

**POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS
IN LOCALITIES : QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN THE
BALLIA DISTRICT OF U.P.**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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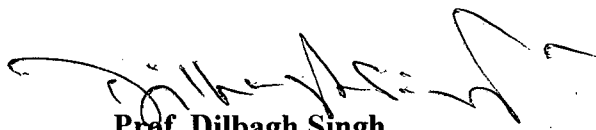



28 July, 2000

CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled, '**POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS IN LOCALITIES: QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN THE BALLIA DISTRICT OF U.P.**', submitted by **AMIT KUMAR MISHRA** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. This is his own work to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. Dilbagh Singh
(Chairperson)


Prof. Mridula Mukherjee
(Supervisor)

To the memory of my father

“Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship,
which struggle on in the survivor’s mind towards some
resolution which it may never find”.

Robert Anderson
'I Never Sang for My Father'

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The responsibility for errors are mine alone.

Amit K. Mishra
(Amit Kumar Mishra)

CONTENTS

	Page Nos.
Acknowledgements	i-ii
List of Tables and Maps	iii
List of Abbreviations	iv
Preface	1-4
Chapter 1	
The Context	5-17
Chapter 2	
The Pre-History of the Quit India Movement	18-40
Chapter 3	
The Quit India Movement in Ballia	41-71
Conclusions	72-79
Bibliography	80-86

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Page No.
1. Distribution of landholding in Ballia district in 1885	9
2. Number of zamindars (proprietors) according to payment of land revenue	10
3. Distribution of land tenures in different categories	12
4. Growth of literacy in Ballia district	16

LIST OF MAPS

Map No.	
1. Ballia, General	before page 5
2. Locations of anti-British activities during the Quit India movement in Ballia	before page 41

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AICC	All India Congress Committee
APS	Appreciation of Political Situation (Weekly)
CID	Crime Investigation Department
CUP	Cambridge University Press
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
DIR	Defence of India Rules
EPW	Economic and Political Weekly
FRUP	Fortnightly Reports from United Provinces
Home (Pol.)	Home Department (Political)
IESHR	Indian Economic and Social History Review
IHR	Indian Historical Review
JAS	Journal of Asian Studies
MAS	Modern Asian Studies
NAI	National Archives of India
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
OUP	Oxford University Press
PAI	Police Abstract of Intelligence (Weekly)
SWJN	Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru
UPSA	Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow

It is in the fitness of things that Ballia, which gave sepoy Mangal Pandey to the country and whose execution at Barakpur (West Bengal) on April 8, 1857 sparked off the First War of Independence, should play such a heroic role in the 'Quit India' movement as well.

(Fighters for Freedom, Who's Who, Varanasi Division, Vol.II, p,1)

PREFACE

This work is an attempt at an in-depth study of the Quit India Movement, in the Ballia district of the United Provinces. The choice of such a small geographical administrative unit is influenced mainly by two reasons. First, for a better understanding of regional variations in the patterns of protest, a movement needs to be studied at the local level. Second, there is a need to explore more sources and try to present a more comprehensive and total history¹ of the movement. This exclusive focus on Ballia at one level makes the story highly localized but at another level the effort is to situate the experience of the locality in the larger context of the national movement. This work endeavours to examine certain formulations regarding the Quit India movement for example, on the role of organizational politics, the nature of protests at different levels, and the articulation of popular protest at local levels in the light of the experience of Ballia.

The present work seeks to study the Quit India movement by situating this movement within the historical evolutionary process of Indian national movement. It attempts to examine the vision of history which perceives national movement as a series of events – ‘from one violent

¹ The term ‘total history’ is used not in the sense in which it is used by the Annales School, which conveys a meaning of absoluteness and finality of historical analysis, but only to underline the conscious attempt to cover various aspects of the movement in detail and explore the maximum possible sources.

outbreak to the others'² This vision of historical analysis is based on the rather erroneous notion that history moves only in leaps and therefore tends to study history in episodes and not as an evolutionary process with a simultaneous focus on gradual socio-economic and political-ideological developments which prepared the background for such big events and through which big events are articulated. Therefore, this work places equal attention on the political activism of the quieter periods and the gradual political mobilization of the people which enabled them not only to comprehend colonial subjugation but also to protest against it.

This work has been divided into three chapters. **Chapter one** introduces the location of this study as well as attempts to analyse the agrarian structure of Ballia. Apart from this, two other socio-economic indices – education and migration – have been discussed in this chapter in an attempt to explain the heightened levels of activism demonstrated by the people of this district during anti-British struggle.

This work perceives Quit India movement as the culmination of popular creativity and political mobilization of the people by the nationalists over the years through a variety of forms. Hence **chapter two** discusses not only the nationalist politics in Ballia before 1942, but also various political organizations and forms of mobilization. This chapter

² Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Revolt of August 1942 in Eastern UP and Bihar' in Pandey Gyanendra (ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942* (K.P. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1988), p.124, fn.p.159.

endeavours to trace the prehistory of the movement as well the roots of the dynamism of Quit India movement in Ballia district.

The **last chapter** of this work has been divided into two sections. The first section presents a narrative account of events that took place in Ballia district during '42 uprising and brings out the mass character of the movement while in the second section a conscious attempt has been made to examine certain formulations regarding various aspects of the Quit India movement such as nature of protest, leadership, mass character, etc. by situating the experiences of Ballia in the national context.

Why Ballia?

The choice of Ballia as the location of this study has been made largely because, despite this district marking the establishment of the first parallel government during the '42 uprisings and it being 'out of control for about ten days', it has not attracted enough attention from historians. Unlike Satara and Mindnapur, the other storm centres in 1942, no exclusive study of this district has been done so far. The only exception is Chandan Mitra's 'Popular Uprising in 1942: The Case of Ballia' in Gyanendra Pandey edited book *The Indian Nation in 1942*, (K.P. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1988).

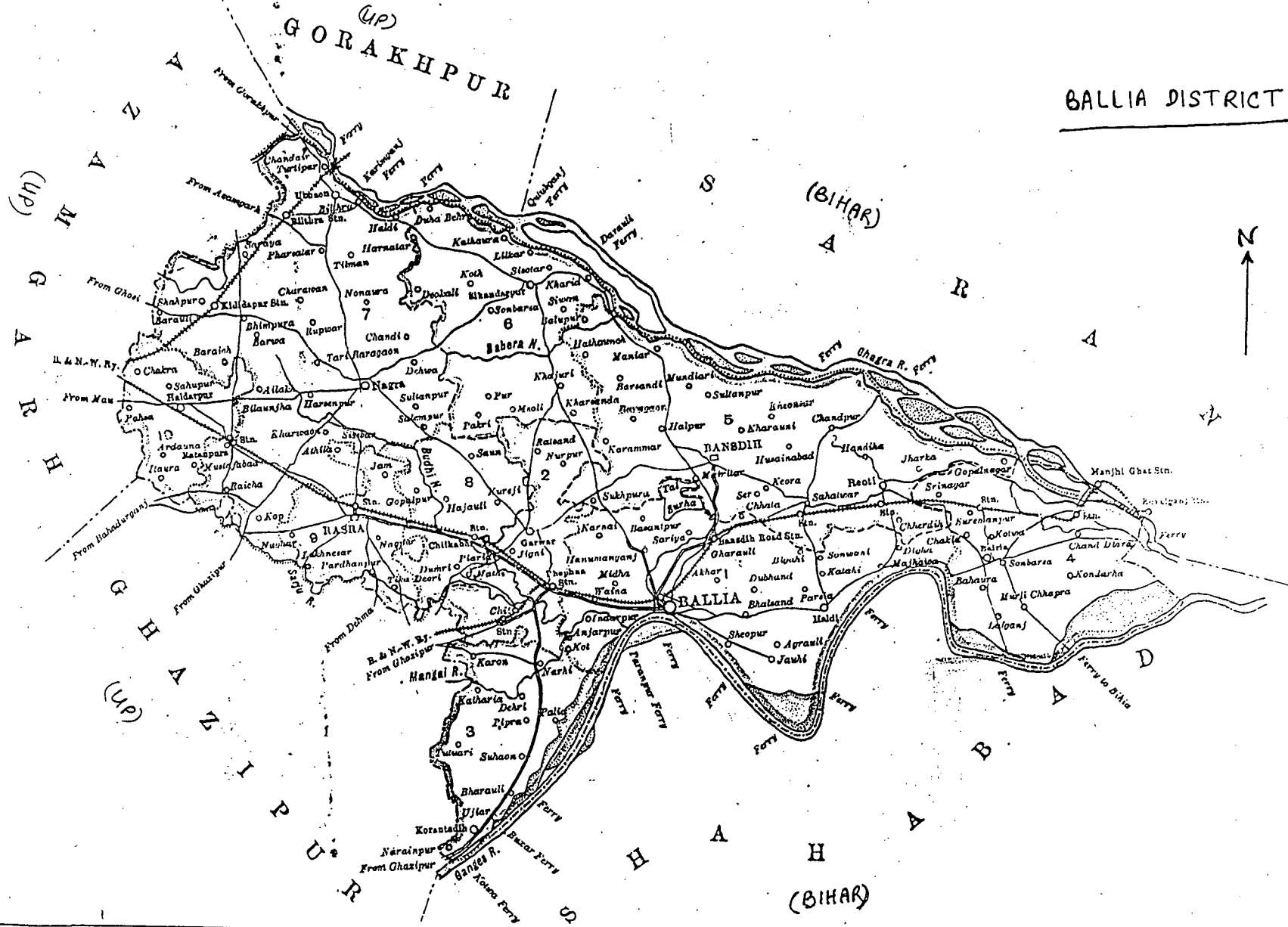
And, of course, my familiarity and close association with the region has an influence over the choice.

Sources

In addition to more conventional and much explored archival sources, this work is based on extensive use of oral sources, – especially oral testimonies of participants. These testimonies are extremely useful not only as a supplementary instrument for historical analysis but more to explain the ‘spirit’ of the movement and popular consciousness.

I have also used hitherto less explored records available at local levels, such as registers available in local police stations which listed all important political events, case files available in the Collectorate record room in Ballia, etc.

CHAPTER – 1



Source: District Gazetteer, 'BALLIA', Compiled by H.R. Nevil (1907)

THE CONTEXT

While the variety of factors that influence the course and pattern of popular protest is immense, in my study of Ballia three features of the local context seemed to stand out as possibly more important than others. These are the agrarian structure, education and migration, and in this chapter I give a brief overview of these by way of an attempt at contextualizing the discussion.

I. Agrarian Structure

Ballia, the eastern most district of the United Provinces was part of Banaras division under the British administration. This district came into independent existence in 1879 by transferring land administration units from Azamgarh and Ghazipur districts of Banaras division.¹

This region which later constituted Ballia district was under the control of Raja of Banaras since 1758² and formed a part of Bengal Presidency but was later transferred to the United Provinces in 1775³. The Rajas of Banaras made several attempts to establish their control over the land owned by Rajput and Brahman lineages of this region but Brahman and Rajputs appear to have been successful in preventing the Rajas from

¹ Report on the Revision of Record of the part of Ballia District, 1882-85, D.T. Robbets, (Allahabad, 1887), p.1 (Hereafter Settlement Report Ballia, 1885).

² Nevill H.R. (ed.), District Gazetteers, Vol. XXX, Ballia, 1907, p.137 (Hereafter District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1907).

³ *ibid.*, p.112

raising revenue rates or even interfering with the management of their holdings.⁴ And finally, the Raja had to settle for a lump sum payment made to him directly which was more in the nature of a tribute than revenue.⁵ This continuous exercise of assertion of dominance over land holdings between agents of Raja of Banaras and local landholding clans led to a general mismanagement in revenue administration and severely affected the collections. It was against this background that the British took direct charge of revenue administration in Banaras division in 1781 and decided to carry out revenue settlement to settle the disputes over proprietary rights and land revenue demands in this region.⁶ To improve the general condition of revenue affairs, Jonathan Duncan, the Resident of Banaras, carried out a revenue settlement for this region during 1788-90 on the basis of land records which survived and the information provided by local revenue officials.⁷ Duncan's reformed land settlements were based on measurements of cultivated areas and calculation of assets.⁸ Duncan tried to restore the zamindari rights to the holders of such rights in pre- Raja Banaras period and a settlement was made for revenue collection and payment initially for

⁴ . Shakespeare, A. (ed.), 'Selections from the Duncan's Record', Vol. I pp. 44-45 cited in Cohn, Bernard S., 'Structural Change in Indian Rural Society – 1596-1885' in Frykenberg, R.E., *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, (London, 1969), pp.60-61.

⁵ . ibid. p.61

⁶ . ibid., pp.62-63.

⁷ . Narain, V.A., *Jonathan Duncan and Varanasi*, (Calcutta, 1959), p.54.

⁸ . Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, p.16

five years and then for ten years.⁹ Later, taking into account the confusion and complexities in land assignments and revenue collection the whole region was brought under Permanent Settlement of land revenue administration in 1795 by Jonathan Duncan. For applying permanent settlement in the region, no regular survey had been conducted and no records of proprietary or cultivating rights were prepared.¹⁰ All the assessments made in earlier decennial settlement became permanent for ever and proprietary right was bound with the obligation to pay the government a revenue that was fixed forever.¹¹

The uncertainties and confusion in proprietary and cultivating rights continued even under the Permanent Settlement as no fresh survey had been conducted before its enactment. When Ballia district was created in 1879, administrative requirements and the need to reduce such uncertainties made a revised settlement inevitable and finally an extensive revision of settlement was conducted during 1882-85 by D.T. Roberts, the then Collector of the district.¹²

Before the introduction of Permanent Settlement, there was no definite proprietary tenure at all though there was a dominion over the soil, exercised by the Rajput clans which was expressed by denoting them as

⁹ Cohn, Bernard S., *op. cit.*, pp.63-64
¹⁰ Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, p.16
¹¹ *ibid.*, p.42
¹² *ibid.*, p.1

zamindars. The person engaged in the payment of the Government revenue did form a *Mahal* but it did not constitute a proprietary tenure. It was merely an agency for the collection of revenue and if the zamindars did not accept the agency it could be given to an outsider.¹³ The permanent settlement changed this and for the first time created the concept of proprietary right over land. As Regulation II of 1793 Act declared, 'the property of the soil has been declared to be vested in the landholders...'¹⁴ This proprietary right of landholders was linked up with the obligation to pay the government revenue which was fixed for ever.

Landowners

In Ballia district, landholdings were dominated by Hindu upper castes, particularly Rajputs, Bhumiars and Brahmans who retained about 88% of total proprietary land, at the time of last settlement of this district in 1885.¹⁵ (Table 1) These traditional landholding castes retained their dominance in landholding even in cases of auction purchases as most of the members of these castes themselves bought land from their relatives or coparceners whose land holding was on sale.¹⁶ This reduced the scope for the entry of new classes (merchants, money landors etc.) into land ownership, and a very small proportion of land had been acquired by

¹³. *ibid.*, p. 41

¹⁴. cited in Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, p.41.

¹⁵. *ibid.*, p.18

¹⁶. District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1907 p.53

business communities. One significant reason for this was that in Ballia money lending was not a monopoly of trading classes but it was largely done by well-to-do Rajputs and Brahmans.¹⁷

Table: 1
Distribution of landholding in Ballia

Caste / Religion	Area of land owned (acres)	% of land owned
Rajput	339814.28	73.60
Bhumihars	35428.21	7.68
Brahmans	33670.46	7.30
Kayasths	16623.22	3.60
Baniyas	11998.41	2.60
Other Hindu Castes	15619.41	3.38
Muslim	8491.61	1.8

Source : Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885 P.47

Initially the land was owned by big landholding clans, but by the early decades of the 19th century, British government started making provisions for demarcation of individual liability of revenue payment to facilitate revenue collection. The settlements of 1830s tried to demarcate individual rights either on the basis of actual possession or that of ancestral shares.¹⁸ Act I of the 1841 Regulation confirmed the principle of joint

¹⁷ . Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, p.77

¹⁸ . District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1907 p.114

responsibility but also allowed the government to proceed against individual defaults.¹⁹ The problem with joint liability was that if one member of a clan made a default in payment of his share of revenue, the entire clan had to face punitive action. Therefore, when the legislations provided scope for individual ownership and liability, members of landholding clans preferred individual ownership of a piece of land and to collect and pay his portion of revenue directly. This attitude led to disintegration of lineage estates as a unit of joint land ownership and formal partition of big estates repeatedly. This repeated subdivision of proprietary holdings was induced by increased population pressure and resulted in relatively small sizes of landholding. H.R. Nevill observed in the District Gazetteer of Ballia that 'land was occupied in small holding by Rajputs, Bhumihars and the Brahman.'²⁰ The relatively small size of landholdings in Ballia can be visualized by the amount of land revenue these landowners paid to the government²¹ (Table 2).

Table : 2
Number of zamindars (proprietors) according to land revenue paid in Ballia district

Under Rs. 25	Rs.25-250	Rs.250-1000	Rs.1000-5000	Rs.5000-10000	Rs. 10000 and above
31596	3121	216	30	0	1

Source : Report of the UP Zamindari Abolition committee, Vol.II, P.17 (Allahabad, 1948)

¹⁹ Metcalf, T.R., *Land, Landlords and The British Raj, Northern India in 19th Century*. (Delhi 1979), p.129.

²⁰ District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1907, p.85; Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, p.49

²¹ Settlement Report (1885) records only 27 proprietors who paid more than Rs. 1000 as land revenue, p.49

Because of this repeated subdivision of landholdings and increasing population pressure on land, the numerous small landlords were not in a better position than the fixed rate tenants,²² and sometimes even took land from absentee landlords for their sustenance. This entire process of subdivision of landholdings eroded the superior material position of landlords on the basis of which they exercised dominance over tenants and left little space for traditional exploitation based landlord-tenant relations.

Tenants:

Permanent settlement fixed not only the land revenue demand but the rent also²³ and ensured the security of tenure till the payment of rents except for the tenants at will. In Ballia, there were mostly three types of tenants – occupancy tenants, fixed rate tenants and tenants at will. **Occupancy tenants** were mainly former zamindars who continued to hold their 'sir' land and after settlement agreed to pay a customary rate of rent. Occupancy rents were very moderate and were fixed forever²⁴ and for all practical purposes it was almost like fixed rate tenants except that occupancy rights were not transferable. **Fixed rate tenants** were those tenants who had cultivated land and paid almost a fixed rate of rent for generations. This category of fixed rent tenure included a specific kind of fixed rate tenure

²² . *ibid.*, p.17

²³ . *ibid.*, p.18

²⁴ . District Gazetteer, Ballia 1907, pp.100-105; Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885 p.52-53

known as '*ganwadh*' in Ballia. Ganwadh was a sort of fixed rate tenure granted mainly to Brahmans at low rates by Rajput landlords. These were permanent and transferable tenures and zamindars had no right except the rent which was fixed.²⁵ The third category of tenants were **tenants at will** who did not have any occupancy right on tenures and who could be ejected or removed from the land on the expiry of the lease.

In Ballia, fixed rate tenancies which ensured security of tenure (this includes both – occupancy tenants and fixed rate tenants) accounted for a very large proportion of total tenancy (Table 3) and there was relatively less proportion of tenants at will.

Table : 3

Distribution of land Tenures in different categories in Ballia, 1885

% of occupancy tenants to total cultivation	% of fixed rate tenants to total cultivation (This includes ex-proprietary, <i>Mafis</i>)	% of tenants at will to total cultivation
36.25%	28.01%	10.37%

Source : Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, pp. 59-61

This fixed rate tenancy with occupancy rights not only ensured the security of tenure but also the fixity of rents and therefore reduced the scope of any exploitation of tenants by landlords by increasing land revenue demands. Another factor which reduced the scope of any exploitation of

²⁵ . Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, p.56

tenants was the presence of a substantial strata of upper caste tenants who, with their cohesive strength and caste privileges, consolidated a position of privileged tenants for themselves. These tenants paid not only low rates of fixed rents but sometimes even mortgaged or sold their tenancies as proprietary classes²⁶ and made it almost impossible to evict them even in case of default in rent payment. These upper caste tenants enjoyed a caste privilege in rent payment for tenant at will category also.²⁷

This survey of agrarian structure of Ballia district brought out some peculiar features related to the position of landlords and tenants. Most of the landlords in Ballia had relatively small holdings and were not in a position very different from upper caste tenants whether in terms of income or status, and sometimes even took land on rent from other big landlords. Most of the tenants in the district were of high caste and were ensured the security of tenure and fixed rent rate (which was very low) and enjoyed the position of a privileged tenant community. These features do not indicate a classical landlord-tenant relationship, based on extreme forms of exploitation. This explains the absence of any sharp landlord-tenant divide, which in turn facilitated collective participation in the anti-British struggle.

²⁶ . District Gazetteer , Ballia, 1907 , p. 85, 105

²⁷ . Rent Rate Report, Pargana Sikandarpur and Bhadaon, Tahsil Resra, Ballia, 1930, pp.22-23

II. Migration

Ballia and infact the entire region was known for its high levels of migration to the industrial centres of Howrah, Calcutta, Dhaka, etc. in Bengal as well as to Bombay²⁸ Though the volume of emigration fell in 1920s and '30s, a large number of natives of this district continued to stay in those industrial cities.²⁹ As Ballia was primarily an agricultural district and there was not much industry to accommodate the increasing labour force, people migrated in search of employment. Though the migrants were mainly labourers, the specific characteristic of migration from Ballia was that it also included educated migrants and a significant number of educated people who also migrated to urban centres in search of employment. In addition to this, the category of migration here includes the short term migration, particularly of students, who went to cities of learning like Banaras for higher studies.

In the case of Ballia, these migrants became a major source of inflow of nationalist consciousness which emerged in urban centres and established a sort of urban-rural link, crucial for the uniform growth of the national movement. Migrants established a two way interactive relationship – nationalist leaders in cities experienced the poverty and backwardness of the rural areas by interaction with these migrants and included these issues

²⁸ . District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1907, p.65; Census of India , 1911, Vol.XV, Part I, pp.91-93

²⁹ . Census of India, 1931, Vol. XVI, Part-I, pp.204-207.

in the larger programme of the nationalist struggle while the rural masses became aware of the ongoing nationalist struggle through returning migrants and started responding to the calls for action. In this process, students played a very crucial role. While studying in cities, many of them came in contact with nationalists who introduced them to the ideas of nationalism and some of them began to take part in the nationalist struggle. When they went back to their villages, they talked about the exploitative character of British rule and other nationalist ideas and urged people to take part in movement.³⁰ This entire phenomenon of contacts between urban centres and the countryside via migrants proved very crucial in Ballia during the 1942 movement. During the course of the Second World War, the Japanese invasion of Burma, and the bombings in Calcutta, led to return of large numbers of emigrants to their homes. They provided the first hand accounts of their experiences and also carried the widespread belief about the impending collapse of British authority. The latter created an ambience in which people started acting in a more defiant manner in countryside. Students who returned to their homes immediately after the Quit India call would stop in public gatherings like fairs, haats, etc. and tell people about the Quit India movement and encourage them to take part in its activities.³¹

³⁰ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra

³¹ *ibid.*

III. Literacy and Education

By 1907 Ballia already had a relatively high rate of literacy which was considered to be in advance of the provincial average.³² This was followed by massive increase in the number of educational institutions in the district. In 1907 there were 9 secondary and 166 primary schools which increased to 16 secondary schools and 490 primary schools in 1932.³³ The rate of literacy marked a great increase (Table 4) and was the highest in the Banaras Division except for Banaras district itself.³⁴

Table : 4

Growth of literacy in Ballia District

Year	Total number of literates	% of literates to total population	Number of literates per mile
1881	-	4.2 (0.1)	43 (1)
1921	41134 (1965)*	9.3 (0.5)	93 (5)
1931	56861 (4226)	11.5 (0.9)	115 (9)

*Figures within brackets show the number of female population.

Sources : Census of India 1921, Vol. XVI, part I, p.124, part II, p.113; Census of India 1931 Vol. XVIII, part I p.481, part II, p.46; District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1986, pp.196-197

The presence of a relatively larger proportion of educated and literate population facilitated the spread of nationalist ideas and activities as there

³² District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1907, p.133.

³³ District Gazetteer, Ballia Government of U.P. (Lucknow, 1986), pp. 196-97

³⁴ Census of India, 1921, Vol. XI, Part I, p.121.

was an available pool of potential cadre and leaders who could be the torch-bearers of the national movement in the area. The presence of a larger number of schools was also conducive to the strength of the national movement as students were an active force in the mass phase of Indian nationalism.

CHAPTER – 2

THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

This chapter attempts to trace the prehistory of the Quit India movement in Ballia. The aim is not only to find out the roots of the heightened activism which Ballia demonstrated during the days of Quit India movement but also to examine the argument that the '42 outbreaks were not mere spontaneous and autonomous outbursts against British authority but were the culmination of nationalist mobilization of masses carried out over years by nationalists. This chapter presents a narrative account of pre '42 anti-British agitations in the district and includes a detailed discussion of the role of various national political organizations and the dynamics of mass politics.

I. Nationalist Activities

Though the main focus of the chapter is to describe nationalist politics from the 1920s, the narrative starts with the great revolt of 1857 to locate the tradition of anti-British resistance.

During the 1857 rebellion, Ballia had no individual existence and was part of the Ghazipur and Azamgarh districts which were among the most disturbed areas during 1857 because of the close proximity to Shahabad in Bihar where the local zamindar Kunwar Singh challenged the British authority and in the later phase had some magnificent victories over

the British, particularly in Azamgarh district.¹ During his marches he camped at several places, such as Sikandarpur, Maniar and Nagra, which later became parts of Ballia district. His march through parts of Ballia and the consequent activity of the British army aroused the local people, especially the Rajput clans, against the British and they attempted to pose a challenge to the British authority by destroying bridges, etc.² However, the resistance was scattered, sporadic and limited in nature and subsided in face of brutal repression by British troops,³ though it took almost a year to restore order in Ballia.⁴

After 1858, the area was reported to be quite peaceful in official records, except for few references to agrarian riots and clashes among high caste share holders over proprietary rights.⁵ But after the formation of the district in 1879, it started opening up to the new ideas emanating in the outside world, and a collective identity as well as sense of a national identity began to emerge. Important in this process were speeches of celebrated figures in social-ceremonial gatherings like the Dadri mela⁶ and

¹ District Gazetteer, Ballia, 1907, p.157.

² Ibid., p.159

³ In the middle of May 1858, village Chit Baragaon which later became part of Ballia was destroyed by British troops because of its open rebellion. *ibid.*, p.158.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.158

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.127; Settlement Report, Ballia, 1885, pp. 18, 21, 30, 40.

⁶ 'In November 1884, *Arya Desopakarini Sabha* organized a speech of Bhartendu Harishchandra, a leading literary figure in Hindi region, in *Dadri Mela*. In this meeting he called for a national identity – called people to work together in the interest of country. Dalmia, Vasudha, *The Nationalization of Hindu Tradition-Bhartendu Harishchandra and 19th Century Banaras*, (OUP, New Delhi, 1997), pp.21-23.

movements such as the cow protection movement.⁷ Though this early modern consciousness had Hindu overtones and tended to overlap religious identity with national identity, its significance in the growth of a collective identity and later a national identity can not be underestimated. In this phase, the Arya Samaj provided the organizational framework for the spread of nationalist ideas, as the thrust of the campaigns of the Arya Samaj was against foreign rule. Arya Samaj was very active in weekly markets in villages, fairs and other social ceremonial gatherings.⁸

By the early decades of the 20th century, this district also started to respond to the ongoing anti-British struggles in the rest of the country and by 1920s with the establishment of the local unit of Indian National Congress in 1919 by Ganga Singh, Thakur Jagannath Singh, Murli Monohar and others,⁹ anti-British activities became more organized and explicit. In November 1918, a Home Rule Procession was taken out in which a large number of students participated and a general strike or *hartal* marked the death of Lokmanya Tilak on August 1, 1920.¹⁰ All these activities, however sporadic they were, ignited the anti-British sentiments in the district, and when, in the last week of November 1920, Dr. Rajendra Prasad came to Ballia in order to prepare the ground for the Non-

⁷ File No.309, Home Public 'B', 1894, NAI, New Delhi.

⁸ Interview Vishwanath Mardana.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *ibid*; Gupta, Durga Prasad, *Swatantrata Sangram Mein Ballia*, (Ballia, 1988), p.43

TH 86
All 78

cooperation movement and gave an emotional speech at the Dadri Mela, it had a tremendous impact on the people. A large number of people participated in the Non-cooperation movement – school teachers left their jobs, students left schools and colleges, lawyers boycotted courts, etc.¹¹ and hundreds of political workers were sent to jail.¹²

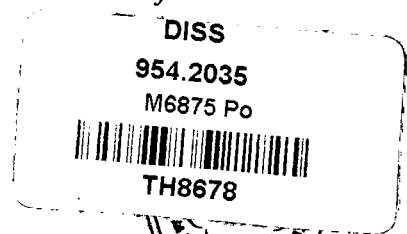
Non cooperation movement being the first experience of modern mass politics in this district had obvious limitations in spread and intensity. Nevertheless, it was the stepping stone for future nationalist struggles, especially as many future leaders emerged from this movement. Some of them were Murli Manohar, Chittu Pandey and Vishwanath Mardana, who were to remain in the front ranks of the leadership of the national movement in later phases.

Following the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement in 1922, Ballia remained in political backwaters for some time. However, it responded with vigour and enthusiasm to visits of national leaders such as Gandhi who visited this district in October 1925.¹³ Efforts were also made by local leaders to build up the tempo and, by 1930, the district was ready to take an active part in the Civil Disobedience movement. While nothing spectacular happened in neighbouring districts, Ballia demonstrated relatively high levels of activism. Processions were taken out and shops

¹¹ Interview Paras Nath Mishra.

¹² Leader, Allahabad, 19 May 1922 in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (hereafter SWJN) Vol.I, p.256.

¹³ Gupta, Durga Prasad, op.cit., p.47.



were picketed. To break the salt law, which was an integral part of Civil Disobedience movement, salt was publicly made and auctioned in Ballia town and other parts of the district.¹⁴ Seeing the intensity of popular enthusiasm, the British authorities moved in to prevent the spread of movement and, in December 1931, arrested almost all the leaders of the Congress, including District Congress Committee President Chittu Pandey, Thakur Jagannath Singh Mahanand Mishra and Ram Lachan Tiwari in a fabricated criminal case known as the 'Ballia conspiracy case 1931', in which they were charged with threatening local merchants and extracting money from them.¹⁵ Though the case was later dismissed by the court, the arrests effectively restrained the leaders from leading the movement at its peak by putting them in jail for almost a year and a half.

A remarkable feature of the Civil-Disobedience movement in Ballia was the enthusiasm shown by the students. As part of their programme, Congress workers tried to induce into the students to give up studies and boycott the schools. Following this, a large number of students of different schools gave up their studies and took active part in the movement. This led to many of them being denied re-admission¹⁶ and even to convictions by the

¹⁴ ibid., p.53

¹⁵ File Nos.19/1/1932 and 19/2/1932, RR No.47, CID files, UPSA, Lucknow.

¹⁶ ibid., Police Diary Nos. 5 and 7, dated 28.12.31 and 1.1.32, Baleshwar Singh, Durga Prasad Gupta, Vaidyanath Singh were rusticated from schools while Ram Lachan Tiwari gave up studies to participate in the Civil Disobedience movement.

courts.¹⁷ Students in fact provided the most devoted cadre for the national movement and undertook a variety of activities such as distributing pamphlets and going to villages for propaganda and organizational work.

To maintain the momentum of anti British feeling generated by the Civil Disobedience movement and to attract more people to the nationalist causes, nationalists organized meetings in fairs and weekly markets, celebrated Independence Day and birth anniversaries of prominent leaders such as Tilak Jayanti, etc.

During the election campaign of 1936-37, nationalist leaders such as Chittu Pandey, Tarkeshwar Pandey, Vishwanath Mardana moved from village to village campaigning against the British government, and also organized political conference in many areas.¹⁸ To highlight the issues and more directly address the peasantry, Kisan conferences, were also held at several places.¹⁹ These were attended by prominent figures such as Acharya Narendra Dev and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati.²⁰ During the election campaign, Jawaharlal Nehru made a whirlwind tour of Ballia district in December 1936 and addressed several meetings at different places in the district.²¹ These meetings were attended by all sections of society – both

¹⁷ Ram Narain, Narad Muni, Ram Nath Rai and Paras Ram Singh, students of different schools in Ballia were convicted by Court for participating in Civil Disobedience Movement. Files Nos. 192/1931 and 270/1932, GAD, UPSA, Lucknow.

¹⁸ Interview Vishwanath Maradana; *Aaj*, Varanasi, 19 and 20, December, 1936.

¹⁹ *PAI*, 14 May, July 16, 1938, CID Headquarters, Lucknow.

²⁰ *PAI*, July 16, 1938; Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

²¹ Interview Vishwanath Mardana; SWJN.

urban and rural - in large numbers and were reported to have had electrifying effect on the people, especially in the rural areas. The result was the victory of both the candidates of Congress, Radha Mohan Singh from Ballia South and Suraj Narain Singh from Ballia North.²² The election campaign and later the establishment of Congress ministry in the Province had a great impact on the people and provided a new impetus to the nationalist mobilization in the district as the establishment of Swaraj Sarkar gave people the minimum required confidence in themselves which enable them to think about challenging the British authority. Ballia was one of those districts of the United Provinces in which the highest number of Satyagrahis were enrolled during the Individual Satyagraha movement of 1940-41,²³ three or four arrests being reported every two or three days,²⁴ even in villages. Though Individual Satyagraha movement was limited in aims, it increased political consciousness and spirit of opposition to the government²⁵ which then found open expression during the Quit India movement.

²² Reeves, P.D. et al., *A Handbook of Elections in UP 1920-51*, (Manohar, New Delhi, 1975), p.278.

²³ File No. G.2, 1940, AICC Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

²⁴ For reports of arrests and other nationalist activities in the district during Civil Disobedience Movement, see *Aaj*, Varanasi for the period of 1940, 1941.

²⁵ File No. 3/6/42, Home (Pol.), NAI, New Delhi.

II. Nationalist Organizations and Groups

This section discusses the working and the ideologies of various nationalist organizations and groups who had provided the organizational network for nationalist activities in the district.

Congress

The local unit of the Congress was founded in 1919 by a local zamindar, Ganga Singh.²⁶ Initially, its spread was limited to the urban population and the leadership was in hands of relatively conservative people like Ganga Singh, Murli Manohar, Jagannath Singh etc., but the process of transformation started very soon, as the leaders realized the necessity of mass support. They carried out a vigorous mass mobilization campaign and made strong efforts to identify the Congress with the causes of the people especially the peasantry, by taking up their problems.²⁷ This effort reached its peak during the election campaign of 1936 and during the rule of the Congress ministry in 1937-39. There was a rapid expansion in membership figures which jumped from 12610 in 1937²⁸ to 21027 in 1939,²⁹ a higher increase than any other district in the eastern part of the United Provinces.

²⁶ Interview, Vishwanath Mardana; Gupta, Durga Prasad, op. cit., p.37.

²⁷ Cittu Pandey, President of District Congress Committee asserted in a meeting at Rasra, Ballia that Congress is a party of Kisans, *Aaj*, December 19, 1936.

²⁸ File No. 20(I) of 1937, AICC papers, NMML, New Delhi.

²⁹ File No. C-1 of 1939, AICC papers, NMML, New Delhi.

The ideological differences in the Congress at the national and provincial levels were reflected in the Congress organization in Ballia as well. In 1934-35, two groups emerged, one consisting of younger leaders of socialist inclination such as Vishwanath Mardana, Ram Lachan Tiwari, Mahanand Mishra etc., who associated themselves with Acharya Narendra Dev and the other around Chittu Pandey who associated with Govind Ballabh Pant, P.D. Tandon etc.³⁰ The first group consisted mainly of younger generation of leaders and drew support mainly from teachers, students, etc., who were disenchanted with the Gandhian strategies and attracted towards socialist ideas disseminating from big cities like Banaras. In 1935, these leaders formed the local unit of the Congress Socialist Party.

31

Despite differences, both the groups participated in the election campaign with the same vigour. By 1940, such groupings were totally ruled out as Chittu Pandey again became the undisputed leader of the District Congress Committee.³²

Qaumi Seva Dal

The Qaumi Seva Dal was established in 1938 as a voluntary wing of the Congress and aimed at laying the foundations of a 'future nationalist

³⁰ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

³¹ Interview, Vishwanath Mardana.

³² Mishra, Paras Nath (ed.), *Karmayogi Mahanand Mishra* (Lucknow, 1998), p.17.

militia'.³³ Its main purpose was to create a dedicated volunteer force which would go from village to village, organizing small camps and meetings, and undertake other organizational activities.

In Ballia, the Qaumi Seva Dal was organized by the younger generation of leaders and political activists who had socialist inclinations such as Mahanand Mishra, Vishwanath Chaube and Rajeshwar Tiwari.³⁴ As a result of a vigorous campaign by its organizers, it registered the highest number of volunteers in any district of the United in 1939.³⁵ Volunteers of the Qaumi Seva Dal, composed mostly of educated youth, who moved from village to village, organizing meetings in which they made speeches emphasizing exploitative nature of British rule and pointing out the significance of the ongoing nationalist struggle in simple language. They also took *Prabhat pheris* which were very popular and attracted a large number of people.³⁶

There was a full time Qaumi Seva Dal volunteer in almost every group of two or three villages. He was usually an elderly and educated person of the locality who had a high level of credibility and respect in the locality. He was affectionately called *Volty Kaka*³⁷ (volunteer uncle) and his main work was to address small gatherings in village *chaupals* and *haats*,

³³ File No.G-2, AICC papers, NMML, New Delhi.

³⁴ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

³⁵ File No. Kw of P-20, 1939, AICC Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

³⁶ Interview, Parasnath Mishra.

³⁷ 'Kaka' is a word in local dialect which is used to show respect while addressing a person of ones' father's generation.

encourage a sense of community by involving people in constructive works and mobilize people for the nationalist cause by making them aware of political issues.³⁸

Because of the enthusiasm it had succeeded in generating among its workers, the Qaumi Seva Dal in Ballia had developed into very a strong organizational force and had recruited the youth on a massive scale.³⁹ These young people were to provide a cadre of politically trained and dedicated activists and leaders who played a critical role in the intense political activism witnessed in the Quit India movement in Ballia.⁴⁰

Left Groups

Left oriented political groups and organizations who advocated more radical programmes focused on peasants in the nationalist struggle were also active in the district.

A branch of the Allahabad Kisan Sabha had been set up in Ballia as early as August 1919⁴¹ by the younger Congressmen like Vishwanath Mardana, Durga Prasad Gupta and others,⁴² to address peasant issues such as rents and tenancy rights. There is reference to Kisan Sabha meeting

³⁸ Interview Vishwanath Chaube.

³⁹ Chandan Mitra, 'Popular Uprising in 1942: The Case of Ballia' in Pandey, Gyanendra (ed.), *The Indian Nation in 1942*, (KP Bagchi, Calcutta, 1988), pp.173-74

⁴⁰ Interview, Vishwanath Chaube.

⁴¹ File No.49, January 1920, Home (Pol.) NAI, New Delhi.

⁴² Interview Vishwanath Mardana.

being organized at Rasra in October 1919,⁴³ but little information is available after that date till we come to 1936-37, when a fresh attempt was undertaken by some leaders who were dissatisfied with the Congress programme and felt that the Congress was not taking up agrarian issues. During 1937-38, several Kisan conferences were held in Ballia⁴⁴ of which two were addressed by Swami Sahajanand, noted Kisan Leader,⁴⁵ and an agitation was launched against 'foreign zamindar'-landlords who were not natives of the district in 1937 and it continued till 1938.⁴⁶

Though these Kisan conferences were quite well attended and they built support for Kisan Sabha among the rural masses, Kisan Sabha in Ballia could not develop the strength it had in neighbouring districts of eastern U.P. such as Ghazipur and Azamgarh or in Bihar. One reason for this limited popularity of the Kisan Sabha was perhaps that most of the leaders of the Kisan Sabha were equally active in the Congress and therefore there was an overlap in the activities of both the organizations.⁴⁷ Another reason for the limited influence of the Kisan Sabha in Ballia district, which I have tried to establish in this work, was the specific nature of agrarian relations of this district, which meant that there was less scope

⁴³ File No.49, January 1920, Home (Pol.), NAI, New Delhi.

⁴⁴ PAI, 16 June 1938, CID Hqs., Lucknow.

⁴⁵ PAI, 14 May 1938, CID Hqs. Lucknow.

⁴⁶ Interview Vishwanath Mardana; Saraswati, Sahjanand, *Kisan Sabha Ke Sansamaran* (Patna, 1940), p.73.

⁴⁷ Interview, Vishwanath Mardana.

for sharp clashes within agrarian society, between zamindars and tenants, and for radical demands on agrarian issues⁴⁸

Growth of Kisan Sabha was also limited by the vigorous mass mobilization drive of the Congress and the Qaumi Seva Dal and efforts made by the Congress leaders to associate with the peasantry⁴⁹ who perhaps felt no need for a separate Kisan organization.

Revolutionary Terrorist Groups

As Ballia had direct connections with Banaras, which had become a storm centre of revolutionary terrorist activities, as well as with Bengal which was an old centre of revolutionary terrorism, many young people in the age group of 20-25 years and school and college students were attracted towards these ideas, even though they could never perform any significant revolutionary terrorists activity in Ballia. An interesting features was that the leaders of the revolutionary groups were also simultaneously leaders of the Congress. For example in 1931, there is a reference to a revolutionary organizations called '*Krantikari Committee*' which was led by Thakur Jagannath Singh, a prominent Congress leader.⁵⁰ Its workers distributed a pamphlet titled '*Mata Ka Pehla aur Doosra Prasad*' during the Civil

⁴⁸ This argument has already been discussed in previous chapter.

⁴⁹ *Aaj*, 19 December, 1936.

⁵⁰ Ballia Conspiracy Case, 1931, Collectorate Records Room, Ballia.

Disobedience movement and there were also some incidents of bomb throwing.⁵¹

In 1934, Gokul Das Shastri, who was incharge of the local Gandhi Ashram, organized a revolutionary group called '*Utthan Sangh*'. This group brought out a cyclostyled leaflet titled '*Jagruti Bharat*'⁵². It was reported to be influenced by socialist ideology⁵³ and was very popular in the district. It had branches in several localities and villages of the district and almost all younger leaders of the Congress in the district – Ramlachan Tiwari, Mahanand Mishra, Baleshwar Singh, Tarkeshwar Pandey and many others were its members.⁵⁴ However, this group became defunct after arrest of Gokul Bhai in 1935 under the Arms Act. In 1937, after his release from jail, Gokul Bhai again, organized a revolutionary group called *Mukti Sadhak Sangh*.⁵⁵

A group consisting of members of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army also existed in Ballia. The leaders of this group were Kamta Singh, Mrigraj Singh and Kapildeo Singh and they were active mainly in Rasra, one of the tehsil headquarters in Ballia district. In contrast to other revolutionary groups who were involved not in action but only in propagation of the idea of armed revolution, members of this group looted a

⁵¹ ibid.

⁵² UP, Who's Who, No.115, 1936, CID Hqs. Lucknow.

⁵³ Rai, Jharkhande, *Bhartiya Krantikari Andolan: Ek Vishleshan* (New Delhi, 1981), p.108.

⁵⁴ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

⁵⁵ ibid.

Mail Train in Nandganj in neighbouring Ghazipur, in coordination with local revolutionaries in 1941.⁵⁶ An important fact about the revolutionary groups in Ballia, which was true for other parts of the country as well⁵⁷ is that though the revolutionary terrorists propagated use of violence they also worked within the Gandhian movement simultaneously.⁵⁸ Almost all the members of the revolutionary groups were not only members of the Congress organization but also took an active part in Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements.

III. Forms of Mobilization

Nationalist leaders had evolved a variety of methods for ensuring the mass participation. This section presents a brief description of such methods of mass mobilization with specific reference to Ballia district.

Meeting, Processing and Camps

Processions and meetings were one of the most common form of mobilization and participation in the national movement. Processions were taken out to register protests against the administration, against arrests of leaders, or to celebrate a particular event like victory in elections or release of a prominent leader from jail, etc. Usually, after marching through different parts of the locality, processions culminated in a meeting at a

⁵⁶ 'Nandganj Train Dacoity Case'. RR No.5, CID files, UPSA, Lucknow.

⁵⁷ Chandra, Bipan, *Nationalism and Colonialism in India* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1979), p.224.

⁵⁸ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

certain place like an important *Chauraha*, or Garden where local leaders and sometimes guest speakers used to address the gathering. In their speeches, these leaders underlined the responsibility of British rule for the problems faced by the people and made emotional appeals for joining the struggle against the British government. Leaders used the local language and popular idioms to convey their message.

In addition to regular meetings, nationalist leaders particularly those with socialist leanings, and those belonging to the Qaumi Seva Dal, organized camps in villages, particularly aimed at inculcating nationalist ideas in the minds of rural people. Some of these were attended and addressed by prominent leaders like Swami Sahjanand Saraswati.⁵⁹

Printed Materials

Printed materials⁶⁰ became a major instrument of mobilization for nationalists particularly in the case of Ballia, where the literacy rate was quite high. Newspapers like 'Young India', 'Navjeevan', 'Leader', and particularly the vernacular ones like 'Aaj' gave coverage to nationalist agitations, propagated the ideas of top leaders, and the spirit of nationalist struggle. They thus became a major source of mobilizing the masses and arousing anti-British consciousness. Paras Nath Mishra confirmed that Aaj,

⁵⁹ Weekly PAIs for 1937-38, CID Hqs. Lucknow; File No.49, January 1920, Home (Pol.) NAI, New Delhi; *Aaj*, Varanasi for this period.

⁶⁰ Printed materials refer to Newspapers and pamphlets.

the vernacular newspaper published from Banaras, was a major source of spreading nationalist message among the masses.⁶¹

In addition to the newspapers that emanated from major urban centres, in Ballia also attempts were made to publish a number of newspapers from time to time. 'Desh Mitra' was the first newspaper reported to be published from Ballia.⁶² **Prabhat** (Weekly) was published during 1932-36 by Durga Prasad Gupta and Vasisht Narain 'Nirbal'; 'Sansar' (Weekly)⁶³ by Vasisht Narain 'Nirbal'; **Sangharsh** (Weekly), by Pandit Harihar Sharma and **Ballia Samachar** by Ramdahin Ojha. In addition to these newspapers which propagated the ideas of nationalist struggle in general, certain revolutionary groups had also made attempts to publish periodicals to propagate their revolutionary ideals.⁶⁴ In 1932-34, Gukul Bhai (organizer of Utthan Sangh, a revolutionary group in Ballia) published 'Jagrati Bharat'⁶⁵ which had socialist leanings and called for revolution when the situation became unbearable.⁶⁶

In addition to periodicals and newspapers, pamphlets (printed or hand written) also had a significant role in spreading the nationalist

⁶¹ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

⁶² File No. 1012/1930, Police Department, UPSA, Lucknow.

⁶³ Gupta, Durga Prasad, op. cit., pp.72-73.

⁶⁴ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

⁶⁵ UP Who's Who, No.115, 1936, CID Hqs., Lucknow. Rai, Jharkhande, op. cit.

⁶⁶ as a poem written on the head of the papers asserts – सब केहू मिल खाई मकई के लावा

उहो ना मिली त बोल द धावा।

(let everyone have the corn; if you wouldn't get that, attack on the establishment)

message as their publication and circulation was relatively easier. In Ballia the nationalists published several pamphlets from time to time and distributed them in markets, fairs and other gatherings. '*Bole le Dhawa*', '*Gunde Hum Ya Tum*' were a few examples of pamphlets published in Ballia by Congress leaders Ram Lachan Tiwari and Tarkeshwar Pandey, who were active in revolutionary organizations as well.⁶⁷

The role of printed materials was multiplied by the fact that their message was not confined among its readers only but spread to larger masses through people reading out the contents of the newspapers in public places⁶⁸ or just talking about the contents with others.⁶⁹

Patriotic Songs

Patriotic songs (particularly in the local dialect) which emphasized the exploitative character of British rule, glorified the nationalist struggle and called upon people to participate in it, became very effective in communicating the message of nationalist struggle particularly among rural masses because of their easy understandability and their sensitivity to the local cultural ethos. Nationalist leaders used to sing these patriotic songs in

⁶⁷ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

⁶⁸ Chittu Pandey, local leader of Congress used to read the news articles and editorial in the *Chowk* (a central place in Ballia Town), to transmit it to the public, Interview Paras Nath Mishra.

⁶⁹ Pandey, Gyanendra, 'Mobilization in a Mass Movement: Congress 'Propaganda' in the United Provinces 1930-34', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.9, No.2, 1975, pp.205-206.

processions, in nationalist camps, at the beginning of meetings,⁷⁰ etc. In Ballia during Non-Cooperation days *Batohiya* songs, written by Raghurib Saran Singh, in which the exploitative character of the British government and problems of Indian masses were addressed through a strange traveller (*Batohiya*) became very popular and were used by the leaders to arouse the anti-British feelings of the masses.⁷¹ Other types of popular nationalist songs were *Bidesiya*, *Birha*, etc. Considering the significance of the songs of local dialect in spreading the nationalist message, it may not be out of context to quote some of them –

A song that invokes the role of Mangal Pandey in the 1857 revolt-

जब सन्तावनि के रारि भइलि, बीरन के बीर पुकार भइल
 बलिया का मंगल पांडे के, बलिबेदी से ललकार भइल ।
 'मंगल' मस्ती में चूर चलल, पहिला बागी मसहूर चलल
 गोरनि का पलटनि का आगे, बलिया के बांका सूर चलल ।
 गोली के तुरत निसान भइल, जननी के भेंट परान भइल
 आजादी का बलिबेदी पर, मंगल पांडे बलिदान भइल ।
 जब चिता – राख चिनगारी से, धुधकत, तनिकी अंगारी से
 सोला नकलल, धधकल, फइलल, बलिया का क्रांति पुजारी से ।
 घर घर में ऐसन आग लगलि, भारत के सूतल भागि जगलि
 अंगरेजन के पलटनि सगरी, बैरक—बैरक से भागि चललि ।⁷²

⁷⁰ Trieveni Singh, Baleshwar Singh, local Congress Leaders used to sing patriotic songs in Congress processions, Interview Paras Nath Mishra.

⁷¹ Upadhyaya, Vishwamitra, *Lokgeeton Mein Krantikari Chetna* (Publication Division, New Delhi, 1997), p.31.

⁷² Written by Prasad Narain Singh.

(The war of '57 took place and heroes were called to participate in the revolution. Mangal Pandey from Ballia called upon the patriots from the altar of patriotism. The first rebellion of fame Mangal Pandey moved forward to face the British troops.

A 'Batohiya' song which underlines the greatness of the motherland-

सुन्दर, सुभूमि भैया भारत के देसवा से
मोरे प्रान बसे हिम खोह रे बटोहिया ।
एक द्वार घेरे राम हिम को तवलवा से
तीन द्वार सिंधु सागर घहरावे रे बटोहिया ।
जाहु जाहु भैया रे बटोही हिन्द देखि आऊ
जहवां कुहुकि कोइल बोले रे बटोहिया ।
सुन्दर सुभूमि भैया भारत के देसवा से
मौरे प्रान बसे गंगाधार रे बटोहिया ।
गंगारे जमुनवा के जगमग पनिया से
सरजू झमकि लहरावे रे बटोहिया⁷³

A song that underlines the poverty and starvation of Indian people under British government and praises the role of great leaders like Gandhi and Nehru –

होई गइलें कंगाल हो विदेशी तोरे रजवा में
सोनवा के थाली जहवां जेवना जोंवत रहलीं
कठवा के ढोकिया होइ गइल मुहाल हो विदेसिया ।

He was immediately shot and sacrificed his life for motherland.
Mangal Pandey sacrificed his life on the of altar freedom.
The spark which emanated from the ashes of the pyre of this revolutionary,
Became a fireball and spread in all directions.
This ignited such a fire of revolution in each and every house,
That entire Birtish troops from Barracks of Barrackpur fled away
And the sleeping destiny of India was awakened).
Written by Raghuvir Saran Singh:-
(India is a beautiful land, brother
And my life lies in the valleys of snow, O traveller!
One entrance Ram (God) has surrounded by a snow watchman (Himalaya),
And Sea surrounded the three other entrances, O traveller!
Go, go and see India
Where Indian cuckoos warble, O traveller!
India is a beautiful land, brother
And my life lies in the holy currents of Ganges, O traveller!
In the shining water of Ganges and Yamuna
The shining Sun is rippling O traveller!)

भारत के लोग आज दाना बिना तरसैं भइया
लंदन के कुत्ता उड़ावे मजा माल हो विदेसिया ।
आवे अशोक, चंद्रगुप्त हमरे देसवा में
लोरवा बहावे देखि तोहरो हवाल हो विदेसिया ।
जुग—जुग जीयसु हमार गांधी—जवाहर,
जे दूर करेंले मोर गरीबन के हाल हो विदेसिया ।⁷⁴

Another song calls for a socialist revolution –

झोपड़ियों से ले चिंगारी, हां धुँआधार फैला दो तुम ।
साम्राज्यवाद की चिता फूक कर, कर दो जग एक समान ।⁷⁵

Social Ceremonial Gatherings

Social ceremonial gatherings like fairs, *haats* (markets in the countryside) provided a space for communication which was used by nationalist leaders. Political workers, especially volunteers of the Qaumi Seva Dal would go to these gatherings, give speeches, distribute leaflets and convey their message in personal conversation. In Ballia a huge annual

⁷⁴ (In your rule, we have become bankrupt, O foreigner!
Where we were eating lavish foods in golden plates
Even wooden plates have become difficult, O foreigner!
Today Indians are starving for food,
And even the dogs of London are enjoying, O foreigner !
If Asoka and Candragupta would come to our country
They would shed tears by seeing the condition, O foreigner!
May our great leaders Gandhi and Jawahar live for ages
Who resolve the problems of us poor, O foreigner!)

⁷⁵ Written by Prabhunath Mishra:
(Let's take the spark from the hamlets
and spread the fire of revolution.
Burn the pyre of imperialism
And make the world egalitarian).
* I owe my thanks to Rashmi for the translations.

cattle fair known as *Dadri Mela* was organized every year which was used by the nationalists for communicating their message. To cite an example, Bharatendu Harishchandra, a famous nationalist Hindi writer of Banaras was called to address a meeting in Dadri Mala, long back in 1883. In this meeting he gave his famous speech 'Bhatvarshonnati Kaise Ho Sakti Hai' (How can India Make Progress) in which he criticized the British government for the pitiable condition of India and called for formation of a national identity.⁷⁶

Prabhat Pheris

Prabhat Pheris was a unique form for the dissemination of nationalist ideas. In Prabhat Pheris bands of men, women and children went around various localities at dawn, singing nationalist songs.⁷⁷ These songs emphasized the exploitative character of British rule and urged people to participate in the nationalist struggle. In Ballia, Qaumi Seva Dal workers organized *Prabhat Pheris* on a regular basis in almost every locality and it became a major instrument in communicating nationalist messages among the masses and in attracting them towards the nationalist struggle.

⁷⁶ Dalmia, Vasudha; op.cit., p.21.

⁷⁷ Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence* (Penguin, New Delhi, 1989), p.279.

Gandhi Ashrams

Gandhi Ashrams which were set up throughout the country for grassroot level constructive work on Gandhian principles, such as spinning and promotion of Khadi, education of rural masses, boycott of foreign cloth etc., provided a well organized institutional network for mobilization work. The *Gandhi Ashram* served as a rallying point for political activists where they discussed political issues and planned the future course of action. It became a training ground for political activists and helped them to develop bonds with the masses who were hitherto untouched by nationalist politics. In Ballia, a Gandhi Ashram under the charge of Ramjas Bhai and Gokul Bhai was associated not only with the constructive work but became an organizing centre for a variety of forms of political action including the revolutionary stream.⁷⁸ Its secretary Gokul Bhai himself was the organizer of a revolutionary group 'Utthan-Sangh'.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

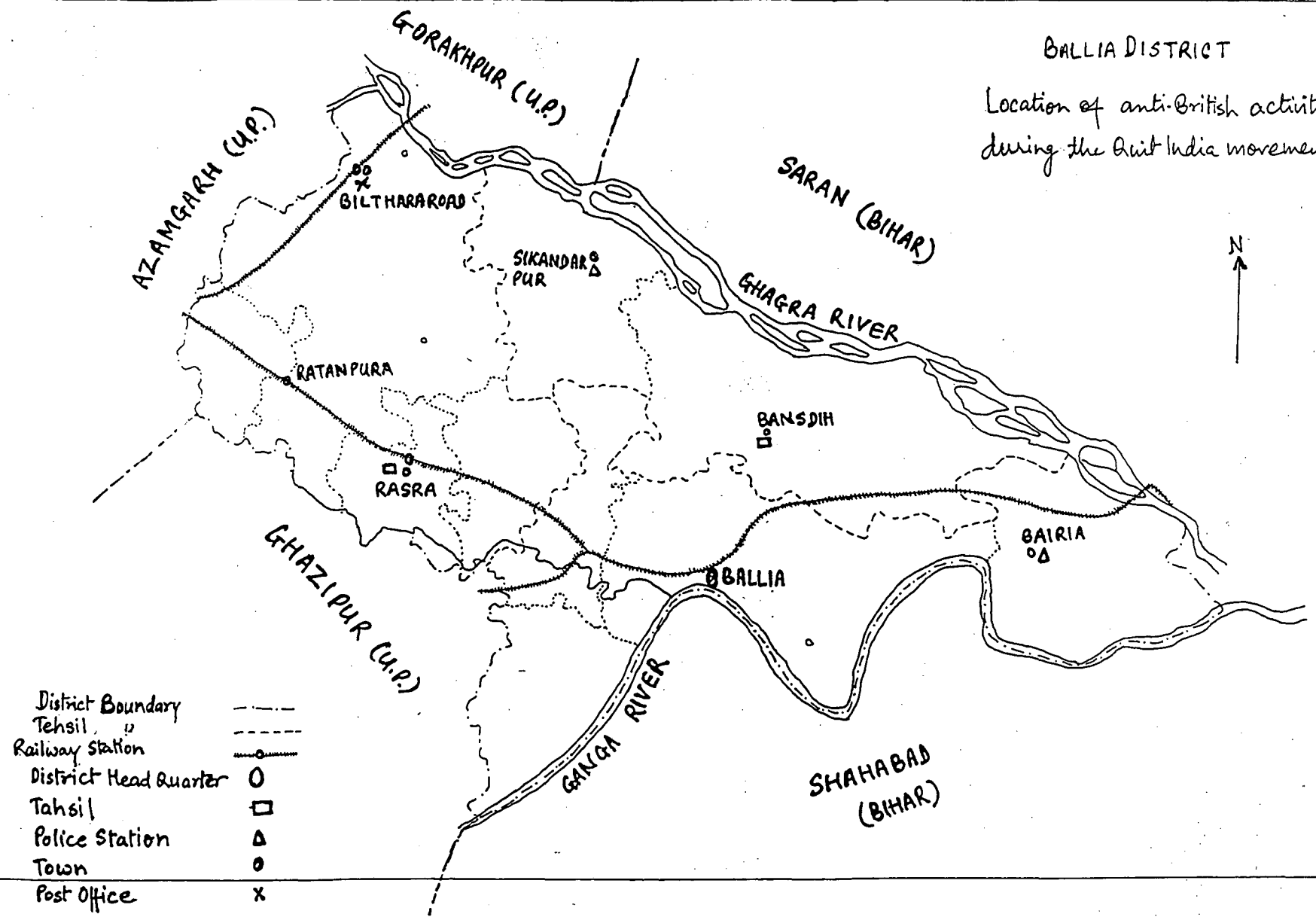
⁷⁹ UP who's who, No.115, 1936, CID Hqs. , Lucknow.

CHAPTER – 3

x I owe my thanks to Taruna for drawing this map.

BALLIA DISTRICT

Location of anti-British activities during the Quit India movement



Source: District Gazetteer, 'BALLIA', Compiled by H.R. Nevill (1907)

THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN BALLIA

The summer of 1942 saw both the nationalist leaders and the Indian people embittered and frustrated. The failure of the Cripps' Mission made it clear to the leaders of the Congress and to the Indian masses as well that the British government was not willing to make any significant concession which would bring independence closer. Popular discontent, which was a product of the gradually deteriorating condition of the Indian masses under British rule compounded by the immediate war crisis, was also aggravated by the news of British withdrawals from South-East Asia and Burma and the impending collapse of British authority. It was against this backdrop that the Indian leaders began to feel that the time has come for a final and decisive assault on the citadel of British imperialism in India. This was aimed at 'nothing less than freedom',¹ as the Draft Resolution for the Congress Working Committee asserted 'the only cure for this intolerable state of affairs is that the British Rule in India should end forthwith'.² Congress formally accepted the idea of launching a struggle in the Working Committee meeting on 14 July and, as before, left it to Gandhi to determine the appropriate time and form of struggle. Finally, it was the historic Congress meeting at Bombay on 8 August at which Gandhi called for a

¹ Speech of Mahatma Gandhi at AICC meeting, Bombay, 8 August, 1942, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Ahmedabad, Vol. LXXVI, p. 392 (hereafter *CWMG*).

² Draft Resolution for Congress Working Committee, date 9 July 1942, *CWMG*, Vol. LXXVI, p. 283

mass movement on the widest scale possible. To quote Jawaharlal Nehru, '(it) is not going to be a movement for a few days, to be suspended and talked over. It is going to be a fight to the finish'.³ All this generated unprecedented enthusiasm among the people. Following Gandhi's famous exhortation – 'Do or Die',⁴ large sections of the Indian masses revolted against British authority. The movement which started in big cities and towns as a reaction against the large scale arrests of leaders and the repressive activities of the British government, swept across the country. In this tremendous mass upsurge, people devised a variety of ways to record their protest. These included attacks on symbols of British authority, hoisting of the Congress flag on government buildings, disruption of means of communication in order to stop the functioning of the British government, etc.

The revolt was very intense in the Eastern part of the United Provinces – Azamgarh, Ghazipur, Gorakhpur and Ballia where the movement attained the proportions of a rebellion.⁵ Ballia, which is the focus of this study, became one of the storm centres of the uprising. A parallel

³ Jawaharlal Nehru's Speech at AICC session, Bombay. 8 August 1942, *SWJN*, Vol. XII, p. 457.

⁴ The Full quotation is "Here is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is : 'do or die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery", *CWMG*, Vol.LXXVI, p. 392.

⁵ Chandra Bipan, et. al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, (Penguin, New Delhi, 1989),p. 462.

government was established by nationalists and Ballia was totally cut off from rest of the country for about ten days.⁶

This chapter has been divided into two parts. In the first part, a narrative account has been presented of the events which occurred in Ballia district during the August 1942 uprising while in the second part certain formulations relating to patterns of mass mobilization, nature of leadership, nature of mass action and the mass character of the nationalist movements have been examined in the light of the evidence from Ballia.

I. Narrative

Ballia responded to the call of 'Quit India' and the news of incarceration of top Congress leaders on 8 August itself through established methods of protest against the British government i.e., through processions, closing of shops, schools, government offices etc.⁷ On 10 August a huge procession was taken out in Ballia town under the leadership of the local Congress leader, Ram Anant Pandey and the Communist leader, Vishwanath Mardana, who called upon people to participate in processions and strikes in large numbers and boycott all government institutions – courts, offices, schools etc.⁸ On 12 August one such procession was

⁶ FRUP, August II, 1942 File No. 18/8/42, Home (Pol.), NAI, New Delhi.

⁷ 'Several processions were taken out between 9 August 13, inspite of a prohibition on such activities under section 144 Criminal Procedure Code', FRUP, August II, 1942, file No. 18/8/42 Home (Pol.) NAI, New Delhi (hereafter FRUP August II).

⁸ Gupta, Durga Prasad, op.cit., p.85; Interview Vishwanath Mardana.

dispersed by a brutal **lathi charge** by authorities.⁹ A large number of people took part in these processions including students, teachers, advocates and merchants. Women took out a procession against the action of the government on 13 August¹⁰. The authorities made an attempt to repress such peaceful protests by imposing section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (which prohibits any mass activity), lathi charges on peaceful demonstrators, arrests at large scale and even firing on one occasions 15 August.¹¹

This type of peaceful protest continued and the general law and order situation in the district was not yet very serious till the arrival of an 'Azad train' carrying students from Banaras on 14 August¹². These students brought the information about the intense opposition to the British government in other parts of the country which was taking the form of sabotage activities, disruption of the functioning of government machinery, disruption of communications by cutting telegraph wires, uprooting railway tracks and digging roads, etc. Along with them came the rumour of the impending collapse of British rule. Both the news and the rumour spread like wildfire in the entire district and created a situation which can be best

⁹ FRUP, August II.

¹⁰ Hallet to Linlithgow, 17 September, 1942, *Linlithgow Papers*, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.

¹¹ FRUP, August II.

¹² 'The Congress Rebellion in the United Provinces 1942'; a published report on 1942 disturbances in UP, Lucknow, 1943 in R/3/1/359 Microfilm, NAI, New Delhi (hereafter Congress Rebellion 1942).

described in the following statement : 'every soul of the locality was moving in an air which contained the scent of rebellion and antagonistic emotions'.¹³ It changed the course of the ongoing anti British agitation. Soon the entire district reported widespread attacks on railway stations, police stations and post offices, uprooting of railway tracks, cutting of telegraph wires and digging of roads at several places. The climax was the establishment of a parallel government in the district.

To give a more comprehensive picture of the heroic struggle of the people of Ballia during the 1942 movement, let us take a look at some of the important incidents that took place in Ballia -

Events at Bilthara Road

The first incident occurred at Bilthara Road, a railway station situated on the train route from Banaras to Gorakhpur. Here the railway station was attacked, the army supply train was looted and the post office was burnt.¹⁴ In this incident the mob was led by Paras Nath Mishra, son of an influential local schoolmaster¹⁵ and a student of Banaras Hindu University, who left his studies and returned to his native place, as done by other students who returned to their homes and spread the message of the revolt. Paras Nath Mishra was active in nationalist politics earlier despite

¹³ Report of Sub Inspector Murtaza Hussain, Police Station Ubhaon in 'Prosecution case against S.I. Murtaza Hussain', Sessions Court Records Room, Ballia.

¹⁴ Case No.10, 1943, Sessions Court Records Room, Ballia.

¹⁵ Statement of Jagannath Pandey in 'Banaras Sabotage Case', File no. 13/1/1942, CID Files, UPSA, Lucknow.

his young age he had taken part in the Qaumi Sewa Dal camps in 1940 in Ballia and gone to villages to spread the message of anti-British struggle.¹⁶

Paras Nath arrived in his village on 13 August with the intention that something should be done at the local level to challenge British authority and spread the rebellion in the countryside. He went to 'Dambar Baba's Fair', a local fair and weekly market, where people were already agog with the news, mixed with rumour of incidents of attacks on symbols of British authority in the neighbouring district of Banaras and Azamgarh. When Paras Nath reached the fair, people gathered around him as he was coming from Banaras and therefore could provide a first hand account about events happening there. Paras Nath addressed the gathering and called upon the people to assemble at the railway station next morning, i.e., 14 August and destroy the railway station in order to disrupt communications and paralyze the functioning of the government. His speech exacerbated the existing discontent of the people and the meeting ended with slogans like *station phoonk do* (burn the station), and *Angrez bhag gayaa* (The Britishers have fled).¹⁷ Next day, people assembled at the railway station in an excited mood. It was a coincidence that a train, hijacked by students who were on their way to spread the message of rebellion, reached the station at the same time¹⁸. The speeches made by the students travelling on this 'Azad' train

¹⁶ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Case No.10, 1943, Sessions Court Record Room, Ballia.

calling for an attack on every symbol of British authority fuelled the fire of rebellion in the minds of the mob and they started destroying the station building. The mob uprooted tracks, broke signal lights and other control mechanisms.¹⁹ After destroying the station building, one section of the mob proceeded to the local post-office under the leadership of Paras Nath Mishra and Devnath Updadhya, where they burnt all the stamps stationery and furniture. The building was not set afire as the post-office was operating from private premises.²⁰ While others were still busy destroying the railway station building, an army supply train carrying sugar, arrived at the station and instantaneously the assembled people broke open the doors of the wagons and started looting the sugar.²¹ This continued throughout the day.

After the attack on the railway station building and the post office, Paras Nath Mishra and his associates, Devnath Upadhyay, Harcharan Lal, Jagannath Pandey and others planned more systematic attacks on symbols of British authority but they fled when they got the news about the arrival of army troops from the neighbouring district of Azamgarh. While being underground, they proceeded to the district headquarters in Ballia and on the way, talked to people about the rebellion in villages and motivated them to participate in the struggle to overthrow British authority.²²

¹⁹ *ibid*; interview, Paras Nath Mishra

²⁰ *ibid*.

²¹ *ibid*.

²² *ibid*.

Events at Rasra

As the news of widespread attacks on symbols of British authority in neighbouring localities reached Rasra, a small town and tehsil headquarter, the people of the area were agitated and started planning attacks on government buildings and ways of paralyzing the functioning of the British government. On 17th August, a huge crowd, under the leadership of Thakur Hargovind Singh, who was a local landlord and prominent Congress leader, assembled outside Rasra railway station and started demolishing the station building. They damaged the control room, cut the telegraph wires, broke all the lamps and glass panes, burnt all the furniture and tickets, damaged the goods shed and set afire a portion of the station building.²³

After destroying the station, the mob proceeded to the tehsil building, where the tehsildar urged them not to damage the tehsil building and records. He donned a Gandhi cap and hoisted the Congress flag on the Tahsil building. Thereafter the crowd hoisted the Congress flag on the police station.²⁴ After hoisting the Congress flag on the tehsil and the police-station, the crowd went to the adjacent compound of a local merchant, Gulab Chand but their purpose in doing so is a matter of controversy. Court records assert that the crowd entered the compound to loot the godowns of the Imperial Bank and other merchants.²⁵ In contrast as

²³ Ordinance Case No.18, 1942 Cases, File No. KW to 3/80, NAI, New Delhi.

²⁴ Criminal Case No. 26, 1942 Cases, File No. KW to 3/80/42, NAI, New Delhi.

²⁵ *ibid.*

one of the participants recalls that they went to take rest and decide the future course of action, on the invitation of the owner's younger brother.²⁶ Whatever be the motive of the crowd, Gulabchand called the police. The police force which had already faced humiliation because of the successful flag hoisting by the mob on the police station, cordoned off the compound (which was enclosed with boundary wall on all sides, except one) and opened fire,²⁷ causing at least twenty deaths.²⁸

Attack on Ratanpura Railway Station

On 16th August, a huge crowd attacked the railway station at Ratanpura, a small town near Rasra. The assembled people broke the signalling system and lamps of the station, sprinkled kerosene oil on papers and furniture and burnt them and set afire the station building. Meanwhile, a goods train came to the station. The mob attacked this train too. They damaged the lamps of the engine and attempted to ransack the wagons but the armed guards of the train started firing, which caused the mob to flee.²⁹

Events at Bansdih

Another event in the series which marked the erosion of authority of the British Raj in the countryside of U.P. occurred at Bansdih, tehsil headquarters. Following the news of the destructive activities challenging

²⁶ Interview, Yusuf Qureshi.

²⁷ Criminal Case No.26, 1942 Cases, File No. KW to 3/80/42, NAI, New Delhi.

²⁸ Govind Sahai, *1942 Rebellion*, (Rajkamal, New Delhi, 1947), p.221.

²⁹ Ordinance Case No.27, 1942 Cases, File No.KW to 3/80/42, NAI, New Delhi.

the British authority in the other parts of the district, Gajadhar Sharma, the President of the Tehsil Congress Committee, addressed meetings at various places in the locality in which he announced the collapse of the British Raj and called upon the masses to attack and destroy the police station and tehsil building.³⁰ On the morning of 18 August, a huge crowd of about 15 to 20 thousand, under the leadership of Gajadhar Lohar, Rajeshwar Chaubey, Suraj Singh, etc., attacked the police station. The station officer of the police station donned a Gandhi cap and hoisted the Congress flag on the building of the police station. Then the mob attacked the building and burnt the records kept in the building.³¹ After that the crowd proceeded to the tehsil building which was adjacent to the police station.

There the mob ransacked the tehsil building and burnt every record in the record room of the tehsil. After destroying the record room the crowd broke open the treasury and looted approximately 15000 rupees,³² which was kept by the leaders to be used for organizing further activities, after distributing a minor share to some policemen.³³ Thereafter, a parallel administration was set up and Gajadhar Sharma was installed as 'Swaraj Tehsildar'. He ordered the dismissal of government employees and fixed the prices of foodgrains in the local market.³⁴ This attempt to establish a

³⁰ Case No.31, Political Cases of 1942, Collectorate Records Room, Ballia.

³¹ Ordinance Case No.36, 1942 Cases, File No.KW to 3/80/42, NAI, New Delhi.

³² Hallet to Linlithgow, 17 September 1942, Linlithgow papers, NMML, New Delhi.

³³ Ordinance Case No. 36, 1942 Cases, File No KW to 3/80/42 NAI, New Delhi; Case No. 31, Collectorate Records Room, Ballia

³⁴ Zaidi, A. Moin, *The Wayout to Freedom*, (Orientalia, New Delhi, 1973), p.201.

parallel government expressed the ultimate goal of the masses, viz., to overthrow the British government. It was to be the forerunner of what was going to happen at the district headquarters the following day.

One significant point to mark in the Bansdih incidents was the collusion between lower officials of the government and the nationalists. In the Bansdih incidents Naib Tehsildar, Lal Bahadur Singh, supported the action of crowd and Naib Nazir Mohammad Moin provided important information to the leaders.³⁵

Attack on Bairia Police Station

On 15th August, a huge crowd of thousands of people attacked the police station at Bairia where the station officer himself hoisted the Congress flag on the building and requested the leaders of the crowd to give him some time to vacate the police station.

But as the crowd dispersed, the station officer removed the Congress flag from the police station. When people came to know about this, they were agitated and decided to attack the police station again. On 18th August a huge crowd of about fifteen thousand people attacked the police station under the leadership of Shivdarshan Singh, Chandrika Rai, Dharichan Koiri and others. People forcibly entered into the police station and started destroying it. It was then that the station officer ordered firing. Several

³⁵ Case No.31, Collectorate Records Room, Ballia

people got injured and some even died but the enthusiasm of the masses was still at its peak. They showed great courage and willingness to sacrifice even their life for the nationalist cause and continued their efforts to capture the police station. A youth died in police firing while trying to hoist the tricolour flag on the top of the building.³⁶ Despite the heavy rain the assembled people continued to ring a cordon around the police station but sometime around midnight the station officer, along with his man fled. Next morning, when people came to know about the escape of the policemen, they further damaged the building, destroyed furniture and set the building afire.³⁷

Attack on Sikandarpur Police Station

On 22nd August, a large crowd of about ten thousand people attacked the local post office under the leadership of local Congressmen, Hira Rai, Gauri Shankar Rai, Jaldhari Singh, etc.³⁸ Thereafter the mob proceeded to capture the police station. There they occupied the house of the station officer, and damaged the police station and residential quarters located within its premises. The station officer surrendered to the crowd and fled. Thereafter the mob sprinkled kerosene oil on the building and burnt it.³⁹

³⁶ Interview, Shivdarshan Singh

³⁷ Records in Register No. 8, of Bairia Police Station, Ballia.

³⁸ Interview Hira Rai.

³⁹ *ibid.*; Register No.8 of Sikandarpur Police Station, Ballia.

Liberation of Ballia – Establishment of `Swaraj Sarkar`

The culmination of widespread attacks on the symbols of British authority in U.P. countryside was witnessed in the massive attack on the district headquarters, the resultant surrender on the part of the authorities and the establishment of parallel government on 19 August at Ballia. Those who had taken to lead in the sabotage activities in the countryside now called upon people to proceed to the district headquarters. As a result, huge crowds converged on Ballia by 19 August.⁴⁰ Their unprecedented victories over British authority in the countryside enthused the people of the town who were already in a militant mood. This situation was aggravated by widespread rumour about the collapse of the British government in other parts of the country and about the establishment of `Congress Raj`⁴¹ in the coming days.

Considering the seriousness of the situation and the evident collapse of the administrative structure in the countryside, the District Magistrate, J.C. Nigam, set up an advisory committee – comprising of the loyalists, rich men of the district like Rai Bahadur Kashi Nath Mishra and urged the imprisoned President of the District Congress Committee Chitu Pandey, to assist the government in controlling the violent outbreaks.⁴² This was

⁴⁰ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra, Vishwanath Chaube, Vishwanath Mardana and Hira Rai.

⁴¹ Congress Rebellion 1942.

⁴² *ibid.*

refused by Chittu Pandey who, in turn, demanded the release of all political prisoners.⁴³ The dilemma faced by the administration finally ended on 19th August, when huge crowds converged on the town from various parts of the district, assembled outside the District Jail and demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners. The district Magistrate, who was already in a state of distress because of the widespread rumour about the end of the rule of the British government and the news of the capture of government establishments in the countryside, realized the limitations of any resistance to the actions of the crowd and ordered the burning of currency notes worth about four and a half lakh rupees⁴⁴ and released all the political prisoners. After release from jail, these leaders particularly Chittu Pandey, the President of the District Congress Committee assumed the leadership of the crowd and led a procession, to Ballia Town Hall where a meeting was held.⁴⁵ This meeting was addressed by Chittu Pandey, Radha Mohan Singh and Ram Govind Singh, all prominent leaders of the Congress. At the same time, a part of the crowd attacked the houses of three deputy magistrates, the city munsif and two loyalist rich men and burnt the two police outposts in Okedeganj and Japlinganj in the city.⁴⁶ After the meeting, the establishment of a parallel government (**Swaraj Sarkar**) was announced

⁴³ Interview, Vishwanath Chaube.

⁴⁴ File No.KW to 3/15/43, Home (Pol.), NAI, New Delhi.

⁴⁵ Ordinance Case No.1, 1943, File No. KW to 3/80/42, Home (Pol.) NAI, New Delhi.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, Hallet to Linlithgow, 17 September 1942, Linlithgow Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

⁴⁷ FRUP August II; Congress Rebellion 1942.

and Chittu Pandey was installed as the District Magistrate (**Swaraj Jiladhish**) of Ballia district. Chittu Pandey declared that now all the territory south of the main railway line in Ballia was under the Swaraj government and that all complaints and disputed matters should be brought to him.⁴⁷ After announcing the establishment of an independent government, Chittu Pandey called upon the people to restore order in the district by refraining from sabotage activities and urged people to go back to their homes as Swaraj had been achieved⁴⁸. Though few younger leaders among the gathering who represented the more radical stream of nationalist struggle, showed their disagreement with the way Chittu Pandey had concluded the upsurge because they had felt that it was the right occasion to overthrow the British government completely⁴⁹, the crowd which was in a mood to go to any extent and to make any sacrifice in order to end the British government, simply dispersed following the call of Chittu Pandey.⁵⁰

This marked the climax of the great anti-British uprisings of 1942 in Ballia district. But this was not the end of the movement and nationalists of this district continued to challenge British authority by carrying on underground activities.

⁴⁸ Ordinance Case No.1, 1943, file No. KW to 3/80/42, Home (Pol.) NAI, New Delhi.

⁴⁹ In words of Mahanand Mishra, पांडे खेल बिगाड़ दिहिन [Pandey (Chittu Pandey) has ruined the game] Mishra, Paras Nath (ed.), *Karmayogi Mahanand Mishra*, (Lucknow, 1998), p.19.

⁵⁰ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

⁵¹ This account of underground activities is based mainly on oral testimonies of the participants. Interviews, Paras Nath Mishra, Vishwanath Mardana, Vishwanath Chaube, Ramgovind Lal and others.

Underground Activities⁵¹

After the establishment of the Swaraj government district at the headquarters, a few young leaders like Paras Nath Mishra , Vishwanath Chaube, Mahanand Mishra and some others decided to capture the police stations and other government establishments which were left untouched during the earlier upsurge. Therefore, they formed groups and proceeded to different areas. On, 21st August, a crowd under the leadership of Mahanand Mishra and Vishwanath Chaube captured the **Garwar police station**, hoisted the Congress flag on it and looted a gun from there. On the following day, i.e., 22nd August, Mahanand Mishra and Vishwanath Chaube went to Haldharpur where they led the mob which attacked **Haldharpur police station**. After capturing Garwar and Haldharpur police stations they decided to capture Ubhaon police station near Bilthara Road where the railway station and post-office had already been destroyed. When the crowd was proceeding towards Ubhaon police station, they encountered some policemen who were coming from the Turtipar side. Though the crowd faced the police firing with great courage initially, after some time they decided to withdraw. Therefore the plan to capture Ubhaon police station could not be implemented. In this incident three persons died due to police firing.

⁵² This news letter carried a slogan, *Kranti Ke Saida Bano Aur Kaumy Diwane Bano Lal Kar Do Sari Dunia Aise Mardane Bano*

To spread the message of nationalist struggle and to keep the spirit of rebellion alive in the minds of people, nationalist leaders who went underground after the arrival of the army in Ballia, published and circulated pamphlets and newsletters. Ram Lachan Tiwari, Ram Anant Pandey and Triveni Singh circulated a lithographed newsletter, '**Gunde Hum Ya Tum**' in which they reported the news of brutal suppressive activities of the British army in the district and gave a call for a total revolution.⁵² They also planned some armed attacks but because of the arrests of some key persons this plan could not be implemented.⁵³ Though these underground activists could not stage any significant assault on British authority except a few sporadic incidents, they continued in their efforts for quite a long time. In early January 1943 they planned to attack police stations and other government offices. In one such attempt they burnt the government high school on 8 the January 1943.⁵⁴

Aftermath

The widespread mass upsurge, attacks on symbols of British authority and disruption of means of communication during the August rebellion led to virtual end of British rule in Ballia district. The district was

⁵³ FRUP, October II, File No. 18/10/42, Home (Pol), NAI, New Delhi.

⁵⁴ Ordinance Case No. 14 of 1943, File No. KW to 3/80/42. Home (Pol.), NAI, New Delhi.

completely cut off from the outside world for about ten days.⁵⁵ This rebellion was not confined to Ballia only. It raged in other districts of the region also with almost the same intensity. The communication links of the eastern part of the province with the rest of U.P. broke down. U.P. Governor Maurice Hallett reported to the Viceroy, Linlithgow, that 'Culverts had damaged, roads were digged, almost every railway station between Banaras and Ballia had been damaged'.⁵⁶

As the news about the seriousness of the rebellion in Ballia and in the eastern part of the province (which included the neighbouring districts of Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur) reached the higher authorities, they sent large military reinforcements towards this region with special powers vested in the officers. The first military troops under the charge of Additional District Magistrate of Gorakhpur reached Ballia on 22nd August from Mau.⁵⁷ On the next day, Marsh Smith, Additional DIG of Police reached Ballia by river after brutal suppression of the rebellion in Ghazipur.⁵⁸ When Marsh Smith reached Ballia town, he found the situation totally peaceful.⁵⁹ He reported that 'villages and town in which outrages had occurred were more or less deserted and that leaders and miscreants had

⁵⁵ FRUP, August II,

⁵⁶ Hallett to Linlithgow, 17 September, 1942, Linlithgow Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

⁵⁷ FRUP, August II

⁵⁸ FRUP, August II, ; FRUP September II.

⁵⁹ Congress Rebellion 1942.

retreated into the interior and possibly Bihar'.⁶⁰ A second military reinforcement reached Ballia on 26th August under the charge of M.B.H. Nethersole, Additional Secretary to the U.P. Government. Nethersole and Marsh Smith unleashed severe repression in the district, arrested thousands of people, ordered brutal lathi charges and firing at some places which resulted in several people being injured and some deaths. Military troops looted and burnt several houses and villages. They appropriated the civil authority and collective fine of about 50000 rupees was imposed on the local populace, which was collected immediately by the revenue staff.⁶¹ After these repressive measures in Ballia town the army proceeded to the countryside where the similar acts of brutality were repeated. Finally, with this brutal and all-out repression, the British government succeeded in 'restoration of law and order' in Ballia.

II. Analysis

1. Why movement could not last longer in Ballia

After the establishment of a parallel government in Ballia, Chittu Pandey, the president of the District Congress Committee, urged the people to return to their homes and refrain from any sort of destructive activities. There after, the district suddenly became quiet and when the military troops

⁶⁰ Hallet to Linlithgow, telegram date 29 August 1942, Linlithgow Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

⁶¹ FRUP August II; Hallet to Linlithgow, date 9 November, 1942, Linlithgow Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

came, they faced little resistance. This helped them to re-establish their authority in a very short time, unlike Satara and Midnapur where the nationalists were able to pose a significant challenge to British authority for a much longer period of time.

Different explanations have been advanced by scholars for this. Henningham⁶² attributes it to the dual nature of the rebellion, while Mitra⁶³ pins responsibility on the leaders and the limited nature of the mass mobilization carried out by them prior to the movement.

The narrative account of the 1942 rebellion in the preceding section of this chapter refutes not only the argument about the duality of the movement⁶⁴ but also seriously questions 'the limitations of mobilization' argument. The leaders brought about an end to the movement because, after the symbolic seizure of power, there was nothing more left to do. Further, the continuation of destructive activities, could have led to chaos and anarchy which would have not only sullied the image of the nationalist struggle but also given the authorities an excuse for brutal repression. Leaders did not call for any direct challenge to the military, because they had realized their limits – an unarmed crowd of whatever numerical

⁶² Henningham, Stephen, 'Quit India in Bihar and the Eastern United Provinces : The Dual Revolt' in. Guha, Ranajit (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. II, (OUP, New Delhi, 1983), p.164.

⁶³ Mitra, Chandan, 'Popular Uprising in 1942 : The Case of Ballia' in Pandey, Gyanendra (ed.); *The Indian Nation in 1942*, (KP Bagchi, Calcutta, 1988), p.180.

⁶⁴ I shall elaborate this point while discussing the mass character of the movement.

strength and enthusiasm could not confront army troops and any such attempt would inevitably result in massive casualties for the Indian people. However, even if the confrontation between military troops and underground activists, is taken to be the yardstick of the success, Ballia did not 'lay prostrate'.⁶⁵ At several places like Ubhaon, and Charaon, the nationalists confronted the military troops, attacked on them and attempted to sabotage government installations, however sporadically. Police stations of Ubhaon and Sikandarpur were attacked only after the arrival of the military in Ballia district.

2. Was the movement a spontaneous outburst or an organized rebellion

The response to the Quit India call is generally characterized as a spontaneous outburst since it was instantaneous and almost all the leaders even at local levels were in jail.⁶⁶ To quote Francis G. Hutchins, 'The August uprising was spontaneous'⁶⁷ and 'occurred without the lead given by urban and intellectual elements'.⁶⁸ Such a formulation is historically erroneous as it emphasises immediate organizational efforts and denies the significance of the mobilization of masses carried out by the leaders and nationalist organisations over many years to prepare them for the anti-

⁶⁵ Mitra, Chandan, op. cit., p.180; Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

⁶⁶ In Ballia, all the prominent leaders of Congress except Thakur Radha Mohan Singh were in jail by May 1942. Interviews Vishwanath Mardana, Vishwanath Chaube.

⁶⁷ Hutchins, Francis G., *Spontaneous Revolution: The Quit India Movement*, (Manohar, New Delhi, 1971), p.290.

⁶⁸ Hutchins, Francis G., *India's Revolution : Gandhi and the Quit India Movement*, (Cambridge, 1973), p. 227.

British struggle. It is true that the element of spontaneity was noticeable in Quit India movement and the broader programmes of mass protest were not chalked out by leaders, because of their arrests before the formal launch of the movement. But this time the spontaneity in popular action had the tacit approval of leaders,⁶⁹ as this passage from the Draft Resolution, passed by AICC on 8 August 1942, illustrates:

A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people , and when no Congress Committee can function. When this happens..... Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide.⁷⁰

Events that took place at Ballia during the 1942 upsurge particularly at Bilthara Road, Bansdih, Rasra and several other places, exhibit the element of organization explicitly. The narrative account of these events in the earlier section of this chapter reveals that the attacks on railway stations, police stations and other symbols of British authority were planned, albeit only a day or two in advance. Oral testimonies of participants also reveal the planning and coordination behind such activities. During the days of the upsurge, these political activists organized sabotage activities and urged the people to take part in them. Usually they visited village *chaupals* at night or early in the morning or went to village markets, delivered short but

⁶⁹ Chandra Bipan et al., op. cit., p. 469.

⁷⁰ *CWMG*, Vol. LXXVI, p.461.

provocative speeches, described the course of action to be taken and quickly disappeared.⁷¹

The planning and coordination which took place in Ballia during 1942 movement defies the spontaneity thesis quite explicitly. Therefore, it is not historically very appropriate to call the Quit India movement as a spontaneous rebellion.

III. Mass Character of the Movement

The Quit India movement marked unprecedented levels of mass participation cutting across all the socio-economic and ideological barriers. The heightened levels of nationalist consciousness and the ultimate desire of freedom from British rule bridged all the gaps among the people and they participated in the Quit India movement in an untidily manner without a single expression of any dissent in order to overthrow British rule.

In Ballia, the Quit India movement enjoyed the active support of every section of society and political group whether it was upper castes or lower castes, landlords, tenants, elder generation or youth, students, teachers, government employees, businessmen, women – all participated in the every form of protest – whether it was peaceful procession or attacks on symbols of British authority or other ‘violent’ forms of protest. However, the evidence indicate that the movement had a mass character.

⁷¹ Interviews Paras Nath Mishra, Vishwanath Chaube, Vishwanath Mardana.

Ballia had witnessed extensive students' participation in the nationalist struggle since the days of the Non-Cooperation movement and Civil Disobedience movement which became prominent during Quit India movement. Students were in the forefront of every anti British activity during the Quit India movement-whether it was spreading the message of the rebellion or drawing up programmes or even providing leadership.⁷² They played a very important role in spreading the call for insurgency in the countryside⁷³ Large numbers of students particularly from **Banaras Hindu University** and **Kashi Vidyapeeth** from Banaras decided to go to villages and small towns to organize anti British activities and called upon the masses to attack government installations. A unique and an effective method used by them was 'Azad Trains': Students managed special trains and after hoisting the Congress flag on them, took them to the countryside. They stopped at every wayside station and encouraged the people to rise in revolt against British domination. The arrival of these 'Azad Trains' brought inspiring news about disturbances from other parts and enthused the people for rebellion.⁷⁴

⁷² 'Paras Nath Mishra, a student of BHU., led the crowd which attacked the railway station and post office at Bilthara Road. Interview Paras Nath Mishra; Case No.10 of 1943, Collectorate Records Room, Ballia.

⁷³ As Maurice Hallet, the Governor of U.P., reported to the Viceroy 'students were entirely responsible for inciting Kisans in countryside to rowdyism.' Hallet to Linlithgow, date 22 August, 1942. , Linlithgow Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

⁷⁴ In Bilthara Road, and Ballia incidents, the catalytic role of 'Azad trains' in mobilizing the people for sabotage activities was underlined by the government records as well. FRUP, August II; Congress Rebellion 1942.

Women also played a significant role in Ballia. They not only provided support to the movement in passive ways like providing shelter but also came out on to the streets to register their protest against the British government.⁷⁵

Government officials particularly at local levels supported the movement by providing information and sympathising with the rebels particularly. In Bansdih incident Naib Tahsildar Lal Bahadur Singh and Naib Nazir Mohd. Syed gave important information to the crowd and did not adopt any repressive measures against the mob.⁷⁶

The Quit India movement in Ballia also enjoyed the active support of the activists of those political organizations which were formally against the movement like Communist Party and Kisan Sabha. In Ballia, Communist leaders like Vishwanath Mardana, Darmadev Lal and several others actively participated in the movement despite their party's opposition.⁷⁷

Although, it is true that Muslims did not participate in this movement en mass, yet there are instances of their participation and support. Thus, it is not very valid to characterize the movement as 'essentially a Hindu

⁷⁵ Women took out a procession in Ballia town on 12 August. Hallet to Linlithgow, date 17 September 1942, Linlithgow Papers, NMML, New Delhi.

⁷⁶ Case No. 31, Sessions Court Records Room, Ballia.

⁷⁷ Interview Vishwanath Mardana.

movement', or that 'Muslims generally had no sympathy and they kept strictly aloof.'⁷⁸

Events at Bilthara Road, Bansdih and Rasra reveals that at these places the 'elite' – high cast rich peasants, small landlords, educated people and the 'subaltern' – the poor, low caste people, participated in sabotage activities in unified manner. The mass character of 1942 uprising undermine the rules of mass action based on socio-economic positions set by 'Subaltern' school and seriously questions the 'dual revolt' thesis to analyse the Quit India Movement which dissects the movement in two parts Stephen Henningham argues that the Quit India movement

.....comprises not one but two interacting insurgencies. One insurgency was an elite nationalist uprising of the high caste rich peasants and small landlords who dominated the Congress. The other insurgency was a subaltern rebellion in which the initiative belonged to the poor, low caste people of the region⁷⁹.

To explain it further, this thesis implies that first 'the elite nationalist uprising began and intensified with the harsh official reaction' and then the poor join in the attacks on government buildings and property whose main object was loot because 'these rebels were much the same people who had engaged in market looting earlier in the year and who had recently swelled the figures for petty crime'.⁸⁰ The incident of Bilthara Road in which the

⁷⁸ Congress Rebellion 1942.

⁷⁹ Henningham, Stephen, op.cit, p.137.

⁸⁰ ibid, pp. 150-151.

mob, which consisted of a large proportion of rural poor, had no idea of the arrival of any army supply train when they attacked the railway station and the arrival and looting of the supply train was a mere coincidence . Another incident of loot was reported in Bansdih where the mob which looted around 15000 rupees from the treasury did not get a single rupee from it and all the money was kept to support the nationalist struggle. If loot was the motive for the participation of the poor, why did they accept such a course? These two incidents rule out any motive of loot behind the participation of the masses. Another fact which questions this formulation is that the August 1942 uprisings gathered massive mass participation when these were aimed at paralyzing the government and not at loot. There was no looting of private property reported during the 1942 uprising.

My main objection to this formulation is that it denies outright the nationalist consciousness of that poor the necessarily characterises them as criminals whose sole object in participating in nationalist uprisings was loot.

Leadership

As almost all the established Congress leaders were in jail during the Quit India movement, the question of leadership becomes very critical in the historical analysis of this movement. It is often characterized as an autonomous movement. It is argued that on the basis of spontaneous trends within the movement an autonomous mass upsurge takes place: Gyanendra

Pandey, for example, talks of the 'autonomous forces at work... that repeatedly challenged the notion of a necessary Congress leadership'.⁸¹ This approach identifies the coexistence of two broad forms of nationalist consciousness. One is primarily the product of mobilization carried out by the 'elite' – Congress leaders, while the other one is the product of autonomous experiences of the 'subaltern' classes. To quote Sumit Sarkar:

One spreading from top downwards, mobilizing peasants through accepted Gandhian forms and restraints; the other a relatively autonomous peasant nationalism...⁸²

This formulation divides the entire nationalist struggle into two domains and denies the role of leadership and the mobilization carried out by them though at one level it accepts the significance of the 'name' of great leaders like Gandhi.⁸³ This formulation of autonomy of subaltern uprisings has been proved historically erroneous particularly in case of the Quit India movement. Though the people were discontented with British rule yet the uprising did not begin before Gandhi's call for 'Do or Die'. It is true that almost all the leaders had been arrested before they could have chalked out a detailed programme for the coming movement. However, the masses were being prepared for a struggle since the early months of 1942

⁸¹ Pandey, Gyanendra (ed.), op.cit. Introduction, p.9.

⁸² Sarkar, Sumit, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism : Civil Disobedience and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact 1930-31' in *IHR*, Vol., 3, No.1, 1976, p.127.

⁸³ Gyanendra Pandey in his book *The Ascendancy of Congress in United Provinces 1926-34* (OUP, New Delhi, 1978) and Shahid Amin in *Event, Metaphor, Memory : Chauri Chaura 1922-1992* (OUP, New Delhi, 1995), have recognized importance of the name of 'Gandhi' in initiating the mass uprising.

by nationalist leaders who were deeply involved in organizational activities among the masses. As David Hardiman, a subaltern historian, acknowledges – ‘the Congress leaders launched the Quit India movement’, and ‘the initial preparation for the struggle in Gujarat was carried out by Vallabhbhai Patel’,⁸⁴ a prominent Congress leader. Considering the heightened levels of preparedness, if the masses acted under the leadership of relatively unknown persons during the Quit India movement it cannot be characterized as an autonomous uprising. Paradoxically, even the so called ‘autonomy’ was sanctioned by the leaders. As Mahatma Gandhi himself had declared ‘Everyone is free to go to the fullest length under ahimsa’.⁸⁵

In case of Ballia, in every important event, there was the leadership provided by people who were associated with the Congress. In case of Bilthara Road the leadership was provided by Paras Nath Mishra, a young student who was earlier active in the Congress volunteer movement in this district;⁸⁶ in Bansdih it was Gajadhar Lohar, who represented the ‘subaltern class’ but was President of Tehsil Congress Committee; in Rasra case it was Thakur Hargovind Singh, a local landlord and influential Congress leader of the locality.

Another piece of evidence which proves the existence of the role of the leadership is the control which the leaders exercised over the crowd. In

⁸⁴ Hardiman, David, ‘The Quit India Movement in Gujarat’ in Pandey, Gyanendra (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.82.

⁸⁵ *CWMG*, Vol.LXXVI, p.403.

⁸⁶ Interview, Paras Nath Mishra.

the Bansdih case, the crowd which participated in the loot of the treasury did not demand any share of the loot and remained under control when the leaders decided to keep the money for the nationalist cause. In the case of Ballia town, this control of leaders over masses was more evidently demonstrated. After the declaration of 'Swaraj', when Chittu Pandey called upon the people to go back to their homes and refrain from any further destructive activities, the huge crowd which was ready to go to any extent in order to overthrow the British authority simply dispersed. And after the formal call of halt by the Congress leaders, the movement, despite few voices of dissent, petered out in this district.

Violence

The use of violent means in the Quit India movement, which was part of the nationalist movement based on principles of non-violent struggle, is a matter of enormous debate in the historiography of this movement. This debate is largely associated with the very definition of violence itself. What are the acts which can be categorized as violent? Instead of going into a historiographical debate on this issue, I would rather like to discuss it through the oral testimonies of the participants. This is because the question of violence or non-violence is something which is largely associated with the spirit behind such activities – the perception and motives with which the crowd operated.

During the Quit India movement in Ballia, intense sabotage activities took place in which people attacked every symbol of British authority, disrupted communications by cutting wires and uprooting railway tracks and sometimes even looted the government treasuries. But an inquiry into the testimonies of participants reveals that, what the people perceived as violence and which was to be avoided was attacks on private property, personal violence and particularly the loss of life.⁸⁷ The narrative of events already discussed, that took place during the August uprising in Ballia clearly demonstrated that this perception was uniformly followed by the crowd in every incident. Except one attack on the private property of a loyalist⁸⁸ there was no report of any attack on private property, or deliberate loot for the sake of loot or killing of anybody by a mob. The targets of attacks were limited to the government.⁸⁹ Therefore, it can be assumed that at least the spirit of 1942 uprising was of non-violence.

⁸⁷ All the participants whom I have interviewed, asserted that all the attacks were targeted specifically on symbols of the British authority and aimed to paralyze the functioning of the government and they made deliberate attempts to avoid attacks on private properties and loss of life.

⁸⁸ Congress Rebellion 1942.

⁸⁹ FRUP, October II, File No.18/10/42, NAI, New Delhi.

CONCLUSIONS

This study of Quit India movement in Ballia led to some conclusions about certain theoretical aspects of Indian national movement such as the nature of nationalist politics, social composition, autonomy of its segments, etc., which have been presented by situating them within a discussion of the related theoretical formulations propounded by the different historiographical approaches.

I discuss two historiographical approaches, the conservative imperialist or Cambridge school approach and the subaltern school, which have questioned the legitimacy of the national movement, and try to see whether the Ballia story confirms or denies their basic propositions. The Cambridge school is dealt with briefly, as it is no longer so important, and the subaltern at some length, given its contemporary character.

The **conservative imperialist** approach rejects the role of the people, their organizations and their ultimate desire to be free from alien rule in the shaping of the national movement which was, in their view, 'engineered by small elite groups of traditional society who had in view the particular interests of their own caste and not the general interests of the people'.¹ They characterize the national movement as a struggle of contesting elite

¹ Chirol, Valentine, *Indian Unrest* (Light and life Publication, New Delhi, 1979, reprint of 1910 edition), pp. 222-223.

groups, as drawn from the educated middle classes, for British favours.² Nationalism was a mere ideology for these historians which was used by the elites to legitimize their narrow interests and to mobilize the masses in their support. This school also denies the step by step growth of the national movement and considers the constitutional measures of the British government as revitalizers for the activities of nationalists. To quote Gordon Johnson:

There is no simple chronological growth of nationalism in India: nationalist activity booms and slumps in phase with the national activity of the government.³

But this approach which denies the legitimacy of the very idea of nationalism and the struggle of the Indian people⁴, fails to explain the dynamics of the Quit India movement which was aimed at 'nothing less than freedom' because the underlying reasons for the unparalleled militancy and unified behaviour of Indian masses demonstrated in this movement cannot be explained without acknowledging the basic contradictions between the interests of Indian people and of British colonialism⁵ and the

² Seal, Anil, 'Imperialism and Nationalism in India' in Gallagher, John, et.al. (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays in Indian Politics 1870 to 1940*, (OUP, London, 1973), p.9.

³ Johnson, Gordon, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism, Bombay and the Indian National Congress, 1880-1915* (Cambridge, 1973), pp.7-8.

⁴ As Anil Seal calls it 'a Dassehra duel between two hollow statues, locked in motiveless and simulated combat'; Seal, Anil, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1968), p.351.

⁵ Chandra, Bipan et al. (ed.), op. cit., Introduction, p.17.

articulation of anti British feelings among Indian masses by mobilizing efforts of nationalists over years.

The events of 1942 as well as the process leading up to the Quit India movement in Ballia do not provide any substance to sustain the Cambridge school argument. There is no-evidence of intra-elite struggle for power – on the contrary ideological and political differences do not seem to come in the way of the common struggle. The dramatic events of 1942 are difficult to fit into the competing elites model or the patron/client/faction model so favoured by Cambridge historians. These models are more suited for studying the petty goings-on in the district boards and municipalities rather than movements and rebellion. It is hardly surprising therefore that most studies by Cambridge school historians tend to taper off before 1942.

The relatively recent entrant in the historiography of Indian national movement is the **'Subaltern' approach**, which rejects all the previous approaches as elite. This approach divides the national struggle into two domains – one of elites and the other subalterns. The struggle in the elite domain, represented by Congress organizational politics, was a bogus struggle which 'tended to be relatively more legalistic and constitutionalist in orientation' and therefore 'more cautious and controlled' while struggle in the subaltern domain was the real anti-imperialist struggle. This subaltern domain was 'an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite

politics nor did its existence depend on the later' and it was 'relatively more violent' and 'more spontaneous'.⁶

The subaltern approach puts forward three propositions. One, it negates the role of the elite, represented in their view by the Indian National Congress and its leaders, in shaping and mobilizing the subalterns and asserts the autonomy of the subaltern politics. Second, it treats the subalterns as a rigid and unchangeable category whose nature of political protest has to be necessarily spontaneous, sporadic, radical and violent. Third, the relationship between these two domains – between the subaltern and elite – has to be necessarily one of antagonism. On the basis of these theoretical formulations, Subaltern group of historians characterize Quit India movement as a 'dual revolt'. To quote Stephen Henningham:

One insurgency was an elite nationalist uprising of the high caste rich and small landlords who dominated the Congress. The other insurgency was a subaltern rebellion in which the initiative belonged to the poor, low caste people of the region'.⁷

The first series of protests in the initial days in the form of processions, etc., belonged to the 'elite uprising', while the violent attacks on government offices, police stations and other symbols of British authority represented the 'subaltern rebellion.'

⁶ . Guha, Ranajit (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, vol. I (OUP, New Delhi, 1982), Introduction, pp.4-5.

⁷ . Henningham, Stephen, op. cit., p.137.

The other formulation relating to the Quit India movement is about the autonomy of popular protest, which brings into question the role of leadership.⁸ These two formulations – the dual nature of protests and the autonomy of popular protest pose serious challenges to the concept of a united struggle of Indian masses against British in which mass action was articulated and shaped (not controlled) by the nationalist leaders.

As the argument about autonomy is more significant because it negates the entire role of leadership let us examine it first. There is a considerable weight of scholarship in favour of the argument that the subaltern classes find it difficult to act autonomously without the organizational initiative of other 'elite' classes. As Eric R. Wolf explains.

The poor peasant and the landless labourer who depends on a landlord for the larger part of his livelihood, or the totality of it, has no tactical power: he is completely within the power domain of his employer, without sufficient resources of his own to serve him as resources in the power struggle. Poor peasants and landless labourers, therefore, are unlikely to pursue the course of rebellion, unless they are able to rely on some external power to challenge the power which constrains them.⁹

Therefore, an 'effective rural rebellion must depend on non-peasant leadership',¹⁰ which unites it through 'its organizational structure, aims and

⁸ Pandey, Gyandra (ed.), op. cit., Introduction, p.9. (emphasis original).

⁹ Wolf, Eric, 'On Peasant Rebellion' in Shanin Teodor (ed.), *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987), p.370.

¹⁰ Weller, Robert P. et al., (eds.), *Power and Protest in the Countryside; Studies on Rural Unrest in Asia, Europe, and Latin America*, (Duke Press, Durham, 1982), p.9.

leadership'.¹¹ During the Indian national movement, such external power was represented by leaders of the Indian National Congress and other associated political organizations whose vigorous mobilization drives articulated and shaped popular protest.

For the Quit India movement, the role of elite domain and leadership in shaping the subaltern protests has been acknowledged even by subaltern historians themselves, in contradiction of to their simultaneous assertion of autonomy. As Stephen Henningham acknowledges this decisive role of elite politics in the shaping of subaltern politics. 'The elite nationalist uprising stimulated the poor to join in attacks on government buildings and property',¹² and denies the claim of Francis G. Hutchins that 'the 1942 revolt occurred spontaneously without the lead being given by urban and intellectual elements'.¹³ These historians repeatedly acknowledge the role of political mobilization of masses in shaping their protests during the Quit India movement. Chandan Mitra who broadly accepts the subaltern division of elite –subaltern, accepts the role of 'elite leadership' in his article on the Quit India movement in Ballia, 'most of the actions that took place in the district were led by radical Congressmen'.¹⁴

¹¹ . Shanin, Teodar, 'Peasantry in Political Action' in Shanin Teodar (ed.), op. cit., pp. 359-360.

¹² . Henningham, Stephen, op. cit., p.151.

¹³ . cited in Henningham, Stephen, op. cit., p.145..

¹⁴ . Mitra, Chandan, op. cit., p.181.

The subaltern historian division of the national movement into two domains and the association of constitutional, peaceful protests with the elite domain and more radical, violent and spontaneous protests with the subaltern domain is based on rigid categories of class, caste, gender, etc., and correspondingly fixed crowd behaviour. This limits its validity in explaining the nature of political protest throughout the national movement – whether it was pre-1942 phase in which large numbers of ‘subaltern’ participated in organized, peaceful forms of protest such as processions, picketing boycott or whether it is the 1942 movement in which the ‘elite’ were participated in relatively more radical, violent and spontaneous events with no less vigour and enthusiasm than the ‘subalterns’.

Another implication of this approach is that it denies the unitary nature of the national movement though it acknowledges the interaction between the two domains ‘---two interacting insurgencies- an elite nationalist uprising and subaltern rebellion.’¹⁵ This acceptance of interaction between the two domains and simultaneous assertion of autonomy of one domain and denial of unified action of these two domains makes formulation rather ambiguous and self contradictory. Besides, it is seriously challenged by the unified behaviour of the Indian people during anti British agitations, particularly during the 1942 movement.

¹⁵ Henningham, Stephen, op. cit., p.150.

Lastly, the present study reveals that the heightened levels of activism of the people of Ballia during the Quit India movement 'reflected the success of decades of nationalist propaganda'.¹⁶ It was neither the 'blind xenophobia'¹⁷ nor the 'non-posting of British officers for a long time'¹⁸ which was responsible for the intense anti-British upsurge in this district.

¹⁶ Mitra, Chandan, op. cit., p.181.

¹⁷ Chaudhuri, Nirad C., *Thy Hand, Great Anarch; India: 1921-1952* (Chatto and Winds, London, 1988), p.704

¹⁸ The Congress Rebellion 1942.

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