodh Mullick, Bipin Pal and other leaders visited the district. They all preached the gospel of nationalism and inspired the educated young men of the district. Among the local leaders Anath Bandhu Guha openly joined the anti-partition agitation. He also lent support to the activities of Suhrid

Samiti. Brojen Ganguly, particularly encouraged by Anath Bandhu Guha, went round the district with his melodious voice singing national songs; and he started a number of *Palli Samitis* or village societies in different parts of the district of Mymensingh. Brojen by that time had returned from the Barisal Conference and had learnt something about the moral and social ideas of Aswini Kumar Dutt and of the Swadesh Bandhab Samiti of Barisal. According to the police report, the *Palli Samitis* of Mymensingh were started with ideas similar to those of Swadesh Bandhab Samiti.

The important role played by some school teachers of Mymensingh should be mentioned. Though they came from other districts, they contributed greatly to the development of political organisations in Mymensingh. Surendranath Sen of Barisal was a teacher at Kishoreganj, a subdivisional town, and subsequently the headmaster of a national school at the same place. He took a very active part in the Provincial Conferences of 1905 and 1906 at Mymensingh and Barisal respectively. An eloquent speaker and a well-read man, he could enthuse young men as well as the masses. Because of his powerful speeches, he was then known as *Vakta* (orator) Suren Sen, to distinguish him from another Suren Sen—the historian of later days. Nikhileswar Ray Maulick of Dacca was a teacher at Muktagacha in Mymensingh district in 1905-06. He then moved to Calcutta and joined the band of pioneers of the Jugantar Party. Even while staying at Calcutta, he kept himself in touch with Mymensingh and took an interest in the political developments in the district. Jnan Mitra, another teacher, was also connected with Suhrid Samiti in its earlier years. Another teacher, Kaliprasanna Das Gupta, was dismissed from his post of headmaster of the Madaripur High School (Faridpur) for taking part in the political movement and allowing his students to engage in political demonstrations. After his dismissal, he found employment in the estate of Brojendra Kishore Roy Chaudhury of Gauripur and had to be in the district of Mymensingh most of the time. Subsequently he joined the Council of National Education at Calcutta, of which Aurobindo Ghose was the Principal. Throughout, he took a keen interest in the political movement in Mymensingh. He had some literary inclination, and wrote a number of books—mostly novels—which were popular in those days.

Another society, Sadhana Samaj, was organised in 1906 by Hemendra Kishore Acharya Chaudhury who subsequently became the real leader of the district in the revolutionary movement. We have had occasion to mention his name in different contexts, and have mentioned his generosity, broadness of mind, earnestness and sincerity of purpose. All over Bengal he was held in very high esteem on account of his idealism, sincerity of purpose and organising ability. Within a short time, he became the undisputed leader of the young men of Mymensingh and so, Suhrid Samiti also accepted him as its leader. Only a leader like him could take over the reins of the organisation from Kedar Chakravarty. It should also be mentioned here that Sitangsu Bhusan Sen, an enthusiastic organiser and a young man of selfless character, was murdered by some members of another revolutionary organisation. It was suspected that his murder had been connived at by some of his colleagues out of jealousy for Sitangsu's influence over the young men; but this heinous deed was reported to have been committed by a group of secret party workers who would not agree to work under the local leadership and took their directions from a centralised organisation of Dacca.

Important members of Sadhana Samaj, who subsequently attained some importance in the revolutionary movement, were Ananda Kishore Mazumdar, Manindra Chaudhury, Naresh Chandra Chaudhury, Surendra Mohan Ghose and others. Within a short time Kedar Chakravarty found that it was not possible for him to keep pace with the tempo of the movement and gradually receded into near-oblivion. Another important factor was the arrival of Tarak Nath Das, who subsequently took a prominent part in India's freedom struggle in the U.S.A. and Europe. He stayed mostly with Hemendra Kishore and toured extensively throughout the district as Tarak Bramhachary. He greatly influenced Hemendra Kishore and also the young men of Mymensingh in that formative period.

I should mention that Mymensingh was a rich district having a number of big zamindars, rajas and maharajas. Noted among them were the zamindar families of Muktagachha, Gauripur and Santosh. Hemendra Kishore belonged to the Muktagachha family, though in a way he was disinherited. The zamindars of Mymensingh played a

very important role in the anti-partition agitation and the movement against the British Government. In furtherance of the Swadeshi movement, they sent a number of young men to Japan and other countries to learn about textile and chemical industries. Particular mention should be made of Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya Chaudhury of Muktagachha who was generally known as the Maharaja of Mymensingh, and Brojendra Kishore Ray Chaudhury of Gauripur. Their support was not limited only to the district of Mymensingh; they also lent full support and made generous donations to the movement in Calcutta. The National Council of Education, which was started in 1906 to provide a substitute for the Government controlled educational system, was mostly financed by these two landlords of Mymensingh and Subodh Mullick and Rashbehari Ghose, both of Calcutta. Brojendra Kishore donated Rs. 5 lakhs for the National Council. The British Government put all kinds of pressure on Surya Kanta and Brojendra Kishore to persuade them to withdraw their support from the movement.

On the eve of the partition, Lord Curzon, the then Governor-General of India, visited Mymensingh and was a guest of Maharaja Surya Kanta. Lord Curzon came with the specific object of persuading Surya Kanta to withdraw his support from the movement. With this objective he made a personal request to Surya Kanta to lend his support to the partition scheme of the Government and to withdraw his support from the "seditious" movement. Surya Kanta firmly refused to oblige the Governor-General. He knew that by this act of defiance, he would incur the displeasure of the Government. Brojendra Kishore was called from Calcutta by the District Magistrate of Mymensingh to attend a Durbar to be held by the Lt. Governor at Dacca, but was later denied a formal invitation. This was a deliberate move to insult Brojendra Kishore. Both Brojendra Kishore and Surya Kanta were humiliated and harassed by the Government in various ways for their support to the nationalist movement; but both of them stood firm, risking all their property worth, even in those days, several crores of rupees. The East Bengal & Assam Government proposed the forfeiture or the seizure of the property of Brojendra Kishore but Lord Minto, the Governor-General, did not approve of it. It was fortunate that these two landlords of Mymensingh came forward in support

of the nationalist movement. Quite apart from their financial aid which, of course, was of great importance, their open support lent greater respectability to the movement and moral courage to the people. Brojendra Kishore was the more active in support of the secret revolutionary movement. In the Santosh zamindar family, there were two brothers; the elder one was a supporter of the Government and the younger one, Pramatha Nath Roy Chaudhury, was a literary man and wrote some plays advocating the idea of nationalism. He lent his support to the nationalist movement. Among the Muslim zamindars of Mymensingh, the Ghaznavi family was famous. There, again, Abdul Halim Ghaznavi was with the nationalist movement, as we have noted before; his elder brother, Abdul Karim, was with the Government.

While speaking about Mymensingh, we should mention another factor. Probably of all the districts of East Bengal, Mymensingh received the greatest Brahma influence. Ananda Mohan Bose, who was a Brahma, a man of saintly character and one of the most respected leaders of the nationalist movement, came from Mymensingh. After his return from England, he urged, upon earnest young men the necessity of preparing for a violent uprising. Another noted Brahma, Krishna Kumar Mitra, editor of *Sanjivani*, also noted for his goodness and high moral sense, belonged to this district. Krishna Kumar was the son-in-law of Rajnarayan Basu, a pioneer of the revolutionary movement. Krishna Kumar's house at Calcutta was an active centre of the movement during the early days of Swadeshi. The Brahma Samaj exerted rather an indirect influence while Ramakrishna and Vivekananda had a more direct influence in inspiring a sense of nationalism. But some Brahma leaders took an active part in organising the revolutionary movement. Another Brahma leader, Bijayakrishna Goswami, though belonging to Santipur, Dist. Nadia, West Bengal, had practically settled in Dacca for some years and his influence was felt all over East Bengal, including Mymensingh and Barisal. Aswini Kumar Dutt was in fact a disciple of Bijayakrishna Goswami who in his later years ceased to be an orthodox Brahma and became a devout Vaishnav. Manoranjan Guha Thakurta and Bipin Chandra Pal were also spiritual disciples of Bijayakrishna. The influence of the Brahma Samaj also played a part in the development of the Mymensingh organisation. Due to



this influence, Mymensingh made great progress in women's education and recognition of the rights of women.

It has been mentioned before that during this period, the British authorities in India, particularly in the two Bengals, followed the Roman dictum of 'Divide and Rule'. Since the 1880's they were openly propagating the idea of favouring the Muslims and instigating them against the Hindus. In Bengal, in spite of a Muslim majority, relations between the Muslims and the Hindus were fairly cordial, even though the Muslims had genuine economic and social grievances against the Hindus as a community and against the Hindu landlords, money-lenders and traders in particular. Islam is a proselytising religion with always some sort of missionary zeal among its adherents. The fanatical *mullahs* (Muslim priests) were propagating with the connivance of the Government even such anti-social ideas as the kidnapping of Hindu widows and marrying them, destroying the idols of Hindu gods and goddesses, desecrating Hindu temples, and so on. The British Government was propagating the idea that the Muslims were eager to purchase British cloth and salt but that the Hindu agitators were not allowing them that facility, and that the Muslims had become angry and resentful towards the Hindus and consequently towards the Swadeshi movement. It should be here stated that the Muslims as a community were direct beneficiaries of the Swadeshi movement as a large section of them were weavers and producers of other commodities taken as substitutes for the British goods.

This propaganda became the more virulent in Mymensingh because of Lord Curzon's wrath against the Mymensingh zamindars for their strong opposition to his partition scheme. All these led to a tension of feeling between the two communities. Except for Barisal—mainly due to the influence of Aswini Kumar Dutt—almost all the districts in East Bengal suffered some communal riots or tension. Before the fire had spread to Mymensingh, a communal riot broke out in the adjacent district of Tipperah. The occasion was the visit of the Nawab of Dacca to the town of Comilla, the headquarters of the district. It will be recalled that the Nawab of Dacca was the main instrument of the Government for supporting this Bengal partition proposal and for fomenting communal tension. The story of the Comilla riot has been told already in a previous

chapter. Government machinery was fully used to excite the Muslim *mullahs* against the Hindus.

The repercussion of this insidious propaganda of the Government became visible in Mymensingh in about April 1907. Then began what was known as the Jamalpur riots. Of all the communal riots of those days, it was the most heinous and it continued for over two weeks. Moreover, the Government was almost directly fomenting the Jamalpur riots and giving all encouragement to the Muslims. Communal passion was raging throughout the province. I should frankly admit that the trend of the political movement was to some extent biased towards Hindu customs and rituals; and the Government made more than full use of that. The Dacca Anushilan Samiti introduced the system of initiating every member with three oaths—the preliminary (*Adya*), the intermediate (*Madhya*) and the final (*Anta*)—preferably before a picture or image of goddess Kali. Anushilan Samiti of Dacca put a ban on a Muslim being a member of the Samiti. Dacca town had a peculiar social condition—particularly because of a section of Muslims, commonly known as the *kuttis*, who were noted for their hooliganism and anti-Hindu attitude. It was because of this that the Dacca Samiti had to take that decision; the alternative was to lose the support of the Hindu middle class. It should also be recalled that the secret revolutionary movement was a movement of middle class young men and there was, then, practically no Muslim middle class. The original Anushilan Samiti at Calcutta was founded or at least organised by a Christian, P. Mitra. It must be said, however, that the nationalists or even the organisers of revolutionary societies were not anti-Muslim in their behaviour. On the contrary, during the Swadeshi movement, there was a definite eagerness to enlist the support of the Muslim community and a number of eminent Muslim leaders were in the movement.

The Jamalpur riots deserve detailed mention in the history of that period. An annual fair lasting over two months used to be held in the sub-divisional town of Jamalpur, starting in April and ending with *Janmastami*, the day of birth of Lord Krishna—usually taking place in August. Many vendors and stalls sold all sorts of articles to the people visiting the fair, locally called the *mela*. Volunteers occasionally visited the fair to see that no foreign

goods were sold in the fair. On 20th April, a large number of volunteers numbering over a hundred paraded the streets with shouts of *Bande Mataram* and badges on their chest. Some had sticks or lathis in their hands. According to a Government report\*, in their enthusiasm for the boycott of foreign goods, the people destroyed some foreign-made toys, salt etc. The atmosphere of the whole district of Mymensingh, including the town of Jamalpur, was surcharged with communal passion, particularly instigated by the Government and propagated by the fanatical Muslim mullahs.

The Mohamedans attacked the volunteers with lathis and other weapons. The latter then took shelter in some building where the Muslims followed them. A party of Muslims also entered a temple called Durgabari and destroyed the image which was being prepared for the celebration of the Basanti Puja. The Sub-divisional Officer saw the damage done to the temple and the image, but took no action. Rather, the authorities allowed the Muslims to attack Hindu houses. The Muslims destroyed some Swadeshi shops and stalls in the fair and also attacked some *kutcheries* or offices of the Gauripur and Ramgopalpur zamindars. The Muslim mob ran towards the railway station where the fleeing Hindus had taken shelter. The Muslims "hammered Hindu houses on the way, entered 3 Swadeshi shops and damaged some stalls." A number of Hindus were wounded and had to be put in hospital for over two weeks. One Hindu was drowned in a tank and the police report read—"death due to drowning". The S.D.O. met the returning Muslims and asked them to surrender their lathis. "They dispersed and no arrests were made."† All this happened on 21st April, 1907.

Then the Muslims were given almost a free hand under the protection of the authorities to indulge in all sorts of hooliganism and mischief to the Hindus, including abduction of women. On the 22nd, Brojendra Kishore Roy Chaudhury sent a wire from Calcutta to the District Magistrate of Mymensingh, drawing his attention to the excesses committed and seeking police protection. The Magistrate had no time or inclination to reply to this urgent telegram for one full week. On 29th April, he put the blame on the zamindars and their officials for not being present in their *kutcheries* in spite

\*Divisional Commissioner R. Nathan's report, 24.4.07.

†Passages in quotations are taken from the Government records.

of the hooliganism. By that time, the excesses committed particularly on one of the Hindu temples and Hindu women had attracted the notice of the Calcutta political leaders. Bhupendra Nath Dutt, the editor of *Jugantar*, had been in Mymensingh a few days prior to these riots. He might have sent some information to Calcutta; anyhow a number of revolutionary leaders from Calcutta rushed to Mymensingh. Bepin Ganguly, Harish Sikdar, Nikhil Roy Maulick, Indra Nandi, Sudhir Sarkar, Pravash Dey and others went to Jamalpur with some revolvers and pistols. On 27th April, a clash occurred between the Hindus and the Muslims. A Muslim was shot in the thigh. A young man named Prakash Dutt, a son of a mukhtear, was alleged to have fired the shot when the *kutchery* of the Gouripur estate was attacked.

On 27th night, there was again an attack on the Hindu temple called Dayamoyee temple. The Hindus fired four shots, two from a revolver and two from a shotgun. This gave an excuse to the authorities to break into the inner precincts of the temple and make a thorough search. They gave an explanation that the search was necessary as the temple and the *kutcheries* of the zamindars were being used for rendezvous by the Hindu mob. A thorough search was made both of the temple and of the offices of the zamindars. The usual weapons maintained by the zamindars of those days, some sticks and spearheads, were found; but no revolver or gun was found either in the temple or in the zamindars' *kutcheries*.

The most surprising feature of the whole affair was narrated by Brojendra Kishore Roy Chaudhury to the District Magistrate in his letter dated 2nd May. When the Muslims invaded their *kutcheries* and demanded that all lathis or sticks in the hands of their chowkidars should be handed over, they were accompanied by the DSP and also the SDO. These two officials gave repeated assurance of protection to the inmates of the *kutchery* if the lathis were surrendered. When, on this assurance, the lathis were surrendered, in the presence of the SDO and under the orders of the DSP, the mob and the police combined in making indiscriminate attacks on the officials and employees of the *kutchery*. The main reason for the wrath of the Government against these officials of the zamindars can be found in the Division Commissioner's report: "The *naibs* (revenue collectors) and other local agents (of

the zamindars) were deeply involved in the boycott movement and in interference with the *mela* which provoked the first outbreak of Jamalpur on 21-4-1907." It should be mentioned here that the matter went up to the India Government and Risley, the Chief Secretary, put up a note to the Viceroy :

"As usual, the students were aggressors. The image destroyed was one of ordinary clay type made for temporary puja purposes and then thrown into a tank or left about to melt away. If the volunteers did get hammered, they have themselves to thank.

H.E. should see."

The then Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, Adamson, wrote on 8th May as below :

"The usual story from E.B. Nothing is done to prevent rioting, but there is a police investigation afterwards which ends in smoke. The authorities in E.B. want stirring up."

So, it is apparent that even the India Government was not quite convinced by the explanation given by the local officials. The riots spread from Jamalpur to neighbouring villages. The extent of the indulgence given by the Government to the Muslim hooligans will be seen from their own report stating that Miajan, a Muslim, proclaimed by beat of drums that the Government had permitted him to loot Hindu houses. Government also admitted some cases of abduction reported from different places. Many temples in different parts of Jamalpur subdivision were desecrated and many Hindu shops and bazars were looted. Only on the arrival of those revolutionaries from Calcutta did the Hindus organise self-defence, and the Muslims became panicky that the Hindus might retaliate on Muslim mosques; but that was not done. Only then did the Government think it necessary to take steps for stopping the riots.

The *Statesman* published a letter signed by some Hindu leaders of Bengal. None of them was then considered to be communal and many of them belonged to the moderate or even loyalist school of politics. An extract from the letter is given below as the passage will be indicative of the public opinion on the Jamalpur riots :

We have referred to the genesis of the disturbances at Comilla and Jamalpur. They spread from place to place, because the authorities were unable to cope with them. Instead of vigorously dealing with the rioters, they followed a temporising policy, which amongst an ignorant class of

rowdies naturally created the impression that the authorities backed them in their lawless proceedings. At Jamalpur, no inquiry was made into complaints preferred by the Hindus against the Muslims and no arrest made of Muslim rowdies charged with breaking images of Hindu deities or committing assaults for nearly 7 days. When the magistrate and the police went to search the houses of Hindus for arms, the mob accompanied them with lathis as if they formed part of the organised forces of the State. The result has been deplorable. The mob, as observed by the "Indian Daily News," have been encouraged in their lawlessness. Hindu shops have been looted; Hindu temples have been desecrated; the images of Hindu deities have been defiled; the Kutcheries of Hindu zamindars ransacked; Hindu women have been outraged; while all this rowdyism has remained unchecked and executive authority was slow to move and suppress lawlessness, repressive measures were being resorted to one after another in rapid succession to put down the excitement and unrest. Repression will be futile so long as the root causes of the public discontent are not removed.

Satinath Ray; Ananda Chundra Ray; Anath B. Guha, Aswini Kumar Dutta, Jatra Mohan Sen; Ambica Ch. Mazumdar; Narendranath Sen; Motilal Ghose; Baikuntha Nath Sen; Surendra Nath Banerjee; A. Chaudhuri; Bhupendra Nath Basu; Jogendra Nath Mukherji, Radhachurun Pal; J. Chaudhuri.

In the letter, the word 'mob' referred to the Muslim mob. The repression which the signatories condemned was all directed against the Hindus.

These riots made it clear to the Hindus that they could no longer depend upon protection to be provided by the Government. The powerful zamindars of Mymensingh also felt helpless. By that time, Hemendra Kishore had become the recognised leader of the younger section of the district. Some time before the riots Barin Ghose had visited Mymensingh, met Hemendra Kishore and given some arms to him. Bhupendra Nath Dutt and Tarak Nath Das also toured the district and had useful discussions with Hemendra Kishore. These riots provided further scope for the development of the leadership of Hemendra Kishore. All the young revolutionary workers who had come from Calcutta recognised Hemendra Kishore as the leader of the district. These riots were considered to be no ordinary communal riots but a fight between the progressive nationalist section and the reactionary section which had taken on a communal garb with the protection and connivance of the Government.

The Jamalpur riots attracted the attention of the Calcutta leaders and of other districts. As the 1906 Provincial Conference at Barisal had made Barisal conspicuous to the people of Bengal, similarly the Jamalpur riots of 1907 made Mymensingh noted in Bengal. It has

already been stated that Sarala Devi, niece of Rabindranath, was taking an interest in the Mymensingh organisation since 1905. P. Mitra, the organiser of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti, came to Mymensingh for organising the physical culture section of Suhrid Samiti. Mymensingh zamindars had been particularly mentioned by Lord Curzon as strong supporters and organisers of the anti-partition agitation. Apart from their political interests and sympathies with the present movement, they were all along noted for their keen interest in physical culture as also in arts and music. Wrestling was a fairly common practice with all the zamindars of Mymensingh. They were generous in encouraging and helping musicians and also wrestlers—the *pahelwans* Jagat Kishore Acharya Chaudhury, the senior most member of the Muktagachha family and his son Jitendra Kishore were all trained in wrestling and they evinced a keen interest in the physical culture section of Suhrid Samiti and Sadhana Samaj.

Besides physical culture, the political aspect particularly attracted the notice of Calcutta leaders; many leaders visited Mymensingh primarily for developing secret societies. Apart from addressing public meetings, they used to address young workers in secret. Among them Surendra Nath Banerjea, Bipin Chandra Pal, Durgadas Lahiri (a noted historian who started writing the history of the world and could write only a few volumes), Kali Prasanna Kayyavisharad, Maulvi Ibadatulla, Sarala Devi, Aurobindo Ghose, Subodh Mullick, and others frequently visited Mymensingh. In 1905, Pratapaditya anniversary was celebrated with great enthusiasm. At this meeting, under the inspiration of Sarala Devi, one of the sponsors of the celebrations, volunteers shouted *Bande Mataram*. It is claimed that this was the first time that *Bande Mataram* was shouted as a national slogan. Within a few months after this, this slogan was accepted by the whole country as the national slogan and it led to bloodshed in the Barisal Provincial Conference. It should be noted here that in the Pratapaditya celebration, Anath Bandhu Guha, one of the local leaders, in his presidential address exhorted the public to celebrate the anniversary of some Muslim notable with a view to fostering brotherly feelings between the two communities. This shows that the movement was not anti-Muslim in any sense.

On 30th May, 1906, within about six weeks after the Barisal Conference, Kedar Chakravarty and Brojen Ganguly (who was

severely beaten at Barisal for shouting *Bande Mataram*) led a procession in the open streets with shouts of *Bande Mataram*. On 6th June both of them were arrested. The spirit of the times can be clearly seen in an editorial note published in the *Jugantar* on this occasion. The paper wrote: "It is well and advantageous to bring out what is the inmost of an enemy. Bhai Brojen and Kedarnath, you have laid the Bengalees under obligation for ever by exciting the British to betray themselves. Be firm, without fear. *Oppression lends bestiality to the oppressor and divinity to the oppressed.*" (As translated by the Government from the Bengali). This was, at the time, really the cult of the movement as understood by the *Jugantar* organisation: to court oppression by defying authority and thereby make authority more and more oppressive and bestial; and this was calculated to rouse the sense of national honour and rights among the people.

Suhrid Samiti and Sadhana Samaj were not merely engrossed in political activities; they had some programme of social work also. The year 1906 was one of scarcity and near-famine conditions in most of the districts of East Bengal as also in some other provinces. In Mymensingh also, acute scarcity conditions were prevailing; and the two societies organised volunteer batches and collected money for relief work throughout the district. Under cover of these open activities, secret organisation was also being crystallised. In spite of Kedar Chakravarty being the organiser of Suhrid Samiti, for secret work the young men of Mymensingh clustered round Hemendra Kishore Acharya Chaudhury.

One of the most daring dacoities of that era was the Rajendrapur dacoity. This was carried out on 11th October, 1909, by a group composed of both Suhrid Samiti and Sadhana Samaj and also of some from the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca. But it was organised under the leadership of Hemendra Kishore Acharya Choudhury. A sum of Rs. 23,000 was being conveyed in a railway train. About eight armed young men got into the compartment. They fatally shot one of the three guards, stabbed one, and shot and wounded another. Then they threw out the bags containing the money and themselves jumped out of the running train. This may be called the beginning of a new organisation under the leadership of Hemendra Kishore which became the nucleus of the *Jugantar* organisation in Mymensingh.



But gradually, some workers under the influence of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti separated from the leadership of Hemendra Kishore and formed themselves into a branch of the Anushilan Samiti at Mymensingh. Among the important workers of Mymensingh belonging to the Jugantar group, after Hemendra Kishore, I should mention the names of Manindra Chaudhury, Naresh Chaudhury, Ananda Kishore Mazumdar, Mohini Sankar Roy, Rajendra Choudhury (he was the custodian of the booty of the Rajendrapur train dacoity) and others. They all contributed to the building up of the organisation. One name which deserves particular mention is that of Surendra Mohan Ghose, later a member of the Rajya Sabha and Deputy leader of the Congress Parliamentary party for three consecutive terms. Surendra Mohan, while a student of the last year class, was arrested under the Arms Act and was sentenced to one year's R.I. and could not prosecute his studies further in the local college. After his release, he took increasingly greater interest in the revolutionary organisation and ultimately became the leader of the Mymensingh organisation next to Hemendra Kishore, although younger than many of those whose names have just been mentioned. Even his father Kamini Ghose, who was also a member of the group, worked under his leadership. His organising ability was particularly noticed during the Non-co-operation movement and was highly appreciated by Deshbandhu Das and Subhas Chandra Bose. He had a sharp intellect and a genial and cordial nature. In those days, he was recognised as a leader of outstanding personality and calibre.

After the arrest of Barin Ghose and others in May, 1908, in the Alipore Bomb Case, the contact of the Calcutta organisation with the Mymensingh and other district organisations was temporarily snapped. Each district was organising itself in its own way; and Mymensingh also was developing its own organisation practically cut off from other districts and from Calcutta. The final blow came when with the promulgation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908 (commonly known as the Samitis Act) all these organisations—Suhrid Samiti, Sadhana Samaj, Anushilan Samiti, Swadesh Bandhab Samiti and Brati Samiti etc. were declared illegal. The District Magistrate of Mymensingh wrote to Sitangsu Sengupta, Asstt. Secretary of Suhrid Samiti, enquiring whether the Samiti had been disbanded at a formal meeting. Sitangsu replied on 15th December,

1908, that the guardians were afraid to send their boys for physical training to the Samiti, so it was not possible to continue that physical training institution any longer. But this was only the public aspect of the matter; secretly all the Samitis continued functioning more vigorously.

It was by about the end of 1913 that contact was again re-established, mostly through the students and workers of different districts staying at Calcutta. Advantage was also taken of the relief work undertaken during the flood of the river Damodar. During this period, Naren Ghose Chaudhury of the Barisal group also came in contact with Hemendra Kishore. Both the groups—Barisal and Mymensingh—then started working in close collaboration. The Mymensingh group also established contact with the Calcutta group. In this way contact between the Calcutta organisation and other districts developed round Jatin Mukherjee of Calcutta and resulted in what was subsequently called the Jugantar organisation and which took the initiative and leadership in the Indo-German conspiracy for an armed rising during the First World War. In many of the overt activities in Calcutta, the workers of Mymensingh district took a prominent part along with the workers of the Barisal and Calcutta organisations. Shortly after, the Mymensingh organisation merged with the Jugantar organisation.

The Jugantar unit at Mymensingh was a large organisation with a number of devoted young workers. Among them were Nagen Chakravarty, Durga Prasanna Roy (better known by his nickname Mangla), Prithwish Chandra Bose (better known by his nickname Pancha), his elder brother Khitish, and Shyamananda Sen, the youngest of them all. Nagen Chakravarty showed wonderful resourcefulness in many difficult situations. Prithwish was a care-free, devoted man without the least anxiety for his personal comfort. Shyamananda was arrested when he was just over 14 and continued to hold a responsible position in political life till the attainment of independence. Khitish devoted more of his attention to developing a volunteer batch.

The Dacca Anushilan Samiti also collected a batch of devoted workers in Mymensingh. The prominent leaders of this organisation in Mymensingh were Rabindra Mohan Sen, Purna Chakravarty, Ramesh Chaudhury, Jnan Mazumdar, and—most important—

Trailokya Chakravarty, popularly known as Maharaj. They also carried out a number of dacoities and some political murders, important among the latter being the murder of Inspector Bankim Chaudhury and Dy. Superintendent of Police Jatindra Mohan Ghose. As has been stated elsewhere, in this case a number of important leaders of Anushilan, including its main organiser and leader, Pulin Das, were on trial. Bankim, who was suspected to have secured information about important links of the Samiti and corroborating evidence in the Dacca Conspiracy Case, was picked out for removal from the scene. On 30th September, 1913, an acid bomb was thrown at him while he was in his house in the evening. He was immediately killed. The murder of the Deputy Superintendent of Police took place on 19th October, 1915; while he was shot at, a little child of his, sitting on his knee was also killed along with Jatin.

In Mymensingh district a number of dacoities were carried out between 1910 and 1916, and also murders. Both Jugantar and Anushilan groups were active in the district and took part, often jointly or independently of each other, in the dacoities. Two of the murders specially to be mentioned were of Dhiren Nath Biswas and Shashi Chakravarty. Dhiren was probably killed by the Anushilan section and Shashi by Jugantar, in both cases for suspected espionage. I have referred to the murder of Sitangsu Sen Gupta, a fine worker.

Far off from the current of those events, from the viewpoint of a narrator of history, we can now view many of the dacoities as avoidable; and certainly many of the assassinations might have better not been committed. Dhiren and Shashi were members of the revolutionary groups; they were suspected of betraying party secrets. Such suspicions were not always based on a correct assessment of facts and might even have been caused by personal jealousy. But in those exciting and hectic days, the young men did not have the time to think over an issue calmly and soberly; they were often hustled by the remorseless force of events into acts of violence. If they had not cared for the life and property of others, they were even more reckless about their own life and comforts. History will certainly take this fact into consideration.

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## Chapter Twenty-Eight

# Pioneering Work in Bombay

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In an earlier chapter I casually referred to the "revolutionary movements in the Bombay Presidency, particularly in connection with Aurobindo's entry into revolutionary politics. In justice to the revolutionary movements in the province it may be said that the earliest attempt in India to organise a revolutionary movement was made in Maharashtra which was all along smarting under a feeling of having been deprived by the British of its supremacy in India. There was a widely diffused anti-British feeling in the Maharashtra region extending from Nagpur to Baroda.

The last Peshwa, Baji Rao II, the head of the Maratha Confederacy, fought his last battle in the Third Maratha War with desperate valour. After the battle at Ashti on 20th February 1818, he surrendered to the British who kept him interned at Bethur near Kanpur on an annual pension of Rs. 8 lakhs. On his death this pension was not allowed to his adopted son Nana Sahib. The already existing bitter anti-British feeling among the people of Maharashtra was further exasperated by the denial of the pension to Nana Sahib. The Marathas were never reconciled to British rule. As in Bengal after the battles of Plassey and Buxar, for some years

popular discontent found expression in petty risings—often of a tribal and local nature and ultimately in the Sanyasi rising—similarly simmering discontent continued in Maharashtra for some years. The first eruption was the rising of Umaji Naik who belonged to the Ramoshi tribe. People of this tribe called themselves Ram Vanshis—the descendants of Rama. After harrassing the British officials for some years, he was caught and hanged in 1827. The *Bombay Gazetteer* wrote about him: “The singular adventures of this man, who but for the British, might have been a second Shivaji, are worth perusal.”

The second rising was organised by Ram Chandra Ganesh Gore, a Chitpavan Brahmin, who organised the Kolis. They ravaged the districts round about Poona for two decades from 1830 to 1850. Ram Chandra was caught in 1840 and hanged, but the Kolis continued their ravages till 1850. During the period of trouble the Kolis murdered several policemen and officers. In Poona and the surrounding districts, they created a near-anarchy situation, and hardly any administration could function there. Their rising was ultimately suppressed in 1850. After this Maharashtra was rather quiet for about 30 years. It is not a little curious that with all these outbursts of discontent, Maharashtra was more or less quiet during the Sepoy rising of 1857 in spite of the fact that Satara and Nagpur, two Maratha Princely States, were declared to have lapsed to the British Empire by Dalhousie in 1848 and 1853 respectively. It may also be mentioned that the Prince of Satara was a direct lineal descendent of Shivaji the Great. Other Maratha princes—Scindia, Holkar and Gaikwad—remained loyal to the British.

The third outburst occurred in 1879. The rising was organised by Wasudeo Balwant Phadke—again, a Chitpavan Brahmin. After receiving his school education in Poona, Phadke joined the medical college at Bombay; but he could not complete the course on account of poverty. Then he joined military service as a clerk. This provided him with some opportunities of learning military tactics and of securing some strategic maps and military information. Even while in service, he thought of designing an armed rising to overthrow British rule.

Then he resigned from military service and started organising a band. He could get easy recruits from the Ramoshis (or Rama Vanshis) and the Kolis; these two communities, in spite of earlier

military defeat, continued to harbour deep anti-British feelings. The Arms Act was not strict at the time; moreover, near about there were the Native States of the Nizam and Kolhapur from where procurement of arms was easier. Somehow, he managed to collect a few arms and also secure some money by committing dacoities. He created a sort of terror for the British as he was operating in a guerrilla manner, taking advantage of the forests and the hilly terrain of the Konkan and the Ghats. But the British Government forces also made vigorous and persistent efforts to capture him. They followed his track and chased him from one hiding place to another.

Phadke at last realised that all his attempts had practically failed. He took shelter in the Nizam's dominion; being tracked there, he took shelter in Madras. Then he became a *sadhu*, putting on the garb of a sanyasi. The Government declared a high reward for his arrest. He could not escape for long and was arrested on July 21, 1879 and put on trial. He was sentenced to life transportation and was removed to Aden to be kept in prison there. There he wrote his memoirs, which have been preserved almost intact. He died in the Aden jail in February 1883. Thus ended the life of a revolutionary patriot of Maharashtra who conducted a guerrilla rising for a pretty long time.

Another attempt took place in Kolhapur State. In 1893, the Shivaji Club was started there by Hanumant Rao Kulkarni with the set purpose of murdering British officials. The Government did not take much notice of the club till 1899 when its organisers committed a number of dacoities in the district of Beed within the Nizam's State. The club was then declared illegal. But it went on operating from underground. The anti-partition and the Swadeshi movement of Bengal (1905-06) created a new thrill in the hearts of Maratha young men. Tilak and Aurobindo had had contacts earlier, too. That contact deepened into a political *entente* between Bengal and Bombay. In 1908, the Kolhapur Club organised an attempt on the life of Col. Ferrie, the British Resident at the Kolhapur Court. The attempt failed; but this brought on the club all the repressive measures of the Government. The club gradually disappeared—leaving a memory in the minds of Maratha young men.

During the final decade of the last century, India was experienc-

ing a new problem—the communal problem. Lord Dufferin may be called the godfather of this policy, whose spokesmen were Sir Sayed Ahmad and Mr. Beck, the English principal of Aligarh College. The impact of this policy was felt also in Bombay and in Maharashtra. In 1893 there were serious Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay on the occasion of the Mohurrum celebration. The Christian missionaries also attracted the attention of the Hindus, as the former were making converts from the untouchables and the hill tribes. The Ganapati Utsab was inaugurated in 1894 as a reaction to that communal clash. Tilak started it on more or less the same line as Mohurrum with physical feats and other demonstrations to wean away the Hindus from the Mohurrum celebrations. It continued for ten days like Mohurrum. This utsab used to be celebrated in the past by the Peshwas, but was abandoned after the British conquest. Tilak revived it with the idea of developing militant Hinduism. The Shivaji Utsab was introduced in June 1895 on the coronation anniversary of Shivaji Maharaj. What Tilak was preaching in the public field the Chapekar brothers, Damodar and Balkrishna, tried to give effect to in practical politics through secret societies. The Chapekars were Chitpavan Brahmins.

Without some reference to the public movement in Maharashtra, it may not be easy to follow the trend of the political movement leading to the secret revolutionary movement. The Sarvajanik Sabha may be called the earliest political association in Maharashtra, having its Bengali counterpart in the Indian Association or the British Indian Association. This sabha furnished a platform for all leading citizens taking an interest in political or social regeneration of the country. It was generally controlled by moderates like Ranade, Gokhale etc. Tilak also was in the Sabha. Gradually the cleavage in outlook between the moderate and the radical wings widened; in 1895 relations became strained. Ultimately Tilak succeeded in capturing the organisation from the moderates. From this breach began the assertive strength of the nationalist and radical wing of thought. The election of a new executive committee of the Sabha on 14th July, 1895 marked the beginning of a new era in Maharashtra politics.

During this period acute economic distress prevailed in many regions of India. Grain riots were a common feature. Maharashtra

also was not immune from the acute distress which was pressing particularly on the peasantry. Tilak at this time had two papers under him—*Kesari* in Marathi and *Mahratta* in English. On the one hand, Tilak and the Sarvajanik Sabha organised famine relief; on the other, they urged the peasants not to pay taxes. Tilak and his associates organised resistance to defy the local authority and to refuse to pay taxes. Their line of propaganda was: better to die offering resistance and asserting one's own just rights than to die of starvation due to famine. There was another paper, *Kal*, conducted by Paranjpe which was also propagating the idea of Swarajya—i.e. independence, at any cost or at any sacrifice. It soon became a catchy idea. The Government then turned to repressive measures. They first withdrew recognition to the Sarvajanik Sabha as a representative democratic organisation. This was hailed throughout Maharashtra as a step to help the Sabha to be infused with greater vigour to serve the public by taking more pains and sufferings.

The whole of Maharashtra was suffering from a continuous famine for about 3 years. Along with that came an epidemic of plague. The toll of human lives in famine and epidemic is anybody's guess. Week after week, Tilak continued writing in *Kesari* and *Mahratta* against the Government, money-lenders and capitalists. *Mahratta* wrote: "The present rise in the prices of grain is partly attributable to speculation of grain-dealers and partly to the insufficiency of food stocks in the country." In a series of articles under the caption "Free Thoughts", he bitterly criticised both the British administration and its stooges in India—the money-lenders, the speculators, the capitalists and the moderates. In the name of organising relief for the plague-infested areas and of taking preventive measures, the Plague Commissioner and his officials were playing the role of many petty tyrants. Tilak described Rand, the Plague Commissioner, as "tyrannical" and stated that "the Government was practising oppression." He tried to impress on the people the futility of sending petitions to the Government as orders for oppression were coming from the Government. On 15th June, 1897, Tilak wrote an article in *Kesari* supporting political murder on special ethical grounds. Rand was murdered just a week later. Within a few days after the murder, Tilak was arrested and prosecuted



in June 1897 and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. This was the beginning of a new chapter in Tilak's life.

The occasion and opportunity of doing something through secret revolutionary methods arose out of some government measures taken in 1897 to combat the epidemic of plague. Rand, the Plague Commissioner, was over-zealous in his duty. What was intended to be a social welfare measure for the good of the people turned into an instrument of oppression in his hand. European soldiers, in their zeal for the work and also in utter disregard of the religious and social sentiments of the people, used to enter the kitchens and the sacred rooms (where the family deity was worshipped) of every family. The Hindus could not tolerate the profanity perpetrated by the British soldiers. Over and above this disregard for religious and social traditions, there was systematic oppression particularly of the poorer section of the people. While enforcing the hygienic measures, no regard was taken of the economic and social conditions of the concerned people. Then, to avenge the indignities and distress hurled on the people, Rand was murdered in Poona on 22nd June, 1897. While the officials and the people were busy with the diamond jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria, Rand, along with a military officer, Lt. Ayerst, was killed. Both the Chapekar brothers, Damodar and Balkrishna, were tried and sentenced to death for these murders. Two Dravid brothers who helped the Government in arresting and convicting the Chapekars were rewarded by the Government; but they were subsequently murdered by other members of the Chapekar Association. For this murder, Mahadeo Ranade and Wasudeo Chapekar were hanged. Tilak, the Chapekars, and other subsequent agitators like S. M. Paranjpe, the Savarkars and others were all Chitpavan Brahmins coming from the Konkan. So the Chitpavans became a sort of nightmare for the British.

After this, Tilak was convicted for preaching philosophical and moral support for political murders in his weekly paper *Kesari*. Two Nattu brothers were arrested and detained as state prisoners under Regulation XXV of 1827, the Bombay counterpart of Regulation III of 1818 in the Bengal Presidency covering the whole of northern India. The Nattu family, again of the Chitpavan Brahmin community, was a wealthy one in Poona and was reputed to be very

loyal to the British crown. In fact, after the defeat of Baji Rao II, the last Peshwa in the Third Anglo-Maratha War, the founder of the Natu family had hoisted the British flag on the palace of the Peshwa. After the Rand murder, the Natu brothers were suspected of financially helping the Chapekar group; so they were arrested and detained as state prisoners. The detention of the Natu brothers without trial figured prominently in the debate of the Congress in 1897 which described such detention as taking recourse to *lettre de cachet* method and repugnant to democratic administration.

As narrated by Yusuf Meherally in his *The Price of Liberty*, in the Congress session, the President, "Sir Sankaran Nair, laid great stress on the law points in the Tilak case and asserted with great force that in England Tilak would have been treated with all the honour and dignity due to a political prisoner. Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea was far more emphatic and eloquent, and thundered out to the assembly that his soul was in jail with Tilak, who, in his opinion, was perfectly innocent. Babu Umesh Chandra Bonerjee\* fearlessly pronounced Justice Strachey's definition of "sedition" to be wholly indefensible and repugnant to public opinion. When Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea reached the peak of his superb oratory while speaking of Tilak, people in the Congress rose to their feet in reverence, triumphantly cried out, echoed and re-echoed the name of Tilak and clapped their hands with such tremendous enthusiasm that even the stentorian voice of that renowned Demosthenes of India† was nearly drowned. Newspapers of the day described that magnificent scene in the Congress as unprecedented in its history..."

Even in 1897, Lokmanya Tilak was a national figure. Bengal raised more money than Maharashtra and Bombay combined together, and sent a leading counsel all the way from Calcutta to defend him. Lokmanya Tilak's was the first case in the annals of the Bombay High Court, in which Section 124 A was invoked, and the second in India, the first being in Calcutta.

The ramifications of the Chapekar group were suspected to be widespread—even up to Kathiawar.° Shyamji Krishnavarma of

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\* W. C. Bonerjee, the First President of the Congress.

† Surendra Nath Banerjea.

Kathiawar went to England in about 1898, apparently to avoid arrest for his connection with the Chapekar conspiracy and the Rand murder. I have already referred to the activities of Shyamji Krishnavarma, Madame Cama and Rana in England and later in Paris. It is relevant, however, to repeat the connection between Shyamji and Cama on the one hand and the Savarkar brothers on the other. Vinayak Savarkar, after graduating from Fergusson College of Poona, left for Britain in 1906 and immediately joined the Shyamji group in London. Since then, Vinayak had been working in close intimacy with Shyamji and Cama. But before leaving for Europe, Vinayak in collaboration with his elder brother Ganesh started in 1899 a society called the Mitra Mela—in line with the Hindu Mela in Bengal.

Before leaving for Europe, Vinayak came under the influence of a Hindu sanyasi named Agamya Guru Paramahansa who was almost openly preaching sedition and revolution. But his main target of attack was the Christian missionaries. It should be noted that the revolutionary movement in Maharashtra inclined more towards aggressive Hinduism. The followers of this saint formed a small committee to give form and shape to the ideas preached by him. The Paramahansa suggested door-to-door collections for building up a fund. Not much was done by this committee which lacked leadership and guidance on the departure of Vinayak Savarkar for Europe. Then his elder brother Ganesh formed another society, the Abhinava Bharat Samaj (New India Society), which may be called the beginning of a revolutionary organisation in Maharashtra.

The emotional and cultural inter-communication between Maharashtra and Bengal was intensive and effective. Even from the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, any movement in Bengal had its vibrations in Bombay as the province was then called. Similarly, waves in Bombay had their ripples in Bengal. The Bramho Samaj, the religious reformist movement initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal, had its counterpart in the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay. The widow remarriage movement of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar received large support from Bombay and Poona. Emancipation of women in the form of allowing widows to remarry, stopping early marriage of girls, allowing women facilities for higher education etc., found ardent support both in Bengal and Maharashtra. When

Tilak initiated the Shivaji Utsav, this was taken up by Bengal as a suitable national celebration.

Among the non-Bengali leaders, Tilak was the most popular in Bengal. When he was prosecuted in 1897, Bengal put up a concerted protest against his arrest and prosecution. A public appeal was issued for raising a defence fund and a Tilak Defence Committee was set up. No less a person than Rabindra Nath Tagore issued a public appeal for collections for the defence of Tilak. In her turn, Bengal found powerful support from Tilak in her agitation against the Partition of Bengal in 1906 and the consequent Swadeshi movement leading to the boycott of British goods.

In 1906, Tilak visited Bengal during the Shivaji Utsav which was celebrated all over the Province with as much enthusiasm as in Maharashtra. At a big public meeting at Calcutta, he highly praised the agitation against the partition of Bengal. Regarding that movement, he said, "It is a corner-stone. I envy the people of Bengal for laying the corner-stone." He further said, "Swadeshi aims at making people self-reliant and able to acquire the machinery of Government to put a stop to steps that are ruining India."

When the anti-partition and Swadeshi movement started in Bengal in 1905-06, Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale lent their support to Bengal's demand in their presidential speeches at the Congress sessions of 1905 and 1906 and also otherwise. Above all, Tilak and his band of followers lent support not only to the open movement against the partition of Bengal, but also to the secret, violent revolutionary movement. Both in Bengal and Bombay, the political movement was intermingled with the process of social and economic movement. Rigours of caste distinction, tyranny over women and the lower classes, untouchability, the near-collapse of the rural economy, lack of mass education, all these stirred the young men of Bengal as well as Maharashtra. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Debendra Nath Tagore, Sibnath Shastri, Rajnarayan Basu, Romesh Chandra Dutt and others had their counterparts in Bombay in Ranade, Apte, Agarkar, Bhandarkar, Malabari, Phule, Chandavarkar, Telang and others.

Then rose another batch in Maharashtra to line up with Surendra Nath, Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal and others. These were Chiplunkar, Tilak, Paranjpe and others. Tilak is a well-known name

in Indian politics and is even now highly revered as a leader of the Indian freedom struggle. Ranade and others were more enthusiastic for social reform and they thought that social reforms should be at least contemporaneous with if not preceding the political movement. Tilak and Chiplunkar—both Brahmins—were of the view that political freedom should not wait for social freedom which would be easier to achieve after political freedom. The contribution of Chiplunkar in the educational and cultural renaissance of Maharashtra deserves mention. He died at the early age of 32. He founded the New English School, Fergusson College and the Deccan Education Society. Tilak, Gokhale, Agarkar and many eminent Maharashtrians joined the society and the college, to serve on a very small salary—Rs. 30 in the beginning and later on Rs. 75 per month. Tilak did not think much of social reforms; but at the same time it would be wrong to consider him as an orthodox Hindu. Chapekar, before his execution, wrote some biographical memoirs in jail. In that he painted Tilak as near-heretic. He wrote: "Tilak is neither a thorough reformer nor is he a thorough orthodox. . . . I do not think anyone had even seen him performing such pious acts as hearing a *kirtan* or a *puran* or visiting a temple. He did many other similar things which would be disgraceful to any man calling himself a pious Hindu." So it would not be right to take him to be an orthodox Hindu. We shall deal with Tilak in the next chapter.

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## Chapter Twenty-nine

# Tilak—Maharashtra in tune with Bengal

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Aurobindo, the high-priest of the Indian nationalist movement in Bengal from 1905, had been in Baroda before that period and from there had maintained regular contacts with Maharashtra and more particularly with Tilak. Occasionally he used to contribute articles to journals in the Maharashtra region of the Bombay Presidency. His writings in the journal *Indu Prakash* were of special interest as it gave an idea of the trends of his thought in those days. These writings soon attracted the attention of Tilak. Before he left Baroda for Bengal in 1905, Aurobindo had developed intimate contact with Tilak and the Poona group. One Thakur Saheb from Udaipur State of Rajasthan, who had settled near Poona, started a secret society in Poona in 1896. Aurobindo was elected its President. From 1905-06 Bengal became prominent in revolutionary politics.

It will be recalled that at the end of the last century there was a widespread realisation of the growing poverty and distress of the people along with a sense of helplessness. Almost every intellectual paid special attention to the masses, which term in India at that time meant the peasantry and the lower middle class. Even a religious teacher and monk like Vivekananda wrote, "The only hope

for India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead." Again, "Give them (masses) their rights and let them stand on their rights." Similar ideas were preached also by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who deprecated the isolation of the upper classes from the masses. In Punjab, too, similar ideas were being preached. We shall refer to that in the chapter on the Punjab movement. In Maharashtra, Ranade took up the same theme from a higher plane in his writings on Indian economy.

Tilak became a protagonist of extremist ideas in Maharashtra. The vehicles of his propaganda were the two journals, *Kesari* and *Mahratta*. He wrote a series of articles describing the distressed conditions of the peasants. Both Bankim in Bengal and Tilak in Maharashtra wrote vehemently against the oppression by the zamindars—the landlords—who were described as the agents of oppression on behalf of the alien colonial government. The Indian National Congress in 1893 passed a resolution recommending a permanent settlement, i.e., settling the land tax permanently and eliminating the frequent, arbitrary changes in land revenue. Tilak supported the resolution and pleaded for easing the peasantry's land tax burden. His first conviction in 1882 was on a charge of defamation made by M. V. Barve—the Dewan of Kolhapur. Tilak criticised some of the arbitrary acts of the Dewan who sued him. Tilak got four months' imprisonment.

After the partition of Bengal, the emergence of an assertive nationalist movement in Bengal—the Swadeshi and boycott movement in protest against the partition—marked a new chapter in India's political history. The Indian National Congress had to take cognizance of the movement. The 1905 and 1906 sessions of the Congress at Banaras and Calcutta were presided over by Gokhale and Dadabhai Naoroji. During the Calcutta session of 1906, the nationalist or the extremist section under the leadership of Tilak tried to widen the scope of the boycott resolution, but failed. That was the beginning of the conflict between the extremist and the moderate wings of the Congress. The climax of the strife between militancy and moderation came at the Surat session of the Congress in 1907 where the extremists directly clashed with the moderates.

The apparent occasion of the clash was the election of the

President, but the real reason lay deeper. Surendra Nath Banerjea proposed and Motilal Nehru seconded the name of Rashbehari Ghosh, the President-elect. The extremists opposed it and Tilak stood up to propose the name of Lajpat Rai, who had just then been released from detention. But Tilak was not allowed to move his proposal; Gokhale particularly objected to this. This became the signal for the clash. The real reason was that there was a rumour that the moderates wanted to rescind or, at least, to modify the resolutions passed last year on, Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. No assurance on this was forthcoming from the moderate leaders. So Tilak took the lead in obstructing the session of the Congress.

Prominent leaders in the extremist group were Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal (commonly called the Lal-Bal-Pal trio), Aurobindo Ghose, Aswini Kumar Dutt and some others. The session could not be completed; it broke up in some physical clashes. For some more years the Congress remained an organisation of the moderates like Surendra Nath Banerjea, Tej Bahadur Saprú, Pherozeshah Mehta, Rash Behari Ghose and others. In a previous chapter, I have already mentioned that after the Congress session in 1906, Tilak remained at Calcutta for some days. The discussions and deliberations he had then with the Bengal leaders led to a closer tie between Bengal and Maharashtra and also to the development at the Surat Congress of 1907. In 1908 Tilak was jailed for six years. It was only after his release that the extremists were able to assert their position in the Congress in 1916. I have sketched the developments here, anticipating certain subsequent events, only to maintain the continuity of the story of Tilak's contribution to radical politics in India.

The anti-partition and consequent Swadeshi movement of Bengal found its first violent expression in the Muzaffarpur bomb explosion. The boldness and the spirit of self-immolation of those two young Bengalis, Khudiram Basu and Prafulla Chaki, stirred the deepest sentiments of Maharashtra and the whole of India, even though the real target, Kingsford, escaped and the bomb fell on two innocent European ladies. Paranjpe in his weekly *Kal* and Tilak in his *Kesari* wrote a number of articles eulogising the bravery of those two young men. *Swarajya* of U.P. also published similar articles. In his



articles Tilak made a comparison between the Rand murder of Poona in 1897 and the Muzaffarpur incident, and expressed his preference for the Muzaffarpur action. He wrote: "Their aim (in the Rand case) was specially directed towards the oppression consequent upon the plague. The Bengali bombs had, of course, their eyes upon a more extensive plan brought into view by the partition of Bengal (that the system of administration was bad). Moreover, a pistol or a musket is an old weapon, while the bomb has more than a form of knowledge; it is a kind of witchcraft, it is a charm, an amulet.... To speak in the language of hyperbole, this (bomb) factory can be brought into existence in no time, and broken up in no time as well. Therefore, how can the loose string of the law (the Arms Act) be put on these turn-headed wizards of the bomb?" Paranjpe wrote in *Kal*: "People are prepared to do anything for the sake of Swaraj. They have no dread of the British power."

While the Muzaffarpur bombs created a sensation in the country, the Anglo-Indian press vehemently advocated stern administrative measures. The height of such writings was reached by *The Pioneer* of Allahabad, which suggested that, "for every bomb outrage, twenty-five suspected leaders should be hanged." *The Englishman* of Calcutta suggested "that the worthy agitators (should be) flogged in public by town sweepers and their presses confiscated." In contrast to all these wild and fanatical suggestions, Tilak wrote a series of articles in *Kesari* starting from the issue of 12th May, 1908, putting up the other side of the case. He was all praise for the courage and self-sacrificing spirit of these two young men, Khudiram and Prafulla; he regretted that there was the necessity of such incidents in India, the land of peace and amity; and, lastly, he suggested administrative reforms with a view to putting an end to such things. Tilak strongly condemned the Arms Act and considered the Moghuls to have been more generous as they had not disarmed the nation as the British had done. He welcomed the advent of the bomb as the only way out from the devitalising effect of the Arms Act which he considered "a great sin of castrating the nation" committed by the British. In his words, "the manhood of the nation was slain by means of the Arms Act." To a disarmed nation, science had brought the bomb to assert its rights. That was the line of argument in the articles written by Tilak in *Kesari*. He concluded his article with these

prophetic words: "The real and lasting means to stop bombs consists in making a beginning to grant the important rights of 'Swarajya' to the people. It is not possible for measures of repression to have a lasting effect in the present condition of Western science and that of the people of India." Another extract from Tilak's writings quoted by the Advocate-General during his trial runs as follows: "The very system of administration was bad; and unless the *authorities were singled out and individually terrorised*, they would not consent to change the system."

Tilak was arrested on 24th June, 1908, on a warrant from the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, issued with the purpose of avoiding trial at Poona. He was not even granted bail. The authorities were afraid of popular demonstrations at Poona; all their precautions, however, did not help them in this regard, as will be narrated later on. He was tried for sedition before the High Court Sessions. Jinnah, Kelkar and Baptista appeared on his behalf. But during the trial Tilak's attitude was one of defiance; that is why Jinnah said Tilak "was determined not so much to secure his acquittal but to establish some political principles." So Jinnah withdrew from the defence.

Tilak argued his case himself. At the end of his long argument, he said, addressing the jury composed of two Indians and seven Europeans, "I appeal to you not for myself, but in the interest of the cause I have the honour to represent. It is the cause that is sacred and I doubt not, gentlemen (addressing the jury), that He before whom all of us will have to appear one day and render an account of our actions, will inspire you with the courage of your convictions and help you in arriving at a right decision." The jury returned a verdict of guilty, by a majority of 7 (all Europeans) against 2 (Indians). It was late in the night; but Justice Davar sat till about midnight to write and deliver the judgment on 24th July, 1908. Perhaps the judge had instructions to finish the trial in the darkness of the night.

Davar sentenced Tilak to six years' transportation—three years on each count—to run consecutively. It was unusual for the two sentences to run consecutively; the general practice was to give concurrent sentence in similar cases. His words in the judgment were indicative of his bad taste; he ascribed "a diseased mind", "a most perverted

mind" to Tilak. At the end of the trial, the judge asked him, "Have you anything you wish to say?" Tilak's reply is significant of his attitude and high idealism. He said, "There are higher powers that rule the destinies of men and nations; it may be, the cause I represent may be benefited more by my suffering than by my freedom." On his conviction he was immediately removed to Ahmedabad to keep him out of the Maharashtra region.

Tilak's conviction did not remove the worries and anxieties of the Government regarding the influence he had over the public. There were wide-spread riots, continuing for a number of days in Poona and Bombay and some other places. The army was requisitioned to suppress the riots. There was a proposal for confiscating the *Kesari* press. But the Governor of Bombay (Sir G. S. Clarke) opposed the idea. He sent a long despatch to the Viceroy on 27th August: "I am strongly opposed to this action (i.e., the forfeiture of the press). Tilak's conviction has produced a considerable ferment already and I think it would be most impolitic to do what would be everywhere proclaimed as vindictive." He also reported that he had "convened a private meeting of the most representative commercial and industrial people. I addressed them and admonished them plainly as to their duty in the present troubles. . . . I think they all sympathise with Tilak in his fall." The Governor went on in his report, "The police and troops here have behaved with great forbearance. Two squadrons of native cavalry, in particular, have been severely tried with heavy stone-throwing and showed admirable restraint; I hope in a day or two all will be quiet." The Governor wrote this more than a month after Tilak's conviction; and even then Bombay was not quiet. That is indicative of the depth of public feeling at the conviction of the Lokmanya. Due to unrest and discontent among the industrial labour, Bombay industries could not function properly for a number of days.

There was a lot of discussion about the place of Tilak's detention. It was rumoured that from the High Court Tilak had been placed in a ship to be transported to the Andamans. The Viceroy anxiously enquired whether this were true. The Governor replied that he had been sent to Ahmedabad for the present. As to his final place of detention, it was pointed out to the Viceroy that it would be contrary to rules to send Tilak to the Andamans, as he was over 40 years old

and as only life convicts were sent there. Mandalay was suggested as his place of detention and the Burmese Government also agreed to have him. But some objection was raised on the ground that Tilak might benefit from the "tradition of mild treatment" which had been given to Lala Lajpat Raj when he had been detained there under Regulation III of 1818. So Insein, ten miles from Rangoon, was suggested as a more suitable place. But Tilak being a diabetes patient, the moist climate of Insein was not considered medically suitable. Ultimately, Tilak was put on 15th September, 1908 on board the Royal Indian Marine vessel *The Hardinge* to be taken to Rangoon and from there to Mandalay.

It was in this prison of Mandalay that he wrote his famous book, *Gita Rahasya*, the philosophy of Karma Yoga. During his previous term of imprisonment in 1898, he had written his other book, *The Arctic Home of the Vedas*. His first book on Vedic research, *Orion*, was published in 1893. Immediately after its publication, *Orion* attracted the notice of Vedic scholars all over the world like Max Mueller, Jacobi, Bloomfield, Thibault and others. When he was sent to prison in 1897, Max Mueller sent him a copy of the *Rigveda* edited by him. The detention gave him the opportunity of writing the second book, *The Arctic Home of the Vedas*. Tilak was pre-eminently a scholar; but the tragedy of political subjugation dragged him into politics, and the world of culture and research was deprived of the valuable contributions of a great mind.

Paranjpe, the editor of *Kal*, was sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment. Paranjpe was a great Sanskrit scholar and had stood first in M.A. in Sanskrit. After the Rand murder, he praised the Chapekar brothers as 'martyrs'. Again, after the Muzaffarpur bomb incident he wrote in *Kal* in praise of the action as also the courage of the throwers of the bomb, Khudiram and Prafulla. He was also a believer in aggressive Hinduism, and often criticised Tilak for his liberal social ideas and conciliatory attitude towards non-Hindus. The offence of both Tilak and Paranjpe was the same; but while Tilak got six years, Paranjpe got only 18 months of imprisonment. It may be stated here that in 1922, the European judge Broomfield, while sentencing Gandhi to six years, referred to Tilak's conviction of six years. He said, "You will not consider it unreasonable, I think, that you should be classed with Mr. Tilak." Gandhi responded

thus: "I just want to say that I consider it to be the proudest privilege and honour to be associated with his name."

With these convictions, the first phase of the movement ended in Maharashtra. Tilak was one of the finest and most effective exponents of aggressive Indian nationalism—and more particularly of the phase of nationalism that developed after the partition of Bengal in 1905. More than any other leader of the time, he was the beloved of the people who out of their regard gave him the title—Lokmanaya—one honoured and respected by the people.

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## Chapter Thirty

# Second Phase of the Movement in Maharashtra

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I have already referred to the disturbances at the Surat Congress in 1907. Extremists headed by Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bepin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghose and others, though ousted from the Congress, were not politically idle. The Government took a serious view of the political situation prevailing in the country, particularly in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab, and started the double-edged policy of repressing the extremists and appeasing the moderates. The Surat Congress was, as usual, held during the last two or three days of December 1907. In June 1908, Tilak was arrested. Before his arrest, he wrote a number of articles in *Kesari* and *Mahratta* justifying his stand at Surat. He received support from many quarters—Shyamji Krishnavarma, who had left India after the Rand murder and had gone to London, gave full support to Tilak's stand. In 1907 Shyamji wrote: "Ten years ago, when our friend Mr. Balgangadhar Tilak and the Natu brothers were arrested, we decided to leave India and settle in England. Now that another friend, Lala Lajpat Rai, has been deported, it falls to our lot to quit England.... England affords safe asylum to the oppressed of all countries save India." In 1907 he left for France to join Madame Cama and S. R. Rana,

who like him, hailed from K̄athiawar. Following the departure of Shyamji, Vinayak Savarkar took charge of the India House; from there he started conspiring in a more aggressive and direct manner.

While in England Shyamji had started, in 1905, the India Home Rule Society, an institution which attracted the notice of liberal Britons for its pronounced views in favour of Indian independence. Even before leaving K̄athiawar for England, he had contacts with the Poona revolutionary group, and had visited Maharashtra several times. He organised some lectureships for attracting qualified Indians abroad. Another Indian in Paris, S. R. Rana, also announced some travelling fellowships to Indians. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar of Nasik, aged only 22, went to England, taking advantage of one of those scholarships. Shyamji had also started a residential institution, the India House, to give shelter to young Indian nationalists. This became the centre of radical Indian politics. Three young men who subsequently became famous in India's revolutionary history took advantage of Shyamji's benevolence—Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Madan Lal Dhingra and Lala Hardayal—the last two hailing from the Punjab. He also started a paper, *The Indian Sociologist*, which attracted great public attention in Britain as also in other European countries as the exponent of radical Indian nationalism. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's political extremism got fresh impetus at this centre of the India House. It was from here that he was sending directions to his colleagues in Maharashtra. The subsequent development of the revolutionary movement in Maharashtra has an intimate link with this group at London. Though not practising, Shyamji was a barrister, a member of the Inner Temple. In March 1909, he was informed that the "attention of the Masters of the Bench has been attracted to certain articles in *The Indian Sociologist*". He did not relent and, on the contrary, reiterated his views. The Inner Temple then decided on 21st April, "The said Shyamji Krishnavarma is debarred and his name removed from the books of the Society."

After the imprisonment of Tilak, the revolutionary movement in Maharashtra, far from being daunted, grew in intensity. In 1907-08, the India House and the group connected with Shyamji celebrated the golden jubilee of the Rising of 1857 in London. Vinayak was busy organising a group in England, and at the same time he was keeping contact with the Maharashtra organisation. In the India

House of the London group, they occasionally held lecture courses on revolutionary activities, particularly on the preparation of bombs, and on the interpretation of revolutionary ideology. The members also practised revolver shooting. On 9th June, 1909, Ganesh Savarkar was convicted at Nasik. It was suspected that this conviction had made an impression on Madan Lal Dhingra and might have furnished an immediate provocation for the murder, on July 1, 1909, of Sir William Curzon Wylie of the Office of the Secretary of State for India at a meeting at the Imperial Institute in London. Wylie died immediately and this daring deed produced a sensation in Britain. This was not a single murder; a Parsee gentleman named Lalkaka was also killed when he intervened to save the life of Wylie.

Dhingra, a student of engineering in London University, used to frequent the India House. The Government immediately connected Vinayak Sarvarkar with this murder though there was no direct link or evidence. Madan Lal Dhingra was arrested on the spot; it was a case of deliberate murder as was evident from the statement found in his pocket. Later it was published as a leaflet and distributed in India. The statement started with the following words:

I attempted to shed English blood intentionally and on purpose as an humble protest against the inhuman transportation and hangings of Indian youths.

In the court, he made a statement in course on which he stated, "I believe that a nation held in bondage with the help of foreign bayonets is in a perpetual state of war. Since open battle is rendered impossible to a disarmed race, I attacked by surprise; since guns were denied to me, I drew forth my pistol and fired." He concluded, "The war (of independence) will continue between India and England so long as the English and the Hindu races last, if this present unnatural relation does not cease. My only prayer to God is that I may be re-born of the same Mother (i.e. the motherland) and I may re-die in the same sacred cause till the cause is successful, and she stands free for the good of humanity and to the glory of God. Bande Mataram." He further said, "In this attempt, I have consulted none but my own conscience. I have conspired with none, but my own duty." The judge sentenced him to death and on the pronouncement of the



judgement, Dhingra thanked the judge, saying, "Thanks, my lord, I am glad to have the honour of dying for my country. The only lesson required in India at present is to learn how to die, and the only way to teach it (is) by dying ourselves. And, therefore, I die, and glory in my martyrdom!" His bold and patriotic attitude drew admiration from many eminent Englishmen. The Irish associations and press were particularly full of admiration for Dhingra. "Ireland honours Dhingra who was proud to lay down his life for the sake of his country." He was hanged on 17th August in Pentonville Prison. When the death sentence was pronounced, he addressed the Judge, "I told you that the English court had no authority over me. I do not care for my life. You are all-powerful, you can do as you like. But remember that, one day we shall be powerful and then we shall do what we like."

This assassination had its repercussions on both the Government of India and the Government of Britain. They thought that a greater dose of repressive policy was the remedy. While on the one hand, the revolutionary groups of Maharashtra and Bengal had intensified their activities, on the other, the Government also had intensified their repressive measures. The elder brother of Vinayak, Ganesh Savarkar, was sentenced on 9th June, 1909, to transportation for life for the simple offence of publishing a book of poems which was interpreted as an incitement to waging war against the Government. From this conviction, one can imagine the severity of the repressive policy of the Government. The judge interpreted the poems as: "The main object is to preach war against the present Government in the names of gods of the Hindus and certain warriors such as Shivaji." A cable was sent to the India House, London, conveying the news of Ganesh's conviction. Vinayak became so excited at the news that in the course of a discussion, he repeated his oath to wreak vengeance on the English. And within a few days Wyllie was murdered by Dhingra, a close associate of Vinayak. The words "transportation and hangings of Indian young men" in Dhingra's statement might have referred to the transportation of Ganesh Savarkar and the hanging of Khudiram Bose. The murder of Wyllie was usually explained as a sequel to these incidents.

Vinayak Savarkar used to maintain intimate contact with the Abhinava Bharat, the secret society he had started in Maharashtra.

He sent some consignments of revolvers and pistols to members of the society. Mirza Abbas was a close colleague of his in all these activities. Abbas and B. N. Bapat went to Paris to learn the art of bomb-making and there they came in contact with Hem Chandra Das, who had come from Bengal for the same purpose. Small arms were being secured from both London and Paris, and these were sent mostly to his brother Ganesh Savarkar. Government tried to implicate Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in the Wyllie murder but could not find any evidence admissible in a British court. It is curious that Shyamji from Paris clearly disassociated himself from this act. In an interview on 2nd July to *The Daily Mail* reporter at Paris, he fumbled and denounced this act and denied any knowledge of or acquaintance with Dhingra. This may be said to be the beginning of a definite shift in Shyamji's political attitude—or, so to say, a definite decline in the morale of the man who played so important a role in the earlier years.

After the Dhingra case, Shyamji started losing the confidence of the Indian revolutionaries. Viren Chattopadhyaya had already had strained relations with him culminating in a public controversy in British papers. Lala Hardayal had, by then, migrated to Paris and Geneva from the U.S.A. and London. Madame Cama started a new journal, the monthly *Bande Mataram*, published from Geneva. She openly declared, "We issue this journal with the object of continuing, commemorating and consolidating the good work that was inaugurated by that redoubtable champion of Indian freedom—*Bande Mataram* of Calcutta." In the very first issue of the paper, Hardayal paid passionate tribute to the "immortal" memory of Dhingra. He wrote, "Dhingra has behaved in each stage of his trial like a hero of ancient times. England thinks she has killed Dhingra; in reality he lives for ever, and he has given the death-blow to English sovereignty in India."

But Shyamji repudiated Dhingra and disavowed any knowledge of, or sympathy for, his act. This volte-face on his part alienated him from his old colleagues like Madame Cama and Rana. In the meantime another journal was published, *Madan's Talwar* (The Sword of Madanlal Dhingra); Madame Cama was connected with this paper as well. Shyamji sold the properties of the India House at London for a good price. The man who for so many years had spent

layishly and lived desperately for the cause of the Indian revolution was now accused of "petty-mindedness in money matters" and of "calculating caution". The breach became complete during the First World War when he declined to lend any support to the Berlin Committee. During the trial of Dhingra, his name was frequently referred to in British papers as the real inciter of the act. He was often called the Mazzini of India. He died in March 1930, almost a forlorn man.

From Paris, Vinayak sent 20 pistols to be delivered to his elder brother, Ganesh Savarkar, at Nasik through Chaturbhuj Amin, a cook in the India House, who arrived in Bombay on 6th March, 1908. But Ganesh was arrested before the arrival of the pistols. He knew about the despatch of the pistols and gave proper directions for their delivery. These were accordingly delivered to the other members of the group. During the course of a search of his house, the police seized some papers, including a copy of the Bomb Manual which was also found in the Manicktala garden before the Alipore Bomb case. This indicates the close link between the Maharashtra group and the Manicktala garden group. This was probably a translation of a Russian treatise on bomb-making formulae which both the Bengal and Maharashtra groups got in Paris.

Mr. Jackson, Collector of Nasik, who convicted Ganesh Savarkar, attracted the notice of that group. Government also anticipated some danger for Jackson and ordered his transfer from Nasik. At a farewell meeting in a theatre hall before his transfer on 21st December, 1909, Jackson was shot dead, by Anant Laxman Kanhere of Aurangabad. One of the 20 pistols sent by Vinayak from Paris was used for this murder. The Government could, therefore, easily connect Vinayak with all that was happening in Maharashtra. For Jackson's murder seven persons were prosecuted; three of them were sentenced to death, three to transportation for life and one to two years' imprisonment. Their names are: A. L. Kanhere, K. G. Karve, V. N. Deshpande (all hanged); S. R. Soman, W. N. Joshi and G. B. Vaidya (transportation for life); and D. P. Joshi (2 years' R.I.). Curiously enough, all these accused, except one, were Chitpavan Brahmins. The movement, however, continued.

We have already alluded to the Mitra Mela and the Abhinava Bharat started by the Savarkar brothers: in fact these two organisations merged together and branches were started in different parts of

Maharashtra. The Abhinava Bharat Samaj used to administer to the new recruits an oath of self-sacrifice and service to the country. Mazzini's books, particularly his auto-biography and another book, *Secret Societies of European Revolution*, had great influence on the workers of the Abhinava Bharat Samaj. Vinayak translated the autobiography of Mazzini into Marathi and sent it from England to his brother Ganesh. The introduction of this book, written by Vinayak, is particularly significant. The Rowlatt Committee said, "The introduction emphasised the importance of elevating politics to the rank of religion... It pointed out Mazzini relied upon the youth of the country to obtain independence. It suggested securing and storing of arms, setting up of small secret societies for manufacture of weapons clandestinely." The book was published from Poona.

The activities of the Samaj attracted the notice of the Government. During the search of the house of the Savarkars, some incriminating books and documents were seized. These led to the Nasik Conspiracy case. Out of the 38 accused in the Nasik Conspiracy, 27 were found guilty and were convicted. Some incidents, mentioned as evidence of the conspiracy, in fact took place in England and in Europe. Particular reference to Vinayak Savarkar's activities there was made in this conspiracy case. Some leaflets and books eulogizing M. L. Dhingra, Khudiram, Kanailal, etc. were found. One leaflet contained the following passage:

This commission of separate assassination is the best conceivable method of paralysing the bureaucracy and of arousing the people... Terrorise the officials, English and Indian; the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not far off. The initial stage of the revolution is marked by the policy of separate assassination.

In the course of the investigation into the murder of Jackson, it was found that Vinayak had a direct part in guiding and forming this conspiracy. Immediately after the murder of Wyllie, Shyamji persuaded Vinayak to take shelter in Paris. Vinayak came to Paris but in spite of the advice of Shyamji to the contrary, he returned to England. Shyamji did not like it as he anticipated his arrest. A

warrant of arrest was issued from Nasik for his arrest and extradition. The court was not unanimous in favour of his extradition; Justice Coleridge dissented. However, the majority verdict prevailed and from Brixton prison he was put on board the liner *Morea*.

When the vessel touched at Marseilles, Savarkar went to the lavatory of the ship. Stripping himself practically of all his clothes, he escaped through the port-hole in a semi-nude condition, swam to the shore and ran three metres into French territory. The English guards ran after him shouting, "Thief! Thief!" Then two French gendarmes ran after him and caught hold of him. They handed him over to the English guards. Savarkar could not speak French and so could not make it known to the French gendarmes that he was a political refugee.

The incident was hushed up in the Paris press till about three days after the incident. The Paris edition of *The Daily Mail* published a small news item. The French socialist paper *L'Humanité* took up the case as an infringement of the right of political asylum. Other French papers, *Le Temps*, *Le Matin*, *Le Claire* etc. also started writing against the decision of the French Government. The Indian trio in Paris, Madame Cama, Rana and Krishnavarma also raised an agitation for the return of Savarkar. After discussion between the Governments of Britain and France, the matter was referred to the International Tribunal at the Hague.

In the meantime Vinayak Savarkar was placed on trial in the Nasik Conspiracy case along with 37 other accused, in the Bombay High Court. Chaturbhuj became a King's witness and Savarkar was described as the inspirer and main organiser of the whole conspiracy. Savarkar took a defiant attitude and challenged the authority of the court to try him. When asked by the Chief Justice if he had any question to put or any statement to make, "Savarkar rose to explain his position and claimed the protection of France whose hospitality he was going to enjoy when he was forcibly brought back. He objected entirely to the jurisdiction of the court and stated that he would not take any part in the proceedings."

The court passed an unusually hard judgement—three life sentences to run consecutively, and not concurrently as was the usual practice, and transportation to the Andamans. The documents produced in the court show close contacts with the Jugantar group of Bengal

which by then had committed so many overt acts—the Muzaffarpur incident, the bomb attack on the Governor's coach at Narayanganj, murder of Naren Goswami in Alipur jail, attempted murder of the Governor etc. Among the papers found with the accused, some contained highly eulogistic reference to Khudiram Bose, Kanai Lal Dutt, Madan Lal Dhingra and other martyrs. The accused in the Nasik case came from different parts of Maharashtra and the Nizam's State such as Bombay, Poona, Nasik, Aurangabad, Hyderabad etc. Abhinava Bharat and its predecessor, the Mitra Mela, were the central organisations of the conspiracy. The brains trust of this anti-British aggressive movement belonged to the Chitpavan Brahmins, a highly intellectual and educated community which generally controlled the educational institutions, the bar, the press and other learned professions in Maharashtra.

The second conspiracy case was started at Gwalior in connection with the activities of Ganesh Savarkar. A branch of the Abhinava Bharat Samaj was started at Gwalior under the name of the Nava Bharat (New India) Society. It was in connection with the activities of this society that this conspiracy case was instituted by the Government of Gwalior, then a native State. In this case, 22 persons were put up for trial as members of the Nava Bharat Society. This society also encouraged "target shooting, sword exercise, preparation of bombs, dynamite, procuring revolvers" etc. etc. The Society also aimed at organising a general rising in any part of India. It is significant that all the accused in the Gwalior Conspiracy Case, and 37 out of 38 in the Nasik Conspiracy Case, were Brahmins. This shows that the Maharashtra Brahmins, particularly those belonging to the Chitpavan sub-caste, were prominent in these revolutionary activities, and they thus became a special target of the Government's wrath.

Another conspiracy case was instituted at Satara, where a secret revolutionary society was established as a branch of the Abhinava Bharat Society. Satara also was a native State. Three accused, all Brahmins, were put in the dock, and all of them were convicted. The Satara Conspiracy Case took place in 1910, i.e. some time after the Nasik Conspiracy Case. After this, the Maharashtra region did not have much of revolutionary activity; but some revolutionary literature and leaflets were occasionally found circulating in Poona and

other areas of Maharashtra. Some of these leaflets came from the Jugantar group of Bengal or were connected with incidents in Bengal.

Maharashtra played a very conspicuous part in the development of the revolutionary movement in India. Tilak, Ranade and other eminent men were also supposed to have encouraged the movement. It is regrettable that some recent biographers of Tilak try to prove that Tilak had no sympathy for or contact with this movement. It is beyond any doubt that he had sympathy with this movement. No one would claim that he ever conspired for and organised overt acts of murder or dacoity. But he gave his moral support to the movement. When Bengal became conspicuous for the revolutionary movement, Tilak went there several times. On one occasion he invited Aurobindo to visit Poona and the latter went there in 1907 to help Tilak in strengthening the movement in Maharashtra.

It would not be proper to ignore altogether the Gujarat region. While at Baroda, Aurobindo had contacts with the Maharashtra group. Some Bengal revolutionaries also visited Baroda from time to time. Notable among them was Jatin Banerjee, later known as Swami Niralamba, who played a conspicuous part in organising the Jugantar group. Kaka Kalelkar, subsequently a staunch and orthodox follower of Gandhiji, was also at that time in Gujarat and was attracted to this group at Baroda. The ripples of these revolutionary movements reached other parts of Gujarat also. In 1909, when Lord and Lady Minto were driving through the streets of Ahmedabad, two bombs were thrown at them. But these did not explode in time and so could not injure the Viceroy and his wife.

Small groups were formed in different places of Gujarat, Baroda and Kathiawar. G. V. Mavlankar, a former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, was also attracted to these groups and activities. In 1951, on reading an article by the present writer in a Bombay paper, he wrote to the author, "We, young students then, were all admiration for our Bengal friends who were then our idols in the matter of patriotism, sacrifice, suffering and courage. You can take it from me that most of us were on the very brink of falling in line with you." But the movement did not take any definite organisational shape in Gujarat. It should also be noted that Shyamji Krishnavarma, Sardarji Rana and Madame Cama, all came from Gujarat.

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## Chapter Thirty-one

# Revolutionary Movement in Bihar and Orissa

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Bihar had played an important part in the rising of 1857. Kanwar Singh Thakur of Jagdishpur was one of the most brilliant leaders of that rising in the whole of India. As a leader of the struggle for freedom and as a guerrilla strategist, I think he may be ranked only second to Tantia Toppe. His popularity with the people was so great that the British authorities were mightily afraid of him. His range of activities was not limited only to local areas but he operated over wider areas of Bihar and U.P. Wherever he went he received tremendous popular support. Finally he had to face a severe defeat on 23rd April, 1858, while proceeding to Jagdishpur; yet he escaped arrest. It is reported that due to fatigue and constant running about from place to place he died in May 1858.

Bihar was an important centre of the Wahabi movement which was operating from the Pathan areas in the then North-West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan up to Bengal. The movement originated in Arabia as a fanatically puritan Islamic movement but in India it took a bitter anti-British shape and caused great anxiety to the British authorities for about 50 years—i.e., from 1820 to 1871. Sayed Ahmed of Rae Bareilly (U.P.) was a leading figure of the



movement in the Gangetic valley. It took the form of secret propaganda, open armed conflict, individual murder, terrorism etc. Sayed Ahmed had his Khalifs (or representatives) in Patna. Hunter has described them as "indefatigable as missionaries, careless of themselves, blameless in their lives, supremely devoted to the overthrow of the English infidels..."

Taylor, Commissioner of Patna Division, advised all the district officers of Chapra, Arrah, Muzaffarpur, Gaya and Motihari to suppress this anti-British movement with a strong hand. But he himself took a course in June 1857 which was nothing but treacherous and most dishonourable. When the Sepoy rising almost coalesced with the Wahabi rising in Bihar, Taylor invited three important Wahabi leaders, Muhammad Hussain, Ahmad Ullah and Waizul Huque, to his house for a consultation along with some other gentlemen. He allowed others to leave his house but arrested those three Wahabi leaders. Far from being ashamed, he congratulated himself on having executed a highly successful stroke of policy. Even an English historian like Kaye (author of *The History of the Sepoy War*) characterised this as "not only very like treachery, but a treachery itself."

The next important movement in Bihar was the Munda movement led by Birsa Bhagwan. Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas areas were the homeland of the Santhals, Mundas, Oraons etc. Birsa was born in 1870; his father Saguna was a very poor Munda. Christian missionaries were working amongst the Adivasis from the very beginning. Birsa also was educated in a missionary school at Chaibasa and became a convert to Christianity before he was actually a major. But the socio-religious renaissance movements in Bengal and other parts of India had their effect also on the Adivasis and on Birsa. The Brahmo Samaj, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Arya Samaj had their influence on Birsa who renounced Christianity and reverted to the original faith of the Mundas. At the age of 21 years, he took up an active role of preaching a new faith among the Adivasis whom he asked to worship not so many deities but only one God, known in their language as Sing Bhang. He asked them to develop clean habits, avoid liquor, put on the sacred thread, take only vegetarian diet and lead a pure and honest life. His was purely a social reformist movement. But the Christian missionaries took this as a revolt against Christianity; and the Government also saw dangerous potentialities

in this movement of Birsa. So on the night of August 23, 1895, while he was asleep, the European Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi went to his place of rest in a near-forest area; and he was stealthily removed from his followers. The Deputy Commissioner was helped by a Christian missionary named Father Lusty and the local landlord, Thakur Jagmohan Singh. Several other followers were subsequently arrested. He and his 15 followers were convicted under Section 505 of the Indian Penal Code and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 50/-, in default another 6 months' R.I. Thousands of Adivasis collected at Khunti, where he was taken, and demanded his release. After his arrest the Lt. Governor of Bengal wrote to the Government of India that though the situation had eased for the time being, yet "it is sitting on a powder magazine."

Birsa was released in January 1898. Then actually began his career as a rebel and political leader. From place to place he was run after by the British forces. Though personally he was more for social reform than for an armed rising, the full strength of the British force of Chotanagpur was engaged in suppressing the Munda movement. The entire Munda community was suspected and oppressed. British brutality during these operations was indicative of the nature of the British rule of those days. During the daytime Birsa used to hide in the house of any of the Adivasis but in the night he and his followers attacked the British administration and its supporters. Police stations and government offices in Khunti, a sub-divisional town of Ranchi district, were burnt. On the Dumari hill near Ranchi, the Munda forces took their stand in 1899. These were composed of about 2,000 persons, not all of them armed and included even women. They barricaded the hill-top and stored food and other necessities. When they moved, generally they moved with entire families including women and children. British officers took care to block all avenues of escape and then ordered the military to fire upon the crowd. According to the Government estimate, about 200 Mundas, including a number of women and children, were found dead after the encounter; but the popular estimate of deaths was much larger. Some of the dead women even had children in their laps. Birsa, however, escaped. He tried to re-organise his followers for a final struggle. But he was awfully tired; at last, he was arrested through some government spies. The British did not have

the opportunity of putting Birsa on trial; it is reported that he died of cholera on 30th May, 1900 in Ranchi jail. The popular suspicion was that he had been poisoned to death. He fought to protect his fellow Adivasis from the oppression of the Government officials, their agents—the moneylenders, traders, landlords—and the Christian missionaries. Even now his memory is revered by every Munda as Birsa Bhagwan, that is, Birsa the god.

There is a good deal of controversy over this affray. The local officials' report, endorsed by all higher authorities, including the Provincial Government, was suspected by Lord Curzon. He pointed out that *'the dead bodies recovered were all of women, some with children in their laps and that all the injuries were head injuries'*. Evidently, he said, some men on the Government side had gone out of control and had fired on unarmed, fleeing people. This the local officials as well as army authorities stoutly denied. But ultimately it was found that some newly recruited British soldiers had gone out of control and had fired wildly, perhaps mostly on fleeing women.

Regarding the revolutionary movement in Bihar, we have to take note of the repercussions of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal of which at this period Bihar along with Orissa formed a part. It should also be noted that in Bihar the intellectual professions—teaching, law, medical and government services etc.—were mostly in the hands of Bengalis. An English-educated Bihari middle-class had just started coming up. As in Bengal, so in Bihar, youth clubs were being organised in different parts. One of the earliest of these was formed in March 1899, at Darbhanga, which had a large Bengali population. Similar associations were set up in other parts of Bihar also. Then with the intensification of the agitation against the Bengal partition Bihar also shared its repercussions. Rakhi Bandhan (tying of coloured thread on others' wrist) was initiated in Bengal on 16th October, 1905, as a protest against the partition and as a symbol of the fraternity and unity of the people. That ceremony was also observed in some parts of Bihar including Darbhanga, particularly under the influence of one Satish Chandra Chakravarti, a teacher of the Saraswati Academy. Satish Chandra was a disciple of Aswini Kumar Dutt of Barisal. Political leaders of Bengal frequently visited Bihar. Surendranath Banerjea addressed a big meeting at Monghyr in 1906; Shrikrishna Sinha, the future Congress leader

and Chief Minister of Bihar, an impressionable young man then, was present at that meeting. A Bihar students' conference held its first meeting in 1906. It developed into a vehicle of propagating nationalism among young men.

Bihar, Orissa and Assam were used by the Bengal revolutionaries sometimes for shelter and often for experimenting with their weapons, for which the topography of these regions supplied suitable terrain. The first bomb experiment was made at Deoghar (within Bihar) which exploded rather prematurely in the hand of Prafulla Chakravarty and his body was blown to pieces. The first overt act by Bengal revolutionaries, which created a sensation all over India, took place in Bihar—at Muzaffarpur. Thus the first three martyrs of the revolutionary movement in Bengal—Prafulla Chakravarty, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Basu—all met their end on the soil of Bihar. Following Khudiram's execution, the schools and educational institutions of Muzaffarpur remained closed for a few days as a mark of honour to his memory and also to express sorrow at his death.

Rajnarayan Basu, maternal grandfather of Aurobindo and Barin Ghosh, owned a house at Deoghar. Aurobindo and Barin used to visit there occasionally along with their political colleagues. In fact, they hired a house at Deoghar, known as Shil's Lodge, for the making of bombs. Jatin Banerjee in the course of his roving revolutionary mission, stayed in Bihar for a pretty long time. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, Indra Nath Nandi and other leaders of the Jugantar group often used to visit Bihar, particularly Darbhanga and Chotanagpur. Another contemporary political figure in Bengal, Shakharam Ganesh Deuskar of Marathi descent, had settled in Deoghar sub-division of Santhal Parganas. He was a forceful writer in Bengali and had intimate contacts with Bhupendra Nath Dutt, Barin Ghosh, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya and other pioneers of the Jugantar movement. His influence also spread over the minds of Bihar young men. Ranchi with its large Bengali population became another centre of revolutionary activities. At first confined mostly among the Bengalis, subsequently it spread among Bihari young men also. In the meantime Sachin Sanyal of Banaras also used to visit Bihar and tried to form units of his Youngmen's Association. Bankim Charitra Mitra of Ranchi was arrested in 1915 and put on trial in

the Banaras Conspiracy Case in which Sachin was one of the principal accused.

Though it cannot be said that any revolutionary or intensive political organisation developed in Bihar or among the Biharis, yet the Government were all the time alert about the ramification of the Bengal movement in Bihar. They even suspected an eminent Bihari scholar like K. P. Jayswal, an Indologist of international repute, to be a dangerous revolutionist after his return from England in 1910, and objected to his appointment as a professor in Calcutta University. After some time, on the personal intervention of Ashutosh Mookerjee, the Government relented and allowed him to be taken on the staff. Rebati Nag of Dacca Anushilan Samiti settled at Bhagalpur where he tried to form a branch of the Dacca Samiti. He recruited a number of young men, one of whom was Ram Binode Singh. But Rebati was subsequently murdered by his own colleagues on suspicion of being a police spy. It is difficult to say how far that allegation was correct and whether the murder was not due to personal jealousy.

As a student of Hazaribagh College, Ram Binode Singh attracted the notice of the police. He was arrested in December 1918 and detained in the Hazaribagh Central Jail. Krishnaballabh Sahay, a future Congress leader, was also a student of Hazaribagh College at the time. This arrest created a commotion among the students of Hazaribagh; Krishnaballabh was one among a large number of students who went up to the jail gate to see off Ram Binode. It is suspected that his arrest was the sequel to the arrest of another young man named Ram Prashad Lal in December 1918 at Monghyr, whose real name was perhaps Kamta Prasad. Ananth Bandhu Chaudhury, a Bengali young man, was also arrested in December 1918 at Bhagalpur. He was a student of Rabindra Nath Tagore's Santiniketan; on Tagore's intervention, he was transferred to Bengal. Two Bengali young men, Hari Prasanna Roy Choudhury and Pratul Mukherjee, were arrested at Monghyr and expelled from Bihar. A few other Bihari young men were also interned within the province. Of all the young men of Bihar only Ram Binode Singh continued his political activities for a pretty long time. He later joined the Congress and was also a member of the Bihar Assembly. All the time he was keeping contact with revolutionary activities. The British Govern-

ment took a serious view of his political activities and his group was subsequently notified as a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act. Similar savage use of the Act was made also in a few cases in Bengal. He died on 3rd June, 1967, at the age of 72.

Here I should mention that Babu Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, was a student of the Presidency College at Calcutta during the hectic days of the Swadeshi movement; he was intellectually and emotionally attracted by Satish Chandra Mukherjee, founder of the Dawn Society. I have already mentioned the importance of the Dawn Society in the political life of Bengal. Rajen Babu used to entertain the highest regard for Satish Chandra Mukherjee till his death. During the latter part of his life, Satish Chandra lived under the care of Rajen Babu at Patna. It may be claimed that Rajendra Prasad received his first political initiation at the hands of Satish Mukherjee.

One tragic case, elaborately described in the Rowlatt Committee's Report of 1918, with the purpose of giving a dark picture of the movement, should be mentioned. The murder of a *mahant* (head-monk) in the course of a dacoity for a political purpose was surely a misguided act. Moti Chand and Manik Chand, two students of a Sholapur school in Maharashtra, migrated to Jaipur to study in the school of Arjun Lal Sethi, famous for his activities for independence in what was then known as the Native States. The Jaipur school was frequently visited by Bishan Datta from U.P. He gave occasional lectures to the young boys urging them to work for a revolution and also to commit dacoities for political purposes. Under the instructions of Bishan Datta, Moti Chand, Manik Chand, Jai Chand and Joravar Singh came to Bihar to commit a dacoity at Nimez. These inexperienced young men murdered the *mahant* but could not get any money. That was in March, 1913. The police had no clue to this incident. After a year, one Shiv Narain, who was arrested on suspicion of political activities, disclosed the whole story to the police and Moti Chand was convicted and hanged. Though the incident took place on the soil of Bihar, all the participants were from outside.

In Orissa also, practically no indigenous revolutionary organisation developed. In the early years (1906-08), the pioneers of the Jugantar group like Bhupendra Nath Dutta and others went to

Orissa for forming revolutionary cells there. Special mention, however, should be made of the work of Shashibhushan Roy Chaudhury, who went to Cuttack as the guardian tutor in an Oriya family. Shashibhushan had a particular knack and urge for working among the youngmen with special emphasis on their moral character and social service. In Cuttack, he came in contact with Pandit Gopabandhu Das who, under his inspiration and guidance, started the Satyabadi Asram and school in collaboration with Nilkantha Das, Kripasindhu Misra, Godavarish Misra and Acharya Harihar Das. Pandit Gopabandhu Das may be called the father of modern Orissa and the guiding spirit of all nationalist and social workers of Orissa. Most of the later Congress and social workers of Orissa may be said to have had their initiation into politics from Pandit Gopabandhu Das and Godavarish Misra. The name of Shashibhushan Roy Chaudhury is still honoured and respected among the elder section of Congressmen in Orissa.

Another group in Orissa was formed by one Girish Chandra Banerjee with some inspiration from Suresh Banerjee, then a student in the Medical College of Calcutta. Subhas Chandra Bose, Annada Prasad Chaudhury (both school students at Cuttack at the time) and others were early recruits to this group which never took any definite shape, nor could it develop any definite social and political ideology; it never grew beyond a very inchoate stage. Girish Banerjee insisted on rigid austerity almost to an absurd extent, not always possible for the young recruits to follow. That perhaps led to the early dissolution of the group. Subsequently, the recruits of this batch came under the influence of Suresh Chandra Banerjee, still a student in the Calcutta Medical College. While some of them worked for the Jugantar group others remained with Suresh Banerjee who did not believe in its secret, violent methods. He was more for development of moral character and inculcating Vedantist ideas. But the young recruits could hardly remain satisfied with the abstract philosophical ideas. So Subhas and many others seceded from his group and joined the Jugantar group.

One young man of this Cuttack group was Govinda Misra, a boy in his early teens. He worked for a tribal rising in Dasapalla, one of the tiniest Orissa native States, where he stirred up some trouble. When the police tried to arrest him, he was sent to Calcutta

by Girish Banerjee for refuge. Here he came in contact with Bhupendra Kumar Datta of the Jugantar party. Bhupen had, by then, migrated from Daulatpur to Calcutta and had effected some contacts with the group of Suresh Banerjee though he was already a very important worker of the Jugantar group. After Bhupen's arrest, Govinda lost contact with the group and started roaming over the country. Ultimately he went to Sabarmati and placed himself at the disposal of Gandhiji.

The career of Govinda Misra—perhaps not a very important worker of the movement—gives a picture of the mental make-up and trend of thoughts of revolutionary workers of those days. Govinda joined the group of Girish Banerjee at a very early age with the vague idea of working for the nation's independence. He felt the idea and ideology of the group to be too vague and airy; so he went on his own initiative to work for an uprising among the tribal people. The police ran after him; he escaped to Calcutta and found work and shelter with Bhupendra Kumar Dutta. When that link also was lost, he roamed about for some time without any definite purpose. But with the rise of a new political force under Gandhiji, Govinda joined him and surrendered to him. To him, as to many others, the method was not so important; secret or open, violent or non-violent, but the method or the means must lead to the goal of national independence. The aim or the end was of the essence to them. After independence he was for some time a member of the Rajya Sabha—the Upper House of the Indian Parliament.

The Jugantar group committed a daring dacoity in September 1914, at Jeypur, Distt. Cuttack. It was organised by Naren Ghosh Chaudhury of the Barisal section of the Jugantar group with the assistance of some Oriya recruits at Calcutta. The operation was carried out in an orderly manner and was a successful operation, though not yielding a big booty. The party went from Calcutta by train and came back safely to Calcutta after the action. It created a sensation in Orissa as it was the first successful political dacoity in Orissa.

Before closing this account of the revolutionary movement in Orissa, I should at least mention the glorious incident of the Balasore fight—in which Jatin Mukherjee conducted a trench fight against



the armed forces of the Government. Bihar had the honour of unfolding the first glorious chapter of martyrdom of Bengal's revolutionaries; Orissa had the distinction of being the soil for the finale and the culmination of that chapter—the revolutionary attempt of direct fight. It was on 9th September, 1915 that under the leadership of Jatindra Nath Mukherjee, four young Bengal revolutionaries—Chittapriya, Manoranjan, Niren and Jatish conducted a trench fight with the Government forces for over an hour; and ultimately Jatin and Chittapriya died and the other three were captured in a seriously wounded condition. This incident was considered the peak of martyrdom of Bengal revolutionaries up to the end of the First World War. We shall describe this incident in detail while dealing with the Bengal activities again.

Thus concluded the drama of revolutionary activities in Orissa.

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## Chapter Thirty-two

# The Movement in U.P.

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The United Provinces was not really in the backwaters of the political flow of India. The province might not have had a great renaissance movement as was initiated in Bengal by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and others or as in the Punjab by Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, or as in Maharashtra by Telang, Ranade, Tilak and others; but it had the traditions of the rising of 1857. Meerut, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi and other places of U.P. had very important roles to play in that great rising. Nana Sahib, Hazarat Begum, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Tantia Tope and others all operated in U.P.. Mangal Pande, who gave the first signal of the rising at Barrackpore in Bengal, also belonged to U.P.. The first real rising of the Sepoys occurred at Meerut in U.P.. Before and also after the Sepoy Rising, Hindu sanyasis and Muslim faqirs in U.P. were carrying the gospel of national emancipation in a subtle manner. Before the rising of the sepoys, the first ripple of discontent was visible among the sepoys recruited from Oudh and other areas of the North Western Provinces—as it was then called.

Among the masses there had been a general anti-British feeling

particularly due to subtle encroachments of the Government on both Hindu and Muslim traditions and customs. The Wahabi movement had its headquarters for North India at Rae Bareilly in U.P.; Sayed Ahmad of Rae Bareilly was a leading figure in the Wahabi movement. This movement created a stir among the Muslims and turned them against the British. But the secret revolutionary movement, as it was in those days, required a disillusioned rising middle class—which till then was lacking in U.P.. So for many years, the secret revolutionary movement could hardly touch the indigenous population of U.P.. At least at the initial stage, the movement was limited to the Bengalis residing in the region. Hasrat Mohani (of Hyderabad) who had contacts with Shyamji Krishna-varma as well as the American Gaelic League, was a resident of U.P. and he had a small group working in different parts of U.P. and Punjab particularly under Amir Chand of Delhi. Mohani's group was based somewhat on the line of a secret movement committed to violent methods.

The anti-partition and Swadeshi agitation of Bengal awakened some response in U.P. The first response came in the form of a journal, *Swarajya*, started in 1907 at Allahabad. Its founder and first editor, Santi Narayan, belonged to U.P., but his successors and subsequent editors were mostly from Punjab. The Muzaffarpur bomb outrage roused the political consciousness of the people all over India. Like Tilak and Paranjpe in *Kesari* and *Kal* respectively at Poona, Santi Narayan wrote an editorial eulogizing the courage and the spirit of Khudiram Basu and Prafulla Chaki. For this he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Seven subsequent editors followed him propagating revolutionary ideas, and they also had to follow him into prison. *Swarajya* played an important role in rousing the political conscience of U.P. and had to face seven prosecutions.

One of the editors of *Swarajya* was Hotiram Verma of Punjab. He was of a very impulsive nature and his writings were considered highly objectionable by the authorities. He acted also as the U.P. correspondent of *Bande Mataram* of Calcutta. In addition to his contact with Bengal, he had contacts with Bombay, Poona and other parts of Maharashtra, particularly with Tilak. He stayed for some time at Poona and had intimate contacts with the Maharashtra re-

revolutionary group. He belonged to Punjab but was working in U.P.; thus he had revolutionary connections in all these four provinces. He, too, was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for sedition. He had also been to Europe, where he had worked in close collaboration with Savarkar, Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama and had travelled extensively in the Far East. In those exciting days *Swarajya* acquired a fame for preaching aggressive nationalism. There was another paper called *Karmayogi* which also propagated revolutionary ideas. The paper was suppressed after one year of existence in 1910.

But Verma's batch of workers could not form any effective nucleus of a revolutionary organisation. So after 1908 there was hardly any revolutionary activity in U.P. till the rise of a new group, consisting mostly of Bengalis. That phase of the movement in U.P. started with the activities of Sachin Sanyal. Before 1908, he was at Calcutta and became a member of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti where he came to be acquainted with Jadugopal Mukherjee and Atul Krishna Ghosh. With the transfer of his father to Banaras in 1908, Sachin went there and joined the Bengalitola H. E. School. By that time, one Nalini Mitra had started a club at Banaras under the name of the Anushilan Samiti; Sachin joined the club. But within a short time its name was changed to Youngmen's Association. As in Calcutta, so in the Banaras club, lathi play, physical culture, moral teaching, studies etc. were the usual programme of work. The organisation did not advance much beyond these activities of the club. In 1912, Sachin came to Calcutta and asked Jadugopal to help him acquire a revolver for murdering Lord Hardinge; but Jadugopal then posed as if he had given up politics as he felt he could not repose much confidence in Sachin. Being denied there, Sachin took the help of Debnarayan Mukherjee, a student of the Scottish Church College, also belonging to Banaras. Through him Sachin approached Bhupendra Kumar Dutta, then a student of the Scottish Church College and an inmate of the Lady Lane Dundas Hostel where Debnarayan was also staying. Bhupendra was at this time a member of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti; he took Sachin to Makhan Lal Sen, the then leader of the Samiti. Makhan also was lukewarm in his reception of Sachin; but there he met Amrita Lal Hazra, then an underground worker and absconding. Amrita

warmly received him. Thus Sachin established contact with Dacca Anushilan. But he always retained a separate entity for his organisation at Banaras; he did not hesitate to approach for arms or other forms of help either the Dacca Anushilan Samiti or the Jugantar group.

The organisation set up by Sachin could not take any definite shape. There were internal dissensions and desertions from the club which ceased to exist after 1913. Then he started another samiti. Even this new samiti could not develop much. One of its active members, Bibhuti, was actually a Government informer and, while working in the Samiti, was regularly sending information to the police. Even the Rowlatt Committee Report confirms this. But Sachin had a restless spirit and great initiative. He went rushing to Calcutta and other places frequently. He was not satisfied with only the urban educated young men; he often went to the rural areas to preach the cult of Swadeshi and national freedom. After the Rodda Arms theft in 1914, Sachin came again to Calcutta and once more contacted Jadugopal, who was then a prominent leader of the Jugantar group under the overall guidance of Jatin Mukherjee. Sachin's mission this time was to get some weapons from the Rodda arms loot. But Jadugopal did not give him any arms. Apart from the peculiar position of the looted Rodda arms, it was not the policy to give arms to anyone without ascertaining the purpose or the organisational strength of the party.

In collaboration with the Jugantar group of Bengal and the Ghadr group of Punjab, Rash Behari Bose was deeply involved in the Indo-German Conspiracy while an absconding accused in the Delhi, and subsequently also in the Lahore Conspiracy cases. His safety was a matter of concern for those engaged in the Indo-German Conspiracy—i.e., the Jugantar party of Bengal and the Ghadr Party of Punjab. In fact he was working as the liaison between the Bengal and the Punjab groups. By that time a large reward had been announced for his arrest and he was proclaimed an absconder with photographs circulated over wide areas and in the official gazette; but daring and adroit, he managed to move about and work for the cause.

Though, in 1914, Banaras was his main centre of residence, Rash Behari also visited Bengal and other places, evading the

notice of the police. Hunted from place to place, he came in the beginning of 1914 to Banaras, which was then an important centre, a sort of clearing house between Bengal and Punjab. Rashbehari met Prajnanananda Saraswaty of Barisal who was also there at the time. Dacca Anushilan was approached by the Jugantar leaders but they declined to join in the Indo-German Conspiracy for organising an uprising in India. But at least one member of Anushilan could not accept this decision; Nagen Dutt alias Girija Babu differed. He came to Banaras and joined Sachin whom he informed of the decision of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. Sachin immediately went to Calcutta and saw Jadugopal Mukherjee. He was sent to Atul Ghose, who gave him a watch-word with which he was asked to meet Rash Behari at Banaras. Thus he became involved in the conspiracy for an armed rising and came to be working under the leadership of Rash Behari. During the course of some discussion, while Rash Behari was explaining how to use revolvers and bombs, suddenly a bomb cap exploded; some members, including Rash Behari, were slightly injured; but there was the sound of the explosion. So Rashbehari had to hurriedly leave the place.

Originally 21st February, 1915, was fixed as the date of the armed rising through a mutiny of the Indian soldiers; but the secrecy about the date could not be maintained. Rash Behari sent Pingley to Meerut with a box of bombs obtained from Amarendra-nath Chatterjee, one of the top leaders of the Jugantar at Calcutta. Pingley was to organise a mutiny in the local cantonment on 21st February, 1915, but he was betrayed by a soldier and arrested with the bombs at Meerut. Meantime Rash Behari arrived in Lahore and scented that the date had been communicated to the authorities by one of their own men. They tried to have the rising on the 19th. But the authorities anticipated them and many arrests were made. The attempt did not materialise and nothing happened. So Rash Behari returned to Banaras.

It may be relevant here to recount something about two Marathi young men who were working with Rash Behari, mostly in U.P.. One of them was Vishnu Ganesh Pingley and the other was Vinayak Rao Kaple. Pingley was an inmate of the Jugantar Asram of Lala Hardayal at San Fransisco (U.S.A). Satyen Sen of the Jugantar group of Bengal was a fellow inmate of Pingley in that asram. Both

of them returned to India together almost immediately after the outbreak of the First World War and landed at Calcutta. Satyen stayed in Bengal; Pingley after some days was directed to go to Punjab to work with Rash Behari. According to arrangement he promised to secure bombs and other assistance from Bengal. Rash Behari, Pingley and Satyen were accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case; but Rash Behari was an absconding accused and could not be produced in the court. Pingley escaped to Banaras with Rash Behari. He also took a relative and friend of his, Vinayak Rao Kaple, to work there. As has been stated earlier, Pingley was later arrested at Meerut and was put up for trial in the Lahore Conspiracy Case along with Satyen Sen, who was discharged.

Kaple continued to work in U.P.. In 1917 he got mixed up with some workers of the Dacca Anushilan Samiti who had sought shelter there. On 9th February, 1918, he was murdered by some of his new colleagues on suspicion of being a police informer. It is generally believed that the suspicion was unfounded and the motive of the murder was personal jealousy because of his popularity among co-workers. It should be mentioned here that by the middle of 1917 the main organisations of both Jugantar and Dacca Anushilan had ceased to operate in Bengal and there was a general dispersal of the remaining workers to safer places for personal security. They lacked the cohesion of revolutionary idealism and discipline and moral inspiration of working for a high cause; so personal bickering and jealousy often influenced the thoughts and actions of the remnants of the organisations.

Sachin and his colleagues were arrested in 1915 and were sent up for trial in the Banaras Conspiracy Case. Debnarayan Mukherjee, who was senior to Sachin, was an important member of the group and was accused in this case. Manilal, one of the few non-Bengali accused in this case, had been placed in charge of organising the mutiny, and he turned approver in the case. Another member of the group was Bibhuti, who had been given the important charge of seducing the army. He was later found to have been working all along as a Government informer and also turned approver. Debnarayan Mukherjee, originally intended to be made an accused, was given the King's pardon. He declined to be an approver but willingly gave evidence as a private witness. He subsequently joined

Government service and was also made a Rai Sahib. There were several approvers in the case. Girija Babu, a man of determined character, faced the trial and the punishment with dignity. Sachin and Girija were sentenced to transportation for life. Sachin was, however, released after four years. Girija later died in Agra jail while serving the term of imprisonment. Rash Behari, who was also an accused in that case, escaped arrest and went to Bengal and later left for Japan. Damodar Swarup, another accused, was awarded a short term of sentence.

When Sachin was arrested for the conspiracy case, his house was searched. Among the incriminating papers found on his person and at his house were copies of old *Jugantar*, then published as a secret pamphlet, and photographs of political martyrs like Khudiram, Kanai Lal and others. Even after his arrest, *Jugantar* leaflets were pasted on the walls of Banaras houses. Different groups of *Jugantar* workers were also working in the U.P., but primarily in Banaras. Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati was frequently going to and staying at Banaras—more as a student of Vedanta philosophy than as a political worker. Yet he did not shun politics in which he was being assisted by Manomohan Ghose (now Swami Swarupananda Giri) and Radhika Sen (now Swami Satchidananda). He built up a small unit of revolutionary workers at Banaras. These Bengali young men could not, however, build up any organisation worth the name; the movement never had a solid foundation. But Anushilan had some workers in different towns of U.P.. The activities of Sachin and of other revolutionaries in U.P. were mostly confined to the Bengalis, rarely touching the native U.P. young men. Among the accused in the Banaras Conspiracy Case, of the few accused really belonging to the U.P., only Damodar Swarup, a school teacher, showed real mettle for serious politics. It was arranged by Rash Behari that in the event of an armed rising materialising, Damodar would take charge of Allahabad. Later he played a prominent role in the Non-co-operation movement in U.P..

There was another revolutionary current flowing through U.P., almost unconnected with the current flowing in Bengal or Punjab. The name of Raja Mahendra Pratap was well known in revolutionary circles at the time; he was the son of the Raja of Hathras. The Hathras Raj family was once the ruler of an independent principality.



It lost its independence in the wake of British conquest. Mahendra Pratap was thus brought up in an anti-British atmosphere. The anti-partition agitation of Bengal naturally captured his imagination and at the age of 20, he attended the Calcutta Congress of 1906 and returned home with the vow of Swadeshi. He had a restless spirit which made him tour the entire eastern portion of the then British Indian Empire, which also included Burma. Next year he went to Europe and after his return started the famous Prem Mahavidyalaya at Brindaban for moral and technical education of young men. It was organised somewhat with the inspiration of the national education movement in Bengal; national service was his main inspiration in starting this institution. Then he turned his attention to social reforms which he himself practised to the extent of partaking of meals with untouchables. At that time, such acts on the part of a member of an aristocratic family were unthinkable, something almost sacrilegious to orthodox Hindu feelings. This led to his social ostracism.

While devoting money, time and energy to such educational and social work, he was keeping in touch with the political developments in the country also; but he did not join any revolutionary group in India. On the outbreak of the First World War, he went abroad with the idea of contacting the Germans. He went direct to Switzerland and there met Lala Hardayal and subsequently Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. Virendra assured him of an interview with the Kaiser, Emperor of Germany. Thus started a romantic career; this portion of Mahendra Pratap's life story will be narrated in the Indo-German Conspiracy chapters. I must record my deep regard for his sufferings, sacrifice, sincerity of purpose and high sense of patriotism. Some years ago he was a member of the Lok Sabha. He travelled round the world in his enthusiasm for India's freedom and returned to India only after the Second World War. The National Government has restored to him all his property and estates which had been confiscated by the alien Government for his patriotic activities abroad.

The really indigenous revolutionary movement in U.P. started only in the thirties. The Hindustan Republican Army which was, so to say, built up by Bhagat Singh of Punjab had important centres in U.P.. Chandra Shekhar Azad was the leader of this batch. He was

a great organiser and carried on a determined fight with the forces of the Government. In a skirmish with the police, he was shot dead in Lucknow in a park which has, since, been named after him. But that story is outside the scope of this book.

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## Chapter Thirty-three

# Madras—Bengal Fire Sets it Aflame

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Madras was considered a quiet province mostly dominated by moderate politicians. It came in contact with the trends in Bengal first through Vivekananda, who received a near-royal ovation in Madras on his return from Chicago. The next emissary of Bengal politics was Bipin Chandra Pal who visited Madras in April 1907. Somewhat earlier, there went another man from Bengal who also created a niche for himself in Madras. He was Taraknath Das. While a student in a Calcutta college, he became a member of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti and gradually became inclined to secret revolutionary work. Thus he came in contact with the Jugantar group—particularly Bhupendra Nath Dutta, editor of the *Jugantar*.

Vivekananda created in Madras a favourable ground for any Bengali social or political worker, particularly for a Bengali sanyasi. Shortly after partition, Taraknath went on a roving tour of different parts of Bengal and subsequently of India in the garb of a sanyasi under the name of Tarak Bramhachari. He went to Madras in 1906 and found it a suitable place for organising a revolutionary group. After travelling extensively throughout the Presidency, he

returned to Bengal. By that time, he had decided to go to Europe for revolutionary work. For that he collected some money through donations. He visited Madras again. There also he was given some money. Then he left for the United States via Colombo. The actual year or date of his arrival there is not definitely known; some have put the date sometime in 1906. It may be relevant to mention his subsequent career. In Europe and the U.S.A., he took an active and important part in revolutionary work, particularly during the First World War. As the Government of India was not agreeable to his return to India, he settled in the U.S.A. as a professor of International Affairs. He wrote several books; the present writer happened to be the publisher of two of his books; one about India's position in world politics and the other about Tibet's importance as a buffer state. After independence, he visited India for a few months. He died in the U.S.A. a few years ago.

In Madras, Taraknath was able to form the nucleus of a revolutionary organisation. Chidambaram Pillai, Subramanya Sivam, Nilkanta Bramhachari, V.V.S. Iyer and others were early recruits to the movement. These four pioneers were men of outstanding merit and great organising ability. They were no mere agitators but were real leaders of men. V.C. Chidambaram Pillai, son of Loganathan Pillai, a vakil, was born in Ottapidaram, Tirunelveli District, in 1873. He started his career as a pleader on the criminal side at Ottapidaram in 1896. Subsequently he moved to Tuticorin in 1900 to pursue his legal practice there. His latent anti-British feeling readily responded to the Swadeshi agitation in Bengal started in 1905. Then, giving up his practice, he took up the role of an itinerant propagandist of the cult of Swadeshi and Swaraj. He started delivering lectures to his countrymen, pointing out to them the benefits which would accrue from supporting Swadeshi enterprise. He then came in contact with Taraknath Das who was then on a political mission in Madras. It was Das who gave him the idea of a secret revolutionary society. He was mainly instrumental in starting the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in October 1906 with Rs. 10 lakhs as its authorised capital and was also connected with several Swadeshi concerns in Tuticorin. For the steamship company money came from different parts of India. He was a firm opponent of the British Indian Steam Navigation Company and certain other English

companies operating on that coast. According to Pillai, Swadeshism meant "the development of Indian industries by Indians." About the same time, a steamship company had been started at Barisal (East Bengal). That gave further encouragement to Chidambaram. He was not daunted by the early collapse of that venture at Barisal. The Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company purchased two vessels and chartered some more. This company of Pillai had to face severe competition with the well-established foreign steamer company which did not hesitate to resort to many unfair means to stifle the new Swadeshi venture. He also incurred serious official displeasure for this enterprise.

By that time Bipin Chandra Pal had gone to Madras in May 1907 and had started his lecture tour. His speeches were highly emotional and exciting. Shri Srinivasa Shastri, the famous liberal leader of Madras, characterised his speeches there in the following words: "Bipin Chandra Pal burst into full flame in Madras as a preacher of the new political creed. . . he spoke words with emotion and subtle logic which were wafted by the soft evening breeze to tens of thousands of listeners, invading their whole souls and setting them aflame with the fever of wild consuming desire. Oratory had never dreamed of such triumphs in India. The power of spoken words had never been demonstrated on such a scale."

Bipin Chandra Pal set the whole of Madras aflame; seditious literature started being widely printed and circulated. V. C. Chidambaram Pillai started a Tamil monthly named *Vivekabani* (Voice of Conscience), in collaboration with Swami Vallinayagam. Nilkanta Bramhachari, a young man of 21 and of good education, a native of Erukkor near Shiyali in Tanjore District, was engaged in journalistic work generally of a seditious character and was editor of the *Suryodaya* (Sun-rise), a Tamil paper. This was proscribed by the Government in March 1910. In 1908, a Tamil paper, *India*, was published and within a short time, Srinivasa Iyengar, printer and publisher of the paper, was sentenced to 5 years' transportation under Secs. 124-A, 153-A and 505 IPC for publishing seditious articles. Then the paper along with the press was removed to Pondicherry, which was a safe shelter for revolutionary workers in Madras, just as Chandarnagar was for those in Bengal. Tirumal Acharya, a member of the staff of *India*, went to Paris and joined the *India*

House group of Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama. Periodicals and leaflets in large number were printed and circulated secretly, promising the advent of the golden days of Rama, Shivaji etc. Some secret pamphlets were seized; these were purported to be printed at a press called "Feringhi Destroyer Press." (It may be recalled that 'feringhi' is an abusive term for Europeans or Britishers.)

At Tuticorin, Subramanya Siva (1884-1925) came under the influence of Chidambaram Pillai. Siva received his education in Travancore, assumed the garb of a sanyasi and tramped through the country as an itinerant preacher lecturing on Swadeshi and boycott. He and Pillai delivered a series of lectures in 1908. Both of them preached to and inspired the people to give up buying foreign goods, not to appeal to the authorities on any occasion, to reject the education imparted through government schools and to avoid the courts, both civil and criminal. On 12th March, 1908, under the orders of Ashe, the Joint Magistrate of Tuticorin, Chidambaram Pillai, along with Subramanya Siva and Padmanabha Iyengar, was arrested under Section 107 Cr. P.C..

Further, Ethiraj Surendranath Arya, a member of the Managing Committee of Chennai Jana Sangam of Madras, who was lecturing on Swadeshi, was tried and convicted under Section 124(A) and 153(A) IPC by the High Court of Madras and sentenced on 17th August, 1908, to 5 years' transportation for delivering seditious speeches. Again C. Subramanya Iyer, editor, publisher, printer and proprietor of the Tamil journal *Swadesamitram*, who was considered to be the chief agitator in Madras, was prosecuted for publishing seditious articles. But the charge was withdrawn and he was compelled to furnish security under Section 107 Cr. P.C.. Another Swadeshi lecturer, Krishna Iyer, who was paid by the National Fund of Madras, was also sentenced on 14th September, 1908, by the Sessions Court of Coimbatore to 5 years' transportation under sections 124(A), 153(A) and 505 IPC for seditious speeches. Suppression of newspapers and conviction of Swadeshi propagandists led to the formation of secret societies to spread Swadeshi propaganda and wreak vengeance on 'feringhi' rule and achieve Swaraj. They were also receiving revolutionary literature from Bengal as well as Paris. *Bande Mataram*, published from Paris by Madame Cama

and Viren Chattopadhyaya, was frequently received by them. By then, they had established contact with the Abhinava Bharat of Poona which had been started by the Savarkar brothers.

At this period Nilakanta Bramhachari became more active; along with Sankara Krishna Iyer, he toured the Madras Presidency. Another notable revolutionary was V. V. S. Iyer, known as Maharishi (great saint). He had been for some years in Europe working in close collaboration with Vinayak Savarkar at the India House in London. Later he moved to Paris and came in contact with Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama. On return, he settled in Pondicherry. He was a great patriot and an extremist in Indian nationalist politics. He believed in the violent and revolutionary method for winning India's freedom. He was of the opinion that training of citizens in the free use of arms and heroic deeds were necessary for every Indian in order to free India. Thus practice in gun and revolver shooting was one of the items taught to young recruits, who were sent to Pondicherry for moral and physical training. Pondicherry was also found suitable for smuggling small arms as also for printing secret pamphlets.

V. V. S. Iyer knew many languages and was the author of a number of books. He was a learned person, a scholar in Sanskrit and a fine writer of English prose. He organised the Bharadwaja Ashram\* in Cheranmahadevi (Tirunelveli district) in 1922. He also organised and founded the Bharathi Ashram for popularising Subramaniya Bharathi's works and ideals. In 1925 he met with an accident in Kalyani Thirtham waterfalls at Papanasam near Vikramasinghapuram (Tirunelveli district) while attempting to save his daughter and he was washed away in the falls. He was a determined revolutionary working with a proper design and method. That is why he settled in Pondicherry.

Subramania Bharathi, the Tamil poet (1882-1921), was the morning star of Tamil renaissance. He was not only a great poet but also a great writer of prose. That he was an active patriot who was in the thick of the battlefield of freedom is well known. Bharathi was for some time the editor of *India*, a fiery Tamil weekly which burst upon the public and for five years shook them out of their lethargy. With the partition of Bengal in 1905, a new spirit was pervading the

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\*Bharadwaja was an ancient Hindu sage.

country and Bharathi also imbibed that new spirit. He belonged to the Tilak school of thought. He also edited for short periods other Tamil papers like *Chakkavartini*, *Karma Yogi*, *Suryodayam*, *Vijaya* and *Bala Bharata* (Young India). He was also a good writer in English. He was the author of *Agni* and other poems and translations. Bharathi had close contacts with Nivedita, who contributed frequently to his paper *Bala Bharat*.

Bharathi's journals carried in each of its issues many extracts from newspapers and magazines of the day as also from noted books, and gave prominence to speeches by Swami Vivekananda and to current statements by Aurobindo Ghose, who was at the time in politics. A by-line underneath Bharathi's *Bala Bharata* title described the journal as "a monthly organ of Indian National Regeneration." Swami Vivekananda's favourite Sanskrit quotation, "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached," formed the motto of the journal. Bharathi also was not spared by the British. He was detained in Cuddalore district jail for a short period in November 1918 while on his way from Pondicherry to Tirunelveli (Tinnevely). It was unfortunate that he died at an early age.

Simultaneously with the secret movement, there was also an open agitation advocating Swadeshi, Swaraj and boycott of British goods. Tuticorin and Tinnevely were two important centres of this movement. Tuticorin was the scene of meetings at which speeches were made which influenced the common people. The Joint Magistrate, Ashe, in view of the disturbed state of popular feelings, issued an order under Section 144 Cr. P.C. prohibiting such meetings. In direct defiance of this, a meeting was called and was attended by thousands of people. Under the influence of the speeches of Chidambaram Pillai on 27th February, 1908, there was a strike of the mill hands of Coral Mills, a European company. Siva and Chidambaram, the two important agitators, were lecturing, pamphleteering and organising. Secret pamphlets on the necessity and methods of setting up revolutionary organisations were being widely circulated. Some of these contained references to revolutionary activities in Bengal and some to the activities of the Russian revolutionaries. To Pillai, Bipin Chandra Pal was a hero; as the date of Pal's release (9th March) approached, Chidambaram made frequent reference to him, calling him the Lion of Swaraj. In addition to his



exhortation for Swadeshi and boycott of everything foreign, he also advocated an almost open defiance of the Government. Subramanya Siva also went on a lecture tour—more or less on the same lines. He took a very prominent part in those days. Padmanabha Iyengar was also associated with them.

Subramanya Siva was born in Travancore in 1884. The reports of the Boer War enthused him to preach the idea of national freedom. He was expelled from Travancore, which was then a Native State. Almost immediately, he joined Chidambaram and organised the strike in the Coral Mills; and both of them helped and guided the strikers. Both of them along with Padmanabhan Iyengar were arrested on 12th March, 1908. They were first arrested under Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Code; but subsequently, they were charged under Sections 124(A) and 153(A) of the Indian Penal Code. On the arrest of their popular leader Pillai, the people of Tinnevely and Tuticorin rose in revolt. Public fury went beyond bounds; almost every Government building was attacked, Government property was destroyed, furniture and records of Government offices, markets, police stations—all were set on fire. The excitement of the people raged high till March 15th. Ashe, the Joint Magistrate, infuriated by the defiance of his order, went to the scene and ordered dispersal of the crowd; but on their refusal to do so, the police opened fire. A large number of persons were arrested. A boy of 17 years was the first victim of the gunfire at Tinnevely. Gurnatha Iyer, Private Secretary to Chidambaram Pillai, was arrested; 40 more people were also arrested and remanded. Pillai and Siva were charged under Sec. 124(A) and 153(A) IPC. Among the accused, 27 persons were convicted. Chidambaram Pillai and Siva were sentenced to transportation for life but on appeal this was reduced to 6 years' imprisonment.

The trial excited great public commotion, particularly in view of the defiant attitude of Chidambaram Pillai. A few extracts from the exchange of words in the court between Wynch, the Collector of Tirunelveli, and Chidambaram Pillai are noteworthy :—

COLLECTOR : You have spread the desire for liberty throughout the land and started the conflagration, and I will

- put you in the jail and torment you there and establish my strength.
- PILLAI : We will no longer be serfs to foreigners in our own land—fear we will not hereafter. Will this injustice be tolerated in any land? Will the Almighty tolerate (this) ?
- COLLECTOR : You collected crowds and shouted *Bandemataram*, and abused us.
- PILLAI : We will not bow, and until death shall cry *Bandemataram*. Is it base and degrading to praise our dear mother ?
- COLLECTOR : You induced the desire for Swaraj everywhere and you sowed the seeds (of discontent). Can the tiny rabbit do the work of the lordly lion ?
- PILLAI : We have considered and understood well that the way of unanimity is the only way. We will no longer be afraid of all your cruelties and lose heart.
- COLLECTOR : I will teach you order and sense by firing and will kill. Who is there to obstruct ? I will put you in prison and wreak vengeance.
- PILLAI : Can you gain your object even though you cut us to pieces and our life perishes thereby ? The great love that shines in our hearts, will that go away ? Will our hearts grieve ?

Throughout the trial he maintained a defiant attitude.

Far from being demoralised or frightened, the people became still more anti-government. Tuticorin and Tinnevely were cited as examples of what other towns and places could and should do. It was being openly advocated that other towns also should follow Tuticorin and Tinnevely and should try to drive the *Pardeshi Firinghi* (foreign British) rule out of India. Moreover, Ashe became the target of the revolutionaries. It was decided that Ashe, being the man responsible for the Tinnevely incidents, should be killed. After three years, on the morning of 17th June, 1911, Ashe, Collector and District Magistrate of Tinnevely, was shot dead in a first-class railway compartment at Maniyachi railway station by Vanchi Iyer alias Sankara Iyer.

Vanchi Iyer, son of Raghupathy Iyer, was employed as a forest guard at Punalur (Travancore State). He was 25 years of age and a member of the secret society called Bharatha Matha Association (Mother India Association) organised by Nilkanta Brahmachari. Other members of the society included Sankara Krishna Iyer of Krishnapuram, Chidambaram Pillai of Tenkasi (not the Chidambaram Pillai of 1908 fame), Dharamaraja Iyer of Shencottah and Harihar Pillai of Tuticorin. The aim of the society was to kill all European officers of the district with a view to intimidating European officials and discouraging them from coming out to serve in India and by this means ultimately achieving Swaraj. Every member took a "blood oath" before a picture of Kali. When the first meeting of the society was held, red powder, sacred ashes and flowers were placed on the floor in front of the picture. Red powder was made into a solution with water. The oath was—"Bande Mataram, we should kill all white men. The affairs of the society should not be revealed. Whoever reveals the affairs of this society will go to hell and he will be killed just as Gossain\* was murdered. Just as we drink the red power solution, it is the white man's blood." Each member read the oath and drank the red fluid, saying that it was the white man's blood. Each member had to prick his thumb with a razor and affix his thumb impression in blood opposite his name on a document. This association decided that Vanchi Iyer should be given the charge of murdering Ashe.

Vanchi Iyer accordingly took leave and went to Pondicherry and got his training in revolver practice from V. V. S. Iyer. Vanchi and Sankara Krishna Iyer went to murder Ashe. Vanchi, after killing Ashe, committed suicide at the station itself and escaped the clutches of foreigners. Sankara Krishna Iyer, who accompanied Vanchi, escaped from the scene but was subsequently arrested and convicted. On the body of Vanchi Iyer, a letter was found urging people to do their best to drive away the foreign English rule and to establish Swarajya. The murder of Ashe is the culminating point in the history of the Tinnevely Conspiracy Case. The conspiracy had its inception in April 1910; it was set on foot by Nilkanta Brahmachari.

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\*The reference was to the assassination of Naren Gosain—approver in the Alipore Bomb case at Calcutta.

Repressive measures like suppression of newspapers and conviction of important persons compelled them to shift their headquarters to Pondicherry. Already they had tried to adopt other methods of spreading their propaganda and for this purpose a secret society had been formed at Tenkasi. In the first meeting which took place on 10th April, 1911, Nilkanta Brahmachari explained the injustice of the Government and the miserable state of the country which rendered it necessary that the British should be driven out and Swaraj obtained. Previous endeavours to effect this by means of preaching, newspapers and isolated murders having failed, a new plan was devised; it was to take the shape of a general rising all over the country on a date to be fixed and the murder of all the white people in one day. All agreed to this and joined the new movement. As described earlier, an oath was drawn up and written on a piece of paper; each person pricked his thumb and affixed his thumb impression in blood. Another such meeting was also held at Tuticorin by the middle of July. It was also revealed that 3000 inhabitants of Madras took the vow to kill George V as soon as he landed on Indian soil for his coronation in 1911. They decided to stage some daring act either on the day of arrival of the King or on the day of his coronation.

As we have stated earlier, Nilkanta Brahmachari appeared in the political arena prior to the conviction of Chidambaram Pillai. Chidambaram was more an agitator for rousing mass passion; but Nilkanta was a better organiser of bands of workers. Having organised a determined batch, he decided to strike and the target was Ashe who, as already stated, was killed in a railway coach at a junction station by Vanchi Iyer in June 1911. Then came the Tinnevely Conspiracy Case. Besides the murder of Ashe, there was a charge of general conspiracy to wage war against the King.

The following persons were charged in the Tinnevely Conspiracy Case with having entered into a conspiracy to wage war against the British:—

1. Nilkanta Brahmachari, journalist, aged 21
2. Sankara Krishna Iyer, cultivator, aged 22
3. Madathukadai Chidambaram Pillai, grocer, aged 24  
(Not the famous Chidambaram Pillai)
4. Muthukumaraswami Pillai, pot seller, aged 45

5. Subbayya Pillai, Vakil's clerk, aged 43
6. Jaggannadha Iyenger, cook, aged 25
7. Harihara Iyer, merchant, aged 21
8. Bapu Pillai, alias Ramaswami Pillai, cultivator, aged 24.
9. V. Desikachari, merchant, aged 30
10. Vembu Iyer, alias Mahadeva Iyer, cook, aged 23
11. Savadi Arunachalam Pillai, cultivator, aged 20
12. Alagappa Pillai, cultivator, aged 18
13. Vande Mataram Subramani Iyer, schoolmaster, aged 26
14. Pichumani Iyer alias Venkatachalam Iyer, cook, aged 26

All of them were charged under Sec. 121(A) and 302 of the Indian Penal Code and 109 and 111 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Nilkanta Brahmachari was the first accused in the conspiracy case, charged with being the organiser of the conspiracy and the leading spirit amongst the conspirators. He was sentenced to seven years' R.I. Sankara Krishna Iyer, the second accused, was convicted for having co-operated with Nilkanta Brahmachari and acted as his henchman and was sentenced to four years' R.I. Harihara Iyer was sentenced to three years' R.I. Chidambaram Pillai was sentenced to two years' R.I. and the remaining four were sentenced to one year's R.I. each.

The caste system was much more rigorous in Madras than in northern India; the revolutionary workers did their best to break the strict caste barriers. Among the different items in the oath that was administered to the members, one was to discard the caste barriers and untouchability. In the judgement of the court, it was noted that the oath had been administered to the workers to ignore caste barriers. In Bengal and other places, the secret revolutionary movement anticipated Gandhiji in many respects, e.g. Swadeshi, cottage industry, charkha, removal of untouchability and caste barriers, mass education, village uplift work etc. Similar objectives were in operation in Madras. The revolutionary movement in India, in addition to the political objective of achieving complete independence, had its socio-economic content also.

After the Tinnevely case, Madras had no mentionable revolutionary activity for some years. The accused in the Tinnevely case, after their release, did not take any further part in the movement except Nilkanta Brahmachari. It was he who played an important

part in organising the Moplah Rebellion in 1922. Perhaps the readers will be surprised to read about Nilkanta organising the Moplah rising, notorious for the communal atrocities committed during it. Initially, the Moplah rising was an agrarian movement and an auxiliary to the Non-co-operation movement. The Moplahs were a turbulent community, descendants of Arab settlers in Malabar. There had been a number of Moplah outbreaks in the nineteenth century. There was a special law, the Mopal Outrages Act, to deal with occasional acts of violence of the Moplahs. The Khilafat question was a sufficient provocation for the fanatical Moplahs. Non-co-operation movement created a further provocation to them. Nilkanta found in them a ready weapon to strike at British rule. But the rulers were clever enough to turn the weapon against the wielder of the weapon and through their agents gave the movement a communal turn. It was easy for the Government to do that as the Moplahs were being economically exploited, and the exploiters were mostly Hindus. Yet the Government could not be in any relenting mood towards the Moplah prisoners and they even allowed a large number of them to be suffocated to death in a rail coach while transferring them from one place to another. Nilkanta was convicted and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment after the Moplah riots. After serving his long sentence, he came out of prison with broken health and took no further active part in politics. He is now a sanyasi engaged in moral and social uplift of the people.

Another worker of this group, Sitaram Raju, came into prominence after the Non-co-operation movement as the organiser of a guerilla band in the Andhra area. While only an adolescent, he came to play an active role. In 1922 he started organising the rural people of the Agency areas of Andhra against forest and revenue officials. After giving due notice, he attacked some police stations and captured them. In all, he thus took possession of five police stations. The Government declared a prize of Rs. 10,000 for his capture. After conducting virtually a guerilla war for two years, he was shot dead in an open fight in April 1924. Thus ended the career of a noble fighter for Indian independence.

This brings us to the end of the story of revolutionary movement in Madras, i.e., present-day Tamil Nadu, Andhra (excluding Telengana) and Kerala States.

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## Chapter Thirty-four

# Punjab in Ferment

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Punjab was the main recruiting ground of the Indian army. Sikhs, Jats and Muslim Pathans were considered loyal and efficient fighting forces by the British Government. Punjab was finally conquered by the British in 1849 after the battle of Gujrat. In all their encounters with the British, the Sikh soldiers fought with uncommon courage and valour but their leaders and generals betrayed them—being bribed or otherwise influenced by the British. So it was strange that during the Rising of the Sepoys in 1857, the Punjab contingents, including the Sikhs, were on the whole loyal; and the province also did not show any signs of unrest. But the placidity of Punjab politics and social order was disturbed by the Kooka rising—otherwise known as the Namdhari movement. It was originally a Sikh reformist movement but aggressive. Ram Singh gave it a militant and anti-British turn by about 1875. The members were asked to take a pledge—not to accept government service, not to send children to government schools, not to go in litigation to government courts, not even to use the government postal services and not to use foreign goods. The movement created a stir in Punjab and it was finally suppressed in 1877. Ram Singh was taken prisoner and sent to Rangoon for detention.

Again in the first decade of the present century, the contagion of unrest came from the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress of 1906 where for the first time the slogan of Swaraj was raised through the presidential speech of Dadabhai Naoroji. Lala Lajpat Rai played a conspicuous role in that session. There he developed intimate contacts with Tilak, Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal and other extremist leaders. Lajpat Rai had a fire-brand colleague in Sardar Ajit Singh. The economic condition of Punjab during these years was very bad owing to continued crop failures for a number of years. That provided the needed material conditions for social unrest. From 1897 to 1900, Punjab suffered terribly due to repeated famines. Thousands of people died in those years.

Moreover, the Government also furnished some occasions for discontent among the Punjab peasants. By the end of 1906, the Government increased the land revenue and also the irrigation tax. This gave an opportunity to Ajit Singh to raise a campaign amongst the peasants. In 1907 was passed the Land Alienation Act which restricted the ownership rights of the settlers to new irrigated land in the Bari Doab and the Chenab Canal colonies. The weekly journal *The Punjabi* took up the case of the aggrieved settlers. The owner and publisher of the paper were arrested. The paper also published an editorial against the *begar* (forced labour) system and cited the cases of two peasants dying of exhaustion while working for some officials. Popular demonstrations against the arrest and prosecution of the owner and publisher of *The Punjabi* were held throughout Punjab on 22nd February, 1907. Repercussions of this prosecution were also felt in distant places like Madras and Calcutta. When the owner and the publisher of *The Punjabi* were each sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment popular demonstrations ultimately led to a clash between the public and the police. In short, increase in land revenue, passing of the Land Alienation Act, police repression and the severity of the sentence on the owner and the publisher of *The Punjabi*—all these led to something like a mass uprising throughout Punjab. Moreover, there was an epidemic of plague in which thousands of people died.

Ajit Singh who was a real firebrand took advantage of the follies of the administrators. He was helped by Sufi Ambaprasad, Aga Haider and Syed Hyder Riza. In February 1907, he organised



the Indian Patriots Association mainly for the betterment of the condition of the peasants. Another association was formed—the Bharat Mata. Thousands of people started coming out on the streets or joining meetings in different places for the assertion of the rights of the people. The demand was not limited to the removal of agrarian grievances but was avowedly for Swaraj. Ajit Singh openly preached the removal of British rule. He frankly told the peasants that unless Swaraj were won, no real redress of grievances could be expected. He exhorted the people not to be afraid of the armed might of the Government; 30 crores of Indians could easily defy the arms of the Government. He even told them that it would be better and nobler to die for the freedom of the country than to die of hunger and the plague. Lajpat Rai could not be indifferent to these developments, and when he joined this movement, naturally, he became the leader.

Mass demonstrations were held not only in rural areas but also in important cities like Rawalpindi, Lahore, Amritsar etc. April and May 1907 were two hectic months for Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai for spreading discontent. In Rawalpindi troops had to be called out to suppress the demonstrations. There was almost a pitched battle between the demonstrators and the army. For showing sympathy with the demonstration, five eminent lawyers of Rawalpindi were summoned to appear before the court on 1st May. On the appointed date, from early morning people started gathering round the court room which was practically surrounded by an angry crowd composed of students, peasants and railway workers. Ajit Singh organised this demonstration. Somewhat afraid of the demonstration, the authorities cancelled the summons against those five lawyers and they were informed that they would not be required to appear before the court.

By that time discontent was spreading even amongst the Army. A conspiracy was detected in the 10th Jat Regiment. A section of this regiment in Fort William at Calcutta was also affected by the workers of the Jugantar group in Bengal. This alarmed the Army authorities. It is reported that even the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, was perturbed; he is said to have reported to the Home Government in London that unless some of these agrarian measures were modified and Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai arrested, it would

not be possible for him to ensure the loyalty of the Indian army. He is also reported to have offered to resign if his recommendations were not acted upon. Moreover, that was the golden jubilee year of the Sepoy Rising of 1857. So the authorities in London and India were afraid of the developments in Punjab, Bengal and other parts. It will be recalled that there were signs of widespread popular discontent and public demonstrations in 1907-08 in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab and Madras; some of these ended in riots and violence. Repressive measures taken by the police only exasperated the public feeling still further.

In Rawalpindi, public demonstrations continued for days together in the teeth of police repression. The authorities could not depend on the Indian troops alone and had to call out British troops. At last the authorities took a serious view of the situation. Lord Minto, the then Viceroy, was a Tory but the Secretary of State for India, Morley, was a Whig. Minto initiated a dual policy of appeasement and repression. It was then a case of a Conservative Viceroy arguing with a Liberal Minister for liberal reforms and at the same time taking strong repressive measures. Orders were issued for the arrest of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh. Lajpat Rai was arrested and sent to Mandalay (Burma) under Regulation III of 1818 to be detained without trial. Ajit Singh could not be easily found but within a few days he was also arrested and sent to Burma.

Lord Minto realised the injustice of the Canal legislation. He felt that some of the provisions of the proposed Act would mean the revocation of the pledged words to the settlers, numbering about 12 lakhs. The bill had been passed by the Punjab Legislative Council and awaited the Viceroy's signature. Pressure was put on him that the refusal of his assent would be interpreted as a surrender to public demonstration and a snub for the Punjab Government. Ultimately Minto, with the consent of Morley, refused to put his signature on the bill. With the arrest of Lajpat Rai and Ajit and the withdrawal of the Canal legislation, the situation in Punjab cooled down to some degree. Minto also issued an ordinance to empower the Government to ban public meetings. The ordinance was subsequently passed as an Act. At the same time, he advocated some administrative reforms to appease the Moderates and the Muslims. The Morley-Minto Reforms Act was passed.

During this period the Lt. Governor of Punjab, Sir Denzil Ibbetson, reported that "Everywhere they could sense a new wind blowing through men's minds." According to his estimate, in the east and west of the province new ideas were confined to the educated classes and amongst lawyers, clerks and students; but "as the centre of the Province is approached, however, the feeling in the towns grows strong and there is sign of activity and unrest. In the cities of Amritsar and Ferozepur there has been an attempt on the part of the Lahore agitators to raise the feeling of disloyalty which apparently met with considerable success in Ferozepur though it was not so successful in Amritsar. In the towns of Rawalpindi, Sialkot and Lyallpur anti-British propaganda is being openly and sedulously preached. In Lahore, the capital of the Province, the propaganda is virulent and has resulted in a more or less general state of serious unrest."

The arrest of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh led to the lessening of the intensity of the agitation. But other leaders gradually took up the struggle. Sufi Ambaprasad, Lal Chand Falak, Bhai Paramanand, Pindi Das and others took up the agitation. Kishan Singh, brother of Ajit Singh and Lal Chand Falak were prosecuted and convicted for inciting disaffection. Similarly, Bhai Paramanand was prosecuted under the Criminal Procedure Code and was bound over for good behaviour. All the time, there was a sort of a constant contact with Bengal. It may be recalled that Ajit Singh, Sufi Amba Prasad and others had previous contact with Jatin Banerjee—later Swami Niralamba. A copy of the bomb manual used by the Alipore conspirators and other documents were seized from Bhai Paramanand. Among the latter were two letters written by Lala Lajpat Rai to Paramanand while he was in England in which he asked Paramanand to establish contact with Shyamji Krishnavarma and get some help from him.

Thus conditions were favourable for a revolutionary movement which was later initiated by Lala Hardayal. A brilliant scholar, he proceeded to England on a State scholarship in 1905 but there he came in contact with Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama. He thought the education for which he had gone to England would be no good for his country. He returned to India for a month in 1906 and went back to England. After some time he surrendered the

scholarship and returned to India in 1908. He then frequently moved about, making Lahore and Delhi the main centres of his activities. He started working against the British Government. Even before his departure for England in 1905, he had come in contact with Jatin Banerjee (Swami Niralamba), one of the pioneers of the Jugantar party. As stated earlier, Jatin Banerjee toured several parts of India including Baroda, Punjab, Bihar, U. P. etc. While he was in Punjab, Ajit Singh, Lal Chand Falak, Sufi Ambaprasad and Bhai Paramanand also were influenced by him. It was due to his contact with Swami Niralamba that Hardayal gave his establishment in San Francisco the name of Jugantar Asram.

Hardayal was originally a resident of Delhi but did not stay there long and again went to America, having given directions to his followers, Jatin Chatterjee of Dehradun and Dinanath, a Delhi resident. Other important members who gathered round him were Avadh Bihari, Amir Chand and Balmukhand. This was the nucleus of the organisation in Delhi. The main responsibility of the organisation remained with Amir Chand, a school teacher. Jatin Chatterjee's father somehow came to know that he was mixing with Hardayal and staying with him in the house of Lala Lajpat Rai. To save his son, he sent him to England to become a barrister. Chatterjee by that time had come in contact with Rash Behari who at this time was serving in the Forest Research Institute of Dehradun. Before leaving for England, Chatterjee put the Delhi group in contact with Rash Behari, who took up the Delhi organisation in 'right earnest and supplied them with revolutionary literature from Bengal. As stated earlier, Rash Behari was in contact with the Jugantar group of Bengal; but this contact was being maintained through the Chandernagar group, particularly through Srish Ghose and Manindra Nayak, the bomb specialist of the group. Nayak used to pass all information to Amar Chatterjee of Sramajivi Samabaya and Atul Ghose, both of the Jugantar group. Amar Chatterjee sent Basanta Kumar Biswas, a young man from Nadia working in the Samabaya, with some bombs to Rash Behari, who was at this juncture planning to kill Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy. The Viceroy came to Delhi for a ceremonial State entry as the new capital of India. While he was passing through Chandni Chowk on the back of an elephant in a State procession, a bomb was thrown at him on 23rd December,

1912. This part of the story is better narrated in the words of Lord Hardinge himself which I quote below:

“It was a perfect morning and the procession of elephants made a most striking picture of oriental colour and splendour. We passed through the Queen’s Gardens, from which the public had been excluded. It was there that I had an unaccountable presentiment of evil and said to my wife, ‘I feel quite miserable, I am sure something dreadful is going to happen’. She replied, ‘It is only that you are tired and you always dislike ceremonial.’ Nevertheless, I persisted in my statement. A few moments later the procession entered the Chandni Chowk, the principal street of Delhi, which was packed with people, and I was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm, the cheering being quite deafening. I had not proceeded more than about 300 yards before there was a shattering explosion. My elephant stopped. There was dead silence. My helmet was on the road. I glanced at my wife, saw at once that she was all right, turned to look at the back of the howdah where I saw some yellow powder and remarked, ‘I am afraid that was a bomb.’ My wife asked me if I was hurt and I replied that I felt as though somebody had hit me very hard on the back and had poured boiling water over me. The Chief of Police handed up my helmet on the top of a lance and asked for orders. I said the procession was to proceed as before. Wild cheering broke out on all sides, but when the procession had gone a short distance, my wife looking behind saw that I was badly wounded and the servant who had been standing behind me holding the State umbrella was dead and that his body was entangled in the ropes of the howdah. She told me about the dead man and I stopped the elephant at once. While the poor man’s body was being removed, I fainted from loss of blood and on recovering consciousness found myself lying on the pavement and receiving first aid. I gave orders that everything was to be carried out as arranged and gave the text of the speech I had prepared to be read at the ceremony by the senior member of my Council. This was done, my wish being that India should realise that nothing could deflect the British Government and the Government of India from their declared intention. I was taken back to Viceregal Lodge in a motor-car in an unconscious state.

“I remembered afterwards that my Indian personal servant, who

had been with me shooting on the previous day and who apparently had put on his scarlet uniform over his khaki shooting kit to keep him warm, had also been on the elephant standing behind Winifred, and that after the explosion I had seen him getting off the elephant in khaki and not in uniform. I said to him, 'What the devil do you mean by being here in khaki?' But I learnt afterwards that the explosion had literally blown his uniform to shreds and that he was covered with 30 or 40 minor wounds. He did not hear what I said as the drums of his ears were burst, as was one of mine. Mine healed, but he, poor man, was always deaf afterwards. I secured for him a double pension.

"A curious fact is that the explosion of the bomb was so loud and crashing that it was heard six miles away, and yet neither Winifred nor I heard anything! I suppose our hearing was paralysed by the bomb before the sound could be heard.

"My wounds, which were very painful, took a long time to heal as several small operations were necessary to remove particles of the bomb with which were screws, nails, gramophone needles, etc., but I was determined to open the first meeting of the Legislative Assembly in the new capital which took place ten weeks after the State entry. I was quite unfit to do so, as I had to leave my bed to go to the Chamber. I received a tremendous welcome not only from the members but from the galleries which were packed, which quite upset me by its genuineness. After a short rest I addressed the Assembly for about fifteen minutes and after listening to a few speeches from the leaders, I was given a great ovation on leaving. I returned to bed, and two days later went to Dehra Dun for a month.

"When driving in a car from the station to my bungalow, I passed an Indian standing in front of the gate of his house with several others, all of whom were very demonstrative in their salaams. On my inquiring who these people might be, I was told that the principal Indian there had presided two days before at a public meeting at Dehra Dun and had proposed and carried a vote of condolence with me on account of the attack of my life. It was proved later that it was this identical Indian who threw the bomb at me."\*

None was arrested on the spot and no clue was found of the

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\* From *My Indian Years, 1910-1916*

conspiracy or of the organisation behind this attempt on the life of the Viceroy. It was a puzzle to the Government as to who could do such a thing. It took the Government nearly two years to trace the real author of this attack. I place below an extract from the report on this bomb attack which was submitted by D. Petie (Addl. Supdt. of Police, Delhi) to the Government, on November 11, 1914.

"Before the Delhi Bombs, two machines of very similar type have already been used in India. The first of these was thrown in Dalhousie Square, Calcutta, at the beginning of March, 1911, but failed to explode. The second exploded in Midnapur in the house of an informer about a fortnight before the Delhi outrage occurred. The fragments of all these bombs were carefully compared and as a result of this comparison Col. Mushratt-Williams (Government Explosive Expert) had no hesitation in holding that the same directing brain had guided the manufacture of the three bombs. It should be accepted as a fact that the bomb was a Bengal product and this fact was, so to speak, the only point of firm ground that showed itself amid the sea of doubt and conjecture by which these were surrounded.

"The bombs used in the explosion at Maulvi Bazar (27.3.1913) and at Lahore (17.5.1913) were exactly identical with the type used in Delhi, in Midnapur and Calcutta. It does become a matter of supreme importance for us to keep in touch with the cognate cases at Maulvi Bazar and Lahore and to see whether our separate lines of enquiry tended to converge at any single point."

From this report, it will be found that the bomb thrown in Dalhousie Square in 1911 and in Midnapur in the same year, at Maulvi Bazar (District Sylhet) in 1912 and at Lahore in 1913 (both aimed at killing Gordon) and in Delhi for killing Lord Hardinge (1912) were of an identical nature and must have been manufactured by the same group and also used by the same group. Only ten days before the Delhi bomb, a similar bomb was thrown in Midnapur to kill Abdur Rahman who had acted as a police informer against political workers. The report ended with the remark: "Real author of the outrage was Basanta Kumar Biswas and the arch-conspirator was Rash Behari Bose." But they came to know this two years after the Delhi incident.

The same group was responsible for a bomb outrage at Lawrence

Gardens in Lahore. The bomb was placed there for killing Gordon, who was transferred for his safety to Punjab from Assam, after an abortive attempt on his life. The bomb missed the target but an Indian orderly was killed on 17th May, 1913. This bomb was similar to the one used on Hardinge. In fact, Basanta Kumar Biswas had brought ten bombs from Amar Chatterjee for use by Rash Behari. The Government were now able to trace the conspiracy and arrest some persons. It was reported that in some papers found in a house at Rajabazar (Calcutta) the police got the name and address of Dinanath. On his arrest Dinanath made a full confession incriminating others. It was on the basis of his statement that other arrests were made. This was the beginning of the Delhi Conspiracy Case (1915) in which Dinanath turned approver. There were fourteen accused including Rash Behari, who was absconding and so could not be produced before the court. Basanta Kumar, Avadh Behari, Amir Chand and Balmukunda were given the capital sentence and hanged. Balraj and Hanumant Sahai were awarded life transportation. Others were acquitted.

It is interesting to note how clever and resourceful Rash Behari was. As soon as he got the scent that his name was likely to be connected with the Alipore Bomb Case, he shifted from Calcutta to Dehra Dun and established contact with some important police officers, including Sushil Ghose, a Deputy Superintendent of Police. He posed as an informer of Sushil Ghose for some time so that the least suspicion about him might be allayed. Three top officials of the Central Intelligence, Denham, Petric and Cleveland, knew of this. Ultimately when Rash Behari's true character was revealed, Sushil Ghose had to explain his relations with Rash Behari. Immediately after the Delhi bomb incident, Rash Behari rushed to Dehra Dun and organised a public meeting to condemn the outrage and to avow allegiance to the British authority. He presided over that meeting. This meeting is mentioned by Lord Hardinge, as quoted above. It was because of such ingenuity and resourcefulness that Rash Behari could escape police vigilance during all these years, though he was engaged in hectic revolutionary activities in Bengal, U.P. and Punjab. It also helped him to escape to Japan, posing as Raja P. N. Tagore of the famous Tagore family.

As we have mentioned before during the search of the Murari-



pukur garden before the Alipore case, two letters of Rash Behari Bose were seized. After this it was thought advisable to send him out of Bengal. In fact, in a discussion on this matter, Sashibhushan Ray Choudhury suggested this and arranged for his stay at Dehra Dun as the guardian tutor of the children of Prafullanath Tagore. This job was, in fact, fixed for Sashibhushan and he passed it on to Rash Behari for the sake of party work. Subsequently he secured a job in the Forest Department. But at the same time he was maintaining connection through the Chandernagar and Chinsura groups with the main Jugantar group. That was how Basanta Biswas was sent to him for those two overt acts. After some time as stated above, Basanta and some other Punjab revolutionaries were arrested and the Delhi Conspiracy Case was started.

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## Chapter Thirty-five

# The Story of Komagata Maru

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A large number of Indians, most of them Sikhs from Punjab, migrated during the first decade of the twentieth century to various British colonies and possessions in the Far East and also to Canada, the Philippines and Brazil. The reasons for the emigration were mainly economic. In Canada, for instance, an unskilled labourer could easily earn ten rupees a day as against a few annas in India, and naturally, those who had settled there had been, asking their friends and relations in India to join them in their new home. Indians living in other British possessions or dependencies in the Far East or in the Philippines and Japan were similarly being invited by Indian settlers in Canada. Many went to settle in those distant countries; and most of them proved to be successful settlers. By 1910 some 10,000 Indians had migrated to Canada; they were able not only to support themselves but even to send some assistance to their people in India. These Indians appeared to threaten the monopoly privilege of the white races to such migration, especially as the current immigration laws had not till then made any discrimination against Asiatics. So the law was tightened and a number of measures were initiated, all with a view to squeezing Indians

out of Canada as well as preventing them from migrating there in future.

Two Orders-in-Council were issued in 1910 by the Governor-General of Canada prohibiting the entry of any migrant into Canada "unless they travelled by continuous journey from their native country and on through tickets purchased therein or purchased and prepaid in Canada and unless they could prove that they individually possessed 200 dollars (equivalent then to Rs. 625) in their own right." The only exceptions were in favour of Canadian citizens, diplomatic and consular officers and their families, tourists and travellers passing through Canada in transit, students going to join a school or a college in Canada, members of dramatic, musical and artistic parties, lecturers, musicians, priests and ministers of religion, professors of colleges and commercial travellers entering Canada for the temporary exercise of their respective callings. The exception clause referred to casual and temporary visitors—but not to intending settlers.

As there was no direct steamer connection between Canada and India and as the possession of 200 dollars in their own right was almost impossible for the class of Indians wanting to emigrate for economic reasons (this actually meant an outlay of Rs. 1,050 including the cost of passage from India), the conditions imposed by these two Orders-in-Council served practically as a complete bar to the entry of Indians into Canada. It may be stated that these Orders-in-Council were passed after consulting the Governments of Britain and of India.

The British, then ruling India, thoroughly disliked the idea of Indians going to the self-governing dominions of the Empire and imbibing ideas of racial and political equality with the "ruling race". This dislike was intensified, when the revolutionary movement for the forcible overthrow of British rule in India had been set afoot both in Canada and the United States of America, by Taraknath Das, Heramba Lal Gupta, Surendra Nath Kar, Lala Hardayal and others. The movement also had active sympathisers all over the Far East wherever Indians were to be found in large numbers. The Ghadr Party—as the Punjab Group of the Indian revolutionaries in America was called—functioned vigorously in North America in spite of all the efforts of the Political Department of the Government of India

and British Secret Service agents. The party held meetings and organised lectures and published its own paper, which circulated widely in the Far East. Its main centre was known as Jugantar Asram—named after the Jugantar party in Bengal in close collaboration with which the Ghadr Party was working in America.

Baba Gurdit Singh, a native of the district of Amritsar, had witnessed the miseries of the Indian labourers—or “coolies” as they were called—in the Malaya States and other places in the Far East in course of his travels as a successful contractor. Proud of his birth as an Indian and a Sikh, he felt intensely for his countrymen, helots at home and unwelcome abroad except as “coolies”. He gave up his lucrative business at Singapore and went to Hong Kong in 1913 to see if he could do something to help his compatriots. Indian residents there approached him to take the lead in chartering a steamer to transport Sikh emigrants to Canada, where they would be able to live in greater comfort once they gained admittance there. Indian residents of Vancouver in Canada promised him every assistance; and after some dispute over the port of embarkation, it was finally decided that the steamer to be chartered would sail from Hong Kong to Vancouver, calling at Shanghai, Manila and Yokohama.

On 24th March, 1914, Baba Gurdit Singh managed to charter at Hong Kong the *Komagata Maru* (3,096 tons), belonging to a small Japanese concern known as Shinei Kishen Go Shi Kaisha. The steamer had accommodation for 533 passengers. Baba Gurdit Singh had originally intended to charter a steamer in Calcutta and from there to proceed to Canada. But ultimately he had to start from Hong Kong itself. At first about 500 emigrants had offered to board the steamer from Hong Kong. But only a few days before the date announced for sailing, Baba Gurdit Singh was suddenly arrested by the Hong Kong police and kept in confinement without any charge being brought against him. The anti-Indian elements in the local administration promptly made use of this opportunity to carry on a campaign of slander against Baba Gurdit Singh and frighten away the prospective passengers of the *Komagata Maru*. He was ultimately released without undergoing any trial. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong authorities had placed a ban against the sailing of the steamer for Vancouver. It was only after the personal intervention of the officiating Governor, who happened to know Baba Gurdit Singh and also

after the latter had threatened the local Government with a suit for damages, that the ban was eventually lifted, but not before the Hong Kong authorities had warned the Government of both Canada and India about the steamer sailing with emigrants for Canada.

At last the *Komagata Maru* sailed on 4th April, 1914, with only 165 passengers. It stopped at Shanghai for five days and then proceeded to Moji with 111 new passengers. At Moji, 86 more were taken on board. The last port of call was Yokohama, where only 14 new passengers joined the boat. From there the steamer sailed with 376 passengers, all of whom except 25 were Sikhs. On 21st May the *Komagata Maru* touched the shores of Canada and, after a thorough checking at the Victoria Quarantine Station, the ship was allowed to proceed, on 23rd May, to Vancouver. The Canadian immigration authorities did not allow the emigrants to land on the plea that they had failed to satisfy the requirements of the current immigration laws of Canada. The only exceptions were a doctor and a student, the former having consistently tried to wean away the loyalty of the emigrants from Baba Gurdit Singh.

Baba Gurdit Singh, it appears, had anticipated such opposition from the Canadian authorities but he was confident that he would be able to obtain redress from the court of law in this matter. He undoubtedly had a strong case, particularly because (1) the Governor-General's Orders-in-Council of 1910 had been found *ultra vires* by the Chief Justice of the Canadian Supreme Court; (2) three British lawyers of Hong Kong had given their written opinion that there was nothing illegal in the *Komagata Maru* sailing therefrom with Indian emigrants for Vancouver (which was probably responsible for the Hong Kong Government's lifting the ban on 4th April, 1914, against the sailing of the *Komagata Maru* from there); (3) a committee of Indian residents of Vancouver, with property worth over two crores of rupees, was prepared to guarantee that each emigrant was in possession of 200 dollars; (4) the emigrants had travelled on through tickets and by direct steamer to Vancouver from their usual countries of residence; and (5) actually a number of intending emigrants, such as preachers and teachers, were covered by the exceptions mentioned in the Orders-in-Council. No lawyer, however, was permitted to go on board the *Komagata Maru*; nor was Baba Gurdit Singh or any other emigrant allowed to visit any lawyer ashore. Only on one

occasion was Baba Gurdit permitted to speak to a solicitor, and that from a respectable distance. All these will only show the most undemocratic attitude of the Canadian Government.

Whatever legal justification the Canadian authorities might have had for holding that the emigrants had failed to satisfy the immigration law, the *bonafides* of the Canadian authorities was open to question. For, they had actually prevented Baba Gurdit Singh and his associates from taking their case to court. Baba Gurdit Singh was prevented even from going ashore to dispose of his cargo and purchase provisions for his associates on board. Further, the Committee of Indian residents of Vancouver was prepared to deposit the security of 200 dollars for each Indian emigrant. But this, too, was refused on the specious ground that the funds donated by the Committee could not be called the emigrants' money "in their own right".

The passengers were kept confined in the steamer week after week, while their provisions and water supplies were running out fast. The immigration authorities were completely callous to the sufferings of the unfortunate passengers, including women and children. Even the local community at Vancouver was not allowed to supply provision for the steamer. Ignoring the numerous protests made at meetings on board the *Komagata Maru* and also on shore against the order forbidding the passengers to land, the Canadian authorities directed the Japanese captain of the ship to weigh anchor at once and sail for Hong Kong without provisions or water. They tried to enforce this order with the help of the police, who were, however, driven back after a determined resistance offered by the passengers on board. A naval craft then appeared on the scene, standing menacingly along the *Komagata Maru*, which ultimately had to sail from Vancouver. But meanwhile good sense had prevailed, and sufficient provisions and water for the voyage were supplied by the immigration authorities. Baba Gurdit Singh had by now been forced to transfer the charter he held of the *Komagata Maru* to two other Indians, both residents of Vancouver, after the local Indian community had paid off the dues to the ship's agent. The new charterers were, however, not allowed to visit the steamer, although all the financial liability for the steamer was theirs. For nearly about two months, the ship remained at Vancouver.

The *Komagata Maru* left Vancouver for Hong Kong on 23rd July, 1914, with a shipload of disappointed passengers, whose only crime was that they were Asiatics. They had been relieved of all their money amounting to about one and a half lakh of rupées; they had been kept imprisoned in the steamër for two months like common felons, almost without food and water; they had to fight for their very existence when the immigration authorities ordered them to bundle off; and, starving and weary, they were sought to be overawed by the authorities actually commissioning a man-of-war. Even the Rowlatt Committee has observed—"They were by this time in very bad temper, as many had staked all their possessions in this venture and had started in full belief that the British Government would assure and guarantee their admission into a land of plenty. This temper had been greatly aggravated by direct revolutionary influences." No "revolutionary influences" were, therefore, needed to steel the hearts of the passengers against the "Sarkar" by which they meant everyone concerned with the British administration, whether at Hong Kong or Shanghai, in Canada or at Calcutta. They could not but feel that gross injustice had been done in the name of the law and that they had been denied the fundamental rights of human beings under a civilised government.

No wonder they acted without their usual restraint at Yokohama and Kobe, where their boat called on the return voyage. They made some extravagant demands of the British Consuls at those two ports, and these were at least partly conceded by the Consul at Kobe. But their perfectly reasonable request to be allowed to disembark at Hong Kong or some other Chinese port or at Singapore was summarily turned down by the authorities concerned, even though the Canadian immigration authorities had directed the captain of the ship to sail back to Hong Kong. They could only see Singapore from their floating prison, just as they had previously seen Vancouver. Their feelings can well be imagined. They were mostly of the labouring class who had left their homes in India long ago in search of better employment in the Far East. All their miserable savings had been used up in the disastrous voyage to Vancouver. But they had hoped that they might possibly rehabilitate themselves in China. Even that hope was now dashed to the ground.

It was the British Consul at Kobe who finally decided the port of

destination for the *Komagata Maru* after he had consulted the Government of India by cable. As the great majority of the passengers had wanted to be allowed to disembark at one or more Chinese ports, it becomes difficult to believe that Baba Gurdit Singh had agreed to the arrangement made by the Consul at Kobe, who informed the Government of India that some 350 destitute Indians were travelling from Vancouver and that the only solution of the problem was to direct the steamer to Calcutta.

The *Komagata Maru*, which had left Kobe on 3rd September, arrived at Singapore on the 16th, when Baba Gurdit Singh once again tried unsuccessfully to obtain permission to land. After a short halt at Singapore, the boat finally left for Calcutta, and on 26th September reached the mouth of the Hooghly. The next day the *Komagata Maru* was met at Kulpi, a few miles south of Calcutta, by a number of British and Indian officers of the Governments of Bengal and Punjab led by Donald, District Magistrate of 24 Parganas. This was in accordance with the joint decision of the two Provincial Governments (Bengal and Punjab) on advice from the Government of India about the probable destination point of the steamer. The plan was to have the passengers landed at Budge Budge and transferred direct into a railway train waiting to take them straight to Punjab. When Donald and other officers met the men on board at Kulpi, they did not, however, give any indication of this plan to them. The baggage of the passengers was examined for arms and "seditious literature", and the persons of some of them were also searched. This went on for three days, causing no little harassment and annoyance to the passengers. Nothing incriminating was, however, found.

On 29th September, as the *Komagata Maru* was proceeding towards Calcutta after weighing anchor at Kulpi, the steamer suddenly slowed down and stopped at Budge Budge, 14 miles from Calcutta, where it was moored to the jetty. This was at about 11 a.m. A party of British and Indian officers, which included Sir Frederick Halliday, Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, came on board and peremptorily ordered the passengers to disembark at once and proceed to the train waiting at Budge Budge railway station to take them to Punjab. The passengers were taken by surprise and most of them protested vehemently. But they were hustled, shoved and



pushed along the one narrow plank which served as the gangway to the steamer. Only 17 of them disembarked willingly and got into the waiting train and the rest, forcibly landed, proceeded to march in a procession towards Calcutta, the Granth Sahib, the sacred book of the Sikhs, being carried in front of them. A body of policemen from Punjab followed behind, in no way, however, interfering with them.

The intention of Baba Gurdit Singh and his associates was, first of all, to deposit the holy Granth Sahib at the Gurdwara at Howrah and then to meet the Governor of Bengal, or someone else in authority, before whom they could place their grievances and seek redress; and afterwards consult lawyers to arrange for settling the points of difference with the steamer agents and dispose of the furniture and surplus provisions on board the *Komagata Maru*. None of these would be possible if they were packed off summarily to Punjab from Howrah on the western bank of the Hooghly. The obvious attempt at whisking them away naturally frightened them. They thought that a trap had been laid to send them off to some tea garden or some unknown destination. Most of them wanted to look for jobs in Calcutta in preference to going to Punjab where employment, they knew, would be scarce.

Encouraged by the non-interfering attitude of the Punjab Police following them, the *Komagata Maru* men were in high hopes about realising their aim by marching in an orderly fashion to Calcutta, only 14 miles away. But their hopes were shortlived, they had scarcely proceeded as far as five miles when they were stopped by a posse of British policemen which had been following them all along. They shouted menacingly, ordered them to turn back at once and proceed to Budge Budge station to entrain from there for Punjab. After some hesitation, the Sikhs decided to obey the order, though with much reluctance. And they started trudging their way back. They were hungry, thirsty and tired. Some, the weaker ones, fell behind; some begged for water to drink from a wayside shop; they were kicked and hustled by the British policemen on the pretext that they were trying to escape, although they were neither criminals nor prisoners. Being in an unknown part of the country, they naturally wanted to stick together under their leader Baba Gurdit Singh. But that was not to be.

When this weary and footsore procession of ex-emigrants came

back to Budge Budge, they wanted to go to the railway station as previously arranged. But even this was not allowed. It was now getting dark; and the authorities considered it prudent to lock them up for the night on the ill-fated *Komagata Maru*. Resentful and in protest, a number of them sat down at the level-crossing near the station; and the police at once surrounded them. With Baba Gurdit Singh in the centre and the Granth Sahib in their midst, they started their evening prayers; the sanctions of the Sikh religion never allow this to be interrupted for any reason whatsoever. The District Magistrate of 24-Parganas, Donald, however, ordered Baba Gurdit Singh to come to him so that he might tell him that the Sikhs must all go back to the steamer to be locked up for the night. Baba Gurdit Singh refused to come before the prayers had been concluded and wanted Donald to come and speak to him. A police sergeant, who had gone into the midst of the Sikh congregation to bring Baba Gurdit Singh out, hit one of the Sikhs. His stick was snatched away from him. Then a British superintendent of police stepped forward into the prayer-meeting and tried to drag Baba Gurdit Singh out. The Sikhs resisted, and the police officer was severely injured. He died later.

At this stage a shot rang out, both parties believing that it had been fired by the other. This was the signal for a general melee with the Sikhs on the one side and the police on the other. Some of the policemen were armed with revolvers, which they freely used. The Sikhs used whatever came handy. Evidently some of them also possessed revolvers, which they had probably purchased secretly from members of the Japanese crew of the *Komagata Maru*, in spite of Baba Gurdit Singh's directions to the contrary.

The Sikhs and the police were so inextricably mixed up in the melee that it was impossible for some time for the British troops, who had arrived from Calcutta, to fire at the former without hitting the latter. The authorities alleged that as the Sikhs had continued all the while to fire at the police, the officer commanding the British troops was compelled to order his men to return the fire, after obtaining Sir Frederick Halliday's approval. Had this been a fact, and had the Sikhs possessed some 40 revolvers, as had been alleged, the casualties among the police would have been heavier. But only two British officers—one belonging to the police and the other serving on the Railways—died of bullet wounds. That the Sikhs could not possibly

have with them a large number of revolvers or pistols would be proved by the fact that search for three consecutive days by the police had failed to reveal any arms either on their persons or among their belongings. The Sikhs might have been able to conceal just a few small arms or might have purchased a few before getting down from the steamer. Besides, an unofficial search had been conducted by Baba Gurdit Singh himself, in the course of the voyage, to make sure that nothing incriminating was carried by the Sikhs, and a few weapons found with some of the passengers had been consigned overboard to the sea at the request of Baba Gurdit Singh.

The British troops fired 177 rounds of .303 bore from close range. The Sikhs must have been mown down, and the number of casualties is bound to have been heavy, as was widely believed by Indians at the time of the incident. But the number of the deaths amongst the Sikhs officially reported was only 20, of whom 18 died as a result of wounds from service rifles. The police alleged that even after the Royal Fusiliers had opened fire, the Sikhs went on firing for some time. This does not seem to be true.

The *Komagata Maru* passengers scattered in various directions under cover of darkness. But all important roads and railway tracks were heavily guarded by the police, who arrested 211 of them. Baba Gurdit Singh escaped, along with 28 others, but not before he had entrusted the Granth Sahib, riddled through with bullets, and his young son, Balwant Singh, to the care of one of his faithful lieutenants. Twenty are officially admitted to have been killed and 62 sent by rail to Punjab under police escort; in the course of their bid to escape out of the police cordon, 211 were arrested. This accounts for 321 out of 376 passengers with which the *Komagata Maru* had embarked for Vancouver. The probabilities are that between 20 and 40 Sikhs were killed in the incident at Budge Budge and that the figures given by the authorities are not quite reliable. Some escaped capture, taking advantage of the darkness of the night. The *Komagata Maru* incident created a sensation in Punjab and also in Bengal.

Baba Gurdit Singh's adventures after his escape from Budge Budge form an odyssey, which he has himself narrated in his book *The Voyage of Komagata Maru*. After seven years of wandering in disguise, he surrendered to the police at Nankana Sahib, the birth-place of Guru Nanak, in the Punjab, under instructions from Mahatma

Gandhi, and was forthwith consigned to prison without trial, and released after about a year, only to be once again put behind prison bars for making a "seditious" speech at the Amritsar Guru Darbar. It was in 1927 that he came out of prison to find that the Government had forfeited all that he had in money and merchandise on board the *Komagata Maru*, which they had seized on her arrival at Budge Budge. A suit lodged by him at the Calcutta High Court for the recovery of his property was decreed against him. Baba Gurdit Singh was left a completely ruined man—financially—but yet a strong fighter. He paid the price of patriotism.

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## Chapter Thirty-six

# Punjab Preparations and the Lahore Cases

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As soon as war broke out in July-August 1914, Indian revolutionaries abroad were asked by their leaders to return to India to work for a rising there. By then in the U.S.A. and in Canada, there were several thousands of Indians, mostly Punjabi and Sikh. The Ghadr Party asked them to return in large numbers. S.S. *Korea* carried the first batch of emigrants and they were addressed by Maulavi Barkatullah and Pandit Ram Chandra. They were definitely asked "Go to India and stir up rebellion in every corner of the country. Rob the wealthy..." The ship left from San Francisco, halted at Yokohama and Manila. At Manila, Hafiz Abdullah, Nawab Khan and Jagat Ram addressed them. They were told—England was engaged in a war threatening her very existence; "Don't let this opportunity slip by...be ready to kill or be killed on arrival in India."

Almost immediately after the beginning of the First World War, the Government of India issued a number of ordinances. The Foreigners' Ordinance was issued on 29th August, 1914 and this was followed by the Ingress into India Ordinance issued on 5th September, 1914. These two ordinances were handy weapons to deal with the returned *Komagata Maru* emigrants and other emigrants

arriving by different ships. A second ship, *Tosa Maru*, with 173 Indian emigrants, mostly Sikhs also arrived shortly after. Many other ships came with discontented Indians from Canada and the U.S.A., some *via* Rangoon, others *via* Colombo. But for almost all of them, the port of disembarkation was Calcutta. The *Korea*, the *Meesha Maru*, the *Siberia*, the *Mexico Maru* and the *Canada Maru* each carried thousands of Indians. All these vessels touched various ports in Far East and the returning emigrants everywhere tried to procure some arms and everywhere Indian revolutionary leaders were exciting them to rebellion and armed rising. At almost all these ports, some local Indians embarked these vessels to return to India for taking part in the coming rebellion. In all about seven to eight thousand of them returned. Maulavi Barkatullah, Pandit Rama Chandra and others were inciting the emigrants to go back to India to organise a revolution. If arms and ammunition could not be supplied from abroad, the emigrants were urged to attack police stations and snatch away the arms of the police. They were also advised to encourage mutiny by the Indian soldiers.

Among these emigrants quite a fair number managed to escape police arrest and they somehow reached Calcutta where they contacted the Sikh community. With their help they came in touch with the Kidderpur group of the Jugantar party. Some of the *Komagata Maru* emigrants were given temporary shelter in different college hostels and boarding houses where members of the Jugantar party were staying. They had been given these addresses by Taraknath Das and other Indian revolutionaries abroad. Ultimately they all went to Punjab. Gradually other emigrants from Hong Kong and Far Eastern territories started arriving in India. The Ghadr organisation in America gave a general call to the Punjabi settlers in Canada, U.S.A., Hong Kong, China and other Eastern territories to return to India and to prepare for a revolution there. During 1914 and 1915, they came back in batches and by different steamers, with bitter discontent against the Government. But there was no organisational base in Punjab to work with nor any leader to guide them.

“Thousands were returning, accurate discrimination was impossible and few of the emigrants had been individually incriminated by any news as yet received. It was not long

before the emigrants, who were not interned, made their presence felt in the Punjab. Only the precautionary measures adopted, prevented an early outbreak on a considerable scale. As it was, the situation developed gradually." (Rowlatt Committee Report)

Of the 173 emigrants carried by *Tosha Maru*—which reached Calcutta on 29th October, 1914 "one hundred of these men were interned. Of those who were not interned, 6 were afterwards hanged. . . and 6 were convicted in various conspiracy cases, 6 were subsequently arrested and interned. . . Of all the October, November and December shiploads, the *Tosha Maru* was the most dangerous." (Rowlatt Committee Report). Most of the returned emigrants were determined to stage an armed rebellion in India and were anxiously waiting for arms from Germany. These emigrants spread over the whole of Punjab, not only in the towns but also in distant villages. They were holding secret meetings and were sending emissaries to different villages, and groups were formed. The Sedition (Rowlatt) Committee Report mentions that at least 3,125 emigrants passed through the hands of the police at Calcutta and Ludhiana; of them 189 had been interned, 704 restricted to their villages and 2,211 were not subjected to any restrictions. Many more entered unnoticed. Usually the ships carrying emigrants were minutely searched. The emigrants were classified into 3 categories. The first-category migrants were considered more dangerous and were arrested or interned. The second-category people were mere suspects and some watch was kept on their movements. The last category of men were considered innocent. But they also were not really quite innocent. It should, however, be mentioned that the number of initiated revolutionaries or of regular members of the Ghadr party was not many, but practically all of them were so discontented and frustrated that they became easily inflammable material, if not for rebellion, at least for creating trouble and social disorder and disturbances. It may be stated that by the time the *Komagata Maru* returned to India the First World War had already started.

The Punjab authorities became alarmed as in quick succession many dacoities and murders were committed. In October 1914, Chauki Man railway station on the Ferozepur-Ludhiana line was attacked and the station cash was looted. In Hissar district, a dacoity

was committed in December 1914 in the house of a Brahmin with a loot of Rs. 22,000/-. In Ambala district an attempt was made to murder a police officer. There were several cases of violent crimes, robberies of mail boxes, attempts to derail trains, and all these were done by the emigrants who by that time had also gathered new followers.

More serious was an attempt of the emigrants to seduce the Indian troops. They contemplated an extensive programme of violence and terrorism as also rebellion in the army. Ghadr literature and booklets were surreptitiously brought into India. These leaflets advocated: "We should commit dacoity on the Government and awaken the whole of the Punjab. Rob Europeans of their money and bring it to your own use." There were many attempts at derailing trains on the 3rd, 6th, 7th, 15th, 18th and 21st January, 1915. A police guard consisting of five armed policemen, sent to guard the railway bridge, was threatened by a gang of armed men supposed to be emigrants and their followers. These emigrants were openly preaching armed rising against the Government and were proclaiming that they had contacts with the Bengal revolutionaries.

On the Dewali day (October) of 1914 some emigrants met at Amritsar under the leadership of Gujar Singh. After some discussion, 15th November was fixed as the date for a rising. They contacted the cavalry in the Lahore cantonment. The cavalry men deferred the date to 23rd November and then to the 27th, but ultimately resiled from the programme. The revolutionaries then decided to attack two police stations to snatch the arms of the police force there. But somehow the programme became known to the authorities. When they approached the police stations on the 27th, they found these heavily guarded by armed forces; so they dared not attack the stations. In this way most of their programmes for a rising failed. As there was hardly any secret organisation and they were often talking openly in a spirit of bravado, no secrecy was maintained.

The Ghadr Party men were specially active in Lahore, Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Ambala and some other districts. They planned to rob government magazines, treasuries, police stations etc., and contacted military personnel in many places. In almost all cases they were anticipated by the authorities as the plans had leaked out before the fixed date. Some military personnel were



arrested at different places and subsequently court-martialled. Before leaving America for India, the emigrant Ghadr workers were assured of German arms and money. But these were not coming for reasons beyond their control. Then, almost in despair, they thought of getting bombs and revolvers from Bengal revolutionaries. Kartar Singh Saraba went to Calcutta with Rs. 2,000/- for the purchase of revolvers. Contact with Bengal was subsequently established through Rash Behari Bose and Pingley. As for money, in a meeting at Moga, they decided to collect money through dacoities—if possible, Government money. But before that, there were many disastrous adventures. One of these was the attempt to rob the government treasury at Moga. When they were passing by the police post, their movement roused the suspicion of the police sub-inspector, Rehmat Ali. He challenged them and was shot dead by the revolutionaries. The sound of the revolver shot attracted the police force as also the village people, who surrounded them. Seven were arrested on the spot and six escaped.

These were fine, devoted men with enthusiasm and energy. Kartar Singh was a young man and was one of the top leaders. Prithvi Singh, Amar Singh, Balwant Singh, Randhir Singh, Sucha Singh, Sohan Singh Bakna and many others worked day and night. But the difficulty with them was that they had no training in the art of secret organisation and hence no secrecy was maintained. Very often the police received previous information of their plots and schemes. One Kripal Singh, a trusted colleague of theirs, used to act as a police spy and informer. Two of the *Tosha Maru* emigrants, not arrested at Calcutta, "were chief leaders of the subsequent revolutionary movement and were admitted as approvers." (Rowlatt Committee Report). On 15th February 1915, important revolutionaries including Kartar Singh Saraba, Nidhan Singh, Dr. Mathura Singh, Paramanand (U.P.), Pingley, Rash Behari Bose and others assembled at a house in Mochi Gate, Lahore. Kripal Singh had this information and informed the police of Amritsar; but they arrived a little too late. Then on 18th February, he informed the police when the revolutionaries assembled in the Mochi Gate house for lunch. The police raided the house for two hours and seized many documents revealing their plan for a rising on 19th February. This date was already known to the Government. Many leading revolutionaries were arrested.

Before that, Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, a Marathi Brahmin, had returned from the U.S.A. along with Satyen Sen. Both of them arrived at Calcutta and stayed for a few days in the Bowbazar Ayurvedic dispensary of Bijoy Ray. Pingley was in contact with the Bengal group of revolutionaries who were organising the Indo-German Conspiracy: He offered the Punjab group the help of a Bengali bomb expert. So long the movement was mostly confined to the returned emigrants and to the peasants. Gradually students were also being contacted and a large number of young men joined them. In February 1915, Rash Behari Bose visited Punjab and was accommodated in a house at Amritsar. There was a programme of mutiny among the Indian regiments at Lahore and other cantonments in Upper India on the 19th and subsequently on 21st February. "Bombs were prepared, arms were got together, flags were made ready, a declaration of war was drawn up, instruments were collected for destroying railways and telegraph wires. In the meantime, in order to raise funds for financing the enterprise, some Punjab revolutionaries had committed various dacoities." (Rowlatt Committee Report). As already stated, information of the proposed rising leaked out through a spy. The Amritsar residence of Rash Behari was raided, seven Punjabi emigrants were arrested with revolvers, bombs and component parts of bombs. But Rash Behari and Pingley escaped. Searches and arrests continued; 12 bombs were seized, all of the Bengal pattern. The plan of an armed rising through the mutiny of the Army simultaneously at Lahore, Ferozepur, Rawalpindi, Allahabad, Benaras and Jabalpur thus failed. Pingley was arrested only a few days later in the lines of the 12 Cavalry at Meerut with bombs in his possession.

The Punjab Government, alarmed at these developments and the frequent acts of lawlessness, urged upon the Government of India for special legislation to do away with committal proceedings and appeal, and to try cases by a sort of a summary trial. The Government of Bengal also had been pressing for a similar measure for some time. The Government of India hesitated over such a drastic step but the developments in Punjab as well as in Bengal ultimately made them agree to pass such an Act. The Defence of India Act was passed through the Imperial Legislative Council in March 1915. Under this Act, there would not be any jury, and certain provisions of the Evi-

dence Act were suspended. It removed also the committal proceedings and facilities for judicial appeal and provided for detention without trial.

With the passing of the Defence of India Act, the Governments of Bengal and Punjab took prompt action under the provisions of that Act. Hundreds of persons were either detained in jails or interned in villages under the provisions of the Defence of India Act, Ingress Into India Ordinance, and Foreigners' Ordinance. According to Government information, thousands of persons had returned from America or the Far Eastern regions with the avowed object of organising a revolution in India and the Government could not get definite information about all of them; so a large number of emigrants were freely moving about escaping police notice. The Government prohibited the publication of pro-German or alarmist matter in any newspaper. The Urdu paper *Zamindar* of Zafar Ali Khan was subjected to pre-censorship. Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal were prohibited from entering the Province of Punjab. The Rowlatt Committee Report states, "It is evident that the Ghadr movement in the Punjab came within an ace of causing widespread bloodshed."

The Punjab Government then started a number of conspiracy cases. The First Lahore Conspiracy Case started on 20th April, 1915 and continued up to 13th September, 1915. There were some approvers in this case, including Nawab Khan and Kripal Singh. The case was tried by a Special Tribunal under the provisions of the Defence of India Act. In the first case seven persons were given the capital sentence including Pingley, Kartar Singh Saraba, Kashi Ram and others. Kartar Singh was also an emigrant from the U.S.A. and was the youngest among the accused, aged only about 22 or 23. Seventeen others including Sohan Singh Bhakna, the founder-president of the Ghadr Party at San Francisco, were also awarded the capital sentence; but the sentences were subsequently commuted by the Viceroy to life transportation and forfeiture of property. Pingley and some others were hanged. Bhai Paramanand was one among those convicted. Another batch of 27 was sentenced to life transportation and confiscation of their property. Six were given lighter punishments. In this case there were 81 accused including Rash Behari Bose, who was absconding. Another Bengali accused was Satyen Sen of the Jugantar Party who came from America along with Pingley in the

same steamer. He was acquitted as the approver failed to identify him. Of the 81 accused, 74 were in the dock, the rest were absconders. Kripal Singh, who was acting as an informer, acted as a prosecution witness or as an approver. He was later killed.

The Second Lahore Conspiracy Case or the first Lahore Supplementary Case started on 29th October 1915 and ended on 30th March, 1916. This also was tried by a Special Tribunal. There were 102 accused but 74 were actually on trial; six were given the capital sentence with forfeiture of property; sentence of one was commuted to transportation for life and 45 got transportation for life. Most of these accused were revolutionary emigrants from America. They were charged with preaching sedition not only among the villagers but also among the regiments; the Army was incited to be in readiness to rise and massacre the Britishers. The Third Lahore Conspiracy Case started on 8th November 1916 and ended on 15th January 1917. This also was tried by a Special Tribunal under the Defence of India Act. There were 17 accused; six were given the capital sentence and five transportation. Bhai Balwant Singh Canadian, who had returned by the *Komagata Maru* and Hafiz Abdullah, who came from Manila, were awarded capital sentence. Capital sentence of one was commuted to life transportation; five others also got life transportation. The Fourth Lahore Conspiracy Case was also tried by a Special Tribunal in 1917. Dr. Mathura Singh received the capital sentence. In the Fifth Conspiracy Case in the same year Jawand Singh received the capital sentence. There was another case called the Lahore City Conspiracy Case, with five accused, one of them being Lal Chand Falak. He was transported for ten years on a charge of waging war against the King. It may be recalled that he had been convicted in 1909 for sedition. There was another case called the Mandi case with five accused, in which one was condemned to life transportation and the remaining four were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. Besides this, a number of army men were arrested and court-martialled and executed for conspiracy and preparation for mutiny.

It should be mentioned here that while the entire movement in Bengal was based mostly on the recruitment of educated young men, in Punjab the movement depended mostly on the rural people. At a later stage they also received the support of students and teachers. This was particularly according to the instruction of Rash Behari

Bose. The students were told that studies could be suspended for some time as they were imbibing only slavery from their studies; but the struggle for independence could not wait. The students were asked to work for the liberation of the country. Appeal to religion was also made. Both the Hindus and the Sikhs were told that their religion was in danger. The Muslims were dissatisfied with the British Government from the time of the Tripoli War, i.e. 1912-13, when Britain did not render any support to Turkey against her despoliation by Italy. During the First World War, the Muslims were still more resentful because of Britain fighting against the Sultan of Turkey who was the Caliph of the Muslims.

From the judgments of these six or seven conspiracy cases, one can get an idea of the extent and the intensity of the conspiracy. They set up a bomb factory in Jabewal, a village near Ludhiana. There was another bomb centre in a village called Lohadbadi. Bhai Parmanand, one of the important accused in the first conspiracy case had earlier been convicted in 1909; then he went to America where he worked with Hardayal, like whom he also was a highly intellectual person. He wrote a book about India with the objective of bringing the Government of India into hatred and contempt and to further the objects of the Ghadr Party.

In one of the judgements, the Tribunal stated, "We have seen that the Jugantar Asram at San Francisco was placarded with a sheet: 'Do not fight the Germans, they are our friends.' We have seen that literature printed by the Ghadr office was taken away personally by the German Consul for distribution among Indians everywhere. We have seen Germany paid for Indian agents to be sent to Afghanistan, Siam, Manila, Tibet and Turkey from America to start trouble against Britain. That the German Consul in San Francisco was in close connection with Ram Chandra and that the Consul-General in New York was forwarding Indian revolutionaries at his own expense to Germany to help in such ways as they could." The judgment also referred to the activities of Heramba Gupta and Viren Chattopadhyaya in America and Europe during the First World War.

There was also another case in which mostly Punjabis were involved but whose trial took place not in Punjab but in distant Burma. Young Turks of Turkey sent some emissaries to Burma in 1913-14

to incite the Muslims of Rangoon to rise against the British. There was some sort of a mutiny among the men of the 130th Baluchis sent to Burma. "The rising was nipped in the bud on 21st January 1915 by timely and drastic action of the military authorities who punished 200 of the plotters." (Rowlatt Committee Report). There were two Mandalay Conspiracy Cases which were a part of the international conspiracy in which the Ghadr Party of Punjab and the Jugantar Party of Bengal were engaged, for organising a rising in India and a mutiny among the Indian Army abroad and in India. The Mandalay Conspiracy Case, 1916, was also tried by a Special Tribunal under the Defence of India Act. Sohan Lal Pathak, who was arrested at Maymyo while haranguing the soldiers of the Mountain Battery and urging them to mutiny, and six others were sentenced to capital punishment and five to transportation. The trial ended on 22nd September, 1916. There was a second Mandalay Conspiracy Case in which three received capital sentence and the rest transportation. The allegations against them in both the cases were that they were trying to organise a rising in India (which then included also Burma) and to invade India from the eastern side. The seats of the conspiracy were Manila, Bangkok and the eastern part of Burma. The Siamese Government was constructing railway lines in North Siam with the help of German engineers. Their area of operation adjoined the north-east frontier of Burma. They served as contact points with the Ghadr elements in Burma.

In the first case, there were two approvers, Nawab Khan and Mula Singh—who also deposed in the second case. The judge traced the conspiracy to its origin in 1912. But the agitation to create discontent in Punjab began much earlier "in which Ajit Singh and Sufi Ambaprasad had been prominent". He referred to the working of the Ghadr organisation in the U.S.A. for the "removal of the British rule by driving the English out of India in order to set up a republican government in which all Indian races were to be represented." Then he went on to describe the ramifications of the conspiracy to the Far East and the setting up of the Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast. Hardayal, Paramananda and Barkatullah took prominent parts in all these matters. The judge said, "Frankly seditious, urgent preparations for mutiny and freedom of India were going on. The Ghadr literature that was being circulated was

openly advocating armed rising by the people and mutiny by the Indian soldiers, and emphasised that 'Sikhs, Hindus and Moham-medans, all have joined; let us go to our country to fight. This is our final order'."

A number of Indian revolutionaries entered Burma from Siam; some of them came even from Manila. Most of them were arrested under the Ingress Into India Ordinance. One Fazl Din who was also arrested had been sent to Burma "to arrange for shiploads of arms despatched from America to be landed in India". These plans "were concocted in concert with the revolutionaries in Calcutta."\*

Another important event of the Ghadr movement is the Singapore mutiny of the Indian soldiers, mostly from Punjab. We shall speak about it in another chapter.

Thus ended the Punjab story of desperate attempts to have an armed rising within and also outside India.

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\*All quotations in this and in the previous paragraph are from the judgment.

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## Chapter Thirty-seven

# Bengal on the Eve of the First World War

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Long before the First World War had broken out in Europe in August 1914, Bengal revolutionaries had a vague idea of a war breaking out in Europe between England and Germany. Some time earlier, the Crown Prince of Germany had visited India and toured different parts of the country. Many bits of gossip and rumours were current about the motive of his visit. He was awarded an honorary Doctorate by Calcutta University; but it was rumoured that he gave scant importance to that honour and gave expression to his feelings through some words or deeds. It was also current that he made certain remarks about the efficiency of Fort William at Calcutta as a defence fort. These rumours had been widely current in Calcutta two or three years before the war started.

In 1911, Von Bernhardi published a book entitled *Germany and the Next War* in which he gave a fair idea of the German war strategy in the event of a war with Britain. He forecast that the Hindu revolutionaries and the discontented elements of the Mohammedans might combine and give trouble to the British in the event of a war. An influential German newspaper, *Berliner Tageblatt*, also published an article in March 1914 "depicting a gloomy situation in India" and



describing the rise of secret revolutionary societies in India. Otherwise also, Germany was showing an interest in the political movements in India; and Indian revolutionaries abroad had some contacts with German embassies in foreign countries as also with the German Foreign Office in Berlin. After 1911 or even earlier, a number of Bengal revolutionaries went to Japan and America and to several European countries, particularly England, France, Germany and Switzerland. We have already mentioned the name of Tarak Nath Das who went to Europe by about 1906-07. Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama were also in Europe by about the same time establishing contacts with European radical thinkers and politicians. Surendra Nath Kar, who was attached to the Prem Mahavidyalaya of Raja Mahendra Pratap at Vrindaban, also went abroad. Lala Hardayal and Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya (brother of Sarojini Naidu) were already there. Heramba Lal Gupta was another important revolutionary worker in the U.S.A. and Europe for some years before the First World War. Two brothers of Prof. Benoy Sarkar, Bejoy and Dhiren, also went abroad about the same time. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, the first editor of *Jugantar*, after release from jail went abroad by about 1909. Jiten Lahiri, Satyen Sen and many others went to America or Europe. Dhangopal, brother of Jadugopal Mukherjee, went out by about 1910. Most of them went ostensibly for further studies, particularly scientific studies. The National Council of Education, started at Calcutta after the partition of Bengal, used to send abroad some of their scholars for scientific studies. There was a society in Bengal called "The Society for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Studies" which also sent out some young men almost every year.

In fact many of these young men went out with financial help from this Association or from the National Council of Education, as also from some big landlords, e.g. those of Kasimbazar, Mymensingh etc. Most of them had sympathy for and were inclined to the revolutionary movement and, while abroad, perhaps devoted more of their time and energy to this dangerous work than to studies for building up a comfortable career. Some of them went to the U.S.A. and some to Europe; they often changed their place of abode from America to Europe and vice versa. Young men from Punjab went mostly to Canada or the U.S.A. Many Sikhs settled there as cultivators or.

artisans and workers. By about 1911, there were about 10,000 Indian migrants in Canada and the U.S.A.—mostly from Punjab.

As the Bengal revolutionaries had anticipated an early outbreak of war between Germany and England, they tried to make contacts with German diplomats abroad. The article in *Berliner Tageblatt* already referred to also gave a hint that secret revolutionary societies were getting foreign help. So, as soon as the war broke out, Indian revolutionaries could easily secure promises of German help. With the outbreak of the War, Viren Chattopadhyya became very active and it was his dynamism which really moved others to action. Some time in September 1914 an international Pro-India Committee was formed in Zurich of which Champakaraman Pillai was the President. Afterwards the Berlin Committee was formed and prominent Indian revolutionaries joined it as members. In the U.S.A. Heramba Lal Gupta, Tarak Nath Das, Barkatullah, Chandra Chakravarty etc. were very active for some years before the War.

The Bengal revolutionaries realised that a great opportunity was coming up before them. A compact and wide-spread organisation in India was necessary to receive and utilise the promised foreign aid. In Bengal, as the Anushilan Samiti definitely declined to participate in the venture, the sole responsibility was taken up by the Jugantar group of workers. It was during and for this campaign that Jugantar developed as a compact party with a unified leadership. History tells us that every movement evolves its own leaders. This movement in India also evolved its own leaders in the person of Jatin Mukherji and to some extent also in that of Rash Behari Bose. Jatin Mukherji, a man of religious temperament, highly affectionate and emotional, possessed all the qualities of head and heart to be the leader at this critical juncture.

All over the world secret movements have their pitfalls—both personal and social; and to this Bengal was no exception. On the one hand a secret revolutionary movement brings out the best of idealism in a man, and on the other it tends to encourage some deficiencies particularly when their idealism starts declining. Members of a secret movement have to develop and cultivate boldness and audacity; they have to act in secret and often against social conventions. Thus a leader of a secret revolutionary movement sometimes tends to become self-centred, indifferent to normal human feelings, and to possess an

exaggerated opinion of himself and his group. That prevents the merger of groups into a bigger entity and collaborative action outside the group. One vice which is usually seen among the leaders is a passionate attachment to their respective groups and entourage and a complete disregard for other groups and their leaders; the leader of a group thus often lacks in generosity and width of vision. Jatin Mukherji was conspicuously free from these vices. Arms being scarce and hard to secure during those days, the greatest attachment of the Bengal revolutionaries was to arms like revolvers and pistols; they would rather part with life than with arms. But Jatin did not have the slightest hesitation to give away arms to anyone provided he was sure of their proper use. Thus it was that he succeeded in building up what gradually came to be known as the Jugantar Party, in which a number of independent and separate groups merged voluntarily.

The curious genesis of this party has been stated earlier. Yet its distinctive features may be re-stated here in the background of the coming events. Its origin can be traced to 1907 when some impatient young men of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti, being dissatisfied with the cautious and passive policy pursued by P. Mitra and Satish Bose, formed a group by themselves and started the bomb factory at the Manicktala garden. Simultaneously with that, they also started a weekly organ *Jugantar*. They never formally seceded from the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti which gradually died of inanition; and the Dacca Anushilan Samiti came to have a separate identity with its headquarters at Dacca. The origin of this difference may be traced to earlier years—1903-04—when Jatin Banerjee started attracting some enthusiastic young men from the original Anushilan, Atmonnati and other groups. He was preaching armed revolution and wanted to build up a secret revolutionary society to achieve that. P. Mitra and his batch did not approve of the conduct of Jatin Banerjee.

During the years 1904 to 1914, there were several other revolutionary groups, mostly in East Bengal, e.g. the Barisal group of Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty, the Mymensingh group of Hemendra Kishore Acharya Choudhury, the Howrah group of Nani Gopal Sen Gupta, the Bogra group of Jatin Roy and Abinash Roy, the Atmonnati group of Bepin Ganguly and Anukul Mukherjee, the Jessore-Khulna group of Bejoy Roy, the Chandernagore group of Srish Ghose, the Serampur group of Satish Sen Gupta and Asutosh Das,

the Bankura group of Nibaran Ghatak, the Madaripur group of Purna Das and so on. Gradually all these groups gathered round Jatin Mukherji to form a single party. The process started before the outbreak of the First World War; but the World War hastened the process and cemented all these groups into a compact party. All these groups surrendered their individual identity and local leadership for a higher cause. It was a real achievement for Jatin Mukherjee when well-known local leaders agreed to accept his leadership ungrudgingly and surrendered their leadership. It was also indicative of the selfless spirit of service to the nation of those local leaders. This new party under Jatin Mukherji did not take any name by itself, but it had started as the inheritor of the tradition of the old *Jugantar* paper. This amalgamated group was issuing a secret revolutionary leaflet periodically both in Bengali and in English entitled *Jugantar* and they were thus clubbed together under this name. It should also be stated that they liked this name, because of the old tradition of the *Jugantar* weekly and also because of the connotation of the word *Jugantar*\*— i.e. end of the old and dawn of the new era.

Thus formed, the *Jugantar* took up in right earnest the work of preparation for receiving and utilizing the expected German aid. On the one side, there was the necessity of building up a wide and intensive organization; on the other, there was also the need of money for spreading that organization. Funds from Germany were, of course, expected but would take time to arrive; and in the meantime money was a prime necessity for preparations here in India. There was a discussion amongst the leaders as to how to raise money. Dacoity was the only method for collecting money for it was clearly known that no rich man would either have the will or the courage to donate money for this cause. Jatin Mukherji, Prajnanananda Saraswaty and others of the united *Jugantar* party realised the urgency of finance to make the necessary preparations for the expected armed rising and had to agree to collect money through dacoity. Out of this decision came what was known as the taxicab dacoities of Calcutta. These daring actions stirred the imagination of the people so immensely that the prestige of the Government was rudely shaken.

Before going into the taxicab dacoities, we should mention here

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\*'Yuga', meaning an era, is pronounced in Bengali as 'Juga'.

another important incident which may be considered a landmark in the revolutionary history of Bengal. This was the theft of the arms on the way from the Customs warehouse of Rodda & Co., armaments importers. This daring exploit was carried out by the Atmonnati group under the leadership of Bepin Behar Ganguly and Anukul Mukherji. Other members of the group taking an important part in organising this bold venture were Kalidas Bose, Bhujanga Roy Chaudhury and Girin Banerjee. The operation took place on 27th August, 1914. A member of the Atmonnati group named Srish Mitra, commonly known as Habul, was an employee of Messrs. Rodda & Co., as one of their duty clerks. He was deputed by the office to take delivery of a consignment of Mauser pistols and a quantity of ammunition from the Customs warehouse in Kidderpur.

It was rumoured that this consignment of 202 boxes of arms and ammunition were intended for the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Out of 202 cases, 192 were delivered in the godown of Rodda & Co. in Vansittart Row on Dalhousie Square. The cart carrying the remaining ten cases was diverted and did not reach the Rodda godown. Srish Mitra was often doing this duty on behalf of Rodda & Co. The carts were supplied by the contractor of the company. The cartmen knew Srish Mitra and therefore acted according to his direction. The cart carrying these ten cases was diverted to a hardware godown in Malanga Lane in the Bowbazar quarter. Naren Ghosh of the Barisal group was taken into confidence for this bold operation and he was asked by Bepin Ganguly to be ready with some colleagues in case of any fray or scuffle on the way with the authorities; but that necessity did not arise. Thus 50 Mauser pistols and 50,000 rounds of ammunition came into the possession of the revolutionaries. This was the first consignment of Mauser pistols in India. These were different from ordinary pistols as these could be converted into rifles by attaching the container box with the butt of the pistol. The same night, the pistols were despatched from Bhujanga Roy Chaudhury's house to different centres. Some of the persons under whose custody these arms were kept became nervous when the police became active after a few days. A big lot was taken to a temple in a suburb of Calcutta; the priest of the temple was known to Atul Ghose who arranged this. Ultimately, practically the entire lot of 50 Mauser pistols came under the control of Atul Ghosh and Naren Bhattacharya—which meant, of Jain

Mukherjee. Thus the major portion of the arms passed into the custody of the united Jugantar party. Although the entire operation was planned and carried out by the Atmonnati group, after the seizure of the arms, the dispersal and safe custody of the arms became a problem to them and they had to take the help of the central unit of Jugantar.

This case created a sensation among the public and also a sense of panic among government officials. They feared that the revolutionaries with these 50 Mauser pistols would try to create a reign of terror among the loyal and rich sections of the people. They also took notice of the fact that the Great War had already broken out in Europe. The revolutionaries, who all along had been handicapped for want of arms, felt that at last they had a comparatively big consignment of arms. Among the Atmonnati group, two persons took great risks and showed resourcefulness and boldness; they were Kalidas Bose and Bhujangadhar Chaudhury. It was their responsibility to arrange the safe custody of arms. Readers may be interested to learn that in connection with the Rodda arms theft, two persons were arrested who later on attained eminence as industrialists and publicmen. They are G.D. Birla and Prabhudayal Himatsingka. Prabhudayal was interned for some time; G.D. Birla was released. The rumour then current was that Raja Baldeodas Birla, the father of G.D., had to spend quite a fortune to secure the release of his son.

The relations of Atmonnati with the Jugantar party were very intimate. It was generally considered to be a unit of the party. Bepin Ganguly, Anukul Mukherji, Girin Banerjee, Harish Sikdar, Prabhas De and others had generally worked in close collaboration with different groups of Jugantar. More than they, Indra Nandi, of indomitable spirit and broad outlook always worked in close collaboration with Jugantar; he was also an accused in the Alipore bomb case. In fact, from 1906 to 1910 it had practically no separate existence. Bepin Ganguly was quite well-known to Jatin Mukherji, Atul Ghose, Jadugopal Mukherji and others. The Barisal group had established contact with the Atmonnati group before its merger with the united Jugantar party; that is why the Barisal group was informed of the contemplated theft of the Rodda arms and was also asked to be ready in case of any trouble on the way. Some workers of the Atmonnati group raised objections to the manner of distribution of

these arms; and Bepin Ganguly met Jatin Mukherji. They discussed the matter frankly and Bepin Ganguly came back satisfied. Within a short time after this, some important leaders of Atmonnati were arrested for the theft of the Mauser pistols. Some were convicted including Haridas Dutta; Bepin Ganguly could not be found to be put up for trial. Other important leaders of the group—Girin Banerjee, Anukul Mukherjee, Harish Sikdar and others—were detained under the Defence of India Act and later under Regulation III of 1818. Bepin Ganguly was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in another case. After that the other workers of the Atmonnati group worked with the Jugantar party, often keeping close contact with the Barisal group.

This one deed of the Atmonnati group may be considered to be of great importance in the revolutionary movement of Bengal. It was bold in conception as well as execution. The young man, Habul Mitra, who, as an employee of Messrs. Rodda & Co., was deputed to take delivery of the arms and ammunition, went underground and was never heard of again. All attempts to trace his whereabouts failed. While important absconders like Amar Chatterjee, Jadugopal Mukherji, Atul Ghosh, Satish Chakravarty and others came out of their hiding places in 1920-21, no trace of Srish alias Habul could be found. Some thought he had become a sanyasi or that he might have met with an unnatural death. Whatever may be his ultimate end, his memory deserves to be enshrined in our revolutionary history, for we owe him a great debt of gratitude. His supreme sacrifice in effacing himself completely marks him as a man of high idealism and great moral virtue.

These Mauser pistols really gave a new turn to the revolutionary movement in Bengal. Some ammunition was recovered by the police almost immediately; and subsequently some of the arms were found in different places. But not all the 50 pistols were recovered. These were used widely by different groups of Bengal revolutionaries in different places. The Rowlatt Committee stated: "The authorities have reliable information to show that 44 of these pistols were almost at once distributed to 9 different revolutionary groups in Bengal." These nine groups were different sections of the Jugantar party. Anushilan also, later on, got some.

As mentioned earlier, a different line was being followed by the

Anushilan Samiti of Dacca. In its own way the Anushilan Samiti was very active during these years, 1912-14. But the two conspiracy cases at Barisal dealt it a serious blow as most of its important members and leaders were convicted in these two cases. Jatin Ghosh was sent from Dacca to Barisal in 1911 to organise a unit in Barisal. Their important local member was Fega Roy, an enthusiastic and devoted young man. In the following years, three or four dacoities were committed in the district by the Anushilan Samiti and also one murder of Manmohan Ghose, an Inspector of Police, in December 1911. The original Barisal Conspiracy Case was started by the middle of 1913 against 44 persons under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code. In this case some incriminating materials were produced—including some looted property, some arms and documents. These documents contained lists of members, methods of organising the units, accounts of looted properties etc. One important document was the District Organisation Scheme, giving details of the organisation and its purpose; in a sense this booklet gave a fair idea of the methods of work of the Anushilan Samiti.

Two of the accused turned approvers and were granted pardon; both of them were induced by their relatives to turn approvers. Only 37 accused could be produced before the court as the seven remaining accused could not be arrested. The lower court discharged nine and committed 28 to the sessions for trial. Among the accused produced were two important leaders—Naren Sen, the top leader after Pulin Das, and Ramesh Acharya. In this case, defence counsel B. C. Chatterjee came to an understanding with the prosecution, according to which twelve important members pleaded guilty and the Government withdrew the case against the others; and the twelve accused who had pleaded guilty, were released after four years according to the understanding with the Government though the court had awarded higher punishment. This created a bad precedent for political prisoners; important leaders pleading guilty and bargaining about the terms of imprisonment was not liked by many members of the Samiti.

Of the absconding accused, five were arrested after a few months and they were put up for trial in the supplementary Barisal Conspiracy Case. The accused were Pratul Ganguly, Trailokya Chakraverty, Madan Bhowmick, Ramesh Chaudhury and Khagendra



Chaudhury. Except the last one, the other four accused were important leaders of the Samiti. After Pulin Das and Naren Sen, they, in fact, were the top leaders. More or less the evidence and materials of the previous case were used in this case also; and all the accused were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The High Court also confirmed their conviction. In these two cases, 14 overt acts were cited by the prosecution. Of the 14 overt acts, one was the murder of Sarada Chakraverty in Noakhali. It was rather strange that the police could find no clue to connect the accused with the murder of Monmohan Ghose which was committed at Barisal. All the other overt acts cited were dacoities in various districts.

Another important worker of the Samiti, Rabi Sen, was already in prison. On his release he was one of the first batch to be detained under the Defence of India Act. In this way, when almost all the top leaders were removed from the field, new leaders emerged; the most important among them were Nalini Ghose, Amrita Sarkar alias Paresh, Kanai Saha alias Kesto, Nagen Dutt alias Girija Babu and some others. Workers of the Anushilan Samiti were active particularly in East Bengal. They committed a number of dacoities, and also murders. In Chittagong and Dacca they murdered in 1914 two persons suspected to be police informers. The victims in both the cases were alleged to be working against the Anushilan Samiti. In 1915 the Anushilan Samiti was still more active. It committed a number of dacoities, mostly in rural areas of East Bengal. Some of these dacoities were accompanied by murder.

The party also committed some murders in 1915. I shall mention only a few of them. On 3rd March the headmaster of the Comilla Government High School was murdered at his own house, as he had taken punitive action against some students of that school for their political activities. The servant of the headmaster and a Muslim who tried to catch the assailants were also shot at and killed. Another notable murder committed by them was that of Jatindra Mohan Ghosh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, at Mymensingh on 19th October, 1915. He was sitting at his house in the evening with a child of his on his lap. The intruders shot at him point blank; unfortunately, his child also died along with him. Exactly after two months, on 19th December, one Dhiren Biswas suspected to be an informer, was also murdered at Mymensingh.

Two important actions, one of murder and another of attempted murder, were committed in Calcutta in 1914. Police Inspector Nripen Ghosh was shot by some members of the Anushilan Samiti. This was a very daring exploit. While Nripen Ghosh was getting down from a tram car at the busy road-junction of Chitpur Road and Grey Street, he was shot at; and he fell dead. One of the assailants, Nirmal Roy, was caught red-handed and was placed on trial. Important lawyers including C. R. Das, J. N. Ray, L. Palit and E. Norton defended Nirmal. This case created a sensation throughout Bengal. Though the accused was arrested right on the spot and with a pistol in his possession, there were some legal technicalities due to which the jurors gave a verdict of not guilty. The High Court Sessions disagreed with the jury and ordered retrial. In the second trial also the jurors found him not guilty. The High Court ordered a second retrial. Norton, who was the Government counsel in the Alipore Bomb case, somehow developed a fascination for Nirmal and stood up in his defence. But the Government withdrew the case, perhaps realising the public resentment and the inevitable reflection on the jury system, and Nirmal was discharged.

Another notable case was the attempted murder of Basanta Chatterjee, Deputy Superintendent of the Intelligence Branch. Basanta was being pursued by the Anushilan Samiti even earlier while he was posted at Dacca. The attempt at his life at Dacca did not succeed. In 1914 Basanta was residing in Musalmanpara Lane of Calcutta. A bomb was thrown at his house by some members of the Anushilan Samiti, but he escaped unhurt. One young man named Nagen Sengupta belonging to Noakhali district, found in a wounded condition on the street, was picked up and arrested. He was suspected of being involved in the attempted murder and was put on trial. This case also roused great public interest. Nagen was a student and a fairly good student, too. His tender age, loveable appearance and his manners attracted sympathy towards him. He was convicted but after a short time, was allowed to go abroad for further studies.

By 1915 preparations for an armed rising with the help of German arms were greatly intensified. Atul Ghosh and others from the Jugantar group tried to persuade the Anushilan Samiti to join the Indo-German venture. Till then the technique of work was, more or less, the same for the Anushilan Samiti and other groups which had

by that time merged to form the Jugantar party; yet there were some differences in outlook between Anushilan and Jugantar. But on the question of Indo-German collaboration the difference in outlook as well as technique between the two groups became sharp and visible.

Anushilan had already developed a centralised and well-knit organisation all over East and North Bengal and also in Calcutta and in some districts of West Bengal. It had some foothold in Tripura, Assam, Bihar, U.P., particularly in Banaras, and in Punjab. Compared to Jugantar, Anushilan had a much wider organisation but very much centralised. Perhaps that led the leaders to think more of the organisation than of the revolutionary objective. Jugantar developed more as a movement than as an organisation whereas the Dacca Anushilan Samiti developed as an organisation rather than a movement or, with the movement. Anushilan thus decided not to join the Indo-German conspiracy. They preferred the stability of the organisation to the objective and the ideal to attain which the organisation should be considered only a means. Different groups which ultimately joined together to form the Jugantar party developed out of popular movements in their respective areas. But Anushilan concentrated its attention on young students and on physical culture, mock fights and subsequently on dacoities, murders and other overt activities—keeping generally aloof from any public movement. In the initial stage, the difference in outlook was not so conspicuous; but with the intensification of the works programme, this difference in outlook became wider and basic.

That was the beginning of divergence of views and ways between Anushilan and Jugantar—which became more noticeable within a few years, particularly since the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-23. It may be said that it was an evil day when B. C. Chatterjee was allowed to pose as the spokesman of Anushilan. Chatterjee pleaded for them before Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India, when he came to India in 1917. In his book, *An Indian Diary*, Montagu wrote:

“He [B. C. Chatterjee] says he has been defending and befriending a large number of extremists who are now interned. He is not talking of those bought with German gold [meaning the Jugantar group]; but his friends are friends who want, he says, not to destroy

the British connection but to get rid of the administration which orders them about.

“His purpose in coming [to Delhi to meet Montagu] all the way from Calcutta was that when the report [on reforms] comes out, he wants to go with [Sir S. P.] Sinha as a witness, to see these internees, to ask them to swear loyalty to that new order of things and then, if he guarantees that they will behave, to let them off.”\*

This speaks of a basic difference in outlook. From the time of the First World War, the difference became significant and prominent, particularly in their respective attitudes towards the German offer of arms. Each group might have its own justification for deciding its course and line of action. The writer has no hesitation in saying that each group decided according to its honest conviction. Members of both groups never flinched from suffering and sacrifice. Naren Sen, Rabi Sen, Amrita Sarkar, Amrita Hazra, Nalini Ghose, Trailokya Chakravarty, Ramesh Acharya, Pratul Ganguly and others of Anushilan were men of energy, devotion and organising ability, which was recognised by all the workers irrespective of their party allegiance.

This difference continued till the achievement of independence in 1947. In public politics and in the three movements of 1921-23, 1930-33 and 1941-43, this difference became more and more conspicuous. The writer would even say that this difference and conflict between the two groups often vitiated the politics of Bengal. The two groups often differed sharply and bitterly—but each followed the dictates of its own conviction.

Before concluding this chapter, I must mention another bold act of murder committed by the Anushilan Samiti. Their attempt on the life of Basanta Chatterjee, as mentioned earlier, failed in 1915. But they did not spare him. In July 1916, they killed Basanta in a busy public street of Calcutta while he was returning from his office. To this story, I shall refer later on.

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\*Words put within brackets have been inserted by the author to clarify the previous reference.

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## Chapter Thirty-eight

# Jugantar at Work in Calcutta

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As we have stated in the previous chapter, to meet the pressing needs for money, the Jugantar party decided to undertake some dacoities within the city of Calcutta and in the districts; these were to be bold and prompt in execution and fundamentally different from the operations hitherto undertaken in rural areas. These called for a high degree of discipline and leadership, almost similar to that prevalent in the army. The idea was not only to get the money but also on the one hand to strike at the prestige of the Government and on the other, to stir the imagination of the people. These daring dacoities undermined the prestige of the authorities. A small batch of three or four persons would go in for an action. In most cases they had to confront a much bigger number.

The first of these Calcutta taxicab dacoities took place on 12th February, 1915, at Garden Reach, a suburb of Calcutta. The money belonged to Messrs. Bird and Company, a British firm. While it was being carried from the Chartered Bank, Calcutta, to a mill at Garden Reach, it was intercepted by the party that came in a taxi. They took Rs. 18,000/- and the taxi drove away. It was carried out under the direct supervision of Jatin Mukherjee. The Rowlatt Report says—"It

was committed by dacoits working under the direction of notable leaders, Jatin Mukherjee and Bepin Ganguly." Naren Bhattacharya, subsequently known as M. N. Roy, actually led it. The whole batch escaped; but after some time, on some suspicion or circumstantial evidence, Naren Bhattacharya, Atul Ghose and Sushil Sen (of Sylhet) were arrested but released on a bail of only Rs. 1000/- each. It was then that Naren Bhattacharya jumped bail and escaped from India. Others were discharged by the court for lack of evidence.

Another taxi dacoity took place in Calcutta on 22nd February, 1915, in the Beliaghata area. In this case a sum of Rs. 20,000/- was secured. The money was taken from the cashier of a rich rice merchant. There occurred another dacoity of a similar daring nature on 17th November, 1915, in a shop on Cornwallis Street and yet another after about 15 days on 2nd December, 1915, on Corporation Street. It was committed under the leadership of Manoranjan Gupta of the Barisal group of Jugantar. A sum of Rs. 25,000/- was secured in this dacoity. Two other dacoities that took place in Calcutta within that year were at Seth Bagan Lane and Chaulpati Road, both in the month of December. All these were undertaken by members of the Jugantar party in which Atmonnati also for all practical purposes had by then merged. The leadership of Jatin Mukherjee had been accepted by all groups except the Dacca Anushilan Samiti.

In all these dacoities, the bands of young men engaged in the venture escaped in taxicabs; in spite of various measures taken by the Government, none of the cabs could be stopped on the way. The Government put up a number of checkposts on the roads of Calcutta in the form of drop-gates like those at level-crossings on railway lines, so that any suspected automobile might be stopped and searched. All the bridges near about Calcutta were placed under strict guard. Sirens as danger signals were set up in the police stations. Motor cars plying on the streets were occasionally stopped and searched. Not a single band was, however, apprehended and none of the taxis involved was detained or searched, nor was anyone arrested during the course of action. In all these cases, the technique was more or less the same; getting down from the car as innocent customers, the revolutionaries entered the shops and, suddenly whipping out a revolver or a pistol, overawed the inmates of the shop almost without actually doing any violence. In no case did the whole operation take

more than ten minutes. That shows the quality of discipline and organisation manifested in these actions. In secretly circulated pamphlets entitled *Jugantar* it was announced that these sums of money had been taken as loans on behalf of the future national government which would repay them. One such letter is quoted below:

"No. 2250

### BANDE MATARAM

Bengal Branch of  
Independent United India

Most respectfully and humbly we beg to say:

GENTLEMEN,

Six honorary officers of our Calcutta Finance Department have taken a loan of Rs. 9,891-1-5 from you, and have deposited the amount in the office noted above on your account to fulfil our great aim. The sum has been entered in our cash book in your name at 5 per cent per annum.

By the grace of God, if we be successful, we will pay back the whole amount with the interest at one time.

The kind treatment accorded to our officers can only be expected from great men like you. We believe that our officers have also behaved with you in the like manner as far as possible.

Under our orders they did not lay their hands on the pledged ornaments, but at the time of counting your deposit, we have got one locket and a *madaly*. On enquiry made by our spies, we have come to know that these two articles are also pledged things. The meeting held in the night of 13th Ashar decided their return to you. It is noted, for your information, that these two articles will be sent to you within a fortnight. We warn you that if this is brought to the notice of the selfish police officers, they will surely misappropriate them.

Gentlemen ! If you go against us by deeds, words or any other means, or hand over anyone to the police on groundless suspicion, then we will not be able to keep our former promise; and we will not leave any one in your family to enjoy your enormous wealth.

It is perhaps not unknown to you that all the police officers have stood in the way of our righteous cause. The Government of our United India have never hesitated to inflict adequate punishment on them and the foreign British Government could not save them despite the utmost precautions. Therefore we remind you again not to do anything to compel us to besmear the Motherland with the blood of our countrymen.

A sound man like you may perhaps understand that to liberate the country from the yoke of the foreigners requires self-sacrifice, benevolence and sympathy of our countrymen. If the rich men of the country feel the weight of our work, subscribe monthly, quarterly and half-yearly to establish the rules and regulations of the *Sanatan Dharma* (ancient religion) in India then we would not have to trouble you in this way. If you do not accept our proposal then we shall be compelled to collect money in a like manner.

Gentlemen ! will you decline to spend something for us who initiated with *Matri Mantra* (solemn verse of Mother) determined to perform the *Mahajajna* (great work) to liberate the country from the foreign yoke with the new vigour of Kshatriya.

The improvement and power of Japan are due to the self-sacrifice and benevolence of the rich men of the country. Pray to God that He, for the achievement of His great work, may give strength to the heart and a right mind to our countrymen.

Calcutta,  
14th Ashar 1323 B.S.

Sd/- J. BALAMANTA,  
*Finance Secretary to the Bengal Branch  
of Independent Kingdom of United India,*

Dacoities usually lead to political murders. After any political dacoity, the police would naturally become active and start harassing the suspects and tracing out evidence. In such a case, it became almost unavoidable to remove the investigating officer or officers or even some men suspected to be prospective witnesses. The more the police became active, the more the revolutionaries also had to be vigilant. These political dacoities led to some police investigations, some searches, arrests of important workers or attempted arrests; all



these consequently led to the murder of police officers. In 1915 a number of political murders took place within the city of Calcutta and in its suburbs. Jatin Mukherjee was then in hiding and was later residing in a house on Pathuriaghata Street. One morning a stranger named Nirod Haldar entered the house; but he was known to Jatin Mukherjee, Naren Bhattacharji, Bepin Ganguly and other inmates. He was all along suspected to be a police agent. He actually called out Jatin's name when Naren emerged and others followed. He was shot dead on the spot. All the political workers immediately left the house. This happened on 24th February, 1915.

On 28th February of the same year another murder took place on Cornwallis Street. At the time, it was considered one of the most daring political murders. An important police inspector, Suresh Chandra Mukherjee, became very active in following the movements of revolutionaries. Jatin Mukherjee wanted this man to be disposed of without delay. Naren Ghosh Choudhury took charge. It was decided to kill him near Hedua (Cornwallis Square) which Suresh would pass by to be on duty supervising the security arrangements for the Viceroy coming to attend the Calcutta University Convocation. Naren Ghose Choudhury and Chittapriya Roy Choudhury waited at the south-west corner of Hedua. They saw Suresh Mukherjee; and Suresh also was attracted by the sight of Chittapriya who was a proclaimed absconder. According to arrangement, Chittapriya was taken out in broad daylight as a bait. Suresh, who knew him, was expected at the spot at this hour. Things followed as expected. As Suresh was about to catch hold of Chitta, the latter fired but the pistol got jammed and Naren shot Suresh in the head from the back; he fell immediately on the street, apparently dead. Sushil Sen, Manoranjan Sen and Niren Das Gupta also fired several shots to assure themselves that Suresh did not survive. Then they all ran away in different directions. The incident took place on 28th February, 1915, at about 8 in the morning, and on one of the busiest thoroughfares of Calcutta. Thus in the month of February 1915, two daring dacoities and two desperate murders took place in the city of Calcutta.

After this, there was a spell of quiet for some months. In October 1915 another daring murder took place in a house on Masjidbari Street. A number of police officers had assembled in the night

apparently to hold a conference about the investigation of political cases. The revolutionaries got the information as they also had their secret service. The murder of Suresh Mukherjee and this raid almost clearly indicated that the revolutionaries often received prior intimation of the movements of police officers. Three young men went to that house, each with a revolver or a pistol. One young man with a revolver in hand first entered the room where several police officers were assembled. The officers were so frightened that they immediately rushed out; some went out into the courtyard and some ran up the stairs to the first floor. While the police officers were running out of the room, the revolutionary young man who had entered the room shot at them. One sub-inspector of police named Girin Banerjee was killed. Another sub-inspector was wounded. The real target, Satish Chandra Banerjee, inspector of police, escaped by running up to the first floor. The Rowlatt Report describes the incident thus: "At about 10.30 P.M. this inspector (Satish Banerjee) was seated in a room in Masjidbari Street on the ground floor, when a young man appeared at the open door and began firing at the occupants with a pistol. They rushed into the courtyard and fled up some stairs followed by their assailant." He was later on joined by his two companions. It should be noted that only one revolutionary actually raided the house where a good number of police officers, all armed and all having armed escorts, were assembled. Still they did not dare give a fight, but simply ran away for their lives. These three raiders are still alive. One is a doctor in Alipur Duar—Brajen Dutta, better known as Jaga Dutta in revolutionary circles. The second is Bhupati Mazumdar, who later was a Minister in West Bengal for some years. And the third, who led the batch, is Manoranjan Gupta, for some years a member of the Upper House of West Bengal Legislature and now an earnest protagonist of the co-operative movement. The last two are bachelors and are now over 80.

After a month, another murder took place on 30th November, 1915, in Serpentine Lane. From a house in this lane, a very important political worker, Naren Ghosh Chaudhury, was arrested the previous day. It was considered a great blow to the Jugantar party; and it was decided that the party must retaliate. Some policemen were keeping watch on that house, as was usual in all such cases; and one of them was shot dead. It may be argued that the murdered

man was innocent as far as the arrest of Naren was concerned; but the revolutionaries had decided that Naren's arrest could not be allowed to go without some effective protest from the party; and as a retaliation, this murder was committed.

The year 1915 was a hectic year for Jugantar. The party was strenuously preparing for the coming armed rising with German aid. After the raid on the police house at Masjidbari Street on October 21, there was a series of overt acts up to the end of the year. The Rowlatt Committee Report states: "From the 21st October to the end of the year, no fortnight passed in Calcutta without some anarchist crime committed by the revolutionaries." During this short period of two months, in addition to the murder in Serpentine Lane, four dacoities were committed with the help of taxicabs in Calcutta. The operations in the districts will be narrated separately.

Along with these dacoities and murders, the Jugantar party was also carrying on a pamphleteering campaign. *Jugantar* leaflets in both Bengali and English were being almost regularly circulated throughout Bengal and other provinces. *Administration Report*, another periodical publication, on the line of the administration reports of any Government, was being published occasionally, giving a summary of important incidents and their interpretations. Dacoity was interpreted as the substitute for tax levied and collected by an established government; the difference was that the national government had not yet been able to establish itself to collect taxes peacefully and so it had to take its dues by force. The other justification given was that the money taken away by dacoity might be considered as war loans.

The pamphlets in Bengali and English, captioned *Jugantar*, explained to the people the urgency of an armed rising and also the implication of the coming revolution. The members of the Jugantar party constituted, so to say, a shadow government of independent India on whose behalf *Administrative Reports* were being published. The Rowlatt Committee referred to these Jugantar documents as evidence of the existence of a revolutionary conspiracy. These printed documents did not contain any name or address, nor did they disclose any plan of a conspiracy. These were in the nature of appeals to the people to understand the import of the intended revolution. These were, therefore, not of any value as exhibits in any conspiracy

case, although these had great political value. The Rowlatt Report also referred to many other hand-written documents and papers containing names and addresses of persons or details of conspiracy. These papers were produced in courts as exhibits in different conspiracy cases connected with the activities of the other revolutionary party.

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## Chapter Thirty-nine

# Jugantar in the Mofussil Districts, 1915

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While the Jugantar group was being re-organised at Calcutta, the mofussil units also were activated. By the end of 1913, most of the district units had shifted their headquarters to Calcutta. In their own districts or localities, these groups continued working more or less autonomously, but with a somewhat loose collaboration. The cementing factor among them was the urgency of the preparations for the expected armed rising. Another factor was their antipathy to the Anushilan Samiti of Dacca which long before this had spread out its own branches in all the districts of East and North Bengal. After the transfer of their headquarters to Calcutta, it became easier for the different groups of Jugantar to come closer to one other and gradually to form a compact party. In this process, the Barisal group, under the inspiration of Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty, played a very important role. It first came to an understanding with the Atmonnati group and then with the Mymensingh group of Hemendra Kishore Acharya Choudhuri and subsequently with the Bogra group of Jatin Roy. It had its branches in Tipperah, Noakhali, Sylhet and Idilpur (Faridpur). Naren Ghosh Chaudhury of the Barisal group belonged to Noakhali and it was mostly on his initiative that the Barisal group developed closer cooperation with different groups.

Naren's impulsive and sincere nature and his earnestness made a great impression on all. Hemendra Kishore Acharya Chaudhuri developed a particular admiration for him. These two men had an emotional affinity. Naren greatly impressed Bepin Ganguly and Anukul Mukherjee, the two top leaders of Atmonnati and also Jogen De Sarkar of the Bogra group. In this great work of integration of groups, he was subsequently helped by Manoranjan Gupta who during the Damodar flood relief had become intimate with Jadugopal Mukherjee. This personal intimacy was based on mutual appreciation and thus it was helpful in establishing the necessary political confidence, leading subsequently to political collaboration between the Barisal group and the main Jugantar group. Another important member of the Barisal group, Aswini Kumar Ganguly, also took an important part in this even earlier, from 1910-1912. He frequently visited Banaras as well as Chittagong, Rangpur and other districts of Bengal, and so had to halt at Calcutta occasionally when he established contacts with the Calcutta leaders. He also participated in the Damodar flood relief work. Gradually, all these groups coalesced and formed the Jugantar party under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee with headquarters at Calcutta.

The mofussil organisations in different districts at the earlier stage did not have much of overt activity except for some dacoities—which were too inadequate to satisfy the political urge. Naturally, there was much enthusiasm among the district workers, when they were informed of the expected armed rising with German arms; and the necessary preparations continued in the mofussil also. There was also an urgent need for money. Many dacoities were undertaken in different districts by these groups of Jugantar. Some murders also became necessary to evade police vigilance. Anushilan also committed a number of dacoities. I have already referred to the activities of the Anushilan Party in a previous chapter. Here I shall confine myself to the activities of Jugantar.

Revolutionaries were often so hard pressed both for money and for small arms that they had to send even their top men for dacoities and smuggling of arms. Apart from his being the top leader of the Atmonnati group, Bepin Ganguly was also then virtually occupying the position of deputy leader of the combined Jugantar party. Yet he had to take part personally in dacoities on many occasions. He

participated in two dacoities at Ariadah and at Agarpara, both near Calcutta. He was arrested almost immediately after the Agarpara dacoity and was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment. A man who supplied evidence in this case was later murdered in his own house. An eminent leader had to be sent behind bars for the sake of a paltry sum of money. After some months another very important worker, Manoranjan Gupta, was arrested while on an errand of getting a revolver from an Anglo-Indian smuggler who betrayed him. A top leader of Amushilan Samiti, Trailokya Chakravarty, was convicted in what was then known as the Shatirpara boat-theft case, which was actually a case of dacoity.

I mention these cases only to show under what desperate conditions these revolutionaries had to work at this juncture. Money and arms ! No risk was considered too great for these. They had to develop the psychology of not caring at all for their own lives; consequently, they would have little consideration for the lives of those who stood in the way of their mission. Yet most of these revolutionaries were tender-hearted and of a loving nature. I recollect a case, typical of their nature. A young man who was working as an informer was murdered in Noakhali. Over in Calcutta, in the house of Satyendra Chandra Mitra (who belonged to Noakhali and was an important member of the Jugantar group), some young members of the party were expressing gratification at this. Satyen Mitra chided them and sternly told them to pray for the salvation of that man's soul. He reminded them that it was a stern duty which the party had to undertake for a noble cause—not a matter of joviality—so it should be approached in a prayerful spirit.

Two well-known dacoities in 1915, for which the Jugantar party was held responsible, took place in the district of Nadia—the Pragpur and the Shibpur dacoities. These two actions were very bold in execution with almost an open defiance of the authorities of law and order. These two dacoities were arranged so as to give some experience of a guerilla fight to the revolutionaries. These, as also the taxicab dacoities in Calcutta, were deliberately planned to be bold and defiant—perhaps as a sort of practice for the expected open rising soon. The only precedent of a dacoity of this nature was the Barrah dacoity committed in 1908 within the district of Dacca. The Pragpur case took place on 30th April and the Shibpur dacoity on 30th

September, 1915. A fairly big party of revolutionaries went by boat in each case. Getting near the village, they started firing Mauser pistols and marched along the village streets to the marked house as if they were challenging the villagers and the police. In both cases there were open fights between them and the villagers helped by the armed police. In both the cases, fairly big booties were secured. But in both cases, the retreat proved near-disastrous—the police and the villagers pursuing and tracking them mile after mile.

In the Pragpur case, the party was composed mostly of Jatin Mukherjee's own group with some from the Barisal group and some from the North Bengal group. Sushil Sen of Sylhet was also in this raid. After the operation, the party found their retreat blocked by the attacking villagers who pursued them even after they had boarded a country boat in the river. During the affray and exchange of bullets, Sushil was seriously wounded. He implored his companions to kill him then and there and not to carry him in a wounded condition. He felt it might not be possible for him to survive after the profuse bleeding on the way. To carry him would be risky and full of dangerous potentialities. So he requested them to kill him and throw his body in the river. Fortunately death intervened and his comrades were spared the unpleasant task of killing such a fine soldier of freedom or of taking the risk of carrying a wounded comrade with retreat already very difficult for them. After his death, his body along with the boat was sunk, so that the corpse might not float and be brought up by the current, which would help identification and tracing of the group which undertook this action.

It may be recalled that Sushil, when a mere boy, was whipped in public by order of the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Kingsford. This order of whipping a tender boy had enraged the whole of Bengal and Kingsford had become the target of the revolutionaries' bombs which burst at Muzaffarpur in 1908. This family of the Sen brothers suffered repeatedly for the country's freedom. Hem Sen, Biren Sen, Kanti and Sushil were all enthusiastic workers in the cause of the Indian revolution. Sushil and Biren were convicted in the Alipore Bomb case; in the appeal Sushil was acquitted by the High Court.

Several persons were arrested in the wake of the Pragpur dacoity. Ashur Lahiri, Gopen Roy, Kshitish Sanyal and Phani Roy were



sentenced to transportation. Others were discharged by the court. The convictions dealt a serious blow to the party.

But the Shibpur dacoity brought a greater disaster. The technique of operation was the same in this dacoity as in the Praggpur case. Here also at the time of retreat the police with the villagers gave them a serious challenge and pursued them along the river banks from both sides. In the exchange of fire, one policeman was killed. Several persons were arrested in connection with this case. The last to be arrested was Naren Ghosh Chaudhury on 29th November, 1915. Nine of the accused were sentenced to transportation for life including Naren Ghose Chaudhury, Nikhil Guha Roy, Suren Biswas, Sanukul Chatterjee, Satya Ranjan Basu, Jatindra Nath Nandi, Kalicharan Das, Bhupendra Nath Ghose and Harendra Nath Kavyatirtha (a Sanskrit scholar). Aswini Ganguly, Bejoya Mitra, Radhika Ganguly and a few others were acquitted but they were all subsequently detained under the Defence of India Act. This dacoity was committed by the Barisal group along with one member each of the Mymensingh and Bogra groups. The latter turned approver and was pardoned as King's witness. Even the Rowlatt Report has described this case as "a severe blow to this group"—i.e. the Jugantar party.

Besides these two, several other dacoities were committed by the party in many East Bengal districts, particularly Gazipur in Barisal, Hazipur in Tipperah, Chandrakona in Mymensingh etc. In all these the revolutionaries went and retreated by boat. The use of taxicabs in Calcutta and boats in the mofussil districts became, with Jugantar, the technique of operations in dacoities during 1915 and 1916. It should be remembered that these dacoities and desperate actions were all conceived and executed in the light of the expected armed rising with German aid. Apart from the idea of securing money the revolutionaries also had the idea of having some training in guerilla tactics. These boat dacoities were conceived with that particular idea.

In narrating Jugantar's activities in this period, one cannot omit what happened in North Bengal. Among the North Bengal districts, the Jugantar organisation was in the beginning concentrated in Pabna and Rangpur. But later on, the units in Bogra, Rajshahi and to some extent in Jalpaiguri were well organized. Kshitish Sanyal and Gopen Roy were two enthusiastic workers there. Gopen who belonged to Pabna was in charge of finance, keeping accounts of the

moneys received mostly through dacoities. On 23rd January, 1915, the Rangpur group of Jugantar committed a dacoity in village Kurul within the Kurigram subdivision of the district; the booty in this case was about Rs. 50,000/-. Two persons, Kalipada Bagchi and Manibhusan Ghose, were arrested at Calcutta on suspicion. But the charge against them could not be proved and they were discharged after some months. The participants in this dacoity used masks to conceal their identity. Mauser pistols were used here.

The Kurul case created a sensation in official circles. Top police officials of the North Bengal Division came to Rangpur in connection with the enquiry into the case. Nanda Kumar Bose, the Additional Superintendent of the district, was placed in special charge of the case. Four young men one day went to his house and enquired about him. Immediately on seeing them, he recognised some of them and ran inside the house. The raiders fired at him, but he escaped unhurt. One Gurkha escort was killed and another policeman was wounded in the fray that ensued. Sasadhar Kar and Umanath Chakravarty were arrested. It was reported that Nanda Kumar Bose recognised Sasadhar as one of the raiders but he did not identify him in the court. Thus the accused were discharged. Nanda Kumar also prematurely retired from police service.

In the same year (1915), a dacoity was committed on 20th February in the village Dharail near Natore in the district of Rajshahi. This was a joint venture of Jugantar and the local Anushilan boys. The booty in this case was Rs. 25,000/-. It is reported that Jugantar and Anushilan workers made a local arrangement also for a joint raid on the Sarda Police Training College within the district of Rajshahi, but this did not materialise. As far as I could gather, Jyotish Roy and Romesh Das of the Jugantar group participated in this dacoity, in which also a Mauser pistol was used. It may be mentioned here that apart from 50 Mauser pistols stolen from Rodda & Co. which were all under the control of Jugantar, there was only one Mauser pistol smuggled somehow; and that also was recovered by the police within a short time. I may also state here that of the six names mentioned in these three cases, Kalipada Bagchi, Sasadhar Kar and Jyotish Roy played an important role in the subsequent movements under the leadership of Gandhiji in the three contiguous districts of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur respectively.

Even by the early part of 1915, the news of the Indo-German collaboration and the expectation of an early rising had become known to all the mofussil units of the Jugantar party. There was hectic and enthusiastic activity in all the Jugantar units in different districts. Particular mention should be made of the enthusiasm prevailing in the ranks of the Barisal, Mymensingh and North Bengal groups which were working as a unified team under the common guidance of Jugantar. Among the leaders or leading members, Basanta Kumar Mazumdar of Comilla (Barisal group), Hemendra Kishore Acharya Chaudhury of Mymensingh and Purna Das, the leader of the Madaripur group, were arrested after the promulgation of the Defence of India Act and were interned. But it was not very difficult to maintain contact with and seek advice from them.

The news of an Indo-German Conspiracy had in the meantime leaked out, not from India, but through international espionage. Prof. Masaryck, the first President of Czechoslovakia, wrote in his autobiography, *The Making of a State—Memoirs and Observations*, how Czech revolutionaries working in the U.S.A. first received this information from the Indian revolutionaries. The U.S.A. was still a neutral country and was a sort of haven and shelter for all the revolutionaries and discontented elements of the subject nations. Indian and Czech revolutionaries were working in the U.S.A., so the Czechs were able to get this information from the Indians. But the political affiliations of the Indians and the Czechs were not on the same line. While the Indians were eager to take help of the Germans to shake off British rule, the Czechs were eager to help the British and the French to shake off the tyranny of Austria—an ally of Germany. So the Czechs passed this information to the French Embassy in Washington and through them Britain got the news. The police was alerted particularly in the delta region of the Ganga and all sea approaches on the eastern coast from Noakhali-Chittagong side to Orissa.

Immediately, searches and arrests began in Calcutta. Sramajivi Samabaya and Harry & Sons, two business firms taking an active part in the Indo-German Conspiracy, were searched. Hari Kumar Chakravarty of Harry & Sons and Ram Chandra Mazumdar of the Samabaya along with many others were arrested. Some went underground. Jatin Mukherjee with four other followers—Chittapriya, Niren,

Manoranjan and Jatish—had gone to Balasore, one of the sites where German arms were expected to be disembarked. They went there both for safety and for convenience in utilising the German arms as soon as these might be landed there. But alas, the arms did not reach India and Jatin had to die in a pitched battle. To this story we shall come later.

Two attempts at armed rising during this period failed. The first attempt with the help of Indian soldiers was to take place on 21st February, 1915. Rash Behari had invited Jatin to meet him; he, Naren Bhattacharya and Atul Ghosh went to U.P.. After discussions it was decided that Rash Behari would take charge of Punjab and U.P., and Jatin would take charge of Bengal. One Kripal Singh betrayed the whole thing and disclosed the plan of the first attempt. The other attempt was for a people's armed rising with German arms. The ships carrying the arms were trapped and intercepted; the weapons did not reach India. On 15th August, 1915, extensive searches in Calcutta indicated that the plot was exposed. Thus that attempt also failed.

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## Chapter Forty

# Martyrdom of Jatin Mukherjee —the Balasore Battle

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After the murder of Nirod in the Pathuriaghata house in February 1915, it was decided that Jatin Mukherjee should move to a safe place from where he would be able to guide the armed rising. Several places were suggested and an offer came from Atul Sen, the headmaster of Bagnan School (Dt. Howrah), of a safe shelter for Jatin and a few others. Jatin stayed at Bagnan for a few days. Ultimately Balasore was selected—not only for safety but also for its nearness to one of the places where German arms were expected to be landed. Nalini Kar had been there in 1910; and it was on his suggestion that Balasore was finally selected. He went there to arrange for the stay of Jatin and his companions. These were further supervised by Naren Bhattacharya (M. N. Roy), who found the place perfectly suitable. Jatin Mukherjee went there along with Chittapriya Roy, Niren Das Gupta and Manoranjan Sen Gupta (all three of Madaripur), and Jatish Pal (of Nadia) went there later. To facilitate the work of organising an armed rising in that region Jugantar had tried to build up some local units. With this idea, a business house—the Universal Emporium—was started at Balasore as a cycle shop. It was being run by Saileswar Bose and Nemai alias Tarapada Chakravarty, both of

them of the Changripota group. Universal Emporium was a sort of a branch organisation of Harry & Sons of Calcutta. The proposed refuge for Jatin was not actually anywhere in Balasore district; it was at a village called Kaptipada in the then Native State of Mayurbhanj more than 30 miles from Balasore town.

The police had a clue to this Universal Emporium from the search of Harry & Sons of Calcutta, which was using the Emporium as its subsidiary, not so much for business as for transmitting information about German arms to the leader. Immediately, a posse of the police Intelligence Department went to Balasore to search the Emporium. They arrested Saileswar and Nemaï, who were taken to Cuttack jail and detained under Regulation III of 1818 as State Prisoners. In the course of the search, they seized some stray pieces of paper in one of which they got the name of Kaptipada, a village in Mayurbhanj State.

Jatin was staying in that village with Manoranjan and Chittapriya; Niren and Jatish were staying in another village 12 miles away. The police party, who had already come well prepared to Balasore, on getting the clue of Kaptipada immediately marched towards that village. The police party ransacked the whole forest area. Some people told Jatin that some Europeans had stopped at the Kaptipada dak bungalow, which was by the side of a small stream. Jatin went there in the darkness of evening, waded through the shallow water of the stream and satisfied himself that some Europeans were really there. He came back to his cottage and told his host Manindra Chakravarty that these Europeans could not have come for any other purpose than to capture them. The party was headed by important officials including G. C. Denham of the Central Intelligence and other European officers from Calcutta along with Sergeant Rutherford, R. G. Kilby, Distt. Magistrate of Balasore, and the S.P.P. of Balasore. They drafted a force of the Mayurbhanj State also.

Jatin, staying in the shelter under the care of Manindra Chakravarty, was highly respected by the village people who looked upon him as a saintly person. The Mayurbhanj State police force had with them some elephants which carried the officers. The bells on the necks of these elephants rang and resounded through the forest. The village people informed Jatin of the approaching police party.

Manindra advised Jatin to leave that place but he refused to leave. Manindra then implored him to leave that village for a safe place across a dense forest in some hilly region. Jatin had sufficient time to escape; but he declined to leave without taking Niren and Jatish with him. Thus his exit was delayed by a few hours, by which time the police party approached the neighbourhood.

On reaching Mayurbhanj State, the police party asked the headquarters S.D.O. at Baripada, one Akshaya Chatterjee, to accompany them. In fact, they sent Akshaya to find out if Jatin and his companions were there. This being a risky job, the British officers thought it prudent to send a poor Bengali officer for the reconnoitring work. He went and reported that the party had left and that the house was vacant. They then interrogated Manindra about Jatin and his colleagues. He said that, according to his information, these men had come there for forest contract work; and that he knew nothing more about them. The police party then sent their men to neighbouring villages to spread wild stories both of panic and allurements. The story went round that these men were German agents or dangerous dacoits; that it was for the benefit of the villagers that the Government force had come to capture them and that the villagers would get cash rewards for the capture of any of them.

Jatin and his companions marched through the forest and hills of Mayurbhanj; and after two days of weary walking they safely reached the Balasore railway station at dead of night on 8th September. They found a train waiting at Balasore station but on closer examination they discovered that it was a special police train waiting at the platform; so they did not think it safe to board it and again started walking till they reached the Burha Balong river. For two or three days, they had had no rest, hardly any food and no sleep. That was their last march; they were awfully tired. Their movements roused the suspicions of the villagers; some were sympathetic and tried to help, but there were some who informed the police. The report went round that the Bengali dacoits had come to the nearby villages. Villagers tried to follow and capture them. Repeatedly Chittapriya and his other companions asked Jatin to go alone to some safe place while they guarded the rear. But he declined and seemed determined to have a show-down with the Government forces.

Some villagers were persuaded and some were threatened by

Jatin's companions; and so they dispersed for a while. But many of the villagers were won over by the Government either by the lure of reward or by the threat of dire consequences on their failing to render help to the Government. They continued to watch the movements of Jatin and his companions, and some of them went up to Balasore to inform the police. Stories of Bengali dacoits had been circulated in every village round about.

Jatin and his party purchased some food from a village shop; they had no small coins and offered a ten-rupee note, asking for the change from the shop-keeper. Now, a ten-rupee note was a very uncommon thing in those days in the interior villages of Orissa. The villagers grew suspicious and again gathered round them, now in an offensive mood. One villager caught hold of Jatin. For two or three minutes, there was grappling and that villager was thrown on the ground. Jatindranath had a good physique; he could easily contend with a number of them. It was at this stage that, after several warnings to the villagers to disperse, Manoranjan fired a few shots. One villager was killed and another was wounded. Then Jatin and his four followers marched on after swimming a small river. At this stage the pursuing villagers left them.

They informed the Balasore authorities; and some went on following and watching them from a distance. Kilby, the District Magistrate, Sergeant Rutherford, Major Freath (army), and others went out with a large posse of armed men, including some military personnel under Freath and Rutherford. The exact number of the Government forces is not known; but it was not less than 70 or 80 men. The Government force was closing in a pincer movement—one wing being headed by Major Freath and the other by Sergeant Rutherford. The five revolutionaries took up position in a small coppice behind some mounds, using them as a barricade. The police party came near the place indicated by the villagers and started shooting and proceeded slowly, constantly firing. The Government forces had up-to-date rifles but Jatin and his party had only Mauser pistols—which, of course, could be converted into rifles and this was done. The Government forces crawled forward on the slushy field, often taking shelter behind the bushes and baulks. The unequal fight continued for about 75 minutes; then the revolutionaries ran out of ammunition.



Chittapriya first received a fatal hit. Then came the turn of Jatindranath who was seriously wounded, first in the arm and then in the lower abdomen. There Jatish also fell seriously wounded. Of the five, one was dead, two were seriously wounded; the remaining two were busy looking after their wounded comrades. Moreover, they had no ammunition. As firing from the revolutionaries stopped, it became easy for the police party to capture them. Before the police party could reach them, however, Chittapriya expired; Jatindranath and Jatish were carried to the district hospital under police guard. Niren and Manoranjan were moved to police custody and subsequently to jail. It is reported that after an operation Jatindranath tore off the bandage and the stitches over the wound. There was fresh bleeding and he died in the hospital next day early morning. But before his death, in a dying declaration he took the entire responsibility on himself alone. In the trial, Niren and Manoranjan were condemned to death and Jatish Pal was sentenced to transportation for life.

Thus ended a glorious episode in the revolutionary history of Bengal. Jatin was something more than an individual—nay, even more than an important leader; he was the guiding spirit of the whole plan of an armed rising. Rash Behari also depended greatly on him and held several consultations with him about the plan of the rising. Jatin was looked upon by all revolutionary workers (except those belonging to Dacca Anushilan) as the symbol of their hopes and aims. All the officers were highly impressed by his daring and dignified demeanour. It is reported that when he was lying in the Balasore hospital seriously wounded one important police officer of Calcutta respectfully addressed him, "Mukherjee, tell me what I can do for you." He smiled and replied, "Thanks, all is over; good bye." Denham of the Central Intelligence had been tracking him from place to place and was almost on the spot. Immediately after the Balasore fight, he sent a report to Cleveland, Director of Criminal Intelligence, Central Government. Hignall, Secretary to the Government of India, noted this as "the interesting report by Denham". It was read by all members of the Viceroy's Council and was sent to Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, who on reading the report noted: "Nothing can be more praiseworthy than the action of Kilby (District Magistrate of Balasore) and Sergeant Rutherford."

Denham's report gave a detailed description of the fight and remarked: "Jatin Mukherjee was perhaps the boldest and the most actively dangerous of all Bengal revolutionaries."

He was not only the boldest, but was also a man of broad vision, a generous mind, and an affectionate heart. He was endowed with a sense of the highest spiritual and moral values. He was a man with high religious and spiritual ideals and a devoted disciple of Bholananda Giri.

Secret revolutionary politics has its dark side also. Basically, any revolutionary movement, secret or open, violent or non-violent, is not a normal movement; so its methods and practices pay little consideration to normal social conventions, laws and customs. Unless one has a high degree of personal idealism and a strong sense of moral and spiritual values, one engaged in such a political mission is very likely to develop an anti-social attitude even for the purpose of satisfying personal whims and desires. Jatindranath was unique in that respect, being unusually free from such tendencies. Leaders like Jatindranath and Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati endowed with a strong sense of spiritual and moral values, left a distinct mark and impression on the Jugantar party; and that helped the members of Jugantar to keep the cause of national service above everything, even above the party itself. It is a legacy which the workers of Jugantar of those days cherished, and still cherish, as their guide and beacon-light in life.

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## Chapter Forty-one

# Preparation for Armed Rising

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In 1915, both Anushilan and Jugantar met with serious disasters. Two conspiracy cases at Barisal practically removed all the top leaders of Anushilan. Similarly, two dacoity cases of Pragpur and Sibpur and the searches and arrests starting from August 1915 consequent on the disclosure of the Indo-German conspiracy dealt serious blows to the organisation of Jugantar. Then Jatin Mukherji died in the Balasore battle. Satish Mukherjee, who had become a sanyasi under the name Swami Prajnanananda Saraswati, was arrested at Banaras and brought to Bengal for internment. Many others were arrested and detained in prison under Regulation III of 1818 and a larger number of important workers were detained under the Defence of India Act. Some top leaders of Jugantar, namely Jadugopal Mukherjee, Amar Chatterjee, Atul Ghosh, Satish Chakravarty, Nalini Kar, Panchugopal Banerjee and Manmatha Biswas went underground. A reward of Rs. 10,000/- was declared for the apprehension of each of them. Among them Jadugopal was the most important, for all the connecting threads of the Indo-German compact—external and internal—were with him. Atul Ghosh, Amar Chatterjee and Satish Chakravarty were also very important leaders

of Jugantar. Manoranjan Gupta, another very important leader of Jugantar, was arrested in early 1916. The safety of the absconders was an important responsibility of those who then took charge of Jugantar. These second-rank leaders had themselves gone underground, constantly shifting themselves as they went about this work; but they were not so marked as yet as to make their movements particularly difficult or risky.

An absconder's life at this period was anything but enviable. No place was safe for them; there never was adequate money even to meet their bare needs; a safe and good sleep at night was almost a rare thing. Not infrequently, it so happened that when in an improvised shelter some food was arranged or cooked ready to be taken, these workers had to leave everything behind in a hurried exit from the shelter on account of its having just then come under police suspicion. Sometimes, on entering a cheap hotel for a frugal meal, an absconding worker had to run away before it was served; often he had to leave the slum eating-house without satisfying his hunger and without any prospect of a shelter. Sometimes he had to lie down on a sheet of paper or simply on a piece of cloth even on the roadside without any meals for a day or two. It was not unusual for the absconding young worker not to possess the money to purchase food, or he was told not to stir from the house as on the road outside a trap had been laid for him. The footpaths might be safer and more hospitable to him than any house.

Dens of gamblers, opium or *charas* smugglers or of the smokers of these narcotics, would give him safer shelter than he could find in any decent house. Pickpockets, goondas, addicts to narcotics, gamblers and like classes of men often helped these young men mostly, of course, in consideration of some monetary gain, but also out of admiration for the desperate and dangerous mode of their life or out of hatred for the police. Perhaps these men found in those youths their comrades in desperate living, a sort of brotherhood in recklessness. A young man or a batch of them without any female member would always be suspected by the owner of any house or the manager of any hotel,\* boarding house or mess. Everyone was anxious to avoid them as dangerous associates for fear of the police.

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\* The word 'hotel' should not be taken in the present sense of the term; it denoted a cheap eating-house, generally in a bustee or slum area of Calcutta.

Nerves were always strained; worry after worry, incident after incident, was followed by panic and threats; yet it was a thrilling experience with a charm of its own. The writer himself gathered a year's practical experience of an absconder's life during this period.

These absconders used to meet at unusual places and at unusual hours according to previous appointment. In Calcutta, the most frequent rendezvous were the Pareshnath Temple, the Campbell Hospital, the yet unoccupied rooms of the Science College, West and East Canal Roads, some small shops, the *Bengalee* office on Bowbazar Street etc. At these meetings they would fix up the programme for the next two or three days. Shyamsunder Chakravarty, then an assistant to Surendranath Banerjee in editing *The Bengalee*, was in full sympathy with the movement and in fact he knew the main scheme. Out of his meagre income, he often used to help these workers. Even after 50 years, the writer recollects with what affection, care and anxiety Shyamsunder used to receive him when he called at the *Bengalee* office. The writer also cherishes a grateful memory about another man, Jitendra Lal Banerjee, then an eminent professor of English in a first-grade college. Satyendra Chandra Mitra, who subsequently distinguished himself as a lieutenant of Deshbandhu Das as a legislator, had put the writer in contact with Jitendra Lal Banerjee before he had been arrested. Few persons knew that J. L. Banerjee had ever taken any interest in the dangerous politics of secret revolutionary movement. He played a leading rôle during the non-co-operation movement.

There were two categories of absconders at the time, the immobile and the mobile. Jatin Mukherjee, Jadugopal, Amar Chatterjee and others had almost always to remain indoors, could hardly ever come out of their shelters in daytime. They belonged to the first category. There were others, the mobile class, who had to move about almost the whole day—day after day, week after week and month after month, to maintain the links of the organisation which was then the principal task of this category of absconders. Jugantar had not, even then, given up hope of receiving German arms; new routes were being tried through which even a trickle of German arms might flow in. So all the links of Jugantar had to be maintained and, moreover, the absconding top leaders had to be provided with safe shelters; and that was a costly and important job. This problem opened a new phase in

the organisation. To provide a seemingly family atmosphere to the establishments of these top absconders, ladies were necessary—to play the role of aunts, sisters and mothers. I shall separately deal with that phase—how those brave ladies faced family pressure, social ostracism and Government repression simply to help the cause of national independence. But I may here mention a few names—Nanibala, Kshiroda Sundari, Baro Pishima (senior aunt) and others. The real name of Baro Pishima was not known even to the revolutionaries sheltered by her.

Jugantar was busy rehabilitating the district organisations in preparation for the armed rising. According to the original plan, arms were expected to be landed at two or three places, e.g. at Raimangal in the Sunderbans and on the Orissa coast. One consignment was also expected to be delivered at Goa. According to the arrangement, there should have been a two-pronged attack on the Government. With the German arms, a guerilla force would have been created to have armed rising in different areas. This would have to be backed by a mutiny among the Indian armed force. An estimate was made and it was found that during the War, the number of British soldiers in India was almost negligible. Immediately on receipt of the arms, these were to be sent to different neighbouring districts. Party units were to be properly organised in all such places. It was decided that the Chotanagpur Hills would form the flank on one side while the Chittagong and Sylhet hills would form the flank on the other side. The railway bridges were to be blown up, for which dynamite was procured. Bands of young men were taught riding and gun-handling as also signalling, particularly semaphore signalling. The importance of ambulance was also appreciated. First-aid boxes were distributed to different centres where batches of young men were given training in first-aid with an elementary course of anatomy. The writer recollects in this connection a name, that of Surendranath Bose, a small zamindar of Noakhali. He was a good rider. He took charge of training young men in riding. He died later during the Noakhali riots of 1946 while trying to defend the helpless Hindus there, with a rifle in his hand, against organised attacks of the hooligans of the Muslim League.

Emissaries were sent abroad and to different parts of India. Naren Bhattacharya had moved out of India some time earlier. He was

moving in different countries of the Far-East under the name of Martin. He went twice to that region. During his first visit he discussed with the German agents at Batavia the programme for sending arms to India. On his return, he had consultations with Jadugopal Mukherjee at Calcutta and with Jatin Mukherjee at Jatin's Kaptipada shelter. Then he again went to the Far East and found that the whole plot had leaked out. He discussed with Sun Yat Sen the possibility of sending arms through North China and Assam. From there he escaped to America via Japan with the help of the Mexican legation there. Rash Behari was also at this time in the Far East.

It is relevant here to say a few words about Rash Behari. After having lost all hopes of an armed rising in Punjab and also finding his further stay in North India almost impossible, he decided to leave India to see if he could do anything abroad. From Punjab he came to Banaras and stayed in the Gidhore Math with Swami Vidyanda (of the *Sandhya* case—original name, Manabendra Chatterjee). From there he informed Naren Seth and Atin Bose at Calcutta about his intention of going to Japan, and asked them to send him some money for his passage and other expenses before departure for, and after reaching, Japan. The Jugantar members collected near about Rs. 10,000/-. This was in the early part of 1915. Amar, son of Atin Bose, then a young man of about 23, was sent with the money. When Rash Behari got the necessary money, he came to Calcutta to catch a ship to Japan and left the Indian shores under the passport of P. N. Tagore, under which name for some time he was known in Japan which he reached about June 1915. Within a short time after his arrival he found Bhagwan Singh and Heramba Lal Gupta there. Rash Behari was living there not very publicly—as the British agents soon came to know who P. N. Tagore really was and tried to get him extradited from Japan. It was only due to the intervention of some influential Japanese citizens that he was not externed from Japan or handed over to the British. So he was advised not to move about freely. Heramba and Bhagwan frequently met and consulted him.

Bhupati Mazumdar went to the Far East, but he was arrested on board a Dutch ship on the high seas. There was some controversy about the legality of his arrest and detention by the British; but at this time, the Dutch were too subservient to the British to press

Holland's international rights strongly. He was then confined in the Singapore military prison at Tanglin. Phani Chakravarty of the Changripota group was also arrested in this region and was clamped in Singapore prison. Sivaprasad Gupta of Benaras, D. R. Guha, an Indian engineer returning from the U.S.A. after 15 years, Kumud Mukherjee of Siam and others were also detained in that prison. Some adventurers also got mixed up in this venture, some of whom later on were boosted as great revolutionaries. Their *bona fides* were always in doubt. Phani Chakravarty was to return to India with the new plan; but he was arrested on the way. Bholanath Chatterjee and Nani Basu, who had gone earlier to Burma and Siam, came back safely.

After his return from Siam, Bholanath accompanied by Benoy Bhushan Dutt went to Maharashtra and thence to Goa, then a Portuguese colony. A small port named Gokarni on the Konkan coast, a few miles north of Goa, was one of the places selected for the delivery of one consignment of German arms. Portugal was an ally of Britain, having declared war on Germany in November 1914. Goa could not, therefore, be a safe place for a pair of Bengali young men. A telegram from Bholanath with B. Chatterton as name of the sender, to Martin at Batavia, roused police suspicions; subsequent enquiries revealed the movements of Bholanath and Benoy. They were arrested on 27th December, 1915, and handed over to the Government of India. They were transferred to the Yervada Prison at Poona. On 27th January, 1916, Bholanath was reported to have committed suicide. Bholanath was a resourceful, clever young man with strong nerves. It is not credible that he would commit suicide. We do not yet know if he committed suicide or was done to death by the police applying third degree measures. So far as is known, he had been subjected to severe torture in the Yervada prison. However, a young man devoted to the cause of national independence died in mysterious circumstances in the dark chamber of a British prison. Hope of getting arms via the west coast disappeared with Bholanath's arrest.

The German consuls at Bangkok, Batavia (Java) and Shanghai were keeping contact with the Bengal revolutionaries. That is why several workers of Jugantar and of the Ghadr party went abroad particularly to the Far Eastern countries. The German representative



in the Far East for this work was Theodor Hellferich to whom Naren Bhattacharya was introduced by the German consul at Batavia. Naren alias Martin discussed with him the plan of sending arms, and it was decided that the *S. S. Maverick* would deliver 30,000 rifles with adequate ammunition at Raimangal. Martin sent a code telegram to Harry & Sons. Several instalments of money were also received, totalling about Rs. 43,000/- out of which the revolutionaries received Rs. 33,000/- only. Naren returned to India in June 1915. Near about that time information of the Indo-German deal leaked out through the Czech revolutionaries in the U.S.A. The *S. S. Maverick* was intercepted at Batavia. Some time after this, a Bengali gentleman named Kumud Mukherjee, a lawyer at Bangkok, came from Siam. He brought the news of the German offer of 5000 rifles and Rs. 1 lakh to be delivered at Raimangal in the Sundarbans. On his return journey he was arrested and thrown into the Singapore military prison.

During the first World War, Holland maintained its neutrality. But the Allied Powers felt it necessary to impose a blockade upon Holland and its overseas communications. Thus her neutrality was only of a formal nature. The Dutch colonies of the East Indies were only nominally under Dutch rule, but were practically under the control of the British Government; it was an essential part of the Allied war strategy to keep strict control over all the territories of the Far East, including the Dutch East Indies and independent Siam (Thailand). French Indo-China was already under the control of the Allies through the French Government there. Thus it was an easy job for the British to detain at Batavia the *S.S. Maverick* and four German military officers detailed to train Indian revolutionaries in guerrilla warfare. The *Maverick* started from a port in California for delivering arms in India. Another ship started from the other side of the Atlantic to deliver arms on the West coast perhaps in Goa or somewhere on the Bombay (Konkan) coast. It could not effect a safe arrival to the Indian coast. It was reported that it went to the Persian Gulf and delivered the arms at a Persian port. Even before the first World War and more particularly during the War, Persia was under the dual control of Britain and Russia, enjoying hardly any independence. The position was deeply resented by the people. The financial and administrative reforms attempted to be introduced through the able guidance of Schuster of the U.S.A.

were to be abandoned almost on the eve of the War on account of the joint opposition of Russia and Britain. So the public's feelings against the Allied Powers were rather bitter. The gendarmes utilised these German arms in organising some local risings.

It was freely discussed and frankly admitted among the revolutionaries organising this rising that with the help of a few thousand rifles and a few lakhs of rupees, the armed rising would not bring independence to India. Yet it was planned and attempted as a venture worth attempting, if not for any material victory or gain, at least to serve as an example for the future generation. In one of his essays, Rabindranath deplored that Bengal had given everything to her sons except the glorious legacy of martyrdom. The enthusiasts of the Jugantar party had no hesitation in sacrificing their well-organised party simply to contribute to the glorious legacy of martyrdom in an open fight. They tried desperately for an armed rising even after the last hope to secure German arms had been abandoned. To that I shall come later.

Jugantar was frustrated in its attempt to have an armed rising. The Ghadr group was also trying the same in Punjab and in the Far Eastern regions. Indian revolutionaries were then following the Irish slogan, "Britain's adversity is Ireland's opportunity". Leaders of Jugantar, including Jatin Mukherjee, Rash Behari Bose, Satish Mookherjee (then a sanyasi under the name of Prajnanananda Saraswaty) and Hemendra Kishore Acharya Chaudhury were all inspired with the idea of striking a blow at Britain when she was in danger. German help—in arms and money—was considered a further opportunity. The Jugantar leaders were anxious to have even some localised risings during the war when all hope of getting German arms had vanished.

At the end of this chapter I would like to add a few remarks regarding a controversial person named Abani Mukherjee, who was in Japan at this time. Recently there has been an attempt to boost him up as an important figure of that time with the definite purpose of denigrating M. N. Roy. Abani Mukherjee was arrested at Singapore on his way to India and was detained there. During this detention, he made several confessional statements and disclosed all that he had come to know in Japan and Shanghai. From these statements, we find that from his very boyhood he was more an adventurist than a serious

worker or a serious student. He left his studies from the 4th class, i.e. 7th standard and took up doing odd jobs in several places, starting from Ahmedabad to Calcutta. Then in 1911 he left for Japan and from there went to Germany. He had some technical training in the textile industry during his sojourn in Japan and Germany. On his return to India, he entered service first in Calcutta and then in the Prem Mahavidyalaya of Raja Mahendra Pratap in Brindaban. He frequently changed his occupation and place of residence. In 1915 he again went to Japan without any political connection or purpose. There he came in contact with Bhagwan Singh, an important Indian revolutionary. Rash Behari Bose was already there under the name of P. N. Tagore.

In his first statement, Abani narrated his personal life starting from boyhood and then his last journey to Japan where Bhagwan Singh picked him up as an emissary for doing some odd jobs. Bhagwan Singh sent him to Shanghai to meet Abinash Roy, another important Indian revolutionary, then working in connection with the Indo-German conspiracy. Abinash Roy also used him as an emissary and Abani was clever enough to be a good emissary or errand boy. For every job entrusted to him, he was being paid. Neither Bhagwan Singh nor Abinash disclosed to him the purpose for which they were utilising him. His main interest was to satisfy his restless nature with some adventure and also thereby to earn his livelihood. He himself stated that in one transaction entrusted to him by Abinash, he saved a fair amount of money apart from what he was given by Abinash as his remuneration. He stated that he had suspected that Abinash was attempting an armed rising in India through German help. In his confession he never claimed any political contact in Bengal or in India. When asked if he had any acquaintance with Jatin Mukherjee, he denied having ever met him. Abinash Roy gave Abani certain addresses which he was expected to contact on his arrival in India, including Motilal Roy of Chandernagar and Kula Chandra Singh Roy of the National Council of Education, Calcutta. Kula Chandra was a member of Jugantar. On his way to India Abani was arrested at Singapore.

In subsequent statements he narrated what he had learnt during these few months either from Bhagwan Singh or from P. N. Tagore (Rash Behari Bose) or from Abinash Roy. Indian revolu-

tionaries in the Far East had been working under great pressure and were eager to communicate certain things to India. They enlisted the help of Abani, who appeared to them clever enough to carry the message to the relevant persons. Contrary to their instructions, Abani put down everything in a notebook including the addresses; and when he was arrested the notebook was also found on him. Throughout all his statements nothing was said about any political mission or purpose he had in all these adventures, but he disclosed all the errands entrusted to him and names and addresses of all the persons he came to know. He was released on parole and then he went out of Singapore. Two other persons detained in Singapore, Bhupati Mazumdar and Phani Chakravarty, confirmed this part of the story.

His subsequent career in Russia is also not very clear. When he came to India about 1922, he first contacted the Jugantar members, who treated him with caution though they offered him shelter in the house of one of their members. But he could sense that the Jugantar group was not taking him into confidence. The main topic of his talk was to vilify M. N. Roy who from Russia had already established contact with his old colleagues of Jugantar. M. N. Roy was sending communist literature and pamphlets including his own weekly organ *Vanguard*. When the entry of *Vanguard* was banned by the Government, Roy changed the name into *Advance Guard*. The suspicion about Abani's bonafides was confirmed by a note sent by Kamenev—one of Lenin's trusted lieutenants. Kamenev said in that note that M. N. Roy was their trusted representative of India and Asia in the Third International and Abani should not be trusted. He soon realised that the Jugantar workers were discussing with him neither any serious party matter nor were they treating him with confidence and trust. So one day he left that shelter; it was known later that he had left for Dacca in contact with another group. When there was a conflict between the Stalinist regime and M. N. Roy, naturally the followers of the Third International in India started deprecating the part played by M. N. Roy in the communist world. Yet the communists have never accepted Abani as a genuine revolutionary. In Muzaffar Ahmed's *History of the Communist Party in India*, Abani has not been given any complimentary comments.

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## Chapter Forty-two

# With Back to the Wall

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We are coming to the end of a chapter in the story of our national struggle. The closing years of this chapter of our history, 1915 to 1917, were years of frantic activity and excitement on the part of the revolutionaries as well as the Government. The year 1915 saw a number of taxicab dacoities and daring murders in Calcutta and outside. The Government did not remain an idle spectator. The position of the Allies, including the British, in the First World War in 1915 and 1916 was anything but satisfactory. The Gallipoli disaster (December 1915) and the surrender of the British general Townsend at Kut-el-Amara (April 1916) meant two serious blows to the defence arrangements of India. The Suez Canal was not considered safe. In the Indian Ocean, the German cruiser *Emden* was making repeated raids on ships and also on Indian territory. A few months before came the news of Indian revolutionaries conspiring to get from Germany arms, money and also expert personnel. The Government naturally became nervous and ruthless. Bengal and Punjab were the two most turbulent provinces during this period. In between Bengal and the Punjab, U.P. and Bihar had an occasional overflow from both sides. Revolutionary movements in other States had subsided long ago.

Repressive measures were intensified in Bengal. The Defence of India Act was passed (March 1915) investing the Government with many drastic powers, including something like a summary trial and detention without trial. Many young men were detained without trial, mostly under the Defence of India Act and also under Regulation III of 1818. The Government was so much worried about the situation in Bengal that anxious despatches were exchanged frequently between the Bengal Government, the Government of India and the Secretary of State for India in London. It will be an interesting study for any research worker to go through the records of this period to be found either in the National Archives at Delhi or in the Archives of the Government of West Bengal. The situation was viewed with so much alarm that in 1916, there was a serious proposal from the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India for recalling the Governor of Bengal, Lord Carmichael, as he was thought to be rather too soft in dealing with the situation; but as there was only one year left of his term, the Government did not pursue the matter.

Early in 1916 the Jugantar group carried out some dacoities in Calcutta and the surrounding areas. The first of these was in January in the district of Howrah (Dafarpur) and in quick succession during the next two or three months, there were some other dacoities. The most important was the dacoity on 20th June in Gopi Roy's Lane, Calcutta, with a booty of about Rs. 11,500/-. In East Bengal also they carried out some dacoities. The Anushilan party, too, committed some dacoities in East Bengal. The position at this time was very difficult both for Jugantar and Anushilan. There were a number of absconders, some among whom were very important. To maintain these absconders and to keep up the structure of the organisation, large sums of money were necessary. Both the parties were also issuing secret pamphlets in English and Bengali. These leaflets were necessary to counteract the Government propaganda against the revolutionaries and to tell the public that they really meant business and were ready to undergo any suffering. The printing and distribution of these leaflets was also a risky and costly affair, as all these had to be done secretly in the face of very strict press laws. The secret pamphlets of the Jugantar party were called *Jugantar* and those of the Anushilan *Sainiti Swadhin Bharat*.

Among the dacoities committed in 1916, a few may be mentioned: in January at Howrah and in February on Cornwallis Street and on Upper Chitpur Road, both in Calcutta and at Janai, district Howrah; in March at Daffarpur, district Howrah; in June in Gopi Roy's Lane in Calcutta. All these were the doing of the Jugantar party. Atul Ghosh, though an absconder, took an active part in keeping up the links and organizing these activities of this period. Among the dacoities committed in East Bengal, in January two were in Mymensingh district; in March two in Tippera district; in June one in Faridpur district in which the booty was reported to have amounted to Rs. 43,000/-. Two dacoities in Tippera were committed by the workers of Anushilan. One of these was in the village Laliteswar. In this case five villagers were killed and five injured; one of the raiding party, Prabodh Bhattacharya, died in the conflict. In another dacoity in Mymensingh in October the booty was reported to be Rs. 80,000/-. This was supposed to be committed by the Jugantar group. We need not mention the other dacoities committed in this period. As I have stated before, dacoity was considered as a sort of levy by the yet-to-be-established national government. Sometimes letters were sent to rich persons asking for money for the national government. In several cases money was given. Failure to give the money was often followed by dacoity. Sometimes, as has been stated in another chapter, the owner of the raided house was sent a letter promising repayment after the achievement of independence.

After the dacoities, committed in or near about Calcutta, the police became very active. Somehow they received information that these were committed by the Jugantar party under the leadership of Atul Ghosh. Atul and Satish Chakravarty were then staying in a house at Salkia in district Howrah where an elderly lady called Bara Pishima (elder aunt) was keeping house to give it the appearance of a family. The police surrounded and raided the house; but the revolutionaries were also alert. Atul was not in the house at the time; Satish Chakravarty, Jugal Dutt and another person were there. They escaped, firing volleys of revolver shots; the policemen also fired but did not come too close. These revolutionaries used to keep quantities of potassium cyanide with them; they preferred suicide to falling into the hands of the police. Satish, while running over the raised bank of

a pond, was kicked on the chest by a mounted policeman; he fell down and the revolver in his hand was thrown off by the jerk and was lost in the darkness. He thought he was lost and swallowed the poison that was with him. But as the drug was old and oxidised, he merely became unconscious for some time. Meanwhile, the policeman on horseback had left the dark spot for reasons known only to him. On regaining consciousness, Satish ran away through bushes under cover of darkness. But the poison had a delayed effect and ruined his health for life. A man of robust health, he was since then a permanent victim to various ailments. Yet he was fully active in politics till 1948. For some years he was considered one of the very important organisers of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. He died in 1968 at the age of 77. It is worth noting that even after swallowing that dangerous drug, he led the life of an absconder for six years. He came out of his hiding place only in 1922. Jugál was arrested and convicted for possessing a loaded revolver.

In the meantime, almost all hope of receiving German aid was lost. I have already stated how the *Maverick*, which was expected to carry German arms, was intercepted at Batavia. Even after that, Naren Bhattacharya alias Martin was moving in the Far Eastern countries. He went to China which was then one of the Allied powers fighting on behalf of Great Britain. It was only the pressure of international politics which had forced China to declare war as an ally of Britain; but China's sympathies were definitely for Indian revolutionaries. So, Naren could secure an interview with Dr. Sun Yat Sen who promised him the facility of transit of some arms through the Indo-China border. The Jugantar group were expecting that something might turn up through that source. Jadugopal Mukherjee decided to move to the Assam side. Other leaders of the party also felt that Jadugopal should be sent to some quieter place as Calcutta was becoming too hot for him. The workers of the Jugantar party were particularly anxious for the safety of Jadugopal and Amar Chatterjee. Two other important absconders of the Jugantar party, Atul Ghosh and Satish Chakravarty, were often taking an active interest in the organizational and operational affairs of the party; so it was essential that they remained near about Calcutta. They were mostly at Chandernagar—until the big search in 1917.

Chandernagar, so long a safe refuge for Bengal revolutionaries,



did not remain so safe during the later years of the war. France and Britain were the original members of the Entente Cordiale which formed the core of the Allied Powers. The Chandernagar authorities practically surrendered their sovereign rights to the British as regards the operation and movements of the British Indian police in their hunt for Bengal revolutionaries. There were many hair-breadth escapes from one house in Chandernagar to another. The Gondalpara group of Basanta Banerjee, Naren Banerjee and Srish Ghosh was then working in collaboration with the Prabartak group of Motilal Roy in giving shelter to the absconders. During this period absconders of the Anushilan Samiti also were receiving help from the Prabartak group and some of them were hiding in Chandernagar.

In May 1916, Jadugopal and Nalini Kar moved out of Calcutta. The writer accompanied them from Calcutta to the interior of Assam. They stayed there for some days, waiting at least for some information, if not arms, through the Indo-Chinese border. During these days they went to the house of one Jnan Chandra Dhar, who was practically the leading member of the Sylhet branch of the Jugantar party. A quiet, unassuming person, he was in charge of organizing a revolutionary group in the district. Jnan Dhar was a type by himself. He was a typical secret revolutionary worker.

After staying for some days in Assam, Jadugopal went to Comilla with the writer, the headquarters of Tippera district, where the Barisal group of the party had a fairly good organisation built up by Basanta Mazumdār, a local landlord and subsequently by Deven Chaudhury and Satu Ghosh, both students at Calcutta. Monomohan Chaudhury, a teacher in a local school and an elderly gentleman of a quiet nature, was looking after the organization. Every member, as also Deven and Satu, entertained high regard for him and he was the guide and mentor of the organization.

During the period when Jadugopal was at Comilla, there was a dacoity unfortunately committed by some enthusiasts of the Jugantar party. It was not actually a dacoity; it was locally known as an extortion case. It was arranged that a rich man would pay a certain sum of money which was demanded of him. While agreeing to pay the demanded amount, he had informed the police also. So when some young workers went to the appointed spot to receive the money, they were surrounded by the police. There was an exchange of revol-

ver shots on both sides; some young men were arrested. It was an inappropriate action and was taken against the definite policy which was to keep Comilla and the surrounding areas quiet as long as Jadugopal was there. Tarapada Bhattacharya—a college student and son of a high government officer—was arrested on the spot and was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment. A fine young boy, intelligent and highly efficient, thus had his career spoilt, simply on account of an indiscreet act though done with the best of intentions.

It was considered unsafe to keep Jadugopal there any longer; so they had to make a hurried exit from Comilla. That very night the writer took Jadugopal and Nalini to Barisal. It is not difficult to guess how risky it was for Jadugopal to travel by train and steamer when a police notification was issued all over the country declaring a handsome reward for his arrest. Sometimes he had to disguise himself as a Muslim and sometimes he had to appear as a Hindu. What a life they had to live then! Yet harder times followed. That we shall narrate in the next chapter.

Here I should say something about the misuse of the powers taken over by the Government under the Defence of India Act which was passed in 1915. Where the Government could somehow put up some of the arrested persons on trial, under the D.I. Act, there was no necessity of the jury system and the accused would have no rights to appeal. Certain provisions of the Evidence Act were also dispensed with. Quite a number of persons were hanged by this sort of a summary trial. But another reprehensible feature of this Act was the power of the Government to detain persons without trial. Those who were detained in jail without trial under Regulation III of 1818 had better luck than those detained under the Defence of India Act.

Apart from repressive methods and the Defence of India Act, the Government had to take many tricky methods to fight what they called "terrorism in Bengal". A Home Department note states that the Government tried "getting inside the conspiracy. This entails the employment of agents who are, or have been, themselves terrorists. . . Their (police officers') efforts to stamp out and not only merely check terrorism, was hampered in many ways; not only did they find that their High Court frequently took a more lenient view of terrorist outrages than appeared justified, but they were hampered in their work. . . by periodical jail deliveries of the so-

called political prisoners on such occasions as the Royal visits and announcement of amnesty in 1919." In the case of the Royal Clemency, hardly any political prisoner was released before he had been in detention for four years. That also was considered by the Government a serious handicap to stamp out the movement. So the Government would like to detain a suspect without trial for an indefinite period. This clearly shows the nature of Government then ruling the country.

We have practically come to the end of the episode as far as it unfolded itself within India. A Home-Political Note of 1924, may be of interest to the reader as that will give a clear picture of how the Government viewed this movement. The persons mentioned in the note were mostly of moderate politics; yet they were considered to have generated social forces leading to the revolutionary movement in Bengal.

"The revolutionary movement of Bengal and the cult of the Bomb was not a sensation got up by a handful of uneducated or semi-educated youths. Nor was it a sequel of the Swadeshi movement. Young Bengal, which came into existence since the days of Ram Gopal Ghose, the Brahmo Samaj, which rose immediately after to prominence, Raj Narain Basu's revolutionary ideas, the establishment of the Hindu Mohamela and the National paper, the National Theatre with the staging of patriotic plays, the rise of Hindu revivalists, like Bankim, Bhudev and the consequent establishment of centres of Lathi-play in Hooghly, the revolutionary attempts of Surendranath Banerjee and A. M. Basu and the establishment of Students' Association, and the next work of the Indian Association and the Congress, the revolutionary plans and schemes of Sisir Kumar Ghose and thereafter Vivekananda's aggressive Hinduism, and finally the organisation of parties of Revolutionaries—these were all gradual stages in the development of National life in Bengal. The sudden clash of Western with Bengali culture gave rise to a new resultant culture, of which Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the great apostle. He was an admirer of the French Encyclopaedists and the French Revolution. Politics being a sealed book to Bengal at the time, the revolutionary energies of the Raja found an outlet through religion and society and Brahmoism was established. The influence of the Brahmo Samaj was considerable on the first members of the Bengal

revolutionary organisations. Many of the picked revolutionaries were at the time either Brahmos or under Brahma influence. As a result of Western education, the desire for freedom was awakened in Bengal, as an examination of Bengali literature 40 or 50 years ago will show."

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## Chapter Forty-three

# Last Hopes Dashed

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Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty was arrested at Banaras and brought to Barisal under police escort, to be interned in his parental house in his native village. But he refused to go there, as it was forbidden to a sanyasi to reside in the house of his parents; that was a transgression of the discipline of sanyas. The Government could not compel him to go there, as it would have aroused bitter public criticism and discontent. So he was allowed, pending further orders from the Government, to live under police guard at the Shankar Math which had been founded in 1911-12 by him at Barisal town and which was then, in fact, the centre of the Barisal branch of the Jugantar party. The present writer took Jadugopal and Nalini Kar to Barisal from Comilla. Jadugopal and Nalini were accommodated in the house of a gentleman, Gopal Chandra Das, who was noted as an organiser of nursing bands and who was never known to have taken any interest in politics. For some unknown reason, that gentleman had some affection and admiration for the writer, at whose request he took the risk of giving shelter to these two important absconders. He knew that those two guests of his were proclaimed offenders for whose arrest the Government had

declared handsome rewards; but he was not told their names. Yet he readily agreed to keep them in his house. Such cases were not rare; in fact those young men could function only on the tacit support of the general public.

In complete violation of the conditions of detention imposed on Swamiji and under the very nose of the police guard, Jadugopal met Swamiji every evening in the Shankar Math and discussed future plans of action. It should be stated that of the two young police watchers deputed to keep watch over the visitors and movements of Swamiji, one became very much attached to him and the other also took a somewhat neutral attitude. So, in a way, they were helpful to the revolutionaries and their movements. Surendra Mohan Ghose, the leader of the Mymensingh group of the Jugantar party, was also called there. Swamiji urged that even if German arms did not come, some rising should be organised with whatever arms the revolutionaries had with them or could muster by force from government armouries. A calculation was made of the available arms with the workers of the party in different districts of East Bengal. It was estimated that a small band of about 150 or so could be armed for a rising. It was proposed that they would be properly dressed in military uniform which was thought necessary to give them the prestige of the nation's soldiers and also to impress upon the public that those young men were not dacoits but national soldiers. A batch of about 150 was considered sufficient to attack some government office or installation. They would be armed—some with rifles, some with muskets, some with Mauser pistols and some with revolvers and ordinary pistols.

At this hour, the case of Ireland was in their thoughts. The attempt of the Irish nationalists to get German arms had failed; the ship was intercepted and Sir Roger Casement was arrested in April 1916. (He was executed in August 1916). But this failure did not deter the Irish revolutionaries. The Sinn Fein party organised the rising on Easter Day in April 1916. It was argued that if the Irish could do it, Bengal—or India—also should be able to do it. Swamiji's idea was that the revolutionaries would be failing in their duty to the future generation if they did not utilise the war situation for some sort of an armed rising. The Irish slogan—that Britain's adversity was Ireland's opportunity—was adapted to Indian condi-

tions. It was fully realised that the small band would be completely annihilated in that desperate attempt and that the Jugantar party also might not have any survivors left, but it would go down in history as having done some pioneering work and, as having left an example for the future generation. It was felt that only by such acts of self-immolation on the part of the pioneers could the future generation be inspired to take a bolder step.

Jadugopal agreed to this idea; but he pleaded for some time as he was still expecting some information from Naren Bhattacharya alias Martin. The scheme was discussed for days together in early June. Ultimately, it was decided that they should wait for another three months or so. After this Suren Ghosh went back to Mymensingh and the present writer came to Calcutta. Jadugopal and Nalini Kar remained at Barisal.

Let us now revert to Calcutta, still then the nerve centre of the organisations of both Jugantar and Anushilan.

Two notable murders took place in 1916, both in the city of Calcutta. Sub-inspector Madhusudan Bhattacharya was shot dead in broad daylight at 10 a.m. in January 1916, just opposite the Medical College. Two persons of the Jugantar group, one belonging to Sylhet district and the other to Mymensingh district, accomplished this daring job. They shot him dead on the spot and escaped through the streets of Calcutta. Deven Chaudhury of Sylhet who took the lead in this case was later arrested with a Mauser pistol in his possession. Deven Chaudhury belonged to the Barisal group of the Jugantar party. The other person was Sudhin Bose, just a teenager, belonging to the Mymensingh group of the Jugantar Party. A daring murder like this showed the desperate mood of the revolutionaries and also the tacit support from the public. There was almost public jubilation over every such action of the revolutionaries.

The other murder of the year was that of Basanta Chatterjee, Deputy Superintendent of Police. Basanta Chatterjee had been a target of the revolutionaries for some time. The first attempt was made while he was at Dacca. Thereafter two attempts were made at Calcutta. I have already narrated the bomb attack on him in 1914 at Calcutta when a young man of Noakhali named Nagen Sen Gupta was arrested with injuries. On 30th June, 1916, while Basanta was returning from his office, some young men shot him at point blank range and he fell

dead on the street. His armed orderly was also shot at and wounded. It was evening, but not yet dark. In this case also the assailants escaped. This daring murder was committed by the members of the Dacca Anushilan party; and the earlier two attempts on Basanta were also made by Anushilan. In this murder Atin Roy of Comilla took the lead. The other participants were Suresh Chakravarty, Probodh Basu, Sishir Ghose and Mohini Bhattacharya. It may be mentioned here that Basanta had acquired some notoriety in the revolutionary circles for his over-zealous pursuit of the revolutionaries. This murder was hailed as a real achievement of the revolutionaries.

After this murder the Government became furious and started wholesale arrests of young men. On 1st July, 1916, there were raids on quite a number of houses in Calcutta and in the mofussil. Tegart (later Sir Charles), who was then the D.I.G., I.B., C.I.D., was in fact the moving spirit behind the Government machinery for all the repressive measures. He ordered a complete round up of the suspects. One notable event on 1st July was the arrest of the Sett brothers of Beadon Street, mentioned in an earlier chapter, which evoked serious public criticism. Practically all the male members of the family (11 in number, including some minors) were taken into custody. Naren Sett, an advocate of the Calcutta High Court, Nripen Sett, a doctor, Jatin Sett, A. B. (Harvard), one of the professors appointed to organise the University Science College, Phani Sett, the next younger brother, were all arrested along with their sons and other male members of the family. On that day about 300 young men were arrested all over Calcutta. For the whole of July, every day there were fresh searches and arrests. During these searches, the police parties were usually rude to the inmates of the houses searched; they often insulted the ladies and wantonly destroyed valuable properties.

Arrested young men were kept in police custody for 14 days, with the formality of presenting them every day before a Deputy Commissioner of Police who enjoyed magisterial authority. For these 14 days, they were lodged in some of the police lock-ups at different police stations in Calcutta (including the Lal Bazar lock-up), in the police training college at Dullanda House on Lower Circular Road, in the office of the Special Branch of the Calcutta Police on Kyd Street and in the Intelligence Branch office of Bengal Police on Elysium Row. The Kyd Street house has now been converted into a



guest house of the West Bengal Government. During these 14 days, the worst forms of torture and all manner of third degree methods were practised on the arrested young men; but the worst of them were practised in the Kyd Street Office. Those whom the police considered the most dangerous were kept in the Kyd Street office of the Special Branch of Calcutta Police. Day after day they were subjected to physical tortures; they were often kept standing the whole day and night without being given any opportunity of sitting down, not to speak of sleeping. They were kept on starvation diets with a daily supply of a handful of *murki* (sweetened puffed rice) worth not more than one pice in those days. It was suspected that some drugs were mixed with this *murki* as, instead of being sweet to the taste as *murki* ought to be, it often tasted bitter. Some of the arrested young men had to leave that *murki* untouched. Thus they passed some days without food, without water to drink, without sleep and without even sitting down for a while. Over and above all this, there were interrogations with threats and temptations three or four times every day; and last of all, physical torture of the worst and most cruel nature. Strangely enough, it was Indian policemen who often indulged in vile and indecent abuses, in which generally the European officers did not indulge. The arrested persons were often not even allowed to drink water or to enjoy a bath or a wash. The only opportunity to sit they got was when they were allowed to go to the latrine.

Day after day young men were arrested and many of them were first brought either to the Kyd Street or to the Elysium Row office. They were often beaten with batons; kicks and blows were the usual form of torture. Young men were often stripped naked and inhuman actions were perpetrated on the private parts of their bodies. But more painful were the scenes when almost innocent young men were brought and tortured to disclose some names which they really did not know. The writer was at this time known under a pseudonym in political circles. A young assistant in a shop where the writer and some friends used to meet occasionally to discuss their programme of work was arrested and brought to the Kyd Street office. He had not the slightest idea of who they were and what they were discussing. He might have had a vague idea that those men were political suspects and he knew only one of them by name; he did not know the names

of the others. The writer from his cell would hear the sound of the young man's weeping and crying along with the thundering threats of the police officer demanding information about the writer mentioned under the pseudonym. That young man pleaded his ignorance, which was real, but the police officers would not believe him. It was more painful than the physical sufferings that were then a part of the game.

The months of July, August and September passed in this way. By that time about 1,500 young men were arrested all over Bengal. It was a period of diaspora for both the Jugantar and the Anushilan parties. The workers naturally had to leave the disturbed places and go to far-off places, not for their personal safety, but to wait till an opportunity came to rally again and strike hard. Only some top-level absconders were left alone with hardly any organisation to arrange shelter for them or render them any help. Almost all the links of organization and personal contacts were lost.

As for Anushilan, by the latter part of 1916 practically all the top-rank workers had been arrested, including Amrita Lal Sarkar alias Paresh, Nalini Ghosh (who later escaped from the Dullanda House custody) and others. The first-rank leaders of Anushilan were already in prison, convicted either in the two conspiracy cases at Barisal or in some other case; some were interned or detained under Regulation III of 1818. It was a desperate situation for the remaining absconders. Those of both Anushilan and Jugantar often had to live together and use common shelters. On the Jugantar side Suren Ghosh, Amar Ghosh and many other important workers were arrested between July and December 1916. But several of its top-ranking leaders were absconders, namely Jadugopal Mukherjee, Amar Chatterjee, Atul Ghosh, Satish Chakravarty, Nalini Kar, Manmatha Biswas and Panchugopal Banerjee, each carrying on his head a reward of Rs. 5000/-. Bhupendra Kumar Datta remained almost the sole moving worker to maintain the links and also collect money. For some time he had the assistance of two other colleagues, Charu Ghosh and Kuntal Chakravarty. After a few months, he also was arrested. Kuntal and Charu remained outside up to the beginning of 1918. Another important worker, Jiban Lal Chatterjee, was also arrested about the end of 1916.

In December 1917 a leaflet was circulated by the Jugantar group,

then headed by Kuntal Chakravarty, on the eve of the visit to India of Montagu, Secretary of State for India in the British Cabinet. We reproduce below the three paragraphs of that leaflet as quoted in the Sedition (Rowlatt) Committee report:

What then must we do. Our duty is plain. We have no concern in Mr. Montagu's coming or going. He is coming in peace, he may depart in peace for aught we know or care.

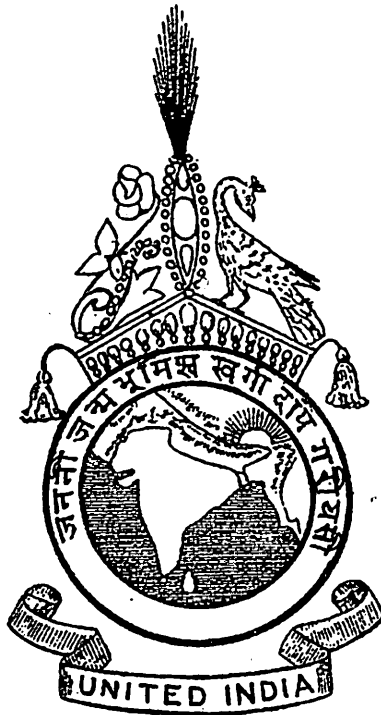
But first and last, spread terror. Make this unholy Government impossible. Hide like invisible shadows of doom and rain death upon the alien bureaucracy. Remember your brothers who are perishing in jails and rotting in swamps. Remember those who have died or have gone mad. Remember, watch and work.

We ask you once more, brothers in the name of God and country and all, young or old, rich or poor, Hindus and Mahomedans, Buddhists and Christians, join this war of Indian Independence and pour forth your blood and treasure. Hark, the Mother calls and shows the way—NANYA PANTHA VIDYATE AYNYA (The only way and no other).

By order of the Executive,  
INDIAN REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE.

\*Kuntal Chakravarty was about the last important worker of Jugantar not yet arrested. The above-quoted leaflet had also the stamp of a seal which was supposed to be the seal of the revolutionary government expected to be established after the revolution. That seal is reproduced in the following page.

Before concluding this chapter, I should say a few words about the hard life of the absconders. Swami Prajnanananda could not remain for long in Barisal town; the Government ordered his internment at P.S. Galachipa (Dt. Barisal). Subsequently he was transferred to Mahisadal (Dt. Midnapur). Galachipa is in the estuary region near the Sunderbans. Before his transfer from Barisal, Jadugopal and Nalini left for Mymensingh. In July and August 1916, no place could be considered safe for them as almost every day some arrests and searches were taking place. So after a



Seal of the Indian Revolutionary Committee

short time Jadugopal and Nalini with some young workers of Mymensingh went out for an indefinite destination. Jadugopal and Nalini subsequently reached Assam and settled at Dhubri as hotel-keepers. They stayed there for some months. Then they went to Chandernagar to observe and examine the situation in Bengal. This was some time before the great raid on Chandernagar by the Bengal Police. Chandernagar was then a haven for revolutionary absconders, of both Anushilan and Jugantar. Practically all political activities had stopped; the only concern was to save the absconders. One prominent man of Chandernagar gave shelter to the absconders practically from a mercenary motive; a large amount of money was being charged for each of them. Anushilan absconders had to pay him handsomely; they still had some money and armaments with them. The Jugantar absconders did not like this; nor had they such financial solvency.

Moreover, they had an alternative source of help in the Gondalpara group, which had all along worked as a unit of Jugantar, on whom they could depend. Srish Ghose and Basanta Banerjee, two important members of that group, had by then been arrested; but Naren Banerjee was still there to help them.

It was a state of dispersal of the party organisations—both for Jugantar and Anushilan. So Jadugopal, Satish, Amar Chatterjee, Atul and others of Jugantar and Nalini Ghose (after his escape from the police lock-up at Dulunda House), Prabhas Lahiri, Amrita Sarkar and others of Anushilan took shelter in different houses at Chandernagar about the beginning of 1917. Of course, they had to find different houses. But after some time Chandernagar became unsafe; this suspicion was confirmed by the brisk movements of the British police in plain clothes. It was decided that all except Atul would leave Chandernagar.

At this stage Nalini Ghose took charge of Amar Chatterjee and along with Prabhas and some others moved to Gauhati in Assam and took shelter in different houses there. An elderly lady—generally known as Baro Pishima (elder aunt)—who used to live with Amar Chatterjee at Chandernagar, with a minor grandchild and who gave shelter to other Jugantar absconders in Salkia (Howrah) and several other places in and around Calcutta accompanied the absconders to Gauhati; this was necessary to give that shelter the appearance of a family establishment. But no safety was possible for them at any place for long. Their unusual movements, aloofness from neighbours, lack of any apparent occupation etc. roused the suspicion of the people. One day a police raid was apprehended in the night. The main difficulty was with Amar Chatterjee, because of his tall, fair and robust appearance and also the large reward proclaimed for his capture. While discussing the future programme and possible shelter, a suggestion was even made to him that he be killed. But he asked his companions not to worry about him, and assured them that he would make his own arrangement. He asked them, if they could spare him some money. Nalini Ghose gave him Rs. 100/-, a fairly big sum for them to spare at that time.

Amar Chatterjee left for an unknown destination. Travelling through North Bengal, Bihar and U.P., he ultimately reached Punjab and stayed as a *sadhu* near Amritsar. During the Martial Law regime

(April-May, 1919) he was there. Then he felt Punjab would no longer be safe for him and again started out on a wandering life. He stayed for some time in Kutch, and then, passing through Gujarat, he reached Poona. He was then on a lecturing tour as a Sikh *sadhu*. His speeches were fairly appreciated and reported in the papers. Ultimately he settled in an *asram* in a small town near Madras. From that Asram, he once went to Pondicherry and met Aurobindo who was not a little amused to find that Amar was the Sikh *sadhu*. In 1921, when the warrant was withdrawn, he came out of his seclusion in Madras.

Being hunted out of Chandernagar, Jadugopal and Nalini Kar again went to Dhubri (Assam) to run the hotel there. But as they found everything had been so queered that it was no longer possible for them to live there, they left Dhubri after some time. This was the beginning of a long sojourn incognito in different places. Jadugopal and Nalini Kar stayed together; Jadugopal, a senior medical student, posed as a Muslim medical practitioner and Nalini often acted as his compounder. They remained in some Muslim-majority villages in Bihar on the Bengal-Bihar border for some time. Jadugopal was an efficient medical practitioner. In every place he soon attracted notice as a good doctor. Even high officials consulted him. This reputation roused the curiosity of the people about his antecedents and family and made his continued stay in one place insecure. So they had to change their place of domicile, occupation and names several times. In some place, Jadugopal would practise as an allopath doctor, and in some other place, he posed as a *Haqim*—a Muslim medico; often they would act as salesmen or traders. Thus Jadugopal, Nalini and Manmatha Biswas lived underground till the second quarter of 1921.

Leaving Chandernagar, Satish Chakravarty also led an arduous and nomadic life. He went on a long journey, halting at different places. He had hardly any money with him. From Chandernagar, Satish and Panchugopal (another absconder for whose arrest also a reward was declared) had their first rest and halt in a village in Rangpur district. An old acquaintance of Satish gave them shelter. Panchugopal stayed there but Satish went to Jalpaiguri according to the instruction of his friend of Rangpur. Ultimately he reached a village in the interior of Jalpaiguri in the forest of the Duars near the

Bhutan border. That village was almost outside the pale of civilisation. Throughout 1921 and 1922, notices were being regularly published in all the Bengal papers that the warrants of arrest against those six absconders had been withdrawn; it took Satish nearly two years to get that information and he came out only by the end of 1922.

On 7th January, 1918, Nalini Ghose, Prabhas Lahiri and some other absconders had a skirmish with the police and somehow succeeded in escaping from the house at Gauhati. Other colleagues sheltering in another house also left that house with the police party still pursuing them. After Amar Chatterjee had left, there were still seven or eight absconders all belonging to Anushilan. Police surrounded them on three sides near a hillock called Nabagraha. Nalini Ghose, who was the leader of the batch, decided to guard the passage on the fourth side so that others might escape. On the 8th night there was a fight with the police party. Nalini Ghose asked his friends to escape while he alone would be guarding the passage but the others would not agree to leave him alone. Some of them wanted to give a straight fight to the police. But Nalini Ghose reasoned with them that it would be better to escape and to work for the cause; so they decided to get out of the police cordon. There was a marshy patch, covered with shallow water, which had to be crossed. It afforded opportunities as well as difficulties. However, in the course of the fight on 9th January, Naren Banerjee and Taraprasanna De were arrested while trying to cross the marsh. Nalini Ghose was arrested at the foot of the hillock, wounded and with a revolver in his hand. Prabhas Lahiri was arrested a few miles off, at Kamakshya, a place of pilgrimage, in a rather seriously wounded condition.

Prabodh Biswas, Nalini Bagchi and others succeeded in escaping. Nalini Bagchi met a heroic death in a subsequent encounter at Kaltabazar near Dacca. Tarini Mazumdar and Nalini Bagchi were surrounded by the police. Tarini died fighting; Nalini was arrested in a seriously wounded condition. When the police wanted to get a statement from him, he sternly told them, "Don't disturb me; let me die in peace." This was perhaps one of the last flashes of the fire that was kindled in Bengal in that period.

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## Chapter Forty-four

# Formation of the Berlin Committee

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We have carried the story almost to the end of the first phase of the revolutionary movement in India. But it will be incomplete without an account of the events abroad during the First World War. About the happenings in Bengal and to some extent about those in other parts of India, the writer has the advantage of some direct or indirect personal knowledge and memory either of his own or of some colleagues and friends. But on what took place abroad he has no such advantage. He will have to depend here mostly on what he could gather from the biographies and memoirs of different persons working abroad. But these versions are sometimes conflicting and, as such, do not provide a very sure guide. He also had to collect facts from the records in the National Archives at Delhi; he has depended considerably on these papers. He has also taken advantage of some books recently published—though, to him, these have appeared to be just an attempt to study an intricate chapter of Indian's history. These incidents took place in the U.S.A., Canada, Mexico, Germany, Turkey, the Mesopotamia of those days, Persia, Afghanistan, the tribal regions between Afghanistan and India and also in the Far East starting from Burma, Siam, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Hongkong,



Japan, Shanghai and other ports of China and in the Indo-Chinese borders on Assam and Burma sides. It has been a really difficult task to collect and collate data and secure materials from so many different places.

In earlier chapters I have referred to the Indo-German conspiracy. I have also mentioned that a large number of Indian students went abroad ostensibly for studies and some of them were there to study textile technology and industrial chemistry. Textile study was favoured as a step towards discarding British cloth and the study of chemistry was encouraged as it would provide the know-how of bomb-making. Some went with prior political initiation and revolutionary inclinations; some others only to escape persecution here. But all these young men cherished the secret ambition of soon becoming citizens of an independent India. Quite a good number of them, after going abroad, received some sort of political initiation and training through the India House in London and later through the centre of Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama in Paris when they had moved there from London. The group of Madame Cama and Krishnavarma was gradually increasing in numerical strength. The Savarkar brothers and Viren Chattopadhyaya were perhaps the earliest recruits of this centre. Members of this group resided at this time in different countries of Western Europe as well as in Britain. In the United States and in Canada there were some groups operating for some time with a definite political purpose. We have already mentioned the Jugantar Ashram of Lala Hardayal. Bhupen Dutt, Tarak Das, Heramba Lal Gupta, Adhar Laskar and later Jiten Lahiri, Satyen Sen and other young men from Bengal went to America not only as students but also as members of a revolutionary party—viz. the Jugantar party. Perhaps Tarak Das was the earliest Indian to migrate to the U.S.A. as an avowed revolutionary. He went there by the end of 1906 under a false name. Sarangdhar Das of Orissa was also there, taking active interest in revolutionary activities in U.S.A. In fact, Jugantar at this period encouraged these young men to go abroad. Others who went abroad for a general study of politics and sociology included Benoy Sarkar, later a famous professor. Efforts, particularly of Satish Mukherjee of the Dawn Society, Aurobindo's National Council of Education and Shiva Prasad Gupta of Banaras also created an urge for young men to go

out. Shīva Prasad, now almost a forgotten man, was in his younger days associated with the Dawn Society. He took an interest in everything connected with the nationalist movement. He donated large sums of money for this purpose. In a previous chapter, I have referred to the efforts of the Association for the Cultivation of Science and also of the National Council of Education.

Immediately after the outbreak of the First World War, Indian young men abroad began to feel that something had to be done by taking advantage of the war situation. Those young men who went for higher studies and whose future careers depended on getting some degrees from foreign universities, decided to leave their studies, if necessary, and join a liberation movement abroad. On this work, young men of all the provinces were almost unanimous. Madras, Maharashtra, Punjab and Bengal, of course, were prominent in this matter. The first approach was by Indian revolutionaries in America through the German Embassy there. Indian revolutionaries including the Ghadr Party members frequently published periodicals and leaflets most of which were highly seditious and contained words and ideas directly inciting disaffection towards the British Government in India. Tarak Das published a paper, *Free Hindustan* containing highly seditious matters. Then he started a secret *samiti* with contacts with the *samitis* in Bengal. Among the members we find the name of Surendra Nath Bose, Sarangadhar Das, G. D. Kumar and also some Americans. He was often invited by the Ghadr party to San Francisco to speak to the members of the Ghadr. All this happened before the beginning of the First World War. Tarak was so active in the U.S.A. that it is difficult to find all the details. He settled at Seattle (Washington) in 1909 and published a monthly journal *Free India* in collaboration with Sudhindra Nath Bose—a revolutionary exile. G. D. Kumar also came to Seattle in 1911 and worked in co-operation with Tarak Nath Das. Tarak Nath Das was able to secure the support of Freeman—the leader of the Gaelic Group of Irish emigrants. *Gaelic American* the organ of the Gaelic group in the U.S.A., extended full support to the nationalist aspirations of Indians. The Ghadr group published several journals like *Ghadr di Gunj*, *Ghadr Sandesh*, *Ghadr di Karak* etc. All these created a general pro-Indian feeling in the U.S.A. It should be remembered that the U.S.A. remained neutral in that war for nearly

three years. It was easy, therefore, for the Indian students there to contact the German Embassy and start negotiations through the German Embassy at Washington. Tarak Nath Das remained active throughout. Bhupendra Nath Dutta was still a student there preparing for his doctorate. He was, however, quite active in contacting the German Embassy. Lala Hardayal had by then become a scientific anarchist. Preaching anarchism was against the laws of the U.S.A. He founded the Bakunin Institute for preaching anarchism. The U.S.A. authorities did not object to his anti-British propaganda; but they did not tolerate his anarchist propaganda. He was arrested in March 1914 and released on bail on the same day. Then he escaped to Switzerland in April 1914. After the outbreak of the War, he was contacted by Viren to join the Berlin Committee.

Young Indians residing in the U.S.A. made an offer to the German Embassy to send Indian volunteers recruited in the U.S.A. to fight along with the Germans in Europe. Bhupen Dutta and Kahan-chand Varma of Punjab were among those who made the offer. The proposal was sent to the Ghadr group in America. But under the leadership of Pandit Ram Chandra Bhardwaj of Peshawar they objected to this. They emphasised the futility of sending Indian volunteers to Europe to fight on behalf of Germany; instead, they suggested that Indian students should now go back to India and organise a rising there. Accordingly the idea of sending Indian volunteers to the European front was abandoned. Indian young men in the U.S.A. at this juncture were waiting for something to happen in Europe. Indian students in Europe took up the work of contacting the German Foreign Office and they soon succeeded in that. Dr. Abinash Bhattacharya, and Dhiren Sarkar, younger brother of Benoy Sarkar, were then students in Germany. Having established contact with the German Foreign Office, they called Viren Chattopadhyaya to Berlin. After his deportation as an anarchist from the U.S.A., Hardayal had settled in Switzerland and had started the Yugantar Ashram at Geneva. He later felt he had no right to start an institution under that name as he was now a believer in scientific anarchism. Thereupon he closed it down and wanted to settle in Constantinople; from there Chattopadhyaya, after a great effort, persuaded him to join the Berlin Committee which Abinash Bhattacharya, Chattopadhyaya, Champakaraman Pillai and others had already started.

When the Berlin Committee was feeling the necessity of keeping intimate contact with the Indian revolutionaries in the U.S.A.—including the Ghadr workers—Dhiren Sarkar and Heramba Lal Gupta were sent to the U.S.A. from Germany with the news of the promised German aid and an invitation for some of the Indian revolutionaries to go to Europe. Accordingly, Jiten Lahiri and Narayan Marathe went to Italy; from there they went to Switzerland. Hardikar, who later on became the organiser of the Congress Volunteer Corps, was also in this group in the U.S.A. Dhiren and Heramba remained in the U.S.A. for some time. They along with Dr. Chandra Kanta Chakravarty and Hemendra Kishore Rakshit Roy were working in the U.S.A. as representatives of the Berlin Committee. It is reported that Heramba Lal Gupta acted for some time as an agent of Germany for organising Indian students in America and, through them, an armed rising in India. But after some months, he left America for Europe and subsequently for the Far East. On his departure, Chandra Chakravarty took up this charge.

In the meantime some Indian students were asked to return to India even without completing their academic course. They were deputed to carry important information and instructions to India. Pingley, a Maharastrian and Satyen Sen, a Bengali, came back together in November 1914 and Jiten Lahiri returned in March 1915. Narayan Marathe also returned; but as soon as he landed at Calcutta he was arrested. In fact these four may be called the first to bring the news of German aid to the Indian revolutionaries. Prior to their departure for the U.S.A. for study, Satyen Sen and Jiten Lahiri were members of the Jugantar party, and on their return they delivered the message to the leaders of the party. Pingley stopped for some time in Calcutta and then was asked to go to Punjab to work with Rashbehari Bose. We have already narrated the heroic part played by Pingley, for which he was condemned to death in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. It was then that hundreds of Punjabi settlers in Canada and the U.S.A. returned to India.

Pandit Keshab Dev Shastri, Kahanchand Verma, Barkatullah and Bhupendranath Dutt were other important revolutionary workers in the United States at the time. Within a short time, they all migrated to Europe. It should be realised that for Indian students sea travel during the War was very difficult. Britain and accordingly her Allies

in the War, i.e. France, Italy etc., were unsafe for them. To Germany and her allies, they were alien citizens entering belligerent countries. So Switzerland, a neutral country, was considered the safest place for them. Italy was safer to land in than France. They decided, therefore, to pass through Italy to Switzerland. It should be remembered that the U.S.A. was a neutral power till April 1917. With her liberal civil rights and traditions of democracy, it was much easier for the Indian revolutionaries to operate there and arrange things with the help of and in consultation with German diplomatic officers in the U.S.A. Frequently, the Indian revolutionary students had to cross the Atlantic from America to Europe and vice versa.

In Europe, Indian young men had already taken some steps to get German aid. Most of them had at some time or other come under the influence of the Paris centre of Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Cama. In fact, Viren and Acharya were frequent contributors to *Vanguard*, the organ of Madame Cama; Viren was almost a co-founder of the paper with Madame Cama. But after the outbreak of the War, they found it difficult to stay on in Paris. So Shyamji Krishnavarma migrated to Switzerland and stayed at Lausanne. Madame Cama was arrested and detained by the French Government. Although she was released after a good deal of agitation by French public men and socialists, she had hardly any freedom of movement. The German Embassies at Zurich and Washington became the main transmitting centres for all negotiations of the Indian revolutionaries. Originally the arrangement was that Heramba Lal Gupta, Dharendra Sarkar and Chandra Chakravarty would be treated by the German Embassy at Washington as representatives of the Berlin Committee in the U.S.A. Heramba and Dharendra left for Europe; so Chandra alone was there. Zimmerman of the Berlin Foreign Office wrote a letter to the German Ambassador in Washington on 4th February 1916 asking the Ambassador to negotiate with Dr. Chandra Chakravarty on all Indian affairs. There were, besides, Muslim workers who had been active from before.

Indians in Europe and America realised that an opportunity had come for India, which they must not miss. Switzerland was a neutral country. As I have just stated, Shyamji Krishnavarma had already moved there when France appeared rather unfriendly to him and his group. He was then about 58 years old; by now he had

lost most of his earlier energy and could not take any significant part at that crucial moment. We should not be uncharitable to him for this nor should we forget the immense contribution made by him earlier. Madame Cama also could not take any part in the war period, as she was detained by the French Government. Younger Indians took up the work and contacted the German Embassy at Zurich. Champakaraman Pillai was prominent in this effort. A society was formed in September 1914 under the name of International Pro-Indian Committee with Zurich as its headquarters and Pillai as its President. That this Committee was formed almost immediately after the declaration of War indicates the foresight and the impatient urge of the Indian revolutionaries to take advantage of the new situation created by the War.

It was soon recognised that they must have their centre at Berlin. Pillai moved to Berlin in October 1914. Viren Chattopadhyaya had gone there earlier and had established contact with the German Foreign Office. Chattopadhyaya was the real moving figure in this. In fact "Chatto" became the password for Indian revolutionaries in Europe. Lala Hardayal, Jiten Lahiri and Marathe had also come to Switzerland from the U.S.A. Viren had brought Hardayal from Constantinople to Berlin and persuaded him to join the movement. The German Ambassador at Zurich helped Jiten and Marathe to go over to Germany. A committee was formed in Berlin about October 1914 under the direct supervision and guidance of the German Foreign office. This was subsequently known as the Berlin Committee. Presumably the International Pro-Indian Committee of Champakaraman Pillai ultimately merged with the Berlin Committee which continued as the guiding and controlling institution for all pro-India revolutionary activities in Europe. Pillai had an important position in the Berlin Committee.

Wise and sober men might have scorned these attempts and laughed at the idea of forming a sort of alliance with Germany. But it should be realised that, for the first time, India was being given a distinct place in an international war and was recognised as a potential ally by one group of belligerent powers. It should be mentioned here that from the Indian side one of the basic conditions was that no German army but only arms, ammunition and money would be sent to India. Germany was undoubtedly motivated by her own interest—

that of harming Britain; but being fully conscious of that and entertaining no illusions about the aims of Germany, Indian young men tried to set afoot a liberation movement within the country. To be sure, they did not ask for any German soldiers to be sent to India. The rising there would be a sort of a popular rising with German arms. Even then, Hardayal was often indiscreet enough to be outspoken about the aims and intentions of Germany; and he was detained in Germany for some time. There was nothing immoral and impolitic in trying to get German aid for India's liberation. Britain was not India's friend nor was she fighting for any noble cause.

Another body was formed in the U.S.A. with the active help of the German Embassy at Washington. It was known as the Indian Independence Committee of which Heramba Lal Gupta, Dr. Chandra Chakravarty and Dharendra Nath Sarkar were members. It is rather difficult at this distance of time to describe very accurately the origin and the initial workings of the Indian Independence Committee. Its first president was one Dr. Habib Mansur. It may be said that the Committee had within its orbit Indians of all the provinces and of all religions. Among the important members and workers were Dhirendra Sarkar, Hormusji Kerseps Dadachanji (son of the Dewan of Baroda), Dr. Paranjpe (later he settled as a doctor at Poona), Dr. Suktankar Joshi (a student of higher printing), Dr. Jnanendra Nath Das Gupta (a science student), Dr. Tarak Nath Das, Dr. Abinash Bhattacharya (of Bramhanbaria, a scientist), Viren Chattopadhyaya (brother of Sarojini Naidu, reported to have been subsequently liquidated in the USSR by the Stalin regime after the Second World War), Champakaraman Pillai and Padmanabha Pillai of Kerala, Mansur Ahmed, Dr. Siddiqui, Narayan Marathe and others. Champakaraman Pillai was previously in Zurich, where he had already contacted the German Embassy. In October 1914, he left Zurich for Berlin to work in the Berlin Committee—or the Indian Independence Committee—under the direct supervision of the German Foreign Office. I have already mentioned the names of Heramba Lal Gupta and Barkatullah. Heramba was the son of Umesh Lal Gupta Vidyaratna, a noted scholar of ancient Indian civilisation. Bhupendranath Dutt was then in the U.S.A.; he came to Europe by about the middle of 1915. Immediately on their arrival in Europe, all of them joined the Berlin Committee. It should be stated here

that during this period several committees were set up in Europe and America with common members, though some of them might not be physically present in the relevant country at the relevant time.

The Committee authorised Viren Chattopadhyaya and Bhupen Dutt to draw up a constitution, which was framed and adopted. Viren was made the Secretary of the Committee with Pillai as its President. The real work also had started by that time. According to the terms of the agreement signed between Germany and the Berlin Committee, Germany was to give training to Indian young men. Some of them were allowed to attend the German explosives factory near Berlin. They were given training for making different varieties of bombs, e.g., hand bomb, time bomb, hand grenade, land mine etc. There were quite a fair number of scientists among them; so they easily mastered the science of preparing bombs. Surendra Nath Bose of Mymensingh whom we have seen working in the U.S.A. even before the War was particularly important among them; from Paris he taught bomb-making through correspondence to Harnam Singh of California. Another important work was to form an Indian Liberation Army by seducing the Indian war prisoners. The third item was the writing of anti-British tracts, pamphlets and books for Indians in India and abroad. The fourth and perhaps the most important item was sending emissaries to India with the message of German aid so that there might be adequate organization in India to receive and make proper use of the arms and money to be sent by Germany.

On the eve of the formation of the Berlin Committee in September 1914, Viren Chattopadhyaya and Dr. Abinash Bhattacharya went to Berlin where they met Baron Von Oppenheim. They had some discussion with Oppenheim and according to his desire Chattopadhyaya framed the terms of the Indian revolutionaries for the acceptance of the German Government. The terms\* were:

- (1) In order to generate and guide revolution in India we require money, arms and, if necessary, some expert army officers or generals.

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\* Translated from Dr. Abinash Bhattacharya's book in Bengali, *India's Efforts in Europe for a Revolution*.



- (2) The German Government should immediately make arrangement to send our colleagues to India. (To organise revolt there).
- (3) Arrangements should be made in Spandau or in some other military explosive factory for training of young Indians.
- (4) Our young men should be given training in Kiel, Bremen Lubeck or any other marine factories for manufacture and use of sea-mines.
- (5) Leaflets, pamphlets, statements in Indian languages should be printed in Government printing establishments.
- (6) If possible some aeroplanes should be sent to India to distribute these leaflets and statements.
- (7) Somehow, ammunition, arms and other military equipments should be delivered on some Indian coast.
- (8) Indian currency notes of Rs. 10/- should be printed here.
- (9) According to our choice, an Indo-German Committee should be set up here to guide revolutionary work in India.
- (10) If our revolution become successful, we shall establish a socialist republic in India; Austro-German powers should not put any handicap to that.
- (11) In India there are many powerful Princes; if any of them tries to set up any sort of kingdom within their jurisdiction or in any part of India, the Austro-German powers must not help them; rather they must help us to establish republican government.
- (12) If our revolution fails for some reason and if the revolutionaries come and seek asylum, the Austro-German powers must make every effort to bring them here and give them protection and asylum.
- (13) If Great Britain, France or any of the Allied powers demand the repatriation of Indian revolutionaries and nationalists on the plea of their being robbers, murderers, dacoits, thieves etc. then the Austro-German power will refuse such demands. The Government of France in 1910 handed over Savarkar to the British on the plea of being a murderer; the Austro-German powers must not do anything like that.
- (14) If any participant in the revolution or anyone else, who, because of some political reason or detention or some other

reason, has not been able to join the revolution, seeks protection and asylum with the Austro-German powers on the failure of revolution, then the Austro-German powers must give them protection unconditionally.

- (15) If the children or widows of any revolutionaries killed in the revolution seek asylum in German, the Austro-German powers will be bound legally and morally to give them asylum there.

The Baron read the terms and gave solemn assurance that the German Government would abide by the terms unless any one of these fell beyond their power, particularly on two points: (1) the Indian revolutionaries should not at this stage insist on any firm commitment from Germany regarding Austria, (2) they should again think over the proposal of printing Indian Government's currency papers in Germany as, in case of failure, this might create difficulties for the Indian citizens having those currency papers. The Indian representative realised the cogency of these points and did not insist on faked currency papers being circulated in India. It should be noted in this connection that there was no mention of any German army being sent to India; the request was only for money, arms and ammunition and, if necessary, for some expert generals. It has also to be noted that in item 10 of the terms, mention was made of a socialist republic and that this was at least three years before the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

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## Chapter Forty-five

# In the United States of America

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The United States of America was noted for her love of freedom and thus attracted a large number of Indian revolutionaries as early as the first decade of this century. The story of the American War of Independence and the biographies of Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Booker T. Washington etc. were favourite reading of all the revolutionaries in Bengal. That is why young men like Tarak Nath Das, Bhupendra Nath Dutt, Jiten Lahiri, Satyen Sen, Lala Hardayal, Surendra Nath Kar, Heramba Lal Gupta and many others went there long before the beginning of the First World War. Some others, of course, went during the War. I should say a few words about Kar, who had come in contact with Jugantar. He joined the Prem Mahavidyalaya of Mahendra Pratap in Vrindaban as a teacher. From there, he went to the U.S.A. apparently for studies, but actually for revolutionary work. He was a T.B. patient whose one lung was neutralised and he had to manage with only one lung. Yet he did not spare himself any hard work. After the War, he died in the USA of tuberculosis.

Most of the Bengali students in the U.S.A. had some previous revolutionary connection and some were sent there by the Jugantar

group. Hardayal, a determined rebel against the British rule in India, went to San Francisco in 1911. On 1st November, 1913, he started the newspaper, *Ghadr*. The Rowlatt Committee said about him, "This man arrived with passionate Anglophobia and determined to inspire with his own spirit as many as possible of his countrymen." He also started the Jugantar Asram and a press called the Jugantar Press in 1914\*. He gave this name to these institutions because of his early contact with Jatin Banerjee—one of the founders of the Jugantar party in Bengal. Tarak Nath Das was the earliest Indian revolutionary to migrate to the U.S.A. He went there in 1906. Hardayal and the Ghadr partymen often invited Tarak to address them. Two other names deserve mention—those of Bhai Paramananda and G. D. Kumar. Paramananda had been in Europe in 1907-08, and took interest in revolutionary politics even then. On return to India, he was convicted for sedition. After his release, he went to America and was one of the earliest and most enthusiastic supporters of Hardayal. He was an active member of the Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast which had its branches in a number of places—e.g., Portland, Astoria, St. John, Sacramento etc., all in the U.S.A.

G. D. Kumar (Guru Dutta Kumar) was a native of Bannu in the Frontier Provinces. For some time he was a teacher of Urdu and Hindi in the National College at Calcutta, set up by the nationalists in 1906. Then he migrated to America in 1907. Kumar all through rendered important service to the cause. During the formative period, his help was requisitioned by Hardayal, Tarak Nath Das and others. The Ghadr party was actually formed in 1913. The Hindu Association of the Pacific Coast was the precursor of the Ghadr party. It was formed with Bhai Sohan Singh Bhakna as its President and Hardayal as its General Secretary. In the first meeting Hardayal told the members that Germany would soon be going to war against Britain and asked them to be ready to take advantage of the situation. Indian revolutionaries published a number of journals, periodicals and leaflets openly preaching revolution in India. G. D. Kumar published

\* I have used the spelling 'Jugantar' as used by Hardayal in naming these two institutions, though the correct transliteration of the Bengali word is 'Yugantar' meaning the end of an era. Similarly, I have spelt the party name as 'Ghadr', as used in the Rowlatt Committee Report, though 'Ghadar' is now used by some writers.

*Swadeshi Sevak* in 1907-08, in which were reproduced articles from *Bande Mataram* of Aurobindo, *Indian Sociologist* of Shyamji Krishnavarma and other journals. We have already referred to *Free Hindustan* of Tarak Das who started several other papers and several associations with the sole object of fostering revolution in India.

Tarak Nath Das was intimately associated with the Ghadr organisation from the beginning. Bhai Paramananda was also there though he did not join the Jugantar Ashram. As early as 1908 Tarak Nath Das was the founder-editor of *Free Hindustan* published from New York. The Central Intelligence of the Government of India compared this paper with the *Indian Sociologist* of Shyamji Krishnavarma. Pandurang Khankhoje was another revolutionary worker from the Vidarbha region of the present state of Maharashtra; he also took a very prominent part in revolutionary work during the First World War.

Immediately after the beginning of the First World War, all these revolutionaries felt that something must be done. But what.? None could say precisely. At this time there were two Indian organisations in the U.S.A.—the Indian Independence League and the Ghadr Party. Both these felt the necessity of having a common programme and a common organization. In the meantime the Berlin Committee was formed in Germany and the Indian revolutionaries in the U.S.A. also developed contact with the German Embassy at Washington, which nominated two Indians—Hemendra Rakshit Roy and Chandra Kanta Chakravarty—as their advisers on Indian affairs. When the Berlin Committee felt difficulty in having effective liaison with the revolutionary group in the U.S.A., they sent Heramba Lal Gupta as their representative there. Jiten Lahiri and some others left for Europe. Satyen Sen and Pingley left for India with intimation of German help and with necessary instructions. Pandurang Khankhoje and Agashe, another Maharastrian, left the U.S.A. for the Middle East. Chandra Kanta Chakravarty was a medical student and somehow got himself into a leading position in the organization there. His subsequent career was most dishonourable.

For about three years of the War, the U.S.A. was a neutral country; she declared war against Germany on April 6, 1917. Till then, it was relatively easy for the German diplomatic officials in the U.S.A. to help Indian revolutionaries. The German Embassy be-

came a sort of clearing house for transactions with the Indian revolutionaries. As I have stated before, the despatch of arms to India was also to be managed from the U.S.A. through the German Embassy. From the U.S.A., contacts were maintained both with the Berlin Committee and the Indian revolutionary centres in the Far East. But it was arranged that activities in the U.S.A. would be supervised by the Berlin Committee; with that purpose, Chandra Kanta Chakravarty was asked by the Berlin Committee to report on the different units of Indian revolutionaries in the U.S.A. He was then in New York and went to San Francisco to study the situation of the Ghadr party there. For some days, he stayed in the Jugantar Asram of the Ghadr party and discussed the future programme with Pandit Ram Chandra and other workers there. By that time Hardayal had had a change of mind and was veering toward philosophical anarchism. He went to Europe and, while leaving the U.S.A. for Europe, nominated Pandit Ram Chandra Bhardwaj of the North-West Frontier Province as the leader of the Ghadr organisation at San Francisco. Ramchandra, who escaped from India in 1911, had first gone to Japan and later to the U.S.A.

Chandra Chakravarty was originally sent to the U.S.A. by Abinash Chakravarty and Kiran Mukherjee of the Jugantar group and had some prior contact with revolutionary activities in India. He settled in New York as a medical practitioner. An intelligent and resourceful man, he somehow managed to gain the confidence of the leaders of the Berlin Committee (more formally speaking, the Indian Independence Committee). After having discussions at San Francisco, he went to Germany to submit his report to the Berlin Committee. After some time he came back with full authority to negotiate with the German Ambassador at Washington. In February 1916, Zimmerman of the German Foreign Office wrote to the German Ambassador at Washington, "In future all Indian affairs are to be handled by the Committee to be formed by Dr. Chakravarty. Biren Sarkar and Heramba Lal Gupta thus cease to be independent representatives of the Indian Independence Committee."\* This is the beginning of a sordid chapter in this exciting story. It is reported that Chandra Chakravarty took \$ 60,000 from the German Embassy

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\* It should be noted that Heramba had already left for Europe and Japan; Dhire also had left the U.S.A.

and then suddenly disappeared. It is difficult now to verify every detail of the allegations levelled against him. But, on the whole, it can be said that he was conspicuous by his subsequent inactivity and he lost the confidence of other Indians then working in the freedom movement. It should also be mentioned that Biren Sarkar, as mentioned in Zimmerman's letter, was really Dhiren Sarkar, brother of Professor Benoy Sarkar.

Then came another man, Harish Chandra. He was the son of Lala Munshiram, later on Swami Shradhananda, the famous Arya Samaj leader. Harish Chandra was educated in the Gurukul at Hardwar, the Arya Samaj educational centre. He went to Europe in 1914 as the Secretary of Raja Mahendra Pratap. On reaching Europe, he disclosed his true nature of an unscrupulous adventurer. He was extremely intelligent and could ingratiate himself with anyone if he felt it was to his advantage. But that game could not continue for long. Having played himself out with the Berlin Committee, he came to the U.S.A. in search of a virgin field. After some time, he disappeared with some money. The subsequent career of Chandra Chakravarty is known; he returned and settled in India. But nothing is known of Harish Chandra's career thereafter. Son of a good and noble father, he led financially, politically and also morally an ignoble life.

But these two men were lone exceptions. Otherwise the group in the U.S.A. was composed of brilliant, patriotic young men ready to undertake any risk for the cause of their country's freedom. Within a few months after the beginning of the War, the U.S. Government arrested some Indian young men for their attempt to violate the neutrality of the U.S.A. Lala Hardayal was arrested; but he was released on bail and, jumping bail, he escaped to Europe. Hardayal had been arrested as a confirmed anarchist along with one Basudeb Bhattacharya. After his release, Basudeb tried to enter India but he was arrested in Bombay. Nothing was heard of him after that. Tarak Das was arrested and convicted for violating the neutrality of the U.S.A. He had to undergo a few months of jail life; on his release, he also left for Europe. In the meantime, Naren Bhattacharya (Martin—M. N. Roy) arrived in America from the Far East.

The Ghadr group in the meantime had serious internal dissensions which hampered its work considerably. Chandra Kanta

Chakravarty formed a committee with four others, but he did not allow the committee to function. It was later alleged that his only interest was to get money and perhaps to pass all information to the British Secret Service in the U.S.A.. Sailen Ghose—then a professor of the newly started University Science College at Calcutta—anticipated his arrest by fleeing from India in the latter part of 1916. He took the risk of a hazardous journey during the peak years of the War. It was then rumoured that in this venture, he was helped by Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee—then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University and a judge of the Calcutta High Court. Sailen came with some initiative and tried to work out something. One very important achievement of his was the winning of the sympathy and support of the Hearst group, the most powerful and influential group of newspapers at the time in the U.S.A. He also secured the active support of Agnes Smedley for the cause of Indian Independence. Miss Smedley subsequently became famous as the champion of the cause of the suppressed peoples of the world.

In April 1917, the U.S.A. declared war against Germany as an ally of Britain. So the Indian revolutionaries, as enemies of Britain, became her enemies also. Nearly 50 of the Indian revolutionaries were arrested and put on trial. This was known as the San Francisco case. Chandra Chakravarty was an accused in this case but he gave evidence in favour of the prosecution and was pardoned. Ram Chandra Bhardwaj of Jugantar Asram was one of the accused. Some Indians were marked for arrest; Sailen and Nāren Bhattacharya (M. N. Roy) were among them. Both of them escaped to Mexico. But Sailen's restless spirit did not allow him to stay there long. After some months, he again entered the U.S.A. in March 1918, by crossing the river between the U.S.A. and Mexico. It was a winter night, and the river, known as the Great River of the North, was a fairly wide one; but in his enthusiasm for revolutionary work, he crossed the river. Soon after his return, he was arrested and put on trial and convicted. This was the Supplementary San Francisco Case. If the memory of the writer has not failed, probably Miss Agnes Smedley also was convicted in this case. The story of Sailen has been narrated in some detail only to show to what pitch the idealism of these young men rose and what hardship and suffering they were prepared to undergo. Yet in Bengal his colleagues considered him to be too



tender and impractical for any overt acts. After some years, Saïen returned to India; but then he appeared to be a man of common clay again. The fire of idealism extinguished, he led just an ordinary life, taking educational jobs as his avocation. He died some years ago at a rather early age.

To revert to the story. The San Francisco trial started with about 50 accused, mostly Indians, along with a few Germans. It was known as the Hindu Conspiracy Case. The trial was a prolonged one. Ram Chandra Bhardwaj submitted a dignified written statement. During this period, Ram Chandra occupied an important position in the Ghadr organisation and in the whole conspiracy. In that case, the Government secured an approver. One Jodh Singh was captured at Bangkok, while engaged in revolutionary activities there. It was suspected that he was subjected by the British authorities in Burma to cruel physical torture and different forms of the third degree method. He broke down and was utilised as an approver in several cases, i.e., Burma and Singapore Cases, the Lahore Conspiracy Case and subsequently the San Francisco Case. Jodh Singh was an old worker of the Punjab group and had taken great risks in his activities in the Far East. I am not sure if he was not a mere adventurer with no stamina and character. Relying on his memory of events occurring over five decades ago, the writer thinks that at one stage Jodh Singh reasserted his manhood and declined to give evidence according to the dictates of the British Secret Service. By that time he was broken in health and possibly also mentally imbalanced. When he declined to give evidence according to the wishes of the British Secret Service, he was, as far as I recollect, thrown into prison and died there—a broken, miserable man. Thus ended the career of a man who might have gone down in history as a traitor without really deserving that appellation. Chandra Chakravarty, as stated before, deposed in favour of the prosecution; he was a real traitor—both financially and politically.

It is now known that Jodh Singh was active even in 1910 when Madame Cama asked him to help her at Paris. Hardayal took him into the Indo-German Conspiracy and sent him to Berlin. He was also involved in the attempt to send arms by sea on the *Henry* from Manila. Then he went to the U.S.A. under a false name and contacted Heramba Lal Gupta in 1915. From there, in the company of three

Germans—including Boehm—he went to the Far East with a false passport in the name of Hassan Zada, a Persian citizen. In the Far East, he travelled from one country to another and one port to another—Manila, Bangkok, Amoy. There he came in contact with Sukumar Chatterjee and Chanchiya. He was arrested at Bangkok, perhaps along with Boehm, his German companion.

But the most tragic incident in the San Francisco trial was the murder of Ram Chandra. While in the dock, he was shot dead by a Sikh who was at one time a co-worker of his in the Ghadr organisation. That Sikh was also immediately killed by an American guard, perhaps in the consequent excitement. Ram Chandra was a man of high moral character, was fairly educated and wielded considerable influence over the Indians in the U.S.A. No one could gauge the motive of the assassin in killing such a noble soul. It was, however, suspected that the assassin acted as an agent of the British Secret Service, which was interested in removing a man like Ram Chandra, always a potential source of trouble. The tragic murder took place on April 23, 1918. A valiant son of India died in a far-off place as the victim of an assassin's bullet. Subsequently a rumour became current accusing Ram Chandra of financial dishonesty. But the rumour appeared to be incorrect and maliciously circulated. The other accused were sentenced, some to four year's imprisonment and others to a few months' or weeks'.

In a second case Sailen Ghose, Tarak Das, Suren Kar, Agnes Smedley and some others were also convicted and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. In another case at Chicago, Heramba and two Germans were convicted and sent to prison. M. N. Roy escaped from Mexico to Europe about the early part of 1918, and went to Germany. It is reported that he travelled by a German submarine. Hardly any one of any importance was left in the U.S.A. by about the middle of 1918.

Thus ended in failure that glorious chapter of India's history of struggle for independence. It is not the immediate result that should decide the value of the activities of that band of brave Indian young men. Their dedication, sincerity and readiness to suffer—these factors cannot be lost in their immediate failure; history must bear the impress of the bold deeds of that heroic band.

I have to add a note at the end of this chapter; and that is regard-

ing Dr. Chandra Kanta Chakravarty. When my article containing these allegations of betrayal against him were published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, he sent a protest note to the editor who kindly sent it to me for reply. I wrote back that I had taken all my information from published sources, mainly from the published memoirs of Dr. Abinash Bhattacharya, Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta and Raja Mahendra Pratap. I offered in my rejoinder to withdraw all my charges and to apologise to him if he could convince his three colleagues who were still living then (1961). Both his letter and my reply were published in the *Patrika*. After that he did not contest my allegations and kept quiet.

Since then I have received further material, which I reproduce below. I hope this will convince the readers about the genuineness of the allegations against him:

- (i) '.....' National Archives of the United States  
R. G 60 Gen. Records,  
Justice—File 9-10-3, Sect. 7

Letter written by C. Chakrabarty to Mr. Knox:\*

Dear Mr. Knox,

I hope you are well and you will kindly excuse me this long silence, as I was busy and did not feel well.

On my arrival at San Francisco on Nov. 12, I went to Mr. Preston's\*\* office and I told him of whatever service I could be to the government I was willing to render it. At first he asked me to plead guilty—to which I consented. Later he decided it would be better if I were in the case, as it would help the case. Of course I expressed my willingness to do whatever pleased the authorities. The case might go on for more than 3 months. I believe Mr. Preston has not yet been fully informed about me, as I asked whether he received any instructions and he did not know what to say. Would you please enquire if I

\*A U. S. official.

\*\*Mr. Preston was the Attorney-General.

have anything to communicate—shall I go direct to Mr. Preston \*? Mr. Sekunna has been released and he will be called as a witness. Hope you are well.

With best wishes.

Nov. 25, 1917.

Yours sincerely,  
C. Chakravarty.

(ii) Report in *San Francisco Chronicle* of 13th December, 1917.

‘You are spoiling the whole case.’

With flushed face and clenched fists Franz Bopp, former German Consul-General in San Francisco, hurled this reproach at Doctor C. K. Chakravarty who, the Government charges, was the directing Hindu agent of the Kaiser in the United States in the conspiracy to overthrow British rule in India, at the conclusion of yesterday’s session of the German-Hindu plot trial.

‘The outburst, delivered by the former German official in an angry voice, came as a climax to a sweeping confession which Captain of Inspectors, Thomas J. Tunney of the New York ‘neutrality bomb squad,’ testified Dr. Chakravarty had made. During captain Tunney’s recital of Chakravarty’s admission in New York, revealing the workings of German intrigue in this country and Berlin and his betrayal of the German and his own countrymen to the extent of \$ 40,000 worth of New York real estate, the diminutive Hindu was the target for dark glances from his fellow-defendants, the subject of excited whisperings and the recipient of several notes from the Hindus.

United States Attorney John. W. Preston sought to secure one of the notes but Chakravarty, who is acting as his own attorney, refused to surrender it. To the dark scowls of his countrymen, Chakravarty responded with a

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\*Mr. Sekunna was a friend and co-worker of Dr. Chakravarty.

broad grin. The notes he glanced over and then tore into shreds without replying.

When Tunney<sup>a</sup> testified that Chakravarty had made a detailed statement to the Secretary of State, which the police official held to be a 'privileged document' that could not be made public even now, one of the Hindu defendants stuffed a wad of paper down Chakravarty's neck in protest. The latter ignored the act, and when Tunney said the statement had been obtained upon the promise of the Government not to use it against Chakravarty, the doctor smiled broadly at his glowering countrymen. When Tunney had concluded and Preston asked if he desired to cross-examine the witness, Chakravarty replied:

"What? No, that is all right."

(iii)

National Archives of the United States  
Justice—File 9-10-3, Sec. 9

8.2.1919.

John Lord O'Brien [Special Assistant to the Attorney General for War Work]

to

A. Mitchell Palmer, Esq. (Alien Property, Custodian):

... The experience of this Department with Dr. Chakravarty is that he has given valuable information to the Government and may again be useful to the Government. In our opinion there is little prospect of his being harmful to the country, and, in view of all the circumstances and your request that this Department express an opinion as to whether there is any reason why he should not be declared an enemy, we are taking the liberty of saying that it is our opinion that he should not be so declared.\*

Now, of course, Chandra Chakravarty is beyond all controversy as he died some time ago.

\*For this material, I am indebted to Dr. Horst Kruger of Berlin and to the National Archives of the United States.

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## Chapter Forty-six

# Indian Revolutionaries in the Near East

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Right after its formation, the members of the Berlin Committee started working in different spheres. It was decided that arms and money would be sent to India, that a liberation army should be recruited out of the Indian prisoners of war, that trouble should be fomented on different borders of India and that for this emissaries should go to Burma, Siam, Java, China, Japan etc., in the east, and to Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan to the west of India.

I have already stated that all these activities involved serious risk to the lives of those who would be sent on these missions. In those days travel from one country to another was very difficult and risky. Most of the countries were belligerent on one or the other side. On the continent, France and Italy and some of the Balkan States were allies of Britain. The British Government became alert about the movements of these young men and Scotland Yard took every possible step to track them down and hunt them from one place to another. So any country of the Allied Powers was not at all safe to them for entry or residence. Among the neutral powers in the Middle East, Persia and Afghanistan were dominated by Britain and also Russia. Turkey, though at war against Britain, had little control over Asia Minor and

Arabia, where British money had already secured considerable influence over the Arab chiefs and bedouins who had been armed and financed to work against the Sultan of Turkey.

Most of the Central European countries were on the side of Germany; to them therefore, the Indians were citizens of an enemy country, and were to be put in prison. So it was not easy for them to go to any country of Europe. When Jiten Lahiri and Narayan Marathe came over to Europe from the U.S.A., they were somehow able to land only in Italy and that also at great risk. From Italy they immediately moved to Switzerland which was practically the only neutral country then accessible to them. The German Ambassador at Zurich could not send Lahiri even to Germany as an Indian citizen. He had to take out a false passport and visa as a Muslim resident of German East Africa; i.e., as a German citizen. It was under such conditions that these young men undertook very hazardous travels all over Europe, Asia and parts of Africa.

Their enthusiasm and courage rose to the occasion and they offered themselves for any risky job for the liberation of their country. Very often they had to travel on a false passport or even without a passport. From America some travelled via North Africa and Gibraltar to Europe. Some others travelled by the North Atlantic route and reached the northern shores of the Scandinavian countries which were at the time neutral. It should be noted that the Atlantic, North or South, was then full of mines and submarines; thus a journey across the Atlantic in a German ship or submarine was extremely risky.

On one occasion it was proposed to send Indian young men through Asia Minor and Palestine to Egypt to work among the Indian soldiers there. A band of young men actually went to the bank of the Suez Canal when intermittent sniping was going on from both sides for some days. Two young men, one a Bengali and the other a South Indian, offered to swim the canal on a wintry night; though it was heavily guarded. Readers may be amused to know that the Bengali young man who offered to swim across the Suez was Biren Das Gupta, now a respectable elderly man—a firm believer in Gandhi's creed and principles. Biren actually fought against the British army along with the German and Turkish forces. It is on

occasions like this that man rises above all logical calculation and human frailties.

The South Indian young man was Tirumal Acharya. He came of a respectable family of Madras and went to England for higher studies. There he came in contact with Savarkar and joined the revolutionary movement. On the outbreak of the war, he went to the Continent and contacted the Berlin Committee; he travelled through many countries on revolutionary work, defying dangers and hardship. Then he went to the Middle East with Barkatulla and Mahendra Pratap. In Afghanistan, he had intimate contacts with the Muhazarins and set up the Indian Nationalist Society in collaboration with Abdul Rab Peshwari after the end of the War. He tried to explore a passage from the north-eastern part of Afghanistan to India through Kashmir.

Some young men were sent to Iran and Baluchistan across the desert to foment trouble on the borders of India, and some others went from Germany to the Far East. In spite of the restrictions on travel in Europe and the dangers involved therein, Indian youths were moving about from one country to another simply for the implementation of their mission. Although for the first two or three months Turkey was a neutral country, her sympathies were fairly known to be on the side of the Central Powers. In November 1914, Turkey openly entered the war on the side of Germany and her allies. This opened an avenue for the activities of the Indian revolutionaries. While on the one hand they were trying to send arms inside India through the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, on the other, they felt that after Turkey's entry into the war on the side of Germany, the path was clear for the marching of the German army almost up to the western gateway of India. Between the Turkish frontiers and India on one side, i.e. on the Baluchistan side, there was only Iran or Persia; on the Peshawar side, there were two countries, Persia and Afghanistan. In both these countries, popular feelings were against Britain and Russia because of their imperialist designs.

Along with the declaration of war by Turkey against Britain, serious doubts arose about the loyalty of Indian Muslims in general and Muslims in the Indian army in particular. It should be remembered that the Sultan of Turkey was then the Caliph or the supreme spiritual head of the Muslims. Seducing the Muslims of the



Indian army posted in Egypt, Asia Minor or in Europe was, therefore, considered easy. That was why the proposal was made for swimming the Suez Canal to get into Egypt.

Egypt was then nominally ruled by the Khedive. Technically, the Khedive was the Viceroy of the Emperor of Turkey on whose behalf he was supposed to rule Egypt. But this was only a historical myth; in reality Egypt was under the full control of Britain. The Khedive was bitterly anti-British mainly because of the insolent and overbearing attitude of the British military and civilian officials. The Khedive was sojourning at Vienna when Raja Mahendra Pratap met him there; he made no secret of his anti-British feeling. In fact, the popular feeling in Egypt was anti-British; but Britain also had her stooges there. The position was similar throughout the Arab regions in the Middle East and also in Persia. Now the attention of the revolutionaries was directed towards Turkey and through Turkey to Persia (Iran). Muslim sepoys were contacted at different places; but the attempted mutiny of the Muslim sepoys did not materialise as they could not muster enough courage for such a desperate step. In the meantime two important persons appeared on the scene; one was Barkatulla and the other was Raja Mahendra Pratap. Bhupendranath Dutt came to Europe from America in May 1915. He was staying incognito somewhere in the Balkans, perhaps in Greece, which was still a neutral country. Through the intervention of the Turkish Government, Bhupendranath escaped from Greece and reached Germany. It was then decided that Barkatulla, Raja Mahendra Pratap, Pramathanath Dutt, Karseps Dadachanji, Tarak Nath Das and others would go to Iran and Afghanistan.

It should be recalled that some time before the beginning of the First World War, Ajit Singh had migrated to Iran and was staying there. Another prominent Punjab revolutionary, Sufi Amba Prasad; was also there from a few years before the beginning of the war. There was another young man there—Abbas Mirza, a Sufi by faith and conviction. He was engaged as a teacher of Indian philosophy. They were not there simply for personal safety or employment; they built up a small revolutionary centre in Persia (Iran). Thus, those who went from Europe to Iran found the nucleus of an organization there. This helped them in moving about disregarding all dangers.

Those who went to the Near and Middle Eastern countries had to face many difficulties and dangers. The most serious danger was the presence and activity of the agents of the British government in those countries. Even before the war, Persia was more or less under the occupation of Russia and Britain. Their control over Persia was so effective that the attempt of the Persian government to reorganise its revenue system with the help of an American expert named Schuster had to be abandoned and he had to leave Persia within a short time. He has narrated his experiences in the book, *The Strangling of Persia*. So the popular feeling in Persia (Iran) towards the Allied powers was not at all friendly. But some feudal lords and Sheikhs were subsidised by the British; and they were ready to act according to the wishes of the British authority. Afghanistan also was still then virtually a British protectorate; Afghan nationalist feeling was gradually trying to assert complete independence. It was considered rather easy, therefore, to get the help of Iran and Afghanistan, if not openly, at least tacitly, from the Government side as well as from the public.

All this time Barkatulla was active in Berlin. He met Kaiser Wilhelm and two important generals, Hindenburg and Ludendorf. Then they decided to send a batch of workers to Constantinople. Barkatulla, Raja Mahendra Pratap, Birendra Nath Das Gupta and some German officials travelled through Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia, and at last reached Constantinople. All of them did not stay there. Only Barkatulla and Mahendra Pratap remained there while the others went to Aleppy, Damascus, Jerusalem and the Sinai desert, where they fought against the British army to free the Suez Canal from the British hold. After some time, Mahendra Pratap and Barkatulla along with the Turkish and German missions left for Kabul. Mahendra Pratap reached there on 2nd October, 1915; Barkatulla had already arrived a few days earlier. Mahendra Pratap, along with Dr. von Hentig and one Turkish army officer, went to Kabul after a short stay at Herat. A guard of honour was presented by the Afghan Army to the mission whose members were treated as State guests. But ultimately they were detained in the guest house as Amir Habibulla was still afraid of the British. However, on the intervention of his younger brother Nasir-ulla Khan, who was the Prime Minister, and his son Amanulla Khan and General Nadir Khan, the

Amir relented and allowed them to function from Kabul. Maulana Obiedulla was already in Afghanistan; he travelled across the tribal regions with a band of Muslim migrants from India; they were all arrested almost immediately after their arrival and, since then, had been kept in prison.

Within the Turkish Empire also, travelling was far from safe for these young Indians. Within a few days of Turkey's declaration of war, an Indo-British army was sent to land in Mesopotamia. Moreover, the Arabs were on the verge of rebellion against the Emperor of Turkey. T. E. Lawrence in his famous book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, has given a vivid picture of the intense activities of the British secret servicemen in Arabia, Mesopotamia (now Iraq) and Palestine. Similarly, Syria was under French control. The local Arab chiefs were helping the British. Gold was their supreme passion; and the British were distributing it lavishly. So the Arab chiefs had no scruple in working against the Caliph; but the general Arab masses were anti-British. The situation seemed to become somewhat favourable on the surrender of General Townshend with his whole army at Kut-al-Amara (April 1915). But the highly bribed Muslim chiefs and Sheikhs continued to help the British.

Raja Mahendra Pratap had left India in December 1914. He went first to Switzerland, where he met Shyamji Krishnavarma and Hardayal. Shyamji was no longer active in those days; and Hardayal was not very enthusiastic about German aid. He was then more an anarchist than a nationalist. Almost disappointed, Mahendra Pratap left for Rome. There he received a message from Viren Chattopadhyaya and came back to Geneva. Viren immediately contacted him and took him to Berlin in February 1915. After his arrival there, Mahendra was received by the Berlin Foreign Office officials. Later he had an interview with Kaiser Wilhelm II. In April 1915, he left Berlin for Afghanistan with an accreditation letter from the German government. He had to travel overland through Austria, the Balkans and, later, Turkey. Serbia (present Yugoslavia) was with the Allied Powers and the position in Greece was not quite clear. King Constantine, being of German extraction, was in favour of Germany, but his Ministers as well as the Greek people were in favour of Britain and her Allies. At Salonika there was a British army of occupation. Passing through the Balkans into Turkey was thus not easy. Yet

Mahendra Pratap and Maulana Barkatulla decided to travel that way, braving the risks involved.

I should place here whatever information I have been able to gather about the band of young men who undertook the utmost risk and hardship for the sake of their country. Pramathanath Dutta of Calcutta was a member of the Jugantar group before his departure for America where he went in 1906 to get himself enlisted in the army. There he met a young Maharashtrian, Ketkar, who also had the same ambition. Ketkar told him that he had been trying for a long time to get military training without any success. Then Pramatha went to France and there got himself enlisted in the Foreign Legion of France in which he served for five years as a non-commissioned officer. He then went to Turkey, which was anti-British due to the attitude of the British during the Balkan War. In 1915 he went to Iran (Persia) where he was wounded by a bullet. He, however, recovered and got mixed up with the hill tribes of Persia among whom he remained incognito for several years even after the end of the war. In 1921, on the intervention of the Russian Foreign Office, he was traced and brought to Moscow. Subsequently, he settled in Russia as a teacher of Indian languages in the Oriental Seminary of Leningrad. He married there and had a son.

Sufism is still a living faith and philosophy in Persia. And Ambaprasad was a Sufi scholar; so was Mirza Abbas of Hyderabad. It is reported that Abbas was attracted by the anti-British agitation in Bengal in 1906-07. So he went there and easily came in contact with the early Jugantar group, working in the Manicktala Garden in 1907-1908 for the manufacture of bombs. His name was mentioned in the Alipore Conspiracy Case and he then left for Persia where, as a Sufi scholar, he was engaged as a teacher for some years before the First World War. During the War, he took active part in the anti-British conspiracy. He met with an early death in Persia.

In the course of their journey through the Middle East in a desperate attempt to reach Afghanistan and the borders of India, a number of enthusiastic revolutionaries lost their lives—some of them due to exhaustion in the desert, some others in skirmishes with bedouin marauders, and yet others in the hands of the British. It is not possible for me to get all the names; only a few are available. It may be of interest to the readers to know something

about their hard life and how they met their death. Two Maharashtrian young men, Agashe and Khankhoje, came to the Indo-Afghan border almost immediately after the declaration of war. Both of them had revolutionary contact with the Maratha group in India. Agashe went to Persia some years before the 1914 war to have military training. To secure the necessary facilities to get military training, he became a Persian citizen under the name of Muhammad Ali. In 1913 he went to the U.S.A. and got himself admitted to a military school. On the declaration of war, he returned to Persia. Khankhoje, after getting his M.Sc. in the U.S.A., joined the Indo-German Conspiracy without waiting to complete his doctorate. On the Indo-Afghan border, Agashe and Khankhoje tried to incite the Persian and Baluchi tribes against the British. After the First World War, Khankhoje settled in Mexico and returned to India after independence. The mission from the Berlin Committee arrived later, i.e., about the middle of 1915. They could not move in large groups, but only singly or in small batches. One young man of 22, Kedarnath of Punjab, was attacked by Persian marauders; he and his colleagues had a skirmish somewhere near Shiraj in Persia. Then Indian sepoys of the British Consulate trapped him in their camp and betrayed him to the police. He scolded the sepoys that for the sake of a few coins they were betraying an Indian fighting for India's freedom. He was shot by the British.

Two other Indian revolutionaries, Basant Singh and Kersaps, were arrested by the British agents. They had gone to Afghanistan to deliver some money to the Indian revolutionary delegation at Kabul. While returning, they were arrested and shot dead. Kersaps was an initiated revolutionary and was perhaps the first Indian Parsee to court martyrdom for the sake of the country. Basant Singh of Punjab was originally engaged in business in Germany before the war. But on account of his patriotic fervour he joined the Berlin Committee. I have already referred to Sufi Amba Prasad, who was staying in Persia for a number of years. He went there along with Ajit Singh as a political refugee. He was highly respected in Persia for his mastery over the Persian language and particularly for his deep knowledge of Sufism. On account of the pressure of the British Government, he was handed over to the British Consul at Shiraj and he also was executed.

After the end of the war, there were a few stray Indian revolutionaries in Persia living incognito among the rural people. Agashe, it is reported, had settled in Persia. Pañdurang Khankhoje returned to the country after independence. Along with Sufi Amba Prasad, there were Ajit Singh and Hrishikesh Latta—both from Punjab. Ajit Singh is reported to have gone to Latin America and later to have returned to India. Hrishikesh was at one time called by the Berlin Committee to go to Europe and then, after consultations and taking instructions, returned to Iran. After the war, he went to the U.S.A., but in 1925, he returned to Iran where he died.

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## Chapter Forty-seven

# Lost in the Wilderness of Deserts and Mountains

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A large number of Indian migrants assembled in Afghanistan in 1915-16. Apart from those who went from Berlin or Europe, some went direct from India. It should be noted that in the unadministered tribal region between India and Afghanistan there was a colony, settled as far back as 1822, of Indian Muslims who were followers of the Wahabi sect. This small band migrated there as Mujaharins because they considered India under British rule to be *Dar-ul-harb*; i.e. unfit for the residence of pious Muslims. Members of that colony had some secret connection with the Muslim organizations in India and were receiving financial aid from Indians. They had little concern for nationalism or for Indian independence. In fact, when they migrated from Punjab and the region subsequently known as the North-Western Frontier Province, those regions were an independent state under Ranjit Singh. They considered it to be impious for a true Muslim to live there. These fanatic Muslims were bitterly anti-British and were ready to take advantage of any new incident in India to create difficulties for the British.

During the First World War, fifteen Muslims of Lahore who had admiration for and sympathy with the Mujaharin colonists ran away

from India by the latter part of 1915. The word Mujaharin meant those who had to flee their country for fear of oppression by or contamination through contact with non-Muslim rule. In January 1917, eight Muslim young men from East Bengal also left their homes for the Mujaharin colony. They were carrying large sums of money, and some of them were arrested on their way with a considerable amount—Rs. 8,000—on their persons. Again, some teachers of the Deoband Muslim Theological School, including Maulana Mahmud Hassan, the head Maulvi of the school, went to Turkey via Hedjaz. From Hedjaz, they carried some letters to the Afghan Government from Ghalib Pasha, the Turkish Governor of Hedjaz. The Maulana travelled via Mesopotamia to Afghanistan. In Turkey some high military officers like Ghalib Pasha and Jamal Pasha were enthusiastic Pan-Islamists, while others were pure nationalists; so in Turkish official quarters, there were often conflicting directions and conflicting policies.

The situation within the Turkish Empire was anything but favourable for the Indian revolutionaries. As I have stated in a previous chapter, the attitude of the Arab Sheikhs and Chiefs, as also of the Bedouin tribes, was purely mercenary. They had no interest in the future of the Sultan of Turkey who, as the Caliph, was the spiritual head of the Muslims all over the world. One instance will amply indicate their attitude. The Sheriff of Mecca, who was governing Mecca as the agent of the Sultan, had no hesitation in betraying a very eminent Muslim religious leader. Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, who was called the Sheikh-ul-Hind, i.e. the religious high priest of the Indian Muslims, went on Haj. He toured the Arab territories to work against the British and rouse the Arabs to support the Caliph. When he went to Mecca, the Sheriff of Mecca arrested him and handed him over to the British, who detained him in Malta for a number of years. As far as I can recollect, he could not return to India.

I have already mentioned the name of Obeidulla Sindhi. He was a devout Muslim; in fact he was a convert to Islam from Sikhism. For some time he was in the Deoband School where he influenced Maulana Mahmud Hassan and some other teachers. Ultimately, on Government's pressure, he was expelled from the school. In 1915 he crossed the North-Western Frontier Province and entered the



tribal region. He first went to the colony of the Mujaharin and stayed there for some time. His idea was to utilize the Mujaharin colony and the tribal people against the infidel British rule. But within a short time, he realised the futility of his plan of a rising in India with the help of the Mujaharin and the tribal people. The British had their agents and stooges in those areas who were reporting everything that Obeidulla was doing. He then started for Kabul and had reached Kabul some time before Mahendra Pratap and the Turko-German Mission, consisting of Dr. von Hentig of Germany, Captain Kazim Bey of Turkey and Maulana Barkatulla, arrived there on 2nd October, 1915. Some other Muslim theologians, including one Maulvi Mohammed Mian Ansari from Deoband, also went to Afghanistan. Obeidulla was first arrested and detained by the Afghan Government along with some young Indians but, on the intercession of Mahendra Pratap and other Indian revolutionaries there, all of them were released. Amir Habibulla Khan received Mahendra Pratap and his companions in audience.

The British put all sorts of pressure on the Afghan Government to extern these Indians, but the Afghans was not agreeable. On the contrary, they decided to help the Indians in their effort to oust the British from India. I have already stated how the Amir was at first afraid, because of the British, to help them and how he ultimately agreed to help them. The Amir even organised a band of Afridis—about 1,000 in number—to conduct some raids on British Indian territories. These belonged to the tribal areas in between India and Afghanistan. They created some trouble in the tribal regions and even beyond. On 1st December, 1915, a Provisional Government of India was formed by the Indian revolutionaries. Raja Mahendra Pratap became its President, Barkatulla the Prime Minister and Obeidulla the Foreign Minister. This Provisional Government formed an alliance with Turkey and Afghanistan and also tried to contact Russia. Germany, Turkey and Afghanistan recognised this government which sent a letter to the Czar of Russia, appealing to him to abandon his alliance with Britain and to help the cause of Indian independence. The letter was sent on a gold plate and was signed by Mahendra Pratap as the President of the Provisional Government, and was taken to Russian Turkestan by Mohammed Ali and Dr. Mathura Singh. But it did not reach the Czar. Mahendra Pratap

carried some letters from the Chancellor of Germany to some important Native Princes. His idea was that, if he could reach Indian soil, it would be possible for him to send the letters to those Princes.

This was the period of what came to be known as the "Silk Letters" conspiracy. Indian revolutionaries used to write letters on silk handkerchiefs or other silken garments, and apparently innocent travellers were asked to carry these letters out of and into India. It was rumoured that a number of eminent persons were involved in this "Silk Letters" conspiracy. They were mostly Muslims, and rumour associated the names of the Ali Brothers and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad with this conspiracy. For this reason they were detained by the Government of India during the First World War. Obaidulla was supposed to have started this method of sending messages even before leaving India. He sent those letters from India mostly to the tribal regions beyond the North-West Frontier Province. This method was used even when they were working in Kabul. Through these letters they sent instructions to organise some sort of armed rising in different parts of India. Their intention was to create simultaneous trouble in the tribal regions and inside India. But nothing came out of all these frantic efforts.

Mahendra Pratap and Barkatulla were very sincere and earnest in their efforts. Barkatulla was completely free from any religious and communal consideration. He came of a modest family of Bhopal and on his own initiative left India almost penniless. He travelled through many countries, earning his livelihood as a teacher of Arabic and Urdu. For some time he was in Japan, then in the U.S.A. and Europe. In Tokyo he was working as a teacher of Urdu. When he left India he had no contact with any revolutionary group. On his arrival in Europe he came under the influence of Shyamji Krishnavarma. Later he went to America and became associated with the Ghadr Party there. On the outbreak of the War, he came from America to Berlin and from there travelled via Turkey through Persia to Afghanistan. He stayed on in Afghanistan even after the end of the War. But then his activities were too much for the Afghan Government to tolerate and he was expelled from Afghanistan. He then went to Europe and then to the U.S.A. Mahendra Pratap, as we have already stated, came of a noble feudal family in U.P. When he was engaged in all these national liberation activities, his property in India was confiscated by

the Government. Some years from now, the Parliament of free India passed an Act restoring his property to him. Before leaving India, he had started the Prém Mahavidyalaya at Vrindaban; it is now a well-known residential institution for educating boys in the humanities and the applied sciences.

By the beginning of 1917 the Indian revolutionaries realised that nothing would come out of their efforts in Afghanistan; so they decided to try other sources. They sent one of their men, Gujar Singh, to the King of Nepal with a letter from the Amir of Afghanistan and also from Bethman-Hollweg, the Chancellor of Germany. But Nepal in those days was a protected state of the Government of India and had no independence. Moreover, it was not the King but the Prime Minister belonging to the Rana family who was the real ruler, and he was a stooge of the British. Nothing came out of this effort also. They even sent certain persons to India with letters to some of the Native Princes. The result can easily be imagined. On the outbreak of the War, all the Native Princes headed by the Nizam of Hyderabad made public statements professing their allegiance to the British Crown. They, in fact, placed all their resources at the disposal of the British. All these attempts by the Indian revolutionaries only show their grim determination and earnestness.

Foiled in every direction, Mahendra Pratap again turned his attention to Russia. By that time there had been a revolution in Russia—or rather two revolutions—the Kerensky revolution and then the Bolshevik revolution under Lenin and Trotsky in October 1917. In March 1918, Mahendra Pratap went to Tashkent, and from there through Russia to Germany. In Germany he had a second interview with the Kaiser. Barkatulla also left Afghanistan but Mahendra Pratap returned to Turkey with the intention of going to Afghanistan. By then, however, the War had ended and King Habibulla of Afghanistan had been murdered; Amanulla, ascending the throne of Afghanistan, declared war against the British Government. It was in that troubled situation that Mahendra Pratap again came to Afghanistan. Then started a period of roaming about in different countries. Ultimately he and Barkatulla both went to the U.S.A. Some years after the war was over, Barakatulla died there. Thus ended the career of a heroic soul dedicated to the cause of India's independence.

Bhupendranath Dutt, Taraknath Das and others who were working from Constantinople, realised by the end of 1916 that nothing would come out of their negotiations with Turkey. Though there was bitter discontent against the British and wide sympathy for Indian independence, in the administration there was lack of method and agreement even on broad principles. Moreover, by the beginning of 1917, the fortunes of the war took an unfavourable turn for Turkey and her allies. In February 1917, the British re-captured Kut-al-Amara and in March occupied Baghdad. Before the end of the year, the British advanced from the south-west and practically occupied Palestine, including Jerusalem. In Hedjaz, the Sheriff of Hedjaz revolted against the Sultan of Turkey and formed an alliance with the British. The Indian revolutionaries realised that nothing could be achieved in or through the help of Turkey. They then left for Germany in batches.

After her surrender to the Allied Powers in November, 1918, Germany was not safe for the Indian revolutionaries who would be accused of high treason by the British. So they all left Germany. Some went to Russia and some took shelter in the U.S.A. Obiedulla, after much weary travelling in various lands, came back after some years to India and settled in Sind. Mahendra Pratap and Bhupendranath Dutt also ultimately returned to India after many years. Taraknath Das spent his last days in the U.S.A. as a professor. Some members remained in Afghanistan as Afghan citizens; some trod their weary way through Turkestan and Central Asia ultimately to reach Russia. But there were others who could not find any safe exit from the deserts and mountains of Mesopotamia, Persia and Afghanistan. What happened to them? Lost in that wilderness! But they, too, have served.

Those who were working on the western borders of India had high hopes of a Muslim rising in protest against the British attacking Turkey and the Caliph. They also hoped that the Muslim soldiers in the Indian army would not tolerate this aggression on the Caliph. All this proved a false hope. Inside India, the Nizam took the lead of organising support for the British. Indian Muslims held the Nizam in great regard and considered him as their mentor in politics. So everything went against the revolutionaries.

Now we come to the finale of the story. When the War was

taking a favourable turn for the Allies, there was one bright light before the Indian revolutionaries: the Russian revolution. Mahendra Pratap and many others went to Russia through Russian Turkestan. On this side Afghanistan had a little war with Britain which brought her real independence. King Amanulla was quite liberal and was also sympathetic to Indian aspirations. So Mahendra and some others again came to Afghanistan. But all these desperate attempts ended in failure—except that those brave souls left an example for the future.

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## Chapter Forty-eight

# In and Around Pacific and Indian Oceans

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During the War period, practically the whole of the Atlantic Ocean and a large portions of the Pacific were full of mines or submarines. So, the journey to the Far East from Europe was long and hazardous, as one had to cross the Atlantic to reach America and then cross the Pacific to reach Java, Shanghai, Japan or Siam. It was decided that the entire campaign in the Far East was to be organised by the German Consul-General at Shanghai under the general supervision of the German Ambassador at Washington. It will be recalled that in the Far East, Japan and China were partners of Britain in the war. French Indo-China (comprising the present Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) was French territory. Philippines was under the control of the U.S.A. Dutch-East Indies (the present Indonesia) was practically under British control. Siam, though independent, was sandwiched between French Indo-China and British Burma and was under the supervision of the British and the French on two sides. So no country was safe for Indian revolutionaries.

For the Berlin Committee, the first thing to decide was where arms might be landed. There was a suggestion that these might be sent to the Karachi side; but as there was no suitable revolutionary

organization that side to receive the arms, it was decided that the main consignment would be landed on the Bay of Bengal coast. Hatiya, an island on the Chittagong coast (Bengal), Raimangal in the Sunderbans (24-Parganas, Bengal) and Balasore in Orissa were the three places generally approved. Rai Mangal was later on abandoned as having too shallow water. Some other site in the Sunderbans\* was explored. That consignment was to be handled by the main Jugantar group of Calcutta. Balasore was ultimately selected. It was at the suggestion of Naren Bhattacharya alias Martin that the German Consul-General at Shanghai made this arrangement. As for Balasore, Jatin Mukherjee himself went to the area and took shelter in Mayurbhanj State; and the Universal Emporium at Balasore was the place where information about the arrival of the consignment would be communicated.

The German authorities also made an assessment of the strength of the revolutionary organizations in India; and it was found that except in Bengal and Punjab, there was not much of organization in any other province. From that point of view also the Bengal coast was preferable, as Punjab had no sea coast for the landing of arms. On this account, it was considered necessary that emissaries of the Berlin Committee as also those of the organization in Bengal should be present in important points of the Far East. Taraknath Das, Heramba Lal Gupta and others went from America to the Far East early in 1915. Heramba for some time took up his residence in Japan and worked in collaboration with Bhagwan Singh and Rashbehari.

From Bengal, Naren Bhattacharya, Phani Ghakravarty, Bhupati Mazumdar and others went to different places. Bholanath Chatterjee had already been to Siam where some Germans had asked him to seek German help for the liberation of India. Some of them went to the Far East late in 1914 and some early in 1915. There was another important man working in Shanghai—Abinash Chandra Roy, who was working for the movement in close collaboration with others already in Japan or Java or Siam. While working there, he kept in contact with the Jugantar group which was handling the Indo-German conspiracy. It is reported that some years back he had

\*Sunderbans is the estuary area of the Ganges intersected by a number of salt water streams and rivers branching off from the main stream of the Ganges and full of dense forest. It was once famous for its Royal Bengal tigers.

some contact with the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. We have no information about what happened to him after the war.

Indian revolutionaries in the Far East took up their positions in Batavia, Bangkok, Shanghai and Japan. It should be recalled that Japan was an ally of Britain; even China had to join the war in favour of the Allied Powers. British and Japanese secret service men were roving over the seas as well as islands and parts of the Far East regions. So any movement of an Indian revolutionary in that area was very difficult and involved great danger. Herambalal Gupta was moving about in Japan. Rashbehari had mostly to remain inactive—any movement for him was almost impossible. The Japanese Government tried to arrest them and hand them over to the British; but the well-known Black Dragon Society of Japan gave them shelter. Rashbehari went to Japan by about June 1915; and Heramba was already there from the beginning of 1915. Lala Lajpat Rai was also there. He felt they were not welcome guests in Japan, and so left for America by the end of November 1915. Within a few days after this, Heramba and Rashbehari were summoned to appear before the police, which they did. They were asked to leave Japan within five days, which would mean their certain arrest by the British and almost certain death. While they were in Japan, the British Embassy and the secret service men were always after them. Apart from diplomatic pressure on the Japanese Foreign Office to get them handed over or at least to extern them, the British even engaged some agents to kidnap or, if necessary or possible, to kill them.

Immediately both of them stopped moving about and had to keep inside their houses. There was some public resentment and protest against this measure of the Japanese government. Some Japanese gentlemen of progressive views undertook to keep them concealed. Toyama and Soma, both belonging to the Samurai clan, gave them protection; for weeks, Heramba and Rashbehari were kept concealed in one house or another. At last Heramba felt it was useless to live that idle life, hiding day and night simply for safety. So he decided to take a chance, and one cold night he escaped, walking a long way over snow-covered regions from where he could board a ship without disclosing his identity. This was made possible for him through the help of the Mexican diplomatic agents in Japan. He boarded a steamer which took him direct to Mexico. Heramba finally



reached the U.S.A. Rashbehari continued to stay there in the house of Soma. Later, he married the daughter of Soma and thereby became a Japanese national—thus he was no longer an alien, and therefore not liable for extradition. For some time even after the marriage, he had to keep himself concealed in the house. It was only some years after the end of the War that he came out publicly. Then, of course, there was not much of revolutionary work for him to do in Japan until the Second World War. On his return to the U.S.A., Heramba was put up as an accused in the San Francisco trial. In about 1918 he settled in Mexico and led the life of a scholar. He translated a number of Sanskrit philosophical books into Spanish—the language of Mexico.

The workers of the Berlin Committee and of the Jugantar Party were, all these months, active in all the regions of the Far East. In Java, they contacted some Javanese and Germans as well as Dutch political leaders; some of them were in Europe while others were in Java. Dr. Daus Dekkar, an Eurasian Javanese, was residing in Europe. He was known as an earnest Javanese revolutionary. He had his contacts in Europe and was the leader of a revolutionary organization in Java. He offered help in the transmission of arms from Java to India. Later on, it transpired that Dekkar was not a reliable agent. The Indian revolutionaries thus made all preparations in the Far East for the transmission of arms to India. Of course, there were strong Indian organizations still functioning in the U.S.A. and in Mexico. It was decided that the arms would be shipped from the U.S.A. and that the ships would start moving by the Pacific but some ships would try even the Atlantic route.

Let us now go back to the story of the activities of the Indian revolutionaries in the Far East. Within a short time the waters of the Pacific and the Indian Oceans were churned to their depths with their activities. German arms were expected to come soon; all the necessary preparations, therefore, were to be made for utilising the arms when received. The German Embassy at Washington was the main agency for arranging the despatch of the arms; but it was expected to work in collaboration with the German Consulate at Shanghai and the German Embassy to Batavia. The German Government sent Admiral von Hintze at Shanghai with special powers and authority to deal with all matters in this connection. Manila was also an important

centre in this transaction. Though Japan was an ally of Britain, popular Japanese feelings were in favour of India. China was also in the war in alliance with Britain; here too not only the Chinese people but also Sun Yat Sen had sympathy with the Indian revolutionaries. This enabled them to make frequent trips between Japan, Shanghai, Manila and Batavia. The German Embassy at Bangkok was also utilised for this purpose. Moreover, on the suggestion of the Berlin Committee, the Germans sent a special agent to the Far East—Vincent Kraft. He was to be a roving agent, normally with his headquarters at Batavia.

As stated earlier, the arrangement was that the ship carrying arms would come via the Pacific, touching at Batavia, and that these arms would be delivered at three places on the Bay of Bengal coast. The arms to be landed at Hatia were "to be worked" by the members of the Barisal group of the Jugantar party. The arms that were to be landed at Raimangal or some other suitable place in the estuary of the Ganga were to be utilised under the direct supervision of Jadugopal Mukherjee. A zamindar of that area, Jatin Rai of Nurnagar, was in sympathy with this movement from the beginning. He promised every help for the unloading and dispersal of the arms. In fact, he arranged some boats and boatmen who would unload the arms from the steamer anchored at some distance from the coast; it was thought risky for the steamer to come too near to the coast. Those men would also handle the arms and carry them in small country boats to the distribution places. The arms for Raimangal were expected to be sent from a base in Siam by the German Consul there and were to comprise 5000 rifles with proper ammunition. At Bangkok there was a centre of the Punjabis—mostly Sikhs who had returned from the U.S.A. and Canada. Moreover a number of Indian engineers and labourers were engaged in the construction of a railway line on the western borders of Siam which was being constructed by a German firm. It was arranged that they would invade and advance through the Moulmein side of Burma; and simultaneously, the Germans and the Indians in China would make an attack also on the northern frontier of Burma on the Bhamo side.

It was expected that this invading revolutionary band would be able to penetrate inside Burma; and that there would be simultaneous risings in Bengal and in the eastern regions of India and, if pos-

sible, also in the Punjab and U.P. The proposal was that members of the Jugantar party with some local people would launch their attack from Chittagong with arms landed at Hatia and the rising would spread into other regions of East Bengal, gradually converging towards Calcutta. The Calcutta section of the party would utilise the arms to be delivered at Raimangal or at some other convenient place in the Sunderbans, for organizing a rising near about Calcutta; while the arms to be landed at Balasore would be used for organising risings in Orissa, particularly amongst the tribals of the Eastern Agency States, extending towards Madras. This was one of the reasons for selecting Balasore as a safe hideout for Jatin Mukherjee. Along with these, it was also arranged that trouble would be started in the North-West Frontier and in Baluchistan, which would be reinforced by invasions by the Afridis from the tribal areas and from Afghanistan. It has been stated in another chapter how an Indian revolutionary delegation had reached Afghanistan and had been promised Afghan help. Further, a naval attack on the Andamans was planned; it would not have been difficult to occupy the Andamans, as during the War, the British did not have large defence forces there. Moreover, the German cruiser *Emden*, then marauding in the Bay of Bengal, would also help in this invasion. "It was hoped that the first distribution of arms would take place by the 1st of July, 1915."\*

Two ships, the *Maverick* and the *Henry* were, according to the plan, expected to bring arms to the Far East. It was for arranging this that Naren Bhattacharya (M. N. Roy) and others had gone to the Far East from Calcutta and Herambalal Gupta from the U.S.A. The *Maverick*, originally an oil tanker of the Standard Oil Company, was purchased by a German firm (F. Jebson & Co.) to be used for the despatch of arms to India. It started from Lower California for Java. Besides its officers and crew, it had five persons declared as Persians to serve as waiters in the steamer; but those five were actually Indian revolutionaries. It was arranged that the rifles would be put into an empty oil tank which would then be filled up with oil. The quantity of arms actually carried by the *Maverick* is not exactly known, but it is apprehended that the main consignment of arms for the *Maverick*

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\* All passages within quotation-marks in this chapter are reproduced from the Sedition Committee Report.

was somehow misdirected. It had been planned that the *Maverick* would meet the German schooner *Annie Larsen* on the high seas and that the schooner would deliver the main consignment of arms to the *Maverick*. It was reported that, for some reason—perhaps the strict vigilance in the Pacific by the Allied naval forces—the *Annie Larsen* could not contact the *Maverick* and returned to the U.S.A. by the end of June 1915, and the arms were seized by the U.S. Government. Before that, the *Maverick* had waited for more than a month in a small island in the Pacific and ultimately reached Batavia. In the meantime, the British had information of German arms being carried to India. I mentioned in a previous chapter that information of the Indo-German conspiracy was first given to the French Embassy at Washington by the Czechoslovak revolutionary exiles working in the U.S.A. By August 1915, the Government of India was alerted about the landing of arms in Hatia, Raimangal and Balasore. The *Maverick* was intercepted and seized by the Dutch Government in Java. Helferich, the German Ambassador at Batavia, however, secured the release of the steamer and sent it back to America. The other steamer, the *Henry*, was “cleared from Manila for Shanghai with a cargo of arms and ammunition.” In those days, Shanghai was practically under the control of the British and the French; so it was easy for them to seize the *Henry*. Her arms were unloaded at Shanghai and the *Henry* was then allowed to proceed towards the Celebes. •

When the plan about the *Maverick* and the *Henry* failed, the Indian revolutionaries abroad could not reconcile themselves to the idea of abandoning all their hopes. Shiva Prasad Gupta of Banaras and Prof. Benoy Sarkar of Calcutta were also in the Far East then. Jodh Singh came at this time from the U.S.A. and established contacts with Sukumar Chatterjee who was an important worker in that region. Jodh Singh, Sukumar Chatterjee and Chinchia started working together between Manila and Sanghai. Two German agents Wehde and Boehm, in collaboration with the Indians tried to send some arms from Manila. After some hurried discussions; it was decided that fresh attempts would be made from a nearer place. The German Consul at Shanghai undertook to send to the Bay of Bengal two ships laden with arms—one to Raimangal and the other to Balasore. The arrangement was for big consignments of arms; one ship would carry 20,000 rifles, 80 lakh ammunition, 2000 pistols,

some hand grenades and Rs. 200,000/-. The other ship would carry 10,000 rifles and 10 lakh cartridges and other accessories.

It was subsequently decided on the suggestion of Naren Bhattacharya that the first ship would unload at Hatia instead of Raimangal, which was no longer considered safe. A third steamer was directed to go to the Andamans. But the entire scheme failed because of premature disclosures made by a Chinese national sent to Helfferich at Batavia and by a Bengali in Siam named Sukumar Chatterjee. Perhaps Jodh Singh also disclosed the information about this scheme. Another man arrested in that area named D. Chinchia, of Madras, stood firm before all oppressions. Chinchia was a student of Agriculture in the University of Utah. Practically all the Indian students in the U.S.A. were eager to get military training even before the beginning of the War. Chinchia joined a cadet course to learn about guerilla war. P. S. Khankhoje, Jiten Lahiri, Kedar Nath, Venkayya—belonging to different parts of India—all got some military training. Jiten Lahiri, being a science student, got special training in bomb making. Chinchia left San Francisco in 1915 for Manila and took a very prominent part in all the ventures in the Far East: I have not been able to collect any subsequent information about Chinchia. Many of these heroic persons remain unknown and even unnamed.

Even after the failure of these two big and bold schemes, all hopes were not given up, and it was decided to send small consignments. The Chinese of those days were noted for their efficiency in smuggling, particularly opium and other narcotic drugs. It was arranged that 129 automatic pistols and sufficient ammunition would be sent to Calcutta through some Chinese dealing in timber; these were to be delivered to Amarendra Nath Chatterjee. It was due to Abani Mukherjee that the information leaked out and some Chinese with the automatic pistols and ammunition were seized at Shanghai. We have already referred to the dubious role played by Abani. Dr. Bhupen Dutt has written in most condemning terms about him and has finally said, "While in the clutches of the police, he tried to placate them and was offered the opportunity to escape."

Mainly from information obtained from Abani, a large number of arrests were made in Burma and Siam, as also in Bengal. The Mandalay Conspiracy Case was an outcome of this. The arrangement

was that German Officers would give military training to the Indians in Siam in the forest areas on the Siam-Burma borders. Then, they were to march into the British territory of Burma. It is difficult for me now to get the details of that case; but it created a sensation in those days. A number of Punjabi settlers in Siam and Burma were arrested and put on trial. One of them was Amar Singh, an engineer in Siam. Amar Singh and a few others were sentenced to death. As far as I can recollect, Jodh Singh appeared as an approver for the first time in this case. It was arranged that the Germans then living in Siam would provide leadership to the Indians in making an attack on the Siam-Burma border and that the Germans along with Indian revolutionaries in or near about China would attack Burma from the north on the Bhamo border. It was also arranged that about 500 German officers and 1000 German soldiers were to be sent for attacking the Andamans. One German ship would carry arms to the western coast of India somewhere near Cambay and those arms would be utilised for organising a rising in Punjab and Baluchistan. All these were brought up as evidence of conspiracy in the Mandalay case.

But the most important fact in this connection is the mutiny of the Indian soldiers in Singapore. It was part of the overall scheme of attack on the eastern frontier of Burma and the naval invasion of the Andamans. But the other schemes had not materialised and so the Singapore mutiny became a single incident for the British to deal with and suppress. On 15th January, 1915, the Indian soldiers fired the first shot of mutiny, and soon they became masters of the city. For seven days, the mutinous Sikh soldiers controlled Singapore. After killing the camp guards, they released all interned Germans and asked them to take up the leadership; but the Germans declined the offer. Perhaps they thought of the futility of the attempt and the consequences following failure. This rising was organised mainly by the Ghadr party from the U.S.A. Two persons, Mool Chand and Bhai Santosh Singh, were sent by the Ghadr party to Singapore for organising this rising. It was planned that from Singapore the liberation army would occupy the whole of the Malaya Peninsula and, with the help of German naval ships and German soldiers, drive out the Britishers from the Far Eastern waters. The Mutiny proved a disaster for the Sikh soldiers.

On the request of the Commander of Singapore, Japanese and French ships arrived at Singapore with arms and soldiers after seven days and re-occupied the city. Some Malayan soldiers were also brought. Mool Chand managed somehow to escape to China. We do not know what happened to Santosh Singh. The released Germans had already left for Sumatra. More than 400 Sikh soldiers were arrested and court-martialled; 41 of them were hanged and 125 were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and sent to different Indian jails. The writer met a number of them in some jails. Mention has already been made of a German named Vincent Kraft who was specially deputed to the Far East to arrange for all these risings and particularly the invasion of the Andamans. He was arrested at Batavia.

When the *Maverick* was seized by the Dutch authorities at Batavia, Martin (M. N. Roy) was in Java. He then left for the U.S.A., leaving Hari Singh to take his place. Attempts for securing German arms were not abandoned. The *Henry*, as stated before, started with arms and ammunition for Indian revolutionaries. But the U.S.A. customs authorities at Manila searched the steamer and the cargo of arms was disclosed. The arms were seized by the Philippine Government. Two American citizens of German descent, Wehde and Boehm, were on board the *Henry*. The vessel reached the East Indies island of Celebes; Boehm tried to reach Bangkok with the intention of raising a guerilla band with the Indians in the Siam-Burma border. Boehm and Herambalal Gupta had worked together in the U.S.A. Heramba reached the Far East region earlier and later on, Boehm came according to his instruction. Their plan was to send 500 pistols to Bangkok and 5000 to Chittagong on Bengal. Accordingly, Boehm was asked to proceed towards Chittagong with the arms consignment. This also failed. Even after these failures, the German Consul at Shanghai planned to send two ships carrying arms to Raimangal and Balasore and a third ship to the Andamans. Helfferich made almost a last attempt to send some money (66,000 guilders—Dutch coin equivalent to little more than a rupee) to a Bengali at Penang or to Calcutta. The messenger, a Chinese, was arrested at Singapore. However, none of these schemes ultimately materialised. Heramba, Boehm and Wehde were tried in the U.S.A. and convicted some time in 1916 or early 1917.

The attempts in the Far East thus ended in failure. The waters of the Pacific and of the Indian Oceans were churned with the fervour of these revolutionaries; but the waters calmed down soon. Is there any trace left of those heroic souls? The water flows rapidly and keeps no impress of any writing on its breast; and there is hardly any mark left of the sweat and blood that flowed from the martyrdom of so many Indian revolutionaries in that region. But these cannot all have been lost. There may still be some trace in the wide bosoms of the Pacific and the Indian Oceans.

We have come to the end of our story of the attempts to organise an armed rising in India during the First World War. This rising was to be effected, of course, with German help of arms and ammunitions, but with the active collaboration of the people, guided and inspired by the revolutionary workers and to be further sustained by a mutiny of the Indian soliders.



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## Chapter Forty-nine

# Women in the Revolutionary Movement

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The revolutionary movement in Bengal based itself on the moral ideals preached by Swami Vivekananda. Great importance was placed on celibacy and observance of *brahmacharya*. Books on *brahmacharya* were extensively read by the recruits and members of all revolutionary parties. Often the vow of celibacy was administered to the members. Associating with women and young girls was definitely discouraged. So, in the early stages, women were not recruited in revolutionary parties. It can be said that up to 1914, there was a near-total ban on the recruitment of women. But by the end of 1914, with the increase in the number of underground workers, it was felt that some women members were needed to give shelter to the absconders. The Government secret service, being well conversant with the revolutionaries' ideas about women, would not readily suspect a family. Absconders were, therefore, to be provided with an improvised family environment to divert police attention as also public suspicion.

Besides, mothers and sisters of the revolutionaries used to help them in various ways. Money was not so cheap and abundant then; even a rupee was often considered a considerable amount for their

activities. A mother would give her son a few rupees when the latter was insistent. The young man might not disclose the whole truth to his mother and sister; but the latter, particularly the sister, could form a vague idea as to the purpose for which money seemed to be in such pressing demand. It was not very difficult for the mother to surmise that her son was engaged in some dangerous game. His movements and even his secretive looks would give an impression at least to the watchful eye of the mother that her son was seriously engaged in something which he was not ready to disclose, and she would often be ready to afford him protection against the father's suspicion or wrath. Strangers frequently coming and staying as friends of her son would make the mother suspicious. The anxious and affectionate mother would discuss her suspicions more with her daughter or daughter-in-law than with her husband or an elder son. The young man also would unburden his mind to his sister or even to his sister-in-law who would more readily sympathise with, and admire, the purpose of the young desperado; often they would even part with some of their ornaments.

In those days, a revolver or a pistol was almost a treasure. The safe custody of a revolver was a very serious business. In many cases, it was found safer and more convenient to keep the revolver with the mother, or more frequently with the sister, or with any young woman in a neighbour's house. In some cases, she might not have any precise knowledge of the contents of the parcel in which the revolver was packed. But in most cases this was disclosed to the young lady in whose custody the pistol was placed, but not always to the mother. The safe custody of another variety of articles namely the booty of dacoities, often caused more difficulties. Cash booty was easier to keep; but ornaments secured in dacoities had often to be kept with some women relatives or sympathisers. Revolutionary workers very often had to travel from village to village and from district to district. In the course of such tours, they had to put up in the house of local comrades, sometimes for days together. This would not be possible without the sympathetic connivance of the mother, the sister or the sister-in-law, as this was to be done without bringing it to the notice of the male head of the family. In all these matters the female members of the family of a revolutionary worker or even of those of his neighbour's family rendered real service to

the cause. The mother would often do all these simply to save her son from serious imminent trouble.

Sometimes sisters also worked as inspirers and helpmates. In this respect, the elder sisters of Jatin Mukherjee and of Swami Prajnanananda Saraswaty stand out prominently. Sarojini Devi was the widowed elder sister of Swami Pñajnanananda Saraswaty; she used to take a keen interest in revolutionary activities. In his younger days, Satish Mookerjee (as he was called before initiation into sanyás) used to receive support and encouragement within the family from his elder sister Sarojini. The members of the Barisal section of the Jugantar party used to look upon her with high regard and respect. Later on, she became a sanyasini and used to stay at Banaras where she was known as Mataji. About five years ago she breathed her last. Similarly, Jatin Mukherjee's widowed elder sister, Benodebala, used to exercise great influence over Jatin. She knew almost everything that Jatin was doing. Party members used to call her *didi* (elder sister) and treat her with great respect. She was a source of strength and inspiration to Jatin. She told Jatin that she would never like to hear that the tiger (Jatin) was meekly lodged in a cage. She exhorted Jatin never to get arrested but better to die fighting. After his martyrdom at Balasore (September 1915), Benodebala took charge of his young children and brought them up. She died some years ago.

Besides these two respected ladies there was, really speaking, no woman member, at least none known to the writer. Manorama Majumdar, the wife of Nagen Majumdar, was closely connected with some members of the Mymensingh group of the Jugantar party. Nagen Majumdâr, a businessman, had been to Japan and was a police suspect for his sympathetic attitude towards the revolutionary movement. Manorama used to give shelter to revolutionary workers and also to keep revolvers in her custody. The most important case at this period of a lady suffering for keeping arms was that of Dukoribala Devi of Birbhum. She was the *mashi* (mother's sister) of Nibarã Ghatak, an important member of the Atmonnati Group. She used to give shelter to important absconders like Bepin Ganguly and others. A letter of Professor Jyotish Ghosh seized in course of a search at Chandernagar gave the clue and she was arrested in January 1917 with seven Mauser pistols in her custody. She was then 30 years

old. She was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment under the Arms Act. At the time of going to jail, she had three or four children, including an infant. During all this time, she showed great courage and moral strength. After her release, however, on account of the strict social conventions, she was not received back into the family of her husband.

As stated earlier, from 1915, another type of female worker was recruited for providing shelter to absconders. Among them two names deserve particular mention—Nanibala and Kshiroda Sundari. In 1915, after the arrest of Ram Majumdar, it was found necessary to contact him in jail to get the whereabouts of a Mauser pistol that had been in his custody. Nanibala Devi, a young widow of only 26, impersonated as the wife of Ram Majumdar to secure an interview with him in jail. Readers of today can hardly imagine what it meant for a young Hindu Brahmin widow, 55 years ago, to impersonate and put on the dress of, the wife of another man. It was through her efforts that the Mauser pistol was made available for revolutionary work. By distant relationship, she was the *pishima* (father's cousin) of Amar Chatterjee. She was accordingly called *Pishima* by the absconders under her care.

After this, she provided shelter to important absconders like Amar Chatterjee, Jadugopal Mukherjee, Atul Ghosh and others—first at Rishra and then at Chandernagar. When hunted by the police from one place to another, she went to Banaras and thence in a few days' time to Peshawar where she could not stay for long. She was arrested sometime in 1917 and brought to Banaras jail where she was subjected to the most inhuman torture that could be perpetrated on a woman. Then she was brought to Calcutta where she slapped the cheek of a European Deputy Commissioner because of his insulting behaviour. She was removed to the Presidency jail as a State Prisoner under Regulation III of 1818. She was the only female State Prisoner in British India till then. In jail, she went on hunger-strike, which she broke only when she was allowed to have Dukoribala as her cook. Dukoribala was a convicted prisoner, but Nanibala was a State Prisoner and thus entitled to have her own food cooked according to her choice and social conventions. Dukoribala was a Brahmin and would also get better association, food and treatment as Nanibala's cook. Nanibala was released in 1919; but she had no

longer any place in her family and so had to live alone. She died in 1967. In her old age she passed her lonely and difficult days engaged in religious practices.

Another lady, Sindhubala Ghose, also suffered much for helping the revolutionary workers. She was the wife of Deben Ghose, a worker in charge of Tiljala Railway Cabin in an eastern suburb of Calcutta who was a member of the Jugantar party. His residence at the Tiljala Cabin was being utilised as a shelter for political absconders including Amarendra Chatterjee, Kuntal Chakravarty, Bhupendra Kumar Datta and Kesto Saha. Kesto, a member of the Anushilan party, was staying there as the two parties were then collaborating in the matter of providing safe refuge for absconders. He was arrested somewhere else; but he disclosed the place of his shelter in Deben Ghose's house. In the meantime, Sindhubala, who was in an advanced stage of pregnancy, left Tiljala for her village home in the district of Bankura. Deben was arrested; but Sindhubala could not be found at Tiljala. The police party went to her village to arrest her.

In that village, there were two ladies of the same name. To be sure of their job, the police arrested both the Sindhubalas and made them walk a few miles up to the railway station, even though the real Sindhubala, the wife of Deben Ghose, was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Both the Sindhubalas were detained in Bankura district jail. After a few months, the other Sindhubala was released but the real Sindhubala was kept in jail for over two years. This case roused great public indignation. Akhil Chandra Dutt in his presidential address at the Provincial Conference at Chinsurah as also Ramananda Chatterjee in his two journals, *The Modern Review* and *Prabasi*, bitterly criticised the Government for thus treating a pregnant lady.

We shall here mention the case of another lady, Kshiroda Sundari of Mymensingh. She also came into the movement in connection with giving shelter to political absconders. She first gave shelter to Surendra Mohan Ghose when he was an underground worker in his own district of Mymensingh. When Jadugopal went to Mymensingh in 1916, he lived under her shelter. Subsequently Kshiroda Sundari moved from place to place along with the absconders—Kshitish Bose and his brother, Prithwish, Nagen Chakravarty, Satish Thakur and others. She had to keep temporary establishments at Deobhog (in Narayanganj), Sarishabari, Jamalpur (both in Mymensingh),

Sesajganj, Dhubri and other places. At Dhubri, she had to play the role of a hotel keeper.

When almost everyone was arrested, she was sent to Banaras as if on a pilgrimage. At that time she was about 45 years old; the absconders used to call her *Jethai-ma* (the elder aunt). During those hectic days, she displayed great courage and ready wit as also strong nerves. After staying for some time at Banaras, she returned to her husband's native village. She had become a widow at about 23 years of age and had a daughter. She used to keep the daughter and the son-in-law with her to give the establishment the semblance of a real family. As she was not arrested, she could go back to her family circle. Social conditions were somewhat more liberal in the East Bengal districts than in the districts of West Bengal and in non-Brahmin families. Though she had stayed out of her family and home for over two years, she had no difficulty in getting back her place in the family.

I have in an earlier chapter narrated the story of *Baro-Pishima* (elder aunt) who went up to Gauhati for providing shelter to Amar Chatterjee, Nalini Ghose and others. What happened to her later on, we do not know, nor did we know her real name. She remained to the revolutionaries of those days simply *Baro-Pishimã*.

These ladies did their best to help the revolutionaries at great personal risk and suffered in different ways and, above all, from social persecution; so I have thought it necessary to pay my homage to them. Most of them passed their last days unknown, unhonoured. Women came more prominently into the revolutionary movement during the thirties. But I am not dealing with that period here.

Before concluding this chapter, I should say a few words about the mothers of the revolutionary young men. With her uncanny sense regarding the welfare of her son, the mother could realise that the son had departed from the normal way of life. In those days, revolutionary young men took to an austere mode of living; often they would forego non-vegetarian diet or onion or things like that. They used to follow some religious and moral convictions usually not observed by young men of their age. Often they would go out at unusual hours or return at unusual hours. The suspicious mother would express her concern to the daughter or the daughter-in-law, that is, the sister or sister-in-law of the son. The mother would rather

try to shield the son from the suspicion or wrath of the father. It was always the responsibility and anxiety of the mother to take care of her son and to protect him and often help him. Arms were often entrusted for safe-keeping to the sister or the sister-in-law with the mother's knowledge.

During their long spells of detention and prison life, the young men had to undergo many fasts and hunger-strikes often running into over two months. On many occasions their letters were withheld; or for two or three months they were not permitted to write or receive any letter. One can easily understand the agony of the mother when she was not receiving any letter from or any information about the son detained in prison by an alien government, or when the son was on hunger-strike for an indefinite period. During the period of hunger-strike, no letter was allowed to be written or received by the political prisoners. The mothers had to bear the full load of agony and anxiety. In addition to the mental agony and anxiety, the mothers often had to suffer poverty and distress. Most of these young men came from lower middle-class families, and were brought up and educated as the future hope and support of the family. Yet the mothers were seldom unhelpful or unappreciative of the hard and noble work their sons had taken up as their duty and *dharma*.

• If the workers of that movement had shown courage and fortitude, their mothers had shown no less; if we underwent sufferings and sacrifice, our mothers did no less; the self-abnegation and renunciation, we courted, were matched by our mothers. That is why Rabindranath has written—

The flow of blood from the veins of the hero,  
 The stream of tears of the mother,  
 Will the price of all these be lost in the earthly dust ?  
 Will not all that bring redemption ?  
 Will not the Lord of the Universe repay all these debts ?

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## Chapter Fifty

# In Detention and Prison

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So we come to the collapse of the effort. All frantic attempts within and outside India to have an armed rising failed. Simultaneously, the Government's repressive measures became more and more ruthless day by day. Immediately after the declaration of war (August 4), the Government of India passed the Foreigners Ordinance on 29th August—apparently to prevent undesirable foreigners from entering India. This Ordinance was also used against the citizens of Chandernagar (a French colony close to Calcutta) entering Calcutta for their normal avocations and business. On 5th September, the Ingress into India Ordinance was passed empowering the Government to restrict the movement of any one entering India after 5th September. This was particularly intended to be used against the returning emigrants. The steamer *Komagata Maru* entered the waters of the Hooghly on 27th September and it reached Budge-Budge on the 29th. So this Ordinance was enacted just in time to deal with the emigrants.

Then the Defence of India Act was passed by the Imperial Legislative Council in March 1915. Even from the early months of 1915, young men suspected of revolutionary connections were being



arrested and detained under the Defence of India Act, passed in March 1915 in imitation of the Defence of Realm Act (DORA) of Great Britain; but it was much more repressive than DORA. Besides this new weapon, the Government brought an old weapon out of the armoury—the Regulation III of 1818. This Regulation was passed in 1818 to deal with the deposed Native Princes who were not always very docile. It applied to the whole of India except the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras for which two separate Regulations had been passed about the same time. It may be stated here that the Lucknow session of the Congress “in a resolution viewed with alarm the extensive use of the Defence of India Act and the Bengal Regulation III of 1818 and urged that in the application of the Defence of India Act, which was an emergency measure, the same principle should be followed as under the Defence of the Realm Act of the United Kingdom.”\*

In the first decade of this century, the old Regulation was first used against Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh of Punjab and then against nine leaders of the Swadeshi movement of Bengal—Aswini Kumar Dutt, Satish Chatterjee, Krishna Kumar Mitra, Sachin Bose, Shyamsunder Chakravarty, Monoranjan Guha Thakurta, Subodh Mullick, Pulin Das and Bhupesh Nag (November 1908). During the War, some Bengali young men were clapped in jail as State Prisoners under the Regulation. At first, arrests were not so frequent and some scrutiny was exercised before arresting a person for detention without trial. Both under the Defence of India Act and under Regulation III of 1818, anyone could be detained without trial for an indefinite period. From July 1916, i.e., following the murder at Calcutta of Basanta Chatterjee, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Intelligence Branch, on 30th June, the Government ordered indiscriminate arrests. Before July 1916, the total number of persons detained without trial under those two Acts did not exceed three or four hundred. But in July to September 1916 in Bengal alone, about 1200 or more persons were arrested and detained without trial. An almost equal number of persons were detained in Punjab. Some young men arrested with revolvers or pistols in their possession were not prosecuted, as the Government was not sure of the evidence and conviction. Very

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\* Dr. P. Sitaramayya in his *History of the Congress*.

often, the arrested young men were kept in the police lock-up for a fortnight, during which they were subjected to various forms of interrogation, intimidation, threats and inducements. Physical torture was hardly used on any of them before July 1916. But from that time on, the worst forms of physical torture were perpetrated on them.

I shall here try to give a picture of life in detention—both in jails and in rural areas. Those who were detained under the Defence of India Act were interned in some police stations, mostly in rented huts. The places chosen were generally unhealthy, socially backward and not easily accessible. Malaria was very common in those places. A young man thus interned was to keep within his hut from sunset to sunrise, i.e., for about 12 to 13 hours of the day. During these hours he was not allowed to receive any visitor in his house or to talk to any passer-by. Even during the day, he was not permitted to mix with or talk to any student or teacher. He was to present his attendance at the police station twice every day; in some cases it was only once a day. This attendance, once or twice as the case might be, was to be done at a particular time. The residential houses of the internees were not necessarily close to the police stations; in most cases, these were pretty far off, even two or three miles away. Within one police station, there were sometimes more than one internee or detenu; in that case, they were directed not to mix with or talk to one another. Several islands in the Bay of Bengal were selected as places of detention where about ten or twelve were kept in separate huts. Kutabdia, Maheshkhali, Sandwip, Kakdwip and some other islands became notorious as places of detention. Kutabdia had about thirty huts, one each for one internee. They were not allowed to talk to each other or otherwise have any communication. Other notorious places of detention were in the terai regions below Bhutan; these were considered to be the most unhealthy regions of Bengal.

It was often very difficult to fulfil the conditions imposed on the detenu; and as such the detenu was mostly at the mercy of the sub-inspector or the officer-in-charge of the police station. Prosecution for violation of these conditions was not infrequent; this was followed by conviction and imprisonment for some months or even a year. Cases of snake-bite were frequently reported. Bear, boar, tiger, leopard, jackal, elephant and other wild animals often roamed about those areas. One young man, interned in the terai area, told me how

he was terrified when one night he saw some bears dancing about in his yard. A tiger scratching against the bamboo wall or fencing of his house was the experience of another.

But there were worse things. Moral standards in such villages were very low. Those immature young men of twenty or less, cut off from their dear ones, and emotionally starved, often tended to fall easy prey to the wiles of sexually loose elements in the rural environment. Sometimes the police also connived at such seductions of the interned young men. When the writer was in a jail as a State Prisoner under Regulation III, a young man, the nephew of a fellow State Prisoner, was brought into that jail to face his trial for violation of the terms and conditions of internment. He was a boy of about seventeen whose sole offence was his relation to his uncle. He had a very good character and was a fairly good student. But he fell a prey to immoral wiles in his place of internment. That was why he was prosecuted. Many bright young men were physically and morally ruined in their places of internment. Quite a number of young men in detention committed suicide. Stories of torture in police lock-up were gradually becoming known to the public. It was Mrs. Annie Besant who took up their case and that, perhaps, was one of the reasons why she also was interned under the Defence of India Act.

I have earlier referred to the hard condition of those interned under the Defence of India Act in unwholesome rural areas. The condition of the State Prisoners in jail was also no less hard. Some jails held a number of prisoners; in the Presidency, the Alipore New Central and the Midnapur Central jails, about 20 to 30 state prisoners were detained in each. But though they were detained in contiguous cells, under the rules they were not allowed to speak to one another. This rule was never observed by the State Prisoners and there were frequent troubles over that one point. They were kept confined to their cells the whole day with relaxation for about half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening, when they were allowed to take a short walk either individually in the ante-cells or collectively in an attached yard. The food was monotonous, ill-cooked, tasteless, adulterated, impure and highly unhygienic. After some hunger-strikes and other troubles, the State Prisoners were allowed to have their food, cooked under their own supervision.

But the greatest difficulty was about their intellectual pursuits.

From the very first day, without their asking, they were allowed cigarettes and tea; but all forms of restrictions were imposed on the supply of books, magazines, pens or pencils and writing paper. No daily paper was allowed. The conditions were the worst in the Presidency Jail and the best in the Alipore New Central Jail (both within Calcutta). Residential accommodation was the worst in the Midnapore Central jail. The cells there were known as corridor cells—i.e. each cell was facing another cell with common roof covering the rather large block that would hardly permit the sun's rays to peep in. It was in this jail that the State Prisoners could realise the true significance of Oscar Wilde's line—"Upon that little tent of blue, which prisoners call the sky."

The arrested persons, after passing fourteen days in police lock-up, were sent to jail for one month. After that period, the final order was passed either of internment in rural areas within some police station or of detention in jail under Regulation III of 1818. During that period of one month, an interview with relatives was sometimes allowed. The writer was allowed such an interview with his elder brother for fifteen minutes. It was supervised by Lowman, then Deputy Commissioner, Special Branch, of Calcutta Police and the conversation had to be conducted in English so that Lowman might follow it. His brother actually broke down after a few minutes' talk; he had heard of the torture in the police lock-up. Before leaving, he could only say, "Have faith in God." Lowman almost shouted in anger, "What do you say?" The writer calmly replied that his brother had asked him to have faith in God—which surely could not be considered objectionable. His brother gave him some books, one of which was Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, as the writer was then a student of philosophy, a forgotten subject among many other forgotten hobbies of early life.

Neither the internees in rural areas nor the State Prisoners in jails could just surrender themselves to that trend of events. We are not here narrating the story of their jail life, but simply trying to say that even in detention they were not in a quiescent and complacent mood. Kutabdia detenus (about thirty in number) organised a mass violation of the terms and conditions of internment, for which they were prosecuted. C. R. Das took up their defence. The Kutabdia Detenus' Case created a sensation in the then listless and languid

politics of Bengal. The Bangiya Mahajan Sabha published a book reproducing the proceedings of this case. The suicide of Sachindra Nath Das Gupta (of Rangpur) and the horrid stories of life in detention moved Rabindranath Tagore. Before committing suicide, Sachin wrote a long letter full of emotion and with some literary flair; that letter was published in some papers. Makhan Lal Ghose (of Baranagar) also committed suicide in his place of internment as also Suren Kar who, when arrested, was a B.A. student of the Calcutta Presidency College. I can recall another suicide in the Rajshahi Central Jail of a young man named Rasik Sarkar, who burnt himself to death in his cell. I cannot now recall other names. There were other suicides in jails and in places of internment. The writer even now recollects his last contact with Makhan in November 1917 at the Presidency jail. Makhan was younger than he; when others were sent to the Hazaribagh Central Jail in Bihar and Makhan was not sent, he broke into tears. After some time, he was sent to an unhealthy place in the Sunderbans in the delta area of the Ganga. Makhan committed suicide there.

When these stories were trickling out, Rabindranath came out of his seclusion. In 1917, in the Calcutta Town Hall, he read his famous article *Kartar Ichhayá Karma* (Work as the Master Wills). In quick succession, he wrote two other articles, *Chhoto-Barho* (The Small and the Big) and *Swadhikar Pramatta* (Intoxicated with Power). In some of the articles, he referred to the suffering of these political detainees and their families; in one he specifically mentioned Sachin's suicide. This was the beginning of a political revival in Bengal. The case of Sindhubala was prominently mentioned in the presidential speech of Akhil Dutt at the Provincial Political Conference at Chinsura. He mentioned this as the "massacre of the innocents." In the editorial columns of his two journals, *The Modern Review* and *Prabasi*, Ramananda Chatterjee started writing feelingly and strongly about the miserable condition of the detenus. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* also kept up its tradition. Particular mention should be made of how it regularly reported the cases of cruel repression of internees, particularly of Professors Jyotish Ghosh and Manindra Sett.

In jail, the State Prisoners started creating trouble by courting trouble for themselves. Hunger-strike was the main weapon. Not that the political prisoners undertook hunger-strike simply to create

trouble. Jail conditions were awfully bad; the ordinary prisoners' life was sub-human. The jail authorities constantly inflicted small insults and indignities on them, apart from frequent inhuman physical tortures not legally allowed. The political prisoners or detenus had to take up the cause of ordinary prisoners often as also to defend their own honour and dignity. In short, jail conditions in those days, particularly for ordinary convicts, were almost barbarous. The jail code itself provided very strict and rigorous conditions of living, work, diet etc; but what was more abominable was the unauthorised and illegal discomforts and tortures inflicted on the prisoners. For all these, the State Prisoners had to take recourse to hunger-strike. "It should also be stated that in every jail there were some convicted political prisoners who had to share the same fate as of the non-political convicts.

By the end of 1917, Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, came to India to study the political situation. The State Prisoners in Alipore New Central Jail started a hunger-strike on the day of his arrival in Calcutta. It was a political hunger-strike and not for the redress of any jail grievance. Within two or three days, the strikers were dispersed to different jails even outside Bengal. Bhupendra Kumar Datta, who was transferred to Bilaspur Jail, continued his hunger-strike for 78 days, till then the longest ever period of hunger-strike in any country. Most others gave up the fast after ten or twelve days. Satyen Sen continued it for 61 days in Amraoti jail. He tried to commit suicide by hanging from the roof of his cell; but the crash of the chair, kicked off from under his feet after the noose had been put round the neck, attracted the attention of the sentry and he was immediately brought down.

About 44 state prisoners were confined in the Hazaribagh Central Jail. There they had three hunger-strikes successively; these were not so much for the redress of jail grievances as for asserting their rights. The last one in April-May 1919 continued for 64 days. That was the time of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre. After this hunger-strike, some daily papers were allowed to them; but nationalist papers were not allowed. Even those papers which were allowed were strictly censored; portions of the paper were clipped off or were blackened with printers' ink. As always before, the prisoners had to procure nationalist newspapers by smuggling them in through the jail staff.

Cigarettes that were supplied to the State Prisoners were mostly utilised in bribing jail warders and officials for the supply of nationalist newspapers. Preparations for the Non-co-operation Movement were then afoot. The prospects and possibilities of this new movement were discussed by the State Prisoners in Jail. Jugantar party members detained in different prisons decided to accept and work for the movement though they could not accept non-violence as a creed.

I should also relate the lot of convicted political prisoners. This category of prisoners became a problem from 1907—specially in Bengal. During the anti-partition and boycott movement, a number of young men—and some elderly men also—were convicted for preaching sedition. There was no special privilege or category for them; they were treated just like ordinary criminals in jails. Diet, clothes, accommodation and restrictions of various nature were all at a sub-human level. From 1909-10, the number of convicted political prisoners for violent overt acts gradually increased to a considerable magnitude. They were all given hard labour—i.e., work which in any civilised country would have been done through animal labour or mechanical devices. Grinding oil from the *ghani* was even then being done with bullocks. But in jails, this was done through convict labour. Breaking stones into chips, thrashing out *Sisal* (aloe) coir threads, grinding wheat, etc.—these were the most painful tasks in jails; the convicted political prisoners were generally put to these and they were confined day and night in cells. The usual instruction was to keep them in cells.

Then, among the convicted politicals, the more important ones were sent to the Andamans—to be imprisoned in the notorious Cellular Jail. That prison was actually meant for hardened criminals who, after release, were to be settled there. These islands in the Bay of Bengal—or, rather, in the Indian Ocean—were being developed as a penal settlement. A very large percentage of the population there, immediately after independence, were descendents of the convict settlers. The cells were small with hardly any outlets for ventilation. Savarkar, Barin Ghose and his colleagues in the Alipore Bomb Case, Pulin Das, Naren Ghose, Nikhil Guha Roy and others of the Shibpur Case, Gopen Roy, Ashu Lahiri and others of the Pragpur Case, and many others were there. Bhai Paramananda and a large number of

those convicted in the conspiracy cases of Lahore were sent there. There were repeated hunger strikes in that jail; some even died in the hunger strike. Nothing about that jail could find any mention in Indian newspapers. The condition of Russian prisons as described by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and others would compare far better than the conditions prevailing in the Cellular Jail of the Andamans.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms scheme was announced some time in April-May 1918; and the consequent Act of the British Parliament was passed in December 1919. On 20th August, 1917, Montagu made a statement in the House of Commons in which he announced as the Government's policy "the gradual development of self-government institutions with a view to progressive realisation of responsible government in India." Then he came to India for an on-the-spot study of the Indian situation. When the Government of India Act was passed, it failed to satisfy the rising aspirations of the political leaders of India. In the Special Session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay on August 29, 1918, a resolution was passed characterising the Reforms proposal as "disappointing and unsatisfactory." The Congress strongly declared that "the people of India are fit for responsible government." Then in the annual session at Delhi, though not rejecting the Reforms proposals outright, the views of the Congress were further stiffened against the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. That session passed a resolution against the bills embodying the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee. This Committee was set up to report on the "criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India."

To implement the recommendations of this Committee, the Government introduced two bills in the Indian Legislative Council. One of these bills was passed on 21st March, 1919; it was called the Criminal Law Emergency Act. It contained all the main features of the Defence of India Act, which had been regarded by the people as a war-time emergency legislation. The war had already ended; so this was intended to be a permanent curb on civil rights of the people in peace time.

During the War period, there was a lull in the public life of India, particularly of Bengal. Surendra Nath Banerjea had already been eclipsed. No other political leader had yet emerged before the public. When the repressive measures were being taken against the young



men of Bengal, the only voice of protest was that of Annie Besant and later of Rabindranath Tagore. Then came the Satyagraha movement of Gandhiji in protest against the Rowlatt Bills. This led to widespread conflicts between the people and the Government. In May 1919 came the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Martial Law atrocities in the Punjab. This created a stir in the political life of the country. Rabindranath's historic letter, renouncing his knighthood, came like a flash of lightning in the dark political sky of India. In Bengal, C.R. Das was gradually coming up as a public leader. His first emergence in the public field was noticed when he took up the case of the Kutabdia detenus' case. His next public action was to organise relief work for the devastating cyclone which ravaged large parts of East Bengal in 1919. After the Punjab atrocities a new set of leaders emerged—C. R. Das, Motilal, Vithalbhai and others—Gandhiji was, of course, the spearhead of this new upsurge. Then began the era of Gandhi in Indian politics.

On 25th December, 1919, there was a Royal Proclamation inaugurating the Montagu Reforms scheme and also announcing clemency for all political prisoners. The Proclamation said: "Let those who in their eagerness for political progress have broken the law in the past, respect it in future. A new era is opening. Let it begin with a common determination among my people and my officers to work together with a common purpose. I, therefore, direct my Viceroy to exercise in my name and on my behalf my Royal Clemency to political offenders in the fullest measure which in his judgment is compatible with public safety." This proclamation gave one satisfaction to the revolutionaries: at last the Government had not questioned their patriotism and their *bonafide* intention. On the proclamation of the Royal Clemency, the Ali brothers and Maulana Azad, who had also been interned under the Defence of India Act, were released. But as regards the release of the Bengal detenus and convicted prisoners, both of Bengal and Punjab, the Government started bargaining and haggling. Some of the earlier batch of political prisoners, as for example those who were convicted in the Alipur Bomb Case, were released. But as for the State Prisoners, detained for their political activities during the First World War, a lot of difficulties were created. The Bengal Government and officials tried to place certain conditions about their future political aims and activi-

tics. Not once but several times high officials of the Bengal Secretariat met almost all the State Prisoners in different jails; in some cases these interviews ended in a bitter exchange of words and verbal skirmishes. Most of the State Prisoners refused to give any undertaking as to their future political activities. This process of wrangling and haggling went on month after month, and the State Prisoners were released in a very slow process. Quite a number of them were released by about the middle of 1920 almost on the eve of the special session of the Congress. But the last batch was released only by about the end of 1920. Many political prisoners convicted for revolutionary activities were not released for some years yet; they continued to languish in distant prisons far off from Bengal and Punjab. Quite a number of them were rotting in the Cellular Jail of the Andamans. Thus was the Royal clemency honoured by the Government.

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## Chapter Fifty-one

# In the Wake of It

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The secret revolutionary movement and its manifestations in Bengal, Punjab and other parts of India, had alarmed the alien authorities in India about the situation, particularly when Britain was engaged in a war for her very existence. The Government set up a committee named the Sedition Committee, commonly known as the Rowlatt Committee after the name of its chairman Mr. Justice Rowlatt, Judge of the King's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice, London. There were five other members, of whom only two were Indians—one a judge of the Madras High Court, C. U. Kumar-swami Shastri, and the other from Bengal, P. C. Mitter. The Committee was set up on 10th October, 1917, to:

- (i) investigate and report on the nature and extent of the criminal conspiracy connected with the revolutionary movement in India;
- (ii) examine and consider the difficulties that have arisen in dealing with such conspiracy and to advise as to the legislation, if any, necessary to enable Government to deal effectively with them.

The Committee submitted its report on 15th April, 1918. Except for four sittings which were held in Lahore, all other sittings of the Committee were held in Calcutta. The Committee recommended special legislation which would dispense with some of the important provisions of normal judicial procedure. The main features of the proposed Acts were abolition of the jury system, modification of the committal procedure, suspension of some of the provisions of the Evidence Acts and withdrawal of the right of filing appeal against the judgment of the court. The Committee also recommended "to give power to require persons by executive order to remain in any area to be specified or not to enter or remain in any such area." In plain language it meant that the Government would have the power to detain or to extern any person without trial. The proposed legislation was more or less in line with the Defence of India Act. Now the main features of that legislation were proposed to be permanently placed on the statute.

When the Committee submitted its report with its recommendations, there was a general sense of indignation, even anger, in the country. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who till now was an ardent believer in the British sense of justice and also a supporter of the war effort during the First World War, strongly resented the provisions of the two proposed Acts which the Government had drafted. To implement the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee, the Government introduced two Bills in the Imperial Legislative Assembly in February 1919. Gandhi had by then shifted his centre of activities from South Africa to India and had not yet decided about his future course of action here. On the one hand there was the attraction of Gokhale's Servants of India Society; on the other, was the shock he received from the Acts proposed to be passed by the Imperial Assembly; the latter ultimately decided his future course. Even though he was unwell, he defied the medical and friendly cautions about his health and plunged into a movement to organise resistance to this law. He gave a call for organising a country-wide satyagraha against the proposed Bills. He said that "the energy of everybody is and must be concentrated" on these two Bills.

The first Bill—the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill—was placed before the Assembly in February 1919. The entire non-official

bloc opposed the Bill. Vithalbhai Patel moved an amendment to postpone the consideration of the Bill. Jinnah, Surendranath Banerjea, Srinivas Shastri, all used very strong language in opposing it. Shastri, who was generally known for his calm and moderate language and temperament, used perhaps the strongest invective against the Bill. He said, "But, if our appeals fall flat, if the Act goes through, I do not believe there is any one here who would be doing his duty, if he did not join the agitation (i.e. Gandhi's Satyagraha movement)." With renewed vigour, Gandhi started organising satyagraha for opposing the black bills. In March and April 1919 there were demonstrations all over India against the Act and in many places there were clashes between the demonstrators and the Government forces. The climax was reached at Amritsar, and the tragedy of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre took place.

On 13th April, 1919, the New Year's Day according to the Indian calendar, thousands of people assembled in a closed ground to hold a peaceful meeting of protest, although in disobedience of the prohibitory order of the Government. Sir Micheal O'Dwyer was at the time the Lt. Governor of Punjab. Under his orders General Dyer, a military officer, marched to that ground with a number of soldiers and opened indiscriminate fire on the unarmed assembly. The number of the dead and the wounded can only be guessed. The Bagh had only one exit, being surrounded by buildings on all sides. The people could not even run away from the bullets as the only exit was blocked by the army men. Worse things followed during the Martial Law regime which was imposed. The infamous "crawling order" made even respectable people crawl on the streets instead of being allowed to walk. The honour of women was also wantonly violated. This became the turning point in India's nationalist movement. The whole being of Gandhi, hitherto a staunch believer in the British sense of justice, underwent a radical transformation after the passing of the Act and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

The conscience of the whole of India was roused. This was the beginning of a militant nationalist mass movement. Gandhiji announced his programme of non-violent non-cooperation with the British Government. Originally, his demand was the redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs. But soon he placed the demand for Swaraj as the main demand. In fact, he wanted Swaraj in one year.

It may be mentioned here that a few months earlier the Allied powers—i.e. Britain, France, Russia and the U.S.A.—had won the war and Germany, Austria and Turkey had been completely defeated. The Turkish Emperor, who was the Caliph, was deprived of authority over the Muslim holy places and could no longer function as the *Khalifa* of the Muslims. Russia had a revolution after the military collapse of Czarist Russia; the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 had a tremendous effect on the political aspirations of the subject nations and races. India also was not free from the influence of that revolution.

It must not be overlooked here that the British Government had at the same time some conciliatory proposals, too. We mentioned in a previous chapter that Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, had made a statement in Parliament and had come to India to study Indian conditions. The Government adopted the old dual policy of appeasing the Moderates on the one hand and taking repressive measures against the nationalists. Almost at the same time as the Rowlatt Committee Report, the new reforms proposals were also published. Two issues loomed before the public—the proverbial carrot in the form of the proposed reforms, and the whip in the form of the repressive measures as recommended by the Rowlatt Committee. At this juncture, it was Gandhi who tilted the balance in favour of a national struggle. He proclaimed, “The implementation of the Rowlatt Committee’s recommendations would mean the end of personal liberty.” This was endorsed by the people at the special session of the Congress in September 1920 at Calcutta. The resolution that was finally accepted embodied the demand for Swaraj in addition to redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs. Prior to that session of the Congress, political prisoners of Bengal were being released in batches. The writer was released just two months before the special session. He along with some other colleagues of Jugantar supported the Non-co-operation resolution there.

When Gandhi announced his programme of Non-co-operation Movement in the earlier half of 1920, many of the leading Bengal revolutionaries were still in jail or in detention at different places. It was for them to decide their future course of action. The prominent leaders of the Jugantar party in different prisons separately decided to support, even join, the movement on their release. They had

their reservations about the non-violence which was being emphatically insisted upon; but they felt that whatever be the nature of the movement, violent or non-violent, it was only through a mass movement that revolution and independence could be achieved. Small groups of young men could set examples of self-immolation by courting suffering or sacrificing their lives by their valiant deeds. That was the revolutionaries' programme of courting the maximum suffering by the minimum number of people to be followed by a mass-movement based on minimum suffering of the maximum number. Through courting individual sacrifices, a handful of revolutionaries could rouse the conscience of the nation. It soon became apparent in the enthusiastic response to Gandhi's call for Satyagraha that the objective had been achieved. There was no illusion in the thinking of the Jugantar workers who were sponsors of the Indo-German conspiracy. They knew that such desperate acts of a handful of young men could not by themselves bring real independence.

It was a transition in the national movement from a secret organisation of a select band of dedicated young men to a mass movement in which, generally speaking, the Indian masses could participate. The details of the Russian Revolution of 1917 were already trickling into India, even within the walls of Indian prisons. It was not the Bolshevik Party functioning from abroad which affected the revolution; it was not even the mutiny of the Russian Navy or the collapse of the Russian Army in the battlefield that had brought about the Communist revolution; it was rather the mass rising of the Russian peasants that achieved it. The peasant revolt urged Lenin to say that the revolution had already started and it was for the Bolshevik Party to provide the leadership. The time was ripe for the seizure of power not so much in the name of the Bolshevik Party but in that of the Soviets—the rural popular institutions in Russia, somewhat similar to our village panchayats.

In the Special Session of the Calcutta Congress in September 1920, Gandhiji's programme of non-violent non-cooperation was accepted. As decided while still in jails, the workers of the Jugantar party who were then outside the prison walls, supported the Non-cooperation movement and voted for it. Though Bengal in general, including its extremist leaders like C. R. Das, Bipin Pal, B. Chakravarti, I. B. Sen and others were not in favour of the pro-

gramme, it was accepted; and the Jugantar members, who had been released before the session, supported the proposal. The upsurge of the people removed the doubts in Chittaranjan Das's mind. He went to the Nagpur session of the Congress in December 1920 to oppose the programme; but popular enthusiasm converted him. Thus the leading lawyer of the Calcutta Bar offered his allegiance to Gandhiji. He had gone to Nagpur as Mr. C. R., Das, the topmost barrister; he came back to Calcutta as Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, the idol of the people, as he renounced all his wealth and luxurious mode of living. The Non-cooperation Movement thereby gained momentum in Bengal. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan had to depend largely upon the Jugantar workers for the district organisations all over Bengal. District after district was organised by them and District Congress Committees were also set up. Thus began a new chapter in India's history of liberation. Their line of argument was: a revolution was feasible only through mass support; as for the means of achieving the revolution, that would be decided by the people according to the demands of the situation and also according to the resources available to the people. So Jugantar merged with the movement, as had been its tradition.

The Anushilan party, in general, decided to oppose this movement; but some individual workers of Anushilan disagreed with the party decision and joined the movement. Anushilan's objection was to the emphasis on non-violence. They even decided to oppose that movement in collaboration with the Citizens Protection League, a subsidiary organisation of the Europeans and loyalist Indians. They placed their men in different districts to oppose the Non-co-operation movement. They started publishing a pamphlet called *Haq Katha* (Truth), denouncing the movement and its insistence on non-violence. But the Non-co-operation movement brought the Indian masses into the political struggle. Thus was the final spark of the Indian Revolution kindled and, from a secret movement, the revolutionary movement flared into an open mass movement.

Some Jugantar party members met Gandhiji at Calcutta and later at Nagpur; they frankly admitted their mental reservations regarding non-violence. Gandhiji appealed to them to give the movement a trial and they agreed to suspend secret organisation for violence and to work for a year in the movement. Gandhiji's programme



was specifically intended to bring Swaraj in a year provided the country accepted his programme. So, during this period, there was no attempt to reorganise the Jugantar party as a secret party for violent activities. But it continued as a closely linked body for the implementation of the Non-co-operation movement in different districts. This was the beginning of the dissolution of the Jugantar party as a secret and separate political party. The mass character of the movement and its potentiality were more and more deeply realised in the process of working out the Congress programme. It was felt that revolution must have a mass backing; a handful of young men could at best stage a *coup* or a revolt, whose practical possibility was then negligible in India. They decided, therefore, to go along with the national movement.

It is pertinent to mention here that the British authorities in India, always eager to malign the revolutionary movement, used to call it a terrorist or anarchist movement. This was a purposeful act of deception. The movement was never a terrorist movement. It was rather a movement of courting suffering and self-immolation at the altar of independence of the Motherland. It is significant that in the terms of reference of the Sedition Committee, the Government of India mentioned the movement as a "revolutionary movement" in India and not as a terrorist movement. When the Jugantar party, which, along with the Ghadr party of the Punjab, had sponsored and carried on the Indo-German conspiracy to stage an armed insurrection in some parts of India, joined the non-violent Non-co-operation movement, even with mental reservations about non-violence, it did so realising the potentialities of the movement and its possibilities of developing into a revolutionary mass movement. This was the culmination of the secret society movement and, with this, the Jugantar party liquidated itself in 1938 as the directing body of the revolution. They made an open declaration that they would have no other party affiliation apart from the Congress which they joined as the machinery for organising the masses of India, not only for political independence but also for a socio-economic revolution.

Before concluding, the writer craves the indulgence of the readers to consider the social and political conditions in which the movement was taken up by a band of reckless young men. The Government was in no way responsible to the people and not removable by the

verdict of the people. Freedom of thought and association was totally prohibited. The people had only one alternative, i.e., to submit to the autocratic rule of an alien Government without any question. In such a situation, those young men took upon themselves the task of rousing the conscience of the people by courting suffering and also by striking at the awe-inspiring prestige of the alien Government. Everyone then thought it to be an act of mad audacity to challenge the authority of the mighty British Raj. That myth of the invulnerability of the British Raj was somewhat broken by the Swadeshi and anti-Partition agitation. But that agitation brought in a reign of terror—in the form of so many repressive measures. So, it became necessary for a batch of dedicated young men to be ready to rush to reckless acts of self-immolation and thereby to put up a bold challenge to the alien Government. It was a sort of propaganda by courting suffering and by taking bold action to defy authority.

## APPENDIX I

### A NOTE ON MADAME CAMA

Two Indians did pioneering work in Britain and Europe as early as from 1903-1904. There is already a biography of Shyamji Krishnavarma. But I have not been able to get any book on Madame Cama. In a recent book, an Indian author has described her as a French lady. So ignorant is India about her ! Both Krishnavarma and Madame Cama spent money most generously for the cause of Indian revolution in their practically exiled life in Europe, and suffered otherwise also. Another name which deserves mention is that of Rana. I could not get much information about Rana, but I have some about Madame Cama. I am therefore adding a special note on her.

Madame Cama was born on September 20, 1869, in a fairly rich Parsee family of Bombay. Her father's name was Framji Patel. After finishing her education, she was married to Rustom Cama who also was a nationalist and for some years (1915-1928) managed *The Bombay Chronicle*. Madame Cama, however, had to leave India on account of her ill health, and on medical advice she went to England in 1901. There she started her political career. I am not sure whether this medical advice was not used as a plea to stay away from India so that she might be free to go on with her political activities. She had occasion there to come in contact with Shyamji Krishnavarma, Savarkar, Viren Chattopadhyaya, Mukund Desai and other revolutionaries. After a short stay in America in 1906, she returned to Europe and settled in Paris, where she pursued her revolutionary activities with intensified zeal. She published a paper, *Bandemataram*, in Paris in 1909. Hardayal was intimately connected with this paper.

In 1907 there was a conference of socialist parties of Europe in Stuttgart, Germany. Eminent socialists of Europe including Hyndman, Ramsay MacDonald, Scheingher (from Germany) attended the conference. Madame Cama attended that conference on behalf of India. Representatives of every country were hoisting their national flag; but India had no national flag of her own. When, the Union Jack was going to be hoisted as the flag of India, Madame Cama protested. She immediately made an improvised Indian flag and hoisted it with the following words: "This flag is India Independent—behold, it is born. It is already sanctified by the blood of martyred Indian youths. I call upon you, gentlemen, to rise and salute this flag of Indian Independence." And she demanded independence, not self-government or dominion status or anything like that. Hyndman supported Madame Cama whereas Ramsay MacDonald opposed her demand. But Madame Cama's demand was carried by a majority of votes. In the course of her speech she stated: "This continuance of the British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of Indians; and lovers of freedom all over the world ought to co-operate in freeing from slavery one-fifth of the whole human race inhabiting that oppressed country." That was a significant day for India as the claim for India's independence was first raised by that valiant lady.

It was due to her agitation that Savarkar's case attracted the attention of French socialists and radical thinkers. After 1914, when the First World War broke out, she intensified her campaign and wrote several articles appealing to the Indian soldiers that they should not fight on behalf of the British as this was not a war for India. It was some time before the War that she started the journal *Vanguard* in collaboration with Viren Chattopadhyaya. She appealed to the Indian

soldiers to surrender their arms and herself went to the camps of Indian soldiers at Marsilles and exhorted them to mutiny. France, being an ally of the British, could not allow this sort of anti-British propaganda. The British Government demanded the surrender of Madame Cama to their hands, to which, of course, the French Government did not agree. But they kept her in detention far away from Paris. After the War she was released, and she returned to Paris. During this period Lenin invited her to Russia, but she declined. This hectic life and intense revolutionary activities further ruined her health which was always delicate. In 1935, at the age of 64, while completely broken in health, she got the permission of the British Government to return to India. Within a short time she breathed her last on Indian soil. Before her death she gave a message to the nation, "He who loses his liberty, loses his virtue. Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God."

## APPENDIX II

### NOTES ON REPRESSIVE MEASURES

References have been made throughout the book to repressive laws and circulars issued by the Government against the Swadeshi movement and subsequently against the revolutionary movement. A consolidated note on these measures is given below.

There were some existing laws which were not originally intended for any political purpose but were freely used against the political suspects and workers.

(1) *Bengal Regulation III of 1818* was passed originally by the Government under the East India Company for the Presidency of Bengal (which then covered the entire British territory in India except Bombay and Madras Presidencies) to deal with recalcitrant deposed Native Princes. For political workers, it was first used against Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh of Punjab in May 1907 and then in November 1908 against nine important leaders of Bengal namely, Aswini Kumar Dutt, Subodh Mallick, Shyam Sunder Chakravarty, Manoranjan Guha Thakurta, Krishna Kumar Mitra, Sachindra Prasad Basu, Satish Chatterjee, Pulin Das and Bhupesh Nag. But from 1915-16 it was widely used against political suspects and workers belonging to revolutionary parties. A similar law—the *Bombay Regulation XXV of 1827* was used against the Natu Brothers in 1897. The Congress session of 1897 condemned this detention as a *lettre de cachet* method.

(2) *Indian Arms Act* and *Indian Explosives Act* (1908) were also freely used. Under the Indian Arms Act, possession of any arms was considered as an offence. Quite a number of political workers were convicted under this Act.

(3) *Section 121* of the *Indian Penal Code* dealt with conspiracy to wage war. In most of the political cases involving a number of persons, this charge was levelled against the accused.

(4) *Section 124(A)*: *I.P.C.* dealt with sedition, defined as any attempt by action or words—spoken or written—to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection against the Government. The provisions of this section were so wide that any public speech or writing advocating nationalism or self-government or the rights of the people might come under the mischief of this section.

(5) *Section 153 (A)*: *I.P.C.* dealt with promoting enmity between different groups and acting in a manner prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony. This section also had a very wide coverage and anything against Government would have an automatic reaction of creating hatred against the officials or the anti-national section of the people.

(6) *Sections 107, 109 and 110* of the *Criminal Procedure Code* were originally meant for dealing with habitual criminals and vagrants suspected of bad livelihood and criminal propensity. Under these three sections, the Government were empowered to

demand security for good behaviour from such suspected persons; failure to provide the security, to the satisfaction of the trying court, would mean imprisonment. These three sections were widely used against political suspects, as in many cases they could not show any ostensible means of livelihood or any definite place of habitation. Several important political workers were prosecuted under these 3 sections and were convicted.

(7) *Section 144: Criminal Procedure Code* empowered the Government to prohibit any assembly of persons from meeting in a certain area or place. Failure to comply would mean conviction. This section was extensively used during those days and also subsequently during the days of the movements conducted by the Congress.

After the beginning of the Revolutionary Movement the following Acts were passed:

(8) *Criminal Law Amendment Act (Act XIV of 1908)* empowered the Government to proceed with the trial by a Special Bench after some abridged form of preliminary enquiry. It also enabled the Government to declare unlawful certain associations, and under this enactment several *samitis* or associations in the two Provinces of Bengal were declared unlawful. This was an all-India Act and was also widely applied to Punjab.

(9) *Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act of 1908* gave Government the power to forfeit presses used for publishing newspapers inciting certain offences.

(10) *Indian Press Act of 1910 (9th February)* gave the Government power to demand security from the keeper of the press.

Nos. 9 and 10 gave wide power to the Government to suppress the freedom of the Press without any judicial trial but simply by executive order.

(11) *Prevention of Seditious Meeting Act of 1911* gave considerable power to the Government for controlling public meetings, including power to declare any meeting illegal.

(12) *Indian Explosives Act (1908)* was amended making it more stringent.

(13 & 14) Immediately after the declaration of the First World War, the Government issued two Ordinances in 1914. These were the *Foreigners Ordinance* and the *Ingress into India Ordinance*. The application of the first was mostly limited to any foreigner coming into India but the second ordinance was frequently used against Indians coming out of Chandernagar or Pondicherry. Quite a number of young men were detained under this Ordinance. Both these ordinances gave power to the executive to detain a person without any trial.

(15) Lastly, the *Defence of India Act* was passed in March 1915 giving wide powers to the Government including trial by Special Tribunal dispensing with jury system and the abolition of the right of appeal. It also authorised the Government to detain any person without trial for an indefinite period. Thousands of political workers, particularly in Bengal and Punjab, were dealt with under this Act.

The Government of Bengal issued several Circulars particularly designed to restrain the students and teachers from joining the Swadeshi movement. The Bengal Government Circular dated 10th October 1905 asking the authorities to keep special watch on "any public action in connection with the boycotting, picketing and other abuses connected with the so called Swadeshi movement; if found necessary, to stop grant-in-aid and the privilege of competing for scholarships;" This had reference to any educational institution. The Circular also declared the desirability "to disaffiliate such institutions". Names of the disobedient or disloyal boys were to be reported. Teachers and others connected with the school might be asked to act as special constables, headmasters were asked to report against the disloyal students and to expel or punish them. This was known as the *Carlyle Circular*,—as it was issued by Carlyle, the Chief Secretary of the province.

East Bengal and Assam Government issued a similar Circular on 16th October 1905 with an additional instruction—"disloyal students not to get Government jobs." This was known as the *Lyon Circular*, after the name of the Chief Secretary.

India Government's Circular was issued on 6th May 1907 by Risley, who was then the Chief Secretary of the Government of India; this was the notorious *Risley Circular*. Its purpose was declared to be "protecting the higher education which was seriously threatened by the tendency of both teachers and their pupils to associate themselves with political movements." It also deprecated "a spirit of lawlessness and resistance to authority which was bound to set back the advance of education."

Regarding the Bengal Circular of the 10th October 1905, *Capital*, the organ of the European industrialists of Calcutta, wrote: "Silly circular reads like a Russian ukase begotten by fear and not like a British document at all." It also opined that this would lead to "converting every principal into a policeman and every teacher into a detective."

It was against all these circulars that the Anti-Circular Society was formed on the 4th November 1905 by Ramakanta Roy, a Japan-returned mining engineer. But its real organiser subsequently was Sachindra Prasad Basu. Its original objectives were to defy the Circular and to compel the Government to change them. But soon the Society took up economic and cultural matters also. Krishna Kumar Mitra was originally its Chairman and he was closely associated with it till he was arrested under Regulation III of 1818 in November 1908.

### APPENDIX III

#### EXTRACTS FROM A MEMORANDUM ON THE NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT

A NOTE SUBMITTED BY C. J. STEVENSON MOORE, OFFICIATING DIRECTOR, CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE, DATED 11.9.07

(File Home. Poll. Octr. 1907. No. 19. Deposit)

The idea of establishing a physical force party amongst the Bengalis appears to have been first put into practical shape by Miss Sarafa Devi Ghosal, a B.A. of the Calcutta University and a member of a well-known Calcutta family. This lady has been for several years a strong supporter of the nationalist movement, and by her marriage to Ram Bhuj Dutt, a Lahore Barrister, holding similar views, has become an important link between agitators in Bengal and the Punjab. In 1904, inspired apparently by the result of the Russo-Japanese war, she opened an academy at Ballygunj, Calcutta, for the instruction of the Bengali boys in fencing and jiu jitsu. Largely owing to her endeavours, the movement was eagerly taken up and similar *akhras* were started some in Calcutta and other in the mofussil, in which, wrestling, lathi play, and gymnastics in general were taught. Students naturally prominently associated, but it received strong support also of teachers, clerks and those holding "advanced political views". "Political designs underlay motives and for that reason, ardently espoused the Shivaji cult, symbolic to their mind of the patriot who successfully revolted against established alien Government."

The Movement does not attract much general notice at first but receives "sudden impetus from boycott following Partition", which was announced on 8.7.05. The boycott movement inaugurated in Calcutta on 7.8.05 at a monster meeting in Calcutta Town Hall and immediately picketing system started, parties of students and schoolboys recruited mostly from *akhras* commence to parade Calcutta bazar for preventing customers from buying foreign goods; by the end

of August picketing took an aggressive form. In mofussil, too, by the end of the year their attitude was very much more aggressive.

When the new administration came in East Bengal and Assam, boycott was in full swing; schools, everywhere, became centres for spreading agitation; students and children formed the bulk of anti-partition meetings in mofussil towns crying *Bande Mataram* and interfering with trade. In Sirajganj, Mymensingh, Barisal, Comilla etc. boys organised under leaders—'sometimes masters of schools'—to picket shops and prevent 'sale of European goods by force'. The issue of the Bengal circular of 10.10.05 "against participation of students in politics", supplemented "by similar instructions of new Government of East Bengal and Assam on 16.10.05" was soon followed by a more defiant attitude on the part of some of the students and masters" and in Calcutta several societies, e.g. the *Anti-Circular Society*, the *Brati Samiti*, and the *Students' New Society*; "all of which were closely associated with the volunteer movement". They took a "leading part in numerous political demonstrations held in Calcutta at that time."

In East Bengal and Assam volunteers in a regularly organised body first came to prominent notice in a disturbance at Sirajganj on 15.11.05. A society, called "Swadesh Sevak Samiti" started in Sirajganj under presidency of Prof. J. C. Chakravarti by some leading men including the Vice-Chairman of the Municipality and several school masters. A volunteer corps was formed of students from 2 local high schools, viz., Banwarilal High School and Victoria School. The Sevak Samiti executive elected Suresh Chandra Das Gupta, drill master as 'General' and two assistant masters were called C-in-C and Dy. C-in-C and several Captains appointed. Under the General, they were posted near shops to prevent importation of foreign goods. They also marched through bazars shouting *Bande Mataram* and carrying flags. On 15.11.05 they had a dispute with shop-keepers and assaulted a Mr. Carberry of the Bengal Bank.

During 1906 the volunteer movement was pushed with great energy especially in East Bengal. At a *Surendra Nath Banerjee's* "Crowning" ceremony in Calcutta, volunteers of the *Bande Mataram Sampradaya* served with big lathis and yellow turbans on heads. In preparation for The Provincial Conference of April 1906 at Barisal, some 200 volunteers were requisitioned under the captaincy of Surendra Narayan Mitra of Broja Mohan College. They wore yellow turbans and dark cross-belts with 'Bande Mataram' inscription and 40 of them were found by D.M. drilling in front of his house a few days before the Conference. Their ostensible business was to look after arrangements and the guests but no doubt they and others brought by Surendra Nath Banerjee were intended by him to make a show of force.

Volunteers also came into prominent notice for action on 30.6.06 at Santipur Station assault on European missionaries. They assembled to receive Bipin Chandra Pal coming there to lecture at Shivaji celebration, and who since Surendra Nath Banerjee's crowning fiasco had been the leader of the physical force party.

A feature developed of inter-district movements of volunteers, on particular occasions. At the Barisal Conference local volunteers got considerable re-inforcements from other districts. At Mehar Mela near Chandpur in Jan 1907 agitators collected from Calcutta and other districts, some 200 men armed with lathis and wearing uniforms, completely demoralised the local police till the arrival of the sub-district officer on the 2nd day of the fair. Volunteers travel by trains and boats without paying fares, on the plea that they are in the service of the mother country.

The volunteer movement attracted the country's attention early in 1907. The *Punjabi* published a para, one P. N. Chatterji of Calcutta projected a National Volunteer Corps—it also contained general conditions of enlistment and service. This is nothing serious. But there exists some central control from Calcutta over

\*The reference is to the *Carlyle Circular* and the *Lyon Circular*.

volunteer bands all over the Provinces of East Bengal both in towns and villages and they have been drafted from one locality to another. A correspondent in *Bande Mataram* also wrote that all existing Samitis should be affiliated to a 'Central Association for Physical Training.'

The movement is yet defective for lack of central control. But, for example, in Dacca it is completely independent so far as the district is concerned. In this district there are 18 *Akhras*—organised by the beginning of 1906 under the auspices of a society of which Babu Ananda Ch. Chakravarti is Secretary. Their headquarters are at Wari and one Pulin Bihari Das is their captain general. They have separate bands, each of which is headed by a captain who must be an expert in sword and lathi play and the names of seven such captains are known. The people who compose the bands are sons of Hindu gentlemen, mostly students and youngmen of the advanced class. The active promoters are doctors and pleaders. Their drill goes as far as squad drill, and their chief arms are lathis, while they are said to use knives, bamboos, spears and wooden swords and some real swords. They used to interfere with the use and sale of foreign goods, but now do so to a less extent.

The movement in several districts is not so defective in personnel. It started with students only but in 1906 need for better materials was felt and great efforts were made by Surendra Nath Banerjea, Bipin Chandra Pal and others. In March Bipin Pal recommended that companies of men should be organised for boycotting foreign goods. It has, however, failed to attract the formidable forces of disorder that exist in Calcutta. But in East Bengal they have got grown-up men, though not of classes that normally resort to violent action. But they are responsible for the March-April 1907 disturbances in Tippera, Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh where volunteers included a zamindar's peons and lathials, many so-called schoolboys and young men of 23 or 24 and companies of them accompanied professional agitators from district to district. At Chandpur they are mostly disappointed applicants for clerkship or employees of jute firms. In some districts zamindars imported lathials from elsewhere in view of the disturbed conditions. But it is only temporary. The movement reached highest state of development in Backerganj (Barisal). In that district some Taluqdars have joined along with some men without occupation; some are volunteers only in name.

They have not yet had much success in acquiring arms, have got some revolvers and pistols from Chandernagar imported there "by post". "A Samiti of Faridpur is believed to have a supply of arms, about 30 or so, but definite information has not been obtained and though a good deal of smuggling of firearms has no doubt gone on, it is not probable that the stock so obtained is considerable."

On a recrudescence of volunteer activities in Barisal, the District Magistrate imposed Sec. 144 prohibiting the carrying of lathis of a certain size between sunset and sunrise and thus effectively checked violence and inscience of volunteers for a time in the district. In the case of Amua market on June 30, 7 volunteers were convicted to 4 months and some to lesser periods or fines.

Two Europeans were assaulted at Dinajpur by students of National School. On 4.9.07 there was some stabbing at Dacca, one fatal. None of these are an outcome of boycott.

What the volunteer movement really aims at will be apparent from a pledge form (their rules are modelled on those of the Jesuits) probably taken from Gokhale's "Servants of India Society". West Bengal has not made much headway. It has not spread in other provinces.



#### APPENDIX IV

### EXTRACTS FROM AN ACCOUNT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND OTHER POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF INDIANS IN ENGLAND AND ON THE CONTINENT—1904-1911

A Report Submitted to the British Govt. of India\*

1. The Nationalist Anti-British Movement amongst the Indians in England, was started in London at the end of 1904 by Shamji Krishnavarma.

2. Shamji was born in 1857 at Mandavi in Kathiawar in a poor 'Bania' family. Became a private tutor in the family of Chhabildas Lalubhai, a rich merchant of Bombay in 1873. Chhabildas gave his brother's daughter in marriage to Shamji with a handsome dowry. Next, Shamji having failed to persuade Mr. Monier, whom he taught Sanskrit, to take him to England, disposed of the jewels of his wife and proceeded to England.

3. 1882, graduation from Balliol and called to the Bar in 1884. Next year returned to India: became Dewan of Ratlam. After 3 or 4 years there, practised as Barrister at Ajmer, passing most of his time in commercial affairs. In 1893, he was in the Council of Udaipur and 1895 Dewan of Junagadh from which post he was dismissed for intrigue against an I.C.S. whose services had been lent to the State.

4. 1897: Left India along with his wife for England and after some years made a public speech expressing that he came to England with the intention of going back to India soon, but on receiving the news that Nathu Brothers and his friend Tilak had been arrested, he decided to settle in England because nobody was safe from the oppressive hands of the governing classes in India.

5. He is reported to have amassed a good fortune by doing business. Next he announced five scholarships which ultimately turned out to be simple loan to be repaid within 10 years with a 4% interest.

6. In January 1905, started the 'Indian Home Rule Society', appointed himself President, and published the first issue of *Indian Sociologist*, a penny monthly, as an organ of the Society. The Society came into being on the suggestion of Mr. H. M. Hyndman (editor, *Justice*, and leader of the Social Democratic Federation). Its object: to secure Home Rule for India and to carry on a genuine Indian propaganda in this country by all practicable means.

7. In May 1905, a complimentary dinner given to Shamji in which J. M. Parekh, Bar-at-Law presided. Shamji in answer to the toast expressed that Indians should rise up against the oppressor and drive them out of the land, and Indians should rise up against the oppressor and drive them out of the land, and that light went out of India when freedom was taken away. Dr. Pereira in reply emphasised that only by blood could India be free and it was better to fight and die for freedom than to live the life of a slave.

8. Shamji's opening the 'India House' on 1.7.05 by Mr. Hyndman. Present on the occasion: Mr. Sedinny of *Positive Review*; Mrs. Despard, a prominent woman-suffragette; Dadabhai Naoroji; and Lala Lajpat Rai, who as one of the first residents of the house, made a speech. Three others described as scholarship-holders (Parameshwar Lal, Barrister of Gaya; Abdullah Suhrawardy, well-known Pan-Islamist; and Abdul Majid) were also present. These three soon quarrelled with Shamji, resigned the fellowship and left 'India House.'

9. A second scheme of scholarship issued in the paper in consultation with Tilak and B.C. Pal in December 1905. About the same time S. R. Rana of Paris also issued in the same paper offering 3 travelling fellowships of Rs. 2,000/- each.

10. 4.5.06: Shamji presided over a meeting in which Parekh moved a condemnation decrying the action of the Indian Government in arresting and punishing

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\*The document is in the National Archives of India.

Suren Banerji for singing National Anthem at the head of a procession at Barisal. Shamji's speech expressed that the motive of the meeting was purely anti-British and not based on any personal regard for the editor of *Bengalee* where recently a serial had been published reviling Shamji for his 'Home Rule Movement'.

11. Accepting one of the fellowships, V.D. Savarkar arrived in England on 9.6.06. Meanwhile Shamji continued to conduct the *Indian Sociologist* on more extreme lines and in January 1907 offered a prize of £ 50/- for an essay on "The best form of government in India." *Mahratta* (17.3.07) wrote congratulating Shamji for his offer of Rs. 1,000/- for organising a programme of work by a kind of political missionaries in India.

12. Scholarship schemes meant to subsidise national movement under advice of Tilak and B. C. Pal (from the end of 1905 till Tilak's arrest and Shamji's quarrel with Pal).

13. In the *Indian Sociologist* (May 1907) an elaborate scheme of founding a 'Society of Political Missionaries in India' was published. The scheme received approval of Tilak, Lajpat & Pal, but owing either to Pal's non-acceptance of certain conditions or to his absence in jail, the scheme ultimately failed.

14. In July 1907, Mr. Rees drew attention, in the House of Commons, of the Secretary of State, to an editorial in Shamji's paper in which Shamji is reported to have claimed himself as not a British subject. Suggestion to expel him as an undesirable alien trying to debauch the loyal subjects. The suggestion not accepted by the Secretary of State.

15. Shamji settling in Paris to carry on propaganda. May 1908, *Daily Mail* published his letter, "I made no secret of my views..." etc. (*Indian Sociologist* banned in India since September 1907).

16. In the autumn, 1906, two Bombay merchants, Nitisen Dwarkadas and Gyan Chand Verma opened an office and firm under the name of "Eastern Export & Import Co." at Warwick Court. Both of them held extreme political views and Dwarkadas soon became the Secretary of the 'India House' and remained in the post till July 1907 when G. C. Verma took over from him. The firm was also in touch with Har Dayal, Parmeshwarlal and S. R. Rana, and took interest in Hafiz Abdur Rahman, a militant Pan-Islamist seeking Hindu co-operation. But by the end of 1907, the business had to be wound up for want of funds; the office, however, remained in the hands of the 'Young India Party' and was ultimately taken over by B. C. Pal and G. S. Khaparde as an office of the *Swaraj* newspaper.

17. Dwarkadas returns to London in August 1908 for propaganda for Tilak's release. His lieutenant G. C. Verma delivered a lecture in 'India House' on September 1908 in course of which he said that nationalism was with Indians since the dawn of Indian history in Vedic times. With British conquest, it burst forth in the shape of Indian Mutiny and the Rising of Phadke.

18. *Indian Sociologist* advocates the Russian method, and tampering with the Army (December 1907). It expressed that the Indians constituted the overwhelming military force of the British Government in India and when they would realise their foolishness, they would not allow themselves to be used as tools for subjugating India and then the British rule in India would end speedily and ignominiously.

19. In April 1908, it advocated the formation of secret societies while writing about the atrocities committed on Indians during the Tinnevely riot. Moreover, it republished from *Everybody's Magazine* accounts of the constitution of secret societies and of the terrorist mode of operation in Russia.

20. From Paris, Shamji got his paper printed and published from London by Mr. A. Bonnar. Advocated revolution more openly and attempted to rouse a feeling of insecurity in Indian mercantile community and to embarrass the financial operations of the British Government in India by writing on the worthlessness of Government securities and advising people to withdraw investment in them.

21. 'India House'—a haunt of the 'Young India Party' and other revolutionaries, rapidly growing in number and boldness. The *London Times* (23.5.08):

"Its revolutionary spirit may be judged from the terms of a red ink circular distributed to the Indian students in the beginning of this month inviting them to attend an anniversary meeting of the Indian National Rising of 1857... This year the same day of the week is Sunday. The gathering was secret, Europeans were excluded and the Indians present are reticent as to what took place."

22. The anniversary took place on 10.5.08, beginning and ending with a national song. *Items*: National prayer, tributes to Nana Saheb, Bahadur Shah, Rani Laxmi Bai, Ahmed Shah and Raja Kunwar Singh (of Bihar) and other martyrs. About 100 Indian students coming from as far as Edinburgh attended. A 'Mutiny Medal' (with 'Bande Mataram' and 'In Memory of the Martyrs of 1857' inscribed on it) was distributed by Savarkar to students of Winchester, Harnam Singh and Refique Mohamed Khan.

23. Harnam rusticated from the college for refusal to put off the badge.

24. Indians flooded with the leaflet *OH MARTYRS*, printed at Paris. The *Times* accused Shamji for its publication and distribution. He denied it, admitting his sympathy with its contents.

25. Mr. Desai's speech in June 1908 on the making of bombs and that of Dwarka on 23.8.08 advocating the doctrine of revolt among the Indian Army—show that 'India House' openly associated itself with violent propaganda.

26. Autumn 1908: Tilak's prosecution and the impending announcement of Indian administrative reforms brought in a number of Indian agitators in England, and 'India House' became the centre of meetings and residence. Those who came were: G. S. Khaparde of Amraoti, Lajpat Rai and Ram Bhuj Dutt of Lahore, B. C. Pal of Calcutta.

27. Savarkar, leader of the violent group.

28. Nationalists' meeting in London, 20.12.08, as a protest against professions of the Nagpur Congress, Khaparde president: "Swaraj is the goal of the Nationalists." "Congratulates the young Turks... and sympathises with the Irish, the Egyptians and Persian Nationalists in their suffering."

29. Guru Govind Singh anniversary held at Caxton Hall by the agitators to make a direct appeal to the Sikhs, especially those in the Indian army. Leaflet 'Bande Mataram Khalsa' distributed and sent to India in large numbers. A number of Egyptian Nationalists present too and distributed leaflets for the formation of Indo-Egyptian Nationalist Association.

30. This Indo-Egyptian Nationalist Association did not flourish much, it is said, due to lack of support from Khaparde and Pal.

31. Capture of 'London Indian Association' by the 'India House' Party on 23.1.09 by expelling S. R. Pathar (from South Africa). On 6.2.09, some leaders advised moderation (especially President L. C. Mullick: "be careful of what is said because it might cause harm to other patriots")—but Sapurji Saklatwala and G. C. Verma expressed immediate "Revolution and Burst".

32. On 12.1.09 Sir W. Lee-Warner of the India Office assaulted in broad daylight by Kunja Bhattacharya (of Bengal); on the 2nd occasion on 4.2.09, by Basudev Bhattacharya, a former member of 'Jugantar' (Calcutta). Basudev, though punished, dissociated from all sorts of violence at the meeting held to condemn Dhingra's act.

33. A. V. Das (22.09) and Haidar Raza (28.2.09) spoke on revolution and violence.

34. Difference between Shamji and Pal became more acute. Virendra Chatto on behalf of Pal wrote a letter in *Times* challenging Shamji's right to represent his revolutionary views as the views of the National Party. Controversy continued in the columns of *Times*: Pal himself participated. Shamji's influence decreased and Pal's increased; but Shamji had money. Haidar quarrelled with Pal and Savarkar for not being received on his arrival at London. Shamji sided with Haidar against Savarkar who promptly joined Pal.

35. *Indian Sociologist*: printed from 20th Century Press where *Justice* and other special democratic party literatures were printed.

36° Haidar Raza° appointed manager of the India House, Savarkar's resignation (April 1909). Raza's speech at a meeting; if British Government attempted to suppress the agitation in England, they would go to Brazil.

37. Hardayal in London (11.9.08): his discordant speech (13.9.08) that he was working for a *Hindu India*. Badrul Islam protested. Consternation in the meeting. Savarkar and Chatto tried to calm Badrul down. Thus Lajpat and others threw away Hardayal.

38. Hem Das on Krishna Verma (Panditji): *Indian Sociologist* would be exchanged with *Jugantar* (weekly of Calcutta); Shamji was in sympathy with *Jugantar* aims and ideals. But he then advocated 'Home Rule' and was not in favour of complete independence; "initiator of passive resistance" derived from a movement amongst English students in 1902 in a certain university against the reading of Bible. Savarkar was Panditji's righthand man when Hem Das reached England.

39. Shamji refused Hem any help and after a quarrel turned him out of 'India House' where Hem had been appointed as Manager-Cook. The reason was 'Hem's inclination to join the secret society in London.'

40. But after Panditji's (i.e. Shamji's) permanent return to Paris, he became a convert to the doctrine of complete independence. This change in idea due to:

- (1) His contact with one Ph.D. in Paris, a leader of the Socialist Party and a former student in the Benares Hindu College, later a great orientalist.
- (2) The writings in *Bande Mataram* under the able editorship of Aurobindo urging complete independence ... brought about this change in Panditji's view.

41. Savarkar's book on *War of Independence* read by V. V. S. Aiyar at usual Sunday meetings (April 1909) in 'India House'. Most enthusiastically heard and cheered by the audience. Speeches also made by Savarkar, Haidar, Verma and Harnam Singh.

42. Decision, and preparation for holding 'Mutiny Day' at India House. Held, in spite of Haidar's objection (personal quarrel with Savarkar).

43. Executive members of 'London Indian Society' met at the office of Delgado (Solicitor for 'Indian Nationalist') on 4.5.09 to discuss why some members were deserting the Society; held that some of the members were being shadowed by the Scotland Yard men. So it was better not to discuss politics at the meetings. Resolution in the next meeting (3rd week of May): (1) No more political lectures and discussions; only social gatherings and 'at homes'. (2) Aiyar, Savarkar and others of the 'India House' not to be invited at 'At Home', working independently of Savarkar's Free India Society. (3) Resignation of Naoroji, J. M. Parekh and N. C. Mallik—accepted.

44. 10th May: Mutiny Day—celebrated with success. Harnam Singh took the chair. Savarkar's analysis of the causes behind the failure of the 1st National Rising.

45. Disputes between Dwarkadas and Parekh apropos of giving a dinner party to Suren Banerjea at the office of Delgado on 29.5.09. A free fight between two groups somehow averted.

46. News of severe sentence on Ganesh D. Savarkar in the Nasik Conspiracy Case caused great excitement and comment among Indian revolutionaries. V. D. Savarkar severely affected and expressed himself in most violent terms at the next meeting (20.6.09).

47. 1.7.09: Sir William Curzon-Wyllie, political aide-de-camp, shot dead at 11 p.m. by Madan Lal Dhingra. A Parsee doctor, Cowasjee Lalcaqa, attempting to catch Dhingra, was shot and died on the way to Hospital. Dhingra's attempt to commit suicide, but caught. On him 2 pistols: one bought in London on 26.1.09 and the other supplied by the Paris branch of the Party and an interesting document divulging the motive of the crime:—

48. "I SHED ENGLISH BLOOD INTENTIONALLY and purposely to protest against the inhuman transportations and hangings of Indian youths. In this attempt I consulted none but my own conscience and conspired with none

but my own duty. As an open war being impossible for a nation in bondage, I attacked by surprise, Slavery of my nation is an insult to my God. Her cause is the cause of freedom. Her service is the service of Sri Krishna. A poor son offering his blood on the altar of Mother's deliverance. The war ceases not only with the independence of India; it shall continue as long as the English and the Hindu races exist in this world. May I be reborn for the same sacred cause till my mission is done and she stands free for the good of humanity and to the glory of God."

49. London Police Report: the murder was not the result of any conspiracy, but instigated by a band of revolutionaries headed by Savarkar (London) and Shamji (Paris). Dhingra used to practise shooting in the local range with his own revolver and also attended India House lectures.

50. On 4.7.09, 12 leading revolutionaries held a meeting to praise Dhingra's action and express hints of congratulations to Savarkar.

*Indian Sociologist* wrote (July): Political assassination was no murder; this may have had a deciding effect on Dhingra's mind.

51. India House practically empty after this murder. Savarkar went to stay with Pal, which became the meeting place of the revolutionaries.

52. Two meetings held to condemn Dhingra's action: (a) S. N. Banerjea (3.7.09), (b) Aga Khan (5.7.09). In the aforesaid meeting Savarkar raised a protest, but forcibly ejected out of the hall. Next day he explained his position through the columns of *Times*. Virendra Chatto wrote a letter in the *Times* (9.7.09) to the effect that though he was anxious to obliterate terrorism, he would not conscientiously help British Government since he was firmly convinced of their wrong policy. He further hinted that the catalogue of assassination would be a longer one and that the responsibility would be at the door of those who instead of espousing the cause of India's freedom, wish to uphold the British interest in India.

53. Mrs. Shamji in London (mid-July) to sell India House premises. "The purpose for which it was established, namely to infuse the spirit of Independence, was accomplished, with tangible results." New kind of work to be carried out by her husband and Mme. Cama in Paris: a new India House there—Savarkar, who was to devote his whole life for the cause would be put in charge of affairs.

54. 1.8.09: Dwarkadas, S. M. Master (a Parsee adherent to Shamji), V. V. S. Aiyer, etc. submitted a petition to the Secretary of State to hand over the dead body of Dhingra to be cremated according to the last wishes of the martyr. This attempt to procure his ashes for distribution in India was a failure.\*

55. G. C. Verma's return from Paris (9.8.09) with leaflets headed *CHALLENGE*: on one page, a copy of Dhingra's statement found on him, and on the other, "to carry out the last wishes of the martyr to defeat the British Government in their unholy satisfaction" and signed "Bande Mataram". Another leaflet 'Bande Mataram' with Dhingra's photo distributed in London. Both printed in Paris.

56. Under V. V. S. Aiyer's instruction, Tirumal Acharya and Suksagar Dutt (brother of Ullaskar) left London (16.8.09) for Gibraltar to join the Riffs of Morocco to gain military experience and seek co-operation of the Morocco Muslims for the cause of India. There, detected in possession of one magazine rifle, one revolver and 3000 rounds of ammunition, seized by the Customs authorities. Suksagar left his friend and returned to London. Acharya got up to Tangiers and finding himself stranded, wired to V. V. S. Aiyer who sent him £10/-. Acharya reached Lisbon, stating that he was going to Brazil to lead the life of a soldier. But soon returned to Paris and joined Govind Amin to learn arms-manufacturing.

\* The dead body was put in an unnamed grave by the British authorities without any religious ceremony.

57. Leaving Pal due to some differences, Savarkar left London and stayed for some days at Brighton during Aug-Sept. On 14th September the third inaugural meeting of the Free India Society held under Sukhsagar Dutt's chairmanship; G. C. Verma spoke about the tremendous work of the Society during the last two years—in sending arms to India, writing the history of the 1857 revolution and the magnificent self-sacrifice of Dhangra.

58. Dussera celebrations organised—to avoid Scotland Yard vigilance (inviting even the Englishmen): 24th Oct. M. K. Gandhi of Transvaal presided in the dinner party and expressed disagreement with Savarkar: so he was criticised by Chatto and Savarkar.

59. Nov. 24 Savarkar ill: meeting held at his bedside: Chatto's eulogy of Savarkar "the wonderful personality of controlling others by an illustration". But the meeting broken by the arrival of spies. Next meeting (2.12.09): V. V. S. Aiyer spoke on how arms could be smuggled into India through Persia, Afghanistan, China and through Indian ports of Calicut, Dwarka and Pondicherry.

60. Apprehending arrest in connection with Nasik Case, Savarkar left London for Paris (6.1.10). A lull among Indian revolutionaries in England.

61. 2.1.10: V. V. S. Aiyer hints at war between England and Germany. Indian Nationalists must be ready to throw off British yoke when the time arrived. V. V. S. seemed to replace Savarkar in his absence. He emphasised the writing of revolutionary literatures and their despatch to all parts of India; religion and revolution, interdependent. Chatto and Dr. Rajan also used to speak.

62. Influence of these three (Aiyer, Chatto and Rajan) extremely strong.

63. Due to absence of co-operation between revolutionaries in India and England, all papers fell into hands unsympathetic to the cause. Proposal to send Jodh Singh and Govind Amin (manufacturing arms in Paris and Berlin respectively) to Brazil to start a large colony there and practise the use of arms, etc. eventually to fight the English in India.

64. Sant Nihal Singh (contributor to U.S. Magazines) arrived in London (late February) and found association with Bipin Pal.

65. At the February meeting, Dr. Rajan's praise of Haider's foresight and his sacrifice for the defence of the country against the English. In March, Srikishen of Hyderabad exhorted the members to follow Mazzini's principles of organisation, insurrection and revolution.

66. 13.3.10: Savarkar arrested at Victoria Station on arrival from Paris. With him was travelling Miss Perin Naoroji, Dadabhai's grand-daughter. Subsequently, during the court-proceedings she showed how actively sympathetic she was with the revolutionary party. Many of the members knew her very well. She sang 'Bande Mataram' and cried other revolutionary slogans. A few Indians were allowed admittance during the hearings.

67. Savarkar's arrest—consternation. Collection of funds for his defence. On 20.3.10 Aiyer was elected leader, Chatto second in importance. Rajan and Kisen also active. Chatto's view: individual assassination was bad; Kanhere's confession led to the arrest of Chaturbhuj and eventually that of Savarkar. But Aiyer of different opinion: India, in a state of war, and murder of individual was perfectly justified. In this matter, G. C. Verma supported him. Aiyer and Chatto saw Savarkar in jail; Savarkar encouraged them to keep up the propaganda.

68. Keir Hardie at a meeting in London advocated the formation of Independent Labour Party for India (29th March). Here Pal and Khaparde welcomed by the socialists. The latter is reported to have thoroughly displeased the revolutionaries by his 'vicious misconduct'.

69. Rumour among the revolutionaries in England that revolutionaries in India were ready to revolt and have collected huge sums of money... Aiyer on 'Terrorism and Its Limitations.'

70. Meeting of 17th April discussed the treachery of Koregaonkar, the right-hand man of Savarkar and Chaturbhuj, the cook at the 'India House' as shown in their deposition about sending out pistols and seditious literature to

India in Nasik Case.\* Aiyar thought it prudent to leave England and reached Paris on 19th April. He had handed over the revolver to Chatto which was originally intended to be sent out to India through Chanjeri Rao.

71. *Madan's Taiwar*, a periodical, was then being despatched to India every week by London revolutionaries. It was printed from Rotterdam (Germany) and sent to Chatto's London address: "Organ of Indian Independence"; all communications regarding it, had been instructed to be made to Mme. B. R. Cama, Paris. It also carried advertisements regarding four books and pamphlets written and published by the revolutionaries:

- (1) *Choose, Oh Indian Princes*, (2) *Bande Mataram*, (3) *The Indian War of Independence*, and (4) *The Social Conquest of the Hindu Race* (Har Dayal)—all available from Mme. Cama, Paris.

72. On 24th April 1910, G. C. Verma and Madhav Rao spoke that both destructive and constructive policies were needed for the success of a movement and friendly Hindu-Muslim relations to be advocated to make the rising a national one.

73. Pal's prominent part in 'Labour Day Demonstration' on 1st May, speaking of the oppression and tyranny of the British rule in India.

74. 10th May: Anniversary of the 'Indian Mutiny': Rafique Md. Khan at the chair. Dhingra's photo and a red flag with martyrs' names and national songs. Chapatis distributed; speeches made; 'Kumar Singh' leaflet by Chatto and Aiyer, distributed.

75. FREE INDIA SOCIETY divided into 2 sections: the former bearing that name, distinct from the latter, the 'Secret Society', which soon left England—at that time engaged in the defence of Savarkar.

76. May 15 meeting: "Help from Japan advisable?" K. V. R. Sawoani supported it. Others held Japan to be imperialist and it was irreligious to accept it. Haidar Raza was requested by the F.I. Society, to edit the 'Jehad' and bring out seditious Urdu pamphlets for which the Society would pay. Haidar was afraid to accept.

77. 22nd May: the Society praised Wardani's (an Egyptian patriot) assassinating Bourtos Pasha. Decision to congratulate the Egyptian revolutionaries and condemn the Moslem League in England and those societies with it in India—which mourned the loss of King Edward. Pamphlet 'Beware, the Traitors!' distributed during Edward's funeral.

78. Last week of May: Plot to rescue Savarkar from jail—by Chatto, Verma, M. Rao—with D. Garnett (a young Irishman), fell through. Rao went to Paris to raise funds for Savarkar's defence which amounted till then to about £ 200/-.

79. Arrest of Savarkar and disclosures in the Nasik Case by Koregaonkar and Chaturbhuj—produced a very disquieting effect, accentuated by a rumour that warrants had been issued for the arrest of the remaining leaders. Chatto and M. Rao left for Paris on 9th June. This shifted the revolutionary centre to Paris and a few other places on the Continent.

80. Savarkar's attempt to escape while he was being removed to India under the 'Fugitive Offenders' Act, at Marseilles on 7th July failed. Landed in India on 22.7.10 and produced before a Magistrate at Nasik.

81. Savarkar's arrest on the French soil raised at Hague Court by his friends headed by Mme. Cama and supported by the French Socialists. Eventually decided in England's favour. Savarkar convicted on 24.12.10 and 31.1.11 (2 cases) to transportation for life. Memo: "Savarkar was no doubt the ablest of Indian revolutionaries in Europe, and he might have proved much more dangerous if he had worked with a single purpose. He, however, allowed himself to indulge in wreaking private vengeance for life sentence on his brother."

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\* Savarkar sent revolvers through this cook for his brother Damodar; on arrest the cook disclosed the plot.

82. Communications to the revolutionaries from Savarkar (while in London prison) passed through Niranjan Pal\* who visited Savarkar frequently in jail. Savarkar-Chatto relation very strained due to Chatto's attempt at leadership and control of funds raised for Savarkar's defence.

93. Chatto (c/o Cama, Paris) wrote to Srikishen (June 1910) who had returned to Hyderabad, asking him to go to Calcutta and meet his sister Mrinalini, thus getting introduced to B.C. Chatterjee (Bar.) and ask B.C. Chatterjee to introduce him to Sukumar Mitra\*\* who was required to open a furniture shop either at Calcutta or at Chandernagore to receive the supply of arms and for which the requisite money be remitted in C/o Cama, Paris. This correspondence was intercepted and deciphered, the scheme nipped in the bud.

84. July 1910: Still hope for Savarkar's release cherished by Indian revolutionaries. Shamji, Chatto, Govind Amin, M. Rao met at Cama's, discussing the way Savarkar should be released. Harddayal returned from Algiers; Perin Naoroji took prominent part too.

85. Shamji's writings in his paper that he was no longer considered important by other revolutionaries. Quarrel ensued between him and S. R. Rana—Shamji boycotted by the other Paris revolutionaries for his avarice and imperious manner, though not completely disowned by Cama and party. But no more consulted or frequently visited.

86. Friction between Shamji and Aiyer about the former's asking for Savarkar's money, which was "his scholarship money". Aiyer refused. Shamji threatened to damage Savarkar's case.

87. Paris was already haunted by young Egyptians, when the presence of Indian revolutionaries revived in the minds of both the groups\* to reform the Indo-Egyptian Nationalist Association formed early in 1909 in London but died due to "Indian lack of interest". Chatto and friends' decision to hold an Indian Nationalists' Conference. But postponed it on hearing about the Egyptian Nationalist Congress which was going to be held, and co-operated with the Egyptians for furthering their anti-British activity. Farid Bey, their leader, was found frequently consulting Cama and often Chatto about the forthcoming Congress to be held in the last week of September.

88. The French Government abruptly prohibited the Egyptian Congress (16.9.10) in Paris. Decision to hold it at Brussels on 22.9.10. 125 Indians and Egyptians in all met at a soiree in a Belgian Hotel in Paris. There were also 25 Europeans, mostly French and German journalists. The following Indians present: Shamji, S. R. Rana, Cama, Chatto, Dwarkadas, Miss Naoroji, Tirumal Acharya, V. V. S. Aiyer, Hardayal, Naginawala, Godrej, etc.

89. 22.9.10: 4.30 p.m., Farid Bey opened the Congress, without a single mention of the Indian affairs. At a fete in the evening, Miss Naoroji sang the well-known patriotic song "Ai Mardano Hindi Jawano Jaldi Lo Hathiar". On 23rd Keir Hardie cordially welcomed, but the session was adjourned to enable the delegates to participate in Belgian Independence Day. The local authorities refused the permission to participate in the demonstration held in honour of the victims of the struggle for Belgian independence. In spite of this a procession of Egyptians attempted to march past the martyrs' monument, but was stopped by the police.

90. During the session, K. Hardie from the chair exhorted that Egyptian movement must be essentially revolutionary; that Edward Grey's utterance that England had no intention of leaving Egypt changed the whole situation. He exhorted them not to cry "Vive l'islam", but "Vive l'Egypte!" (*Independence Belge*, 25th September). Hardayal created a sensation by calling upon Egyptians to refuse to enter the Egyptian Army. But he was made to stop. According to a French

\* Son of Bipin Chandra Pal.

\*\* Son of Krishna Kumar Mitra, editor *Sanjibani*.



newspaper, the Egyptians wanted to maintain a resolutely pacific attitude without giving expression to revolutionary ideas.

91. The Indian delegates were disappointed. But they exercised a good deal of influence. Their greater literary skill too was made use of by the Egyptians in preparing their speeches. Hardayal prepared the whole speech, "The Moral and Intellectual Aspect of Egyptian Movement" read by Hamid-eb-Alaily, one of the secretaries, and the paper 'The Egyptian Army' read by Dr. Mansur Riffat was corrected and revised by Chatto.

92. A meeting of the Muslims sympathetic towards Persia (London, 2.11.10). A good number of Indians, Egyptians and Persians present. President: Major Fyed Hossain Belgrami, M.C. He said that he had received many telegrams etc. condemning the Russo-British aggression in Persia. These were said to have been inspired by Cama and Chatto, and the Egyptians and Persians of Paris (especially the younger ones) acted accordingly.

93. Indian revolutionaries much pleased with this meeting and hoped that young Muslims would join hands with them. Chatto was found mixing with the Egyptians, in particular with Dr. Mansur Riffat.

94. Paris revolutionaries differed on method to be followed. (Sept. 1910): Hardayal in favour of gaining Swaraj by more direct method and disapproved of the Bengal terrorism. Chatto preferred indirect and devious methods. Both disapproved Savarkar's policy, whilst Aiyer desired to carry it on.

95. It remained unascertained whether as a result of difference of opinion or otherwise, the two important leaders (Hardayal and Aiyer) left Paris for good. Hardayal left Rasjebuti (28.9.10), thence to Martinique (W. Indies), and eventually to U.S.A. in Feb. 1911. Aiyer quietly disappeared (Oct., 1910) after attending the International Socialistic Congress at Copenhagen (August 27, 1910). Went to Geneva, thence to Berlin, and escaping surveillance arrived at Pondicherry on 4.12.10 in the guise of a Muslim.

96. In October, 1910, Niranjan Pal and his father Bipin Pal were attempting to revive interest in Indian affairs in London. A dinner followed by Tableaux vivants representing scenes from the *Ramayana* was held on Dussera (18.10.10); many Indians and some Englishmen present. On the 19th Bipin Pal spoke on "The Conflict of Civilisation in Modern India", under the auspices of the "South London Ethical Society" at W. T. Stead's; attempt to run a 'Hindusthan Society' to raise money, failed.

97. Bipin Pal started a fortnightly, "The Indian Students" (March, 1911), declaring to avoid the current Indian politics, but in the subsequent (and the last) issue disapproved of English education. Discontinued for want of funds. Pal in financial difficulties approached the Geakwad of Baroda and received some help.

98. Chatto's (and friends') attempt to oust Cama from leadership and exclude her from the council. Feb. 1911: Chatto drafted a scheme of revolution in two parts: (a) International, (b) National.

99. A correspondent believed that the activity of Indian revolutionaries in Europe practically doomed due to Savarkar's absence, "Chatto was too fickle and unsettled, Cama too weak, S. R. Rana brainless, Shamji Krishnavarma no longer regarded as of any importance". About this time (April 1911) T. Acharya left Paris for Munich.

100. Mutiny Day (1911): at Nizamuddin's (proprietor of 'Eastern Cafe', London): mostly Beharis present. B. C. Pal had given up association with seditious activities, so also Niranjan, Ashu Mitra and J. B. Patel. 'Kumar Singh' leaflet (1910) distributed by Saraju Prasad.

101. Another leaflet, "10th May 1911" printed in Paris was also circulated: Heroes of the War of Independence eulogised, especially Rani of Jhansi: Indians exhorted to make mighty sacrifices like those tens of thousands of men and women who perished in 1857.

102. Cama's article in her "Bande Mataram" (April): 'In Memoriam': The three men executed in Nasik Case, the murder of Srish Chakravarty, and the bomb

thrown in the Dalhousie Square Calcutta—described as “good news”, concluding by urging upon every Indian to kill every Englishman without discrimination and that Bengalis had taken the lead in the matter—so blessed be their efforts ! This was to create a tense atmosphere during the Coronation and the subsequent Delhi Darbar. Cama’s letters to V. V. S. Aiyer (April, May, 1911) in Pondy clearly indicated that Paris revolutionaries were really thinking on the above lines and Aiyer’s policy quite coincided with theirs.

103. The above policy succeeded in creating terror in the minds of the Englishmen during Coronation by the murder of Mr. Ashe (Distt. Magistrate, Tinnevelley) on 17.6.11 at Manyachi junction by *Vanchi* (alias Sankara Aiyer of Shencotta, Travancore). On Vanchi’s dead body a leaflet was found, exhorting every Indian to try and drive out the Englishmen and restore *Swarajya* and *Sanatan Dharma*.

104. V. V. S. Aiyer, intimately connected with this political murder, being a very important member of the “Secret Society” of Savarkar’s with its organisation in Nasik and other places in India and in London—outwardly known as “Abhinava Bharat”. It engineered the murder of Curzon-Wyllie and Jackson. In May 1911, “A Word of Advice to the Aryans” (in Tamil) was distributed in Madurai etc., exhorting to kill *feringhees* to establish *Swarajya*. Another, “The Oath of Admission to the Abhinava Bharat Society” (Tamil), issued a fortnight later. These are said to have been printed in Pondicherry and written by V. V. S. Aiyer intending to carry out Savarkar’s programme.

105. Vanchi (who killed Ashe) was initiated to extreme nationalism by Nilkanta Aiyer, one of the accused in Tinnevelley case. Vanchi used to visit V. V. S. Aiyer too, frequently, at Pondy. Nilkanta stated that he and Vanchi visited V. V. S. Aiyer separately, speaking of V. V. S. Aiyer as an advocate of violence and assassination to free the country. This statement was made due to a quarrel between V. V. S. Aiyer and Nilkanta whom the former accused of cowardice and persuaded Vanchi to join his own party.

106. The memo remarked that the Indian revolutionaries might be contemplating something of the above nature during the Coronation procession at London. But the only Indian (name not given) believed to be really dangerous was reported to have been carefully watched and special precaution taken regarding Indian and Russian strangers.

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