

**GANDHI AND FREEDOM—MOVEMENT IN BENGAL
1919 —1922**

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DHIRENDRA NATH DASH

CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI - 110067

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GANDHI AND FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN BENGAL: 1919-1922

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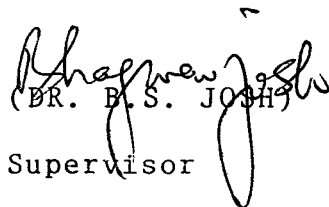
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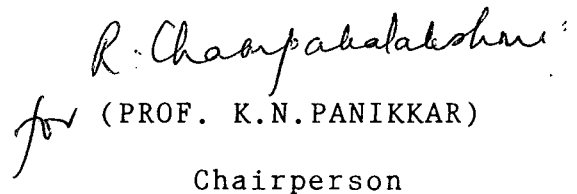
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DECLARATION

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Gandhi and Freedom Movement in Bengal: 1919-1922", submitted by Mr. Dhirendra Nath Dash for the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. We recommend that this dissertation should be placed before the examiners for their consideration for the award of M.Phil. Degree.


(B.R. P.S. JOSHI)
Supervisor


for (PROF. K.N. PANIKKAR)
Chairperson

FOR

MY FRIEND

PRAKASH CHANDRA SHASTRI

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INTRODUCTION

Before Gandhi, there was no All- India Congress Organisation in the true sense of the term.¹ A paradigm of pre-gandhian nationalism was lost. With the rise of Gandhi, there emerged two distinct power structures: one on the All India Level, and the second on provincial level. However the sharp controversies and ~~stronmy~~ disputes of the early congress, did not appear in the Gandhian era; but other things remaining equal, a new pattern of politics emerged. The stands which the politicians like Gandhi took, were often determined by the needs of the places which was to predominate.

With the coming of Gandhi into the lime-light of Indian politics (1919) Gegeral Principles and concrete programmes were formulated on a national basis.

This was a crucial period, both for M.K. Gandhi, and for liberation movement in Bengal. After returning from South Africa, and being involved in Indian politics for four years (1915-1919), Gnadhi was determined to give the freedom struggle a new twist all India level by propounding the concepts of Hartals and passice resistance against Rowlatt's dracondain Act for Indians. The initiative he took in leading the peasant movement in Champoran (Bihar), and the Kheda(Gujarat) against British Raj were local affairs. But through the Hartals agaist

1. In its earlyyears the Congress was not concerned with the exclusive control of any particular area/region in India. Even though the INC was successful in involving large sections of population in protests and rallied especially before 1919, this often reflected the exploision of local crises and tension rather than the conditions in the sub-continent as a whole. (C.A. Bably local roots of Indian politicss cit. p-5).

Rowlatt Act the sought to be an All-India leader. By remoulding the politics of each and every province in British India, according to his own ideology.

The only way for him, to achieve this end, was to have a strong organisation to spread his ideas. To create an organisation of his own, was impossible so he tried to resort to the Congress Organisation, to spread his ideology through congress machinery.

The politics of freedom struggle in Bengal during this period was a complex affair. It was due to the polarisation of views amongst political leaders regarding the fate of Home Rule Movement, Chamesford - Montagu reforms and acquiring control over the provincial Congress Organisation. The real-moderates, under the leadership of Surendra Nath Banerjee and Probash Chandra Mitter, had given a farewell to Home Rule Movement, left the Congress Organisation and formed the National Liberal Party to work the Reform. The moderates other than Banerjee faction were undecided as to which course they were to follow. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC) was captured by the extremists under Chittaranjan Das who were aspiring to continue the Home Rule Movement, and not to accept the Govt. of India Act 1919. Another group of Extremist under Jitendra Lal Banerjee were deviating from the policies of C.R. Das to have their own way.

The lower castes, Namasudra community, one of the largest agricultural community of Bengal, was busy in fighting a classwar against the dominant castes; the migrating people in Calcutta (from non-Bengali Areas) were having their separate way, and the non-official European communities were fighting an Anti-freedom struggle in Calcutta. In 1919, all these sections saw the emergence of a national leader whose philosophy of politics was diametrically opposed to that of theirs on many crucial points.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AICC - All India Congress Committee.
- BPC - Bengal Provincial Conference.
- BPCC - Bengal Provincial Congress
Committee
- BNNR - Bengal native newspaper Report
- CWMG - Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.
- DCC - District Congress Committee.
- Home Pol Progs - Unpublished Home Department
I proceedings of the Government
I of India preserved in National
I Archives of India, New Delhi.
- INC - Indian National Congress
- NAI - National Archives of India.
- NCM - Non-Cooperation Movement.
- NMML - Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

SELECTED GLOSSARY OF INDIGENOUS WORDS

- AHIMSA - Non-Violence.
- ASHRAM - The fourth phase of life According to the classification made by t Ancient Indian Thinkers. Of course each phase can be called like this; but actually it is told to the fourth stage, while a man becomes an ascetoc for all purposes. And also, in chaste Bengali Language Ashram means the dwelling place of a monk.
- BHADRALOK - Respectable men in Bengal.
- GHARKHA - Spinning wheel.
- CHASI - Cultivatoks
- HARTAL - Stoppage of work as a sign of mourning or protest.
- HARAM - For-bidden by Religion.
- HIJRAT - Muslim Flight from places where Islam is in Danger.
- HAT - Market place
- KAYASTHAS - Writor Castes.
- KHADI - Hands spun Cloth.
- KHALIFA - Spiritual head of the Muslims, Sultan of Turkey.

MAHATMA

- A little given to a man in honour, which means great soul. This was conferred on Gandhi in 1919, by Rabindra Nath Tagore.

MOFFUSIL

- Interior Areas in India.

PUNDIT

- Learned man in Hindu Society; A man of wisdom.

RAJ

- Rule: British Rule in India

SABHA

- Association.

SATYAGRAHA

- Soul-force : Gandhi had converted these out of Gujarati words, meaning non-violent resistance to devilish Activities. The opposite of which is Duragraha.

SWADESHI

- Use of things belonging to the Immediate neighbourhood, or to one's own country.

SWARAJ

- Self-Government.

ZAMINDAR

- Land Lord.

CHAPTER - ONE

IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF NON-COOPERATION IN BENGAL PROVINCE

Before Gandhi arrived on the scene Indian National Congress was dominated by relatively small number of men. But over time the Indian National Congress was able to attract a wide variety of followers. Organisational structure implied ideological openness and this made it a movement and not just a party. It included within its fold, individuals and groups who subscribed to widely divergent political and ideological perspectives. Multiple ideologies could compete within the congress to acquire hegemony over it.¹ This virtually gave the Congress the ability to absorb diverse social and political elements, and the capacity to change its structure as a result of absorption of these elements.

The Indian National Movement showed a remarkable capacity to remain united despite diversity. A lesson was learnt from the disastrous split of 1907- moderates and extremists, constitutionalists and non-constitutionalists and leftists and rightists remained together even in the face of serious crises.²

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1. Bhagwan Singh Jose, "Nationalism, Third International, and the Indian Communists" - in Bipan Chandra (edited) "The Indian Left: a Critical Appraisal", vikas publishing house (Delhi, 1983) p. 154.
 2. Ibid.

The Congress became a forum for the expression of various aspirations concerning regions, social groups, castes and communities. The alliance of Indians on the congress platform did not remain static. As the situations changed, so did the attitude of various groups towards the All India movements. Similarly the changes in All India movements could turn allies into opponents and critics into friends. To be more precise, Indian National Congress was not a 'monolith', a solid homogenous block in opposition to the British.

Ravindra Nath Tagore as is well known had taken part in the early days of the Swadeshi agitation in Bengal. His poems, songs, and speeches had roused and inflamed the fervour of patriotic persons in Bengal.³ But while he could rouse feelings and stimulate as no one else could, he could not controller direct the activities of masses. There was a great hiatus between

3. Sumit Sarkar, "Swadeshi Movement in Bengal", peoples publishing house, (Delhi, 1973) p. 286.

him and Gandhi - a born leader of the people. As the popular agitation in Bengal found its natural overflow in violent activity. The attempt at rousing masses got drifted towards individual terrorist movement (1907-8) Tagore shrunk back from the movement in disgust.⁴ Nevertheless, it is astonishing to recall how closely the programme of national activity that he had laid down as early as 1904 in his lectures on Swadeshi Samaj and in his presidential address at the Bengal provincial Conference at Pabna, in 1908, resembled that of Gandhi during the NCM. That included Hindu-Muslim unity, untouchability, village reconstruction, revival of handicrafts, rural education - with its emphasis. On physical labour, village self-government and volunteer organisation. All these had been advocated by him with passionate sincerity, which anticipated to a considerable extent Gandhian concepts of NCM.⁵ But still during the non-cooperation movement both of them were at opposite poles regarding the issue of drawing masses into politics and starting the new phase of extralegal anti-colonialist mass struggle, Gandhi was opposed to modern machinery⁶ and Tagore was a supporter of it along with all the benefits of modern civilization i.e. railway, telegraph and others. Tagore wanted to industrialise India over night, knowing well that it was sure to tremendous hardships to millions. Though Tagore was the admirer of Western Science, he advocated that properly controlled, machines could be made to

4. Ibid p- 465 Passim.

5. Yathindra Kumar Ghosh, compiler, "Bengal Provincial conference 1908", (Calcutta, 1975) p. 14 Passim.

6. Visva Bharati quarterly, Vol. V part I new Series May-July 1939: An Article, "Ghandhi on Machines", by Nirmala Kumar Bose.

serve the humak-kind in a better way.⁷ Though Tagore developed considerable sympathy and admiration for the October Revolution in Russia it is doubtful if he believed in socialism.

Both of them knew well that the soul of India lay in the villages, although there was difference in the degree of admiration and emphasis. Both of them wanted to bring masses into politics. Tagore had known it well that the currents and cross-current of Indian History for centuries mainly centered round the villages. It is not accidental that some of the best creations of the poet, whether in prose or in poetry, were village-centred. His short-stories are too permeated with the aroma of village life.⁸

Ravindra Nath Tagore was very worried about the condition of peasant-farmers, who dwelt in the countryside: he thought there were the persons who fed the City-population with their tireless effort. He thought that the cause of their misery was uneducation.⁹

During the NCM, Tagore and Gandhi entered into open controversy with each other. Much against the ideas of Tagore, Gandhi compared India to a house in fire, did he expect the students to be engaged in studies there when a house is in flames? Was it not a duty with them to take their books and come out on the streets with buckets of water to put down the fire? While India was lying prostrate at the feet of British imperialism, education could wait for some days but Swaraj could not.

7. Bhudev Chaudhury (Editor) "Tagore-studies" (Calcutta, 1964) p-10.

8. See Visva Bharati Quarterly, Vol-XVI No. 3 Nov/Jan 1950/51, "Cloud and the Sun", a story by Tagore. There, through two characters i.e. Shashi Bhusan and Giribala, Tagore beautifully describes life in a Bengal village. Also see summit Sarkar, op. cit., p-289.

9. Amiya Kumar Sen, "Tagore and Modern Education", in Visva Bharti Quarterly, Vol.-12, No. 1, 1956.

Tagore's argument against the cult of Charkha was that the Churka retarded the development of a free mind and stopped initiative. It engendered mechanical habits instead of fostering creative abilities, and ended by making everyone a prey to lethargy. This tendency of moulding the potentialities of all into the same pattern of oneness has been operating in India.

In spite of all their efforts, the Congress-men in Bengal could not win over Tagore for the cause of non-cooperation movement. Tagore opposed Gandhi and his programme of non-cooperation. While the movement was continuing- in October 1921, Tagore brought about a series of articles against non-cooperation movement in the journal modern-review. He published those articles under the heading - "The call of Truth" - Sater Ahbhan. Through it Tagore warned India and Bengal of the pitfalls ahead. He pointed out that NCM was suffering from bigotry, lithargy, intollerance, ignorance, and inertia. Against it Gandhi brought about a series of articles in Young India under the captions - "The poet's anxiety", "The poet and Charkha".

In September 1921 while Gandhi had gone for tour in Calcutta-Gandhi's supporters arranged -the burning of foreign clothes in the courtyard of Tagore while Gandhi was talking with him, to register their portest against Tagore's ideology

of supporting the trade in foreign cloth.¹⁰

II

Unlike Tagore, Chitranjan Das developed a faltering attitude towards the first Gandhian movement. Moreover his opposition was directly from the Congress platform, in its various annual sessions from 1919 to December 1920. In the initial phase he opposed Gandhi; but in the Nagpur congress 1920 he gave his unconditional support to Gandhian movement.

From the beginning C.R.Das was an ardent believer in the fact that India was to proceed in legal ways against Britain to achieve independence. But during the Swadeshi movement he was drawn into the politics of the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal. As he was the most prominent lawyer of Calcutta during the time he had given free legal assistance to many revolutionary youths.¹¹ After Swadeshi movement he remained aloof from politics. He entered into active politics by presiding over the Bhowanipur provincial conference,¹² There he had appealed to the people of Bengal to assess their spiritual ideals and not to foolishly follow the materialist ideas of the west. For the upliftment of the people he had suggested the points, like

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10. Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F.No.18 September, 1920 Fortnight report sent by the government of Bengal, for the first half of September 1920.
 11. NAI, Satyabhakta Papers, Section C, No.22, pp. 3,4,7,8.
 12. Sumit Sarkar, "Modern India", Macmillan Publication, (Delhi, 1983) p-153: Also see Yatindra Kumar Ghosh, "Bengal Provincial Conference", 1917, (Calcutta session) (Calcutta, 1972) p. 21, ff.

abandoning western industrialism, reconstruction of the villages be providing civic amenities, teaching the peasant and agriculturist the art of handicrafts to utilise their spare times. The Amritsar congress passed fifty resolutions which embraced a wide variety of topics ranging from a demand for the recall of Lord Chelmsford to the call for an investigation of land revenue system, labour conditions and the conditions of third class passengers. But the issue of cooperation or non-cooperation acquired the top priority. On this issue the foremost leader of Bengal C.R. Das gave opinion which was not absolute. It was to be duly rectified in the special congress held at Calcutta in September 1920.¹³

Indian National Congress met in its special session at Calcutta in September 1920. It was organised with the intention to get support from the Bengal leaders towards non-cooperation inside Bengal province.¹⁴ Explaining the stands at Amritsar, and the change which had taken place in between in it Gandhi, clearly mentioned that it was due to the unyielding attitude of the British that he adopted such methods.¹⁵

Moreover, Gandhi played his trump card before the special session at Calcutta, by instigating that he was not much concerned with the decision of the congress as he was prepared to carry on his policy without it.¹⁶

13. NAI, Satybhakata papers, op.cit. p- 8.

14. Home Pol. Progs (deposit) F.No. 70 September, 1970 p-1. Report on Political situation in Bengal for first half of September 1920, sent by the Government of Bengal.

15. Young-India 28.7. 1920: CWMG, Vol. 18, p. 89.

16. Home Political document - oc. cit.

The shift of a large segment of opinion in favour of Gandhi, created a crisis for the established political groups in Bengal politics. They were so divided amongst themselves that the appearance of Gandhi in Congress with countrywide, supports, including that from some groups from within their own regions, made them side with Gandhi.

One reason for the success of Gandhi's challenge to the existing congress policy was the absence of any other major All India political leader or group who could organise opposition to him or provide a dynamic alternative. So divided were the congress men in Bengal that they could not resist Gandhi's leadership and gave him a blank cheque in September 1920 to carry on the non-cooperation movement.¹⁷

After the Calcutta congress was over, C.R.Das tried to alter his support for non-cooperation. Above all he was strongly pressing for the adoption of resolutions by the congress to the effect that the reform act was to be worked out and the programme of obstructing from inside the councils was to be carried on along with the mass movement continuing out-side.¹⁸ After the Calcutta congress Das was building support in an attempt to force Gandhi's hands, and to gain as much control as was possible over the NCM. Although he argued with Gandhi at Calcutta, he was not ready to allow Gandhi to run the Congress as he linked.

17. NAI, Satyabhakta Papers op.cit. p. 18

18. Calcutta Historical Journal, Vol. I, No.1, July-1976, p.16, Here Amalesh Tripathy opines, that C.R.Das was much annoyed with Gandhi's negative tactics: and he propounded the concept of obstruction from within .

Das also aimed at implementing all stages of NCM at one time. The Calcutta resolution, he argued, emphasised essentials and by putting a purely negative emphasis on boycott Gandhi offered no work of a practical nature to the masses.¹⁹ His plan was more comprehensive than that of Gandhi. He laid as much emphasis on economic, as on political boycott. Politically it would mean a boycott of all government machinery, economically it should entail boycott of foreign goods and British agency houses. Men and money should be withdrawn from all British agency houses in India. In the last stage the country was to refuse to pay taxes. Das called for the re-organisation of the congress, creation of a special fund, and a membership drive, particularly to include those who have been enrolled under the new reform to vote.²⁰

Gandhi and C.R.Das met in a secret meeting before the start of Nagpur Congress Session. It led to the signing of the Gandhi - Das pact.²¹ Through which each of them gave ideological concessions to each other. C.R.Das himself moved the resolution on non-cooperation, he also claimed that the Nagpur resolution was quite stronger than that adopted at Calcutta.²²

19. John Gallagher and Anil Seal (Editors), "Locality, Province and Nation", p.-150 Passim.

20. Ibid p. 150, 151.

21. Rajat Roy, op. cit p. 264.

22. NAI, proceedings of Indian National Congress (Microfilmed) - Report on Nagpur Congress: Appendix -F

In retrospect we see, the final resolution as it was adopted at Nagpur was victory for C.R.Das. It was different both in letter and spirit, from Gandhi's draft. It resolved to combine all four stages of the programme at once; to form a body of workers to be known as the National services; to set up Tilak Swaraj Funds; to undertake a complete economic boycott and to establish congress committees in every village.

III

Though a guarded and Cautious speaker on public platform, in private conversation Bipin Chandra Pal had never concealed a strong dislike for Mahatma Gandhi and All his works, practices and theories. Thus he was a vehement opponent of satyagraha, and a vehement opponent of non-cooperation in its early stage.²³ He was against pontifical authority in politics and hence he thought that Mahtma Gandhi's personal ascendcy in Indian politics would be injurious to the democratic training of the people. B.C.Pal was propounding the concept of a sort of collective leadership over the congress which was to be changed frequently.

Non-cooperation as Mr. Pal understood was something different from the understanding of other persons. A non-cooperator was not to take rest by simply paralysing the

23. Liberty 15.4. 1921: NAI, BNNR January- June 1921, p- 442.

present administration.²⁴ The non-cooperator was to build as he destroyed; to organise inch by inch and part by part the organs and instruments of the physical, the economic, the educational and the judicial administration of his society that was to replace the existing government of the country at any time. And being swayed by this ideology B.C. Pal strongly condemned the non-cooperation movement in the Barisal session of Bengal provincial conference in March 1921.²⁵ He mentioned there that non-cooperation idea was as old as the Swadeshi movement and it was sure to face the fate like its predecessor. The Swadeshi movement had drifted into terrorist movement within a short period.

Even though there was a growth of pan islamic sentiment in the province, B.C. Pal did not wish to align the congress movement with Khilafat movement.²⁶ As Pal mentioned the Khilafat agitation was to be utilised by some muslim leaders for promotting the cause of pan-islamism. As as such it was bound to be a meance to the growth of nationalism in India. Amongst the other leaders of Bengal mention may be made of Jitendra Dal Banerjee, Samsundar Chakraverti and Subhash Bose.

24. Ibid.

25. Indian mirror 29.3. 1921: NAI, BNNR January -June 1921. P- 345.

26. Nirmal Kumar Bose, "Modern Bengal", (Calcutta, 1959), p. 8

Jetendra Banerjee and Syamsundar Chakraverti were true Gandhians and had given their unconditional alligence to Gandhi. Subhash argued that Gandhi had understood the character of Indians and exploitied it to his advantages most succesfully. But he did not understand the character of his opponenets. His criticism was that Ghandhi was not using diplomacy and international propaganda for the achievement of independence.²⁷

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27. Quarterly Review of Historical Studies Vol. XV No. 2
1975-76 - An Article on, "Subash Bose's Reflection
on History", by S.R. Goyal.

CHAPTER - T. W. O

NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT IN BENGAL

In its broader perspective-the non-cooperation movement in Bengal can be divided into two categories i.e. the movement organised and led by Congress Organisation-Gandhi-led movement; and the spontaneous uprisings with doses of efforts from below-outside the purview of the Congress directions. The NCM was not organised in the same manner - all over Bengal. In other words, entire Bengal was not equally mobilised against the British Government. In some places, the Gandhians, under their direct supervision, organised the movement; and, in other places the movement was not directly organised by the congress leaders.

Non-cooperation movement was formally started on 1 August 1920. Until December, 1920 in Bengal-only the Khilafat committee was propagating the ideas of non-cooperation.¹ After the Nagpur Congress was over in December 1920, the provincial Congress Organisation- under the leadership of C.R. Das took part in organising the movement. After the Nagpur Congress - C.R. Das left his practice and left smoking, drinking, and indulgence in modern luxuries and comforts to which he had indulged and began to live a life of political and spiritual ascetic. Subhash Bose came back from Britain and joined the non-cooperation movement in Bengal. Black political activities in the beginning of 1921 were attributed by the government to chronic lac of funds.²

1. Home Pol Progs (Deposit No.84 Dec.1920) Telegram from Viceroy of India to the Secretary of State 1 October, 1920.
2. Home Pol. Progs.(Deposit No.1 April,1921 p-8) Report for first half of January 1921 sent by the Government of Bengal.

A number of Congress Committees were soon set-up to collect funds for the Tilak Swraj fund. Collection boxes for Khilafat funds were put in shops in Calcutta.

C.R. Das took initiative in organising strikes amongst students. Initially, college students in Calcutta left their classes and joined the NCM. Students of Ripon College, Bangabasi College, Vidya Sagar college, Scottish Church College Central College and City College of Calcutta withdrew from their institutions.³ In Calcutta places like Mizrapure Square, Cornwallis Square, Halliday Park, and College Square became the Chief Venues for the striking students to organise meetings where, very often decisions were taken not to go back to the Golan-Khanas again.⁴ Along with C.R. Das, Sirish Chandra Chatterjee, B.C. Pal and C.F. Andrews took the lead in this regard. After the strike picked up in the city-colleges schools in mofussil areas followed suit. Mofussil Colleges - Serampore and Uttarapara College, Midnapure College, National Art College of Nagpur, Naihati School, Salkia Hindu School, and Bankura Hindu School joined the strike. Gandhi, so far the national education was concerned; acquired the unconditional help from C.R. Das and they succeeded in establishing hundreds of national educational institutions in Bengal.⁵

3. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) No.41 April 1921 Report for first half of January 1921 sent by the Government of Bengal. Also see Amrita Bazar Patrika 14th January, 1921 7/19-

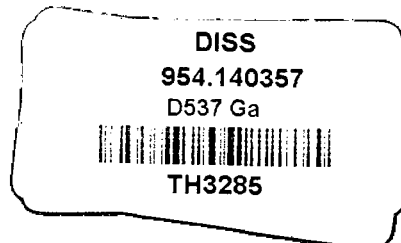
4. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 19 January, 1921

5. P.C. Roy. "Life and Times of C.R. Das" (Calcutta, 1927) p -170

It was followed by strikes Engineering workshops of
of messrs Burn & Company, and Messrs Jessop and Company at
Hawrah. ⁶ Non-cooperators established links with the motor-drivers'
Association, Khansamas Union, Central Oriya Labour Association and
Carters' Union of Calcutta to win over them for the cause of
NCM. ⁷ Byomkesh Chakraverty, C.R.Das, Abul Kalam Azad, Bakr Siddiq
Siddiqui and Khwaja Abdul Kassim issued provincial village
organisation schemes-which included the establishment of primary
national schools in villages; villages banks, inducing authorities
to reduce areas under jute cultivations; boy-cutt of foreign
goods; Arbitration courts and preventions of the consumption
of liquor. ⁸ Picketing continued in the districts of Chittagong,
Dacca, Faridpur, Hoakhali, Rangpur, Tippera and Midnapore. ⁹
Gandhian constructive works got good response from people at few
places like Tamlok, Contai, Arambagh Bankura, and Comilla.

The duke of Connaught visited Calcutta on January 28,
1921. As a result of the preachings of the Non-cooperators
a complete Hartal was observed in north and central Calcutta
from morning until three in the afternoon.

- TH-32-85
5. Home Political Document opcit p-9.
 7. Home Deptt. Political Proceedings F.No. 415, 1921;
A document purporting to contain informations regarding
NCM in Bengali.
 8. Home Pol Prog.(Deposit) No. 41 April 1921, p-26
Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State 23, January 1921.
 9. Home Deptt. Political Proceedings F.No. 415, 1921
Opit p-25.



All shops and markets were closed and vehicular traffics of all sorts were suspended. Particularly every indigenous place of business through out the city was closed. Two taxis driven by Punjabi drivers - were damaged by a crowd near ^Entally. At the entrances to the roads leading to duke's route non-cooperators, were seen persuing the crowd to stop them from going there. At places the method of persuasion took a threatening turn.¹⁰ Moreover, Gandhi was at Calcutta at that time¹¹ to campaign in favour of the NCM.

One of the characteristic feature of Gandhi's propaganda was his presence at ladies meetings and addresses to them. Not only the Angliaised ladies but also those of the most orthodox type both Hindu and Muslim. During this tour in Calcutta in the last week of January 1921, Gandhi addressed a large meeting of ladies at Bara Bazaar - where the Marwari leaders of the Area Padamraj Jain was a staunch supporter of Gandhi. Some 4,000 ladies were present, when Mr. Gandhi made an appeal for funds for the attainment of Swaraj a hush fell upon the crowd for a few minutes, and then all of a sudden there came a shower of cash and gold ornaments.¹²

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10. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F.No. 42 April 1921 p -2
Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State 29.1.1921.
11. A. B. Patrika, January 29, 1921, 7&&2.2.3.4.
12. Telegraph 5.2.1921.

On Sunday evening, 21st January, Gandhi addressed a public meeting at Mirzapur Park, Calcutta. Appealing to the vast crowd,

He asked one and all to boycott the West and he assured them that Swaraj would be the inevitable result. It made a great impact in Calcutta. So much so that the Calcutta Medical College, which had so long defied the request of C.R.Das and B.C.Pal to stop functioning Joined NCM¹³ immediately afterwards.

In February there strated the tramway workers strike in Calcutta. Strikers - threw brickbats at the Police at Kalighat; the Police fired on the irate mob.¹⁴

In March 1921 - the Government took certain measures to extern Mr. & Mrs. C.R.Das, Mammohan Neogi and Maulavi Tajbuddin Ahmed to enter Mymenisingh. It gave a boost to NCM activities in Bengal.¹⁵ In the beginning of March strikes strated in Lilboan Railway workshop in East Bengal.¹⁶ Railway men of Kanrapara workshop struck workeon 3rd March.

13. NAI BNNR January - June 1921 pp. 117-118.

14. Hindustan (Calcutta) 19.2.1921; Also see Bainik Basunati 21.2.1921. NAI, BNNR January-June 1921 pp. 194-195.

15. Bengali 4.3.1921

16. NAI BNNR January-June 1921

There were strikes in Wellington and Northbrook mills. The strikes continued here till the second week of May - 1921; while a communal split occurred amongst the strikers - Hindus and Muslims - leading to a violent riot on 11 May 1921.¹⁷

The Bengal provincial conference met at Barisal in March under the Presidentship of Bipin Chandra Pal.¹⁸ In his presidential address to the conference, Bipin Chandra Pal mentioned NCM as an evil.¹⁹ Bipin Chandra Pal did reduce the hold of the extremists in Bengal who were favouring NCM, through his Presidential speech. He did it in two ways - by criticising Gandhian and denouncing the Khilafat.²⁰ Many delegates who supported the NCM violently opposed the speech of Bipin Chandra Pal by holding a meeting outside the main hall. Virtually there was a split in Bengal Congress and Bipin Chandra Pal alongwith it, bade good bye to non-cooperation movement.

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17. Home Pol. Progs. (Deposit) F. No. 65 June 1921 p-11, Report for 1st half of April 1921 sent by the Govt. of Bengal. Also see Home Pol. Prog. (Deposit) F 65 June 1921 p-5, Report for 1st Half of March, sent by Govt. of Bengal.
18. Amrita Bazaar Patrika 22.3.1921
19. Bengali 27.3.1921.
20. Indian Mirror 29.3.1921. NAI BNNR January-June 1921 PP 345, 356.

The Extremist continued the movement. The Bangiya Swaraj Sangha - consisting of students, ex-detenuws, ex-state prisoners - pushed the policy of Boycott more vigorously. It established 12 centres in various parts of Calcutta, each with a captian and 19 volunteers. The sangha had its headquarters at 78 Annerst street, and 84 Siteram Ghosh street- where the members had to register their names.²¹ A number of volunteers corps and seva samitees were formed to carry the Sandesh of Mahatma Gandhi to the masses. By this time, in the mofussil Areas there were 61 corps with membership approximately of 4,014. In Calcutta it was 9 with 1,072 members. Calcutta Seva Samitees with 897 members. The police claims that corps of prostitute volunteers were formed at Faridur and Goalundo.²² Ex-terrorists like Purna Das and Bhupendra Nath Dutta led the volunteer organisations. Rebati Mohan Mitra, Sitendra Mohan Ghosh, and Anagana Mohn Chakravorty, from Banamali Sarkar Street, Calcutta invited recruits to the volunteer corps which they had started under the name of "Bengal Mukti Sena Samiti", with the object of helping the famine stricken people.²³

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21. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F.No. 12 June 1921 p-15
for first half of February 1921; Ibid F.No. 43 April 1921
report for second half of February 1921, sent by the Govt of
Bengal.
 22. A.B. Patrika 28-1-1921 9/3.
 23. Home Pol. Progs (Department) F.No. 527 1921 PP 4,5 -
A document purporting to contents information regarding
the volunteer movement in Bengal during NCM.
 24. NAI BNNR July-December 1921 p-131-132.

A difficult problem was the coordination of the Congress and Khalifat activities in Bengal. A joint working committee for coordinating the two organisations became necessary. C.R.Das set up a provincial working committee for NCM consisting of 6 Muslims and six Hindus, out of which three seats were allotted to the Khalifat Committee. Short-lived strikes encouraged by the Khilafat Committee, occurred on 4th and 5th April in Howrah, Ganges and Fort William Jute Mills.²⁵

In May 1921, Non-cooperation agitation in Mofussil areas was chiefly confined to Rajshahi, Chittagong and Darjelling. Threats of social boycott were used in Noakhali to induce the Chowkidars to resign from their posts.²⁶ A peculiar incident occurred at Howrah in May, 1921. A rumour was floated that boys were being kidnapped for sacrifice at the foundation of Lucknow Jute Mill then being constructed.²⁷ It caused wide spread panic, and serious riots started in Lawrence and Fort Glosters Mills.

However, Byomkesh Chakravarty - a leading Congressmen withdraw himself from Congress, Politician in May 1921, and retired from Politics.²⁸

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25. Home Pol. Progs. (Deposit) F.No 57, June 1921 p-7
Report for 1st half of April, 1921 sent by the Govt. of Bengal.
26. Home Pol. Progs. (Deposit) F.No. 65 June 1921, p-10
Report for 1st half of May, 1921 Ibid.
27. Ibid, F. No. 63 June 1921 for 1st half of May 1921.
28. NAI, BNNR January-June 1921, p -620

At the Raniganj Coal fields, i.e. in European owned collieries discontent was being fomented amongst the labourers by Sadhus-Buswanand and Darsnanand with active assistance of Marwari Coal Traders.²⁹ Labourers Associations were formed in those Areas. In July 1921. C.R. Das was invited to Raniganj to aid and assist the strikers.

The tea garden workers in the Darjeeling and Kurseong districts lead by Dal Bahadur strated hartal and supported the NCM. In July there were frequent strikes there. The government sent special official on duty to clam down the situation.

In May, there was a sudden massive exodus of tea garden labourers from the Chargola valley in Assam in the wake of NCM.³⁰

Initially the strika was against the owners ~~of~~ the estates but latter on it took an anti-Government colour. On 2 May the ~~peolies~~ had refused to work. On 6 May the planters of ~~Chargola~~ valley held a meeting to put down the strike. The Govt. supported the capitalists-planters and took recourse to repressive measures in order to stop the progress of the ideas of non-cooperation among the workers.

29. Rajat Roy, "Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal" (Delhi, 1984) P- 276

30 NAI, BWR July-December 1921 pp-15,16,18
Also see Ibid January-June 1921 pp-608,609,619,
620,621,622, 632, 637, 638,

A large body of them strated a long track for home and reached Chandpur in Tipperaa^District of Bengal. The government ordered the Gorkha soliders to check thier movements which started an operation against the refugees. This was pointed on Bengal Press as the second Jhallinwalabagh massacre. It was followed by a total hartal in the Chandpur town.³¹

At Comilla the local bar left the court in a body. The schools were closed down and for a few days Europeans in that areas, virtually remained in a state of siege. Deliberate attempts were made to boycott Europeans and loyal Indians and to molest them by intimediating their servants into quitting work. Shopkeepers refused to sell goods to Europeans.^{32.} Non-cooperators attempted to control supplies and formed village Unions to prohibit the exportation of rice, corn, and jute, and to sell to the non-Indians customers only at exorbitant rates. The intention of this move was to harm the European interests. Similar situation prevailed at Noaphali and Chittagong. On 24 May there was a srike in the Assam Bengal Railway which became general in character.

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31. NAI, BNNR January-June 1921 PP -640, 642, 643, 685, 685.
Also see Stateman , 7 June 1921.
32. Home Pol. Progs, (Deposit) F.N. 64 June 1921,
Report for 1st half of June, 1921, sent by the Govt.
of Bengal.
33. Ibid. F.No. 1, Sept. 1921 p-6 Report for 2nd half of June
1921 sent by the Govt. of Bengal.

About 10,000 to 12,000 workers participated in the strike which continued under their leader Swami Miananda. On 27 May the steamer strike occurred at Chandpur Goalando Barisal and Khulna. J.M. Sengupta of Chittagong led the movement. The intention of these strikes was to force the government to repatriate the refugees.

Congress Volunteers in Chandpur helped the refugees to go back to their home, or to their Estates again. A convincing sign of the gradual collapse of the strike was the fact that the Secretary of the Assam-Bengal Railway strikers' Union presented a petition to the Government for the settlement of the strike on terms which were a considerable reduction on previous demands.³⁴

The non-cooperators supported the strikes in various undertakings - against the coolie exodus.³⁵ Mahatma Gandhi expressed his opposition to the strikes.³⁶ But the Bengal leaders supported the strikes, for some time it seemed as if Bengal had slipped out of the control of Mahatma Gandhi.³⁷

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34. Home Pol Progs. (Deposit) F.No. 1 September 1921. p-11
Report for first half of July 1921 sent by the Govt. of Bengal.
35. Ibid No. 64 June 1921 for Report for first half of June 1921, sent by the Govt. of Bengal.
36. Statesman, 18, June 1921.
37. Bengali 22 June 1921.

Even C.R.Das and his followers were on the verge of snapping their links with NCM. C.R.Das called the Eastern Bengal strikes not as political strikes; but as national strikes. They had sprang from the same spirit with which the battle of Swaraj was being fought all-over the country - and were part and parcel of the NCM.³⁸ That the strike in East-Bengal had not the support of all NCM - leaders in Bengal was apparent in a meeting held on 16 instant in Indian Association Hall under the Presidency of Shyam Sunder Chakravarty, Editor of "Servant". The object was to discuss the Chandpur strikes and the response to it. The President of the meeting strongly pleaded that the strike was not a part and parcel of the NCM.³⁹ Another meeting was convened in college square on 18 June Saanka Jiban Roy presided over it and expressed the support of the NCM to the Eastern Bengal strikes.⁴⁰

In June, 1921 there was a widespread rumour in Bengal, to the effect that Afghanistan was coming to attack India, to help Indian Muslims by supporting the Hijrat movement. It gave a boost to Khilafat Activities.⁴¹

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38. BNNR January-June 1921 p-743,
Also see Amrita Bazar Patrika, 7th June 1921.
39. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F.No. 1 September 1921 p-7
Report for first half of June 1921, sent by the Govt. of India.
40. Ibid.
41. NAI, BNNR July-December., 1921 p-3.

Another important features of this time was the establishment of a host of arbitration courts in many area. Apart from Calcutta city, two other places where the Arbitration courts worked successfully delivering justice in both civil and criminal cases, were Contai and Barisal.^{42.}

In Calcutta 1st of August 1921 was observed as the anniversary of the start of NCM.⁴³ In August recognition of Bengal Provincial Congress Committees was conducted. B.N. Sasmal became its secretary. There was so much dissension in the Congress organisation in Bengal that no important person was willing to be responsible for the conduct of the party. By this time the Party was fragmented into different factions split in the Calcutta Extremist ranks was complete by this time. The split was not however, confined to the higher strata of the organisation; it was spreading to the lower ranks also. Serious splits were occurring in every district town of the province.⁴⁴

42. A. B. Patrika July 31, 1921 4/1.

43. NAI, BNNR July-Dec. 1921 p-214

44. Nayak (Calcutta) 19, July, 1921.

The Extremists of Bengal were gradually drifting away from the extremists of other Provinces. In Bengal, the leaders declared hartal, as soon as, any of their counter-part was arrested which was much against the dictates of Gandhiji.⁴⁵

Non-cooperators were holding a meeting in Calcutta town hall; where disgraceful and scandalous scene were enacted.⁴⁶

In the first week of September 1921 Gandhi visited Calcutta on 6th September Gandhi met Tagore for four hours. During their discussion, Gandhi supporters organised the burning of foreign clothes in Tagore's courtyard to register their protest against Tagore. Gandhi, alongwith Muhamed Ali visited Chittagong and Barisal. At Chittagong Gandhi and Muhammed Ali delivered speeches to large enthusiastic crowds Gandhi exhorted Hindus and Muslims to boycott foreign cloth and asked them to regard it as beef and haram respectively (forbidden by religion)⁴⁷

45. Navak, 21, July, 1921; also see BNNR July-Dec -1921 pp 129 & 120

46. Indian Mirror 26 August 1921: Ibid p 255, 256, 257, 264, 265.

47. Home Pol. Progs (Report) F.No. 18 September 1921 p-8

House to house collection of foreign clothes was made in Calcutta to be burnt on the birthday of Gandhi, all collected clothes were set on fire in the Halliday Park on the 20th September.⁴⁸

Before the coming of Prince of Wales to India, various rumours began to be floated in different parts of Bengal. For example, in Khulan, a rumour prevailed that Prince of Wales will make a declaration at Delhi for one year as a preliminary to granting Swaraj. In Howrah, a rumour stated that the prince of Wales with his escort of 18000 troops was stopped on his way out to India by Kemal Pasha, and asked to release all the Musalmans who were in Gaol.⁴⁹

On December, the Prince of Wales visit to Calcutta was violently opposed.

"From early morning Khilafat and Congress volunteers appeared on the streets, and it is not exaggeration to say, took possession of the city. The bazars were closed, Trams were stopped. Taxis were frightened on the streets and tonges were to be seen. There was little open violence, not even a brickbat was thrown at the armoured cars that patrolled the streets. The control of the city passed for the entire day into the hands of the volunteers. At nightfall electric

48. Home Political Proceedings - F.No. 18 October 1921.
Report on Political situations in Bengal for the first half of October 1921. p-11

49. Home Department Political Proceedings, F.No. 415 1921.
A document purporting to contain informations regarding the impact of rumours on people in Bengal.

lights were cut-off, and the streets were silent, dark and deserted. It was just like a city of the dead.⁵⁰

Moreover during the Princes's visit - both the ~~cooperators~~ and non-cooperators and the government were ready to confront each other. Four Armed cruisers were stationed outside Howrah and special battalion of troops were mustered in every part of city. The thrust of repression from the side of the government was facade by the non-cooperators. From the side of the non-cooperators the usual method of massively courting arrest to fill the jails was put into action in every part of Calcutta. Women participated in the movement.

The activities of the congress volunteers were declared unlawful.⁵¹ Prosecutions were instituted against the leading newspaper and politicians and public meetings in Calcutta city were prohibited for three months. However, the largest defiance of law took place, outside Calcutta i.e. in Pabna, Mymensingh, Dacca, Faridpur, Bakergunj, Tippera, Chittagong, Howrah 24 Praganas and Rangpur.

50. Rajat Roy, "Social Conflict and Political Unrest" opt F-292 Also ~~she~~ is quoted in Times⁵⁰ "one year of non-cooperation.", by L.N. Roy.

51. A.D. Patrika, 31.12.1921, Also see Home Department Political Proceedings F.No. 654, 1922 - Allegations made by Gandhi regarding Prince's visit to India and the consequent repressive policy of the government on the volunteer organisations.

C.R.Das's wife Bansnti Devi and sister Urmila Devi were arrested and sent to Gaol. But the arrest of the two ladies created such a sharp reaction in the movements that government was forced to release them in the midnight of the same day. Men were arrested simply for wearing Gandhiscaps, Congress offices were raided and Congressmen were ousted from their houses in winter-nights.⁵²

C.R.Das, after his arrest while going away in a police van told the persons who had gathered around him.

"If our goal is sacred, there is nothing to fear about whatever hurdles may come on the way of achieving it. The flame which has been lit in this country, can not be extinguished. Remain non-violent in whatever you do. I believe, it will lead you to success."⁵³

Amongst the movements which were initially organised by the Congress and later on due to the breakdown of Congress vigilance slowly became spontaneous rebellions in character the Anti-jute cultivation propaganda of February 1921 stands supreme. The Bengal Congress launched a campaign amongst the cultivators to boycott the cultivation of Jute. Very soon the agitation turned against the Europeans. On 1st April 1921, Europeans were stoned in Dacca. In Comilla town

52. NAI, Satyabhakta Papers, Section C, No.22,

p -22.

53. Ibid, p -23

Bricks were thrown at the wife and children of the police superintendents. In Howrah a Jute-mill manager was beaten up. In the interior of Mymensingh a sort of self-government was established while people refused to attend the police investigations. The government had lost its authority there. Congress volunteers rioted and rescued arrested prisoners, by attacking goals in Barisal and prevented the unloading of Liverpool salt in Munshiganj. On 3rd May 1921 - Matigara hat in the siliguri sub-division in Darjeeling districts was looted.⁵⁴

In December 1921 massive application of government powers began to break the organisation of the movement in towns. After this unrest became, to some extent, more rural in character. While the NCM ^{tried} to get substantial support from educated classes in urban areas, the leaders made half-hearted effort to push it to the rural area. Also it was a period of leisure for the rural people (after they finished their harvest-works in November) - giving them enough scope to participate in the movement.

In Nilpanari sub-division a Swaraj than was established by Gysuddin Ahmed. On 21 December 1921, armed policemen were attracted by the mob in Nilpharai market. In many districts of Bengal, the protest against the visit of Prince of Wales ^{took} acute form. Chowkidari taxes were refused and government orders were defied. Moreover, the rancour of the rural masses was primarily directed against rural Chowkidars.

At Chittagong police and forest officials were assaulted.⁵⁵

Prohibited forests were looted by crowds of villagers inspection bungalows were burnt, and meetings were held in defiance of Section 144 of Indian, Penal code, The Maharaja of Kassimazar was told by his tenants that they would not pay rents if he continued to pay land revenue to the British government.⁵⁶

Mymensingh peasants refused to pay chowkidari Taxes with the belief that Gandhian Swaraj was knocking at the door.⁵⁷

Wahabis of Dinajpur, Rajshahi, and Birbhum mobilised general people for a Jajed against Britishers. However, the unruly elements in rural areas. - consisted primarily of muslims - who were swayed by false rumours, regarding the desecration of holly places, and, the need for a Jihad. A conference of ulemas at Comilla, attended by 10,000 muslims declared Jajed obligatory according to the Hadith.⁵⁸

In the beginning of 1922, civil administration came to the verge of collapse in Tippera, Rangpur, Moulapore, Chittagong, Jalpaiguri, Madarhat, Decca, Paridpur and Backergunj.⁵⁹

55. Rajat Roy, "Social Conflict and political unrest in Bengal,"
Opcit P. -300

56. Ibid, P 297

57. Ibid, P 287

58. Ibid, P 298

59. Home Pol. Progs. (Deposit. F.No. 18 February 1922 p-84
fortnightly report sent by the Government of Bengal for
second half of February 1922.

In Rangpur - the moneylenders and absentee landlords lost control over the people. In Trippera, the trouble took colour of a class-war as the local landholders and moneylenders were harassed by the Muslims peasants. The Non-cooperators attacked the police-station with lathis and axes. A widespread refusal to pay rents. In Jalpaiguri, in February 1921, some santals were arrested on the charge of looting a Marwari shop-keeper's stall - following a quarrel between him and a santal boy. While the policemen began to march along with the arrested santals a crowd consisting of Santals, orsons and muslims - wearing Gandhi caps gherood them and began to throw dust into the eyes of police constables. They thought they were protected from bullet as they were Gandhi caps.⁶⁰

The pre-existing troubles often sought outlet through the broader movement. The best example was the Contai union board movement of June, 1921. Birendra Sasmal, a local leaders of Contai - took initiative in exploiting people's mood to boost the campaign for NCM. Through mass meetings and pamphlets, he convinced the contai people that Bengal village self-government Act - 1919 (Bengal Act No. V of 1919) was a draconian Act.⁶¹

60. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F.N.o 18, Feb 1922. Ibid.

61. BNNR July - December 1921 NAI p-135.

That the Act had not given people - the proper power and that the Union Boards were not given power to deny over-taxation that the chowkidars and the defadars of that Area, instead of being kept under people's control, were kept under the control of districts magistrates.

However, the most important allegation against the act was that it did not consider an individual tax payer's ability to pay and supported a spiralling tax-burden.^{62.}

The first meeting to oppose the Act was organised by a local businessmen of Kantanala Bazar on 9 June 1921. Afterwards meetings were held at Balisai, Dehki, Golampur, Namal and Phuleswar. Leaders like Birendra Sasmal, Pramata Bandopadhy, Satish Jena and Surendra Das took initiative in this regard. In different meetings people adopted the resolutions against the Act and sent copies to individual officers, districts magistrate, the chairman of the districts boards, to chief secretary to Govt. of Bengal, Minister in-charge of local self-government and to members of Bengal legislative council. Elected candidates resigned from the Union Boards.

62. Daink Basumati(Calcutta) 31.1.1921; MAI BNNR January-June 1921, pp -149, 150.

N.B. The act mixed the function of the "chowkidari Panchayats" with these of the "Union Committee" by creating Union Boards, endowd with powers and duties necessary for catering to the collective needs of villages - and entrusted with powers of imposing taxes necessary for the purpose.

On 14 August 1921, Birendra Sasmal Declared his intention not to pay the enhanced Taxes. People also denied to pay taxes, courted arrest and went to jail. This resulted in boycott and intimidation of loyal supporters of the government; active molestations of government officers; conflict with local policeman, and stopping chowkidars from doing their duties. Government officers accompanied by armed forces strated to confiscate properties of the ~~or the~~ defaulters.⁶³

The district magistrate A.W.Cook visited the affected areas, gave report not to continue the Act in Midnapur. In December, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal Mr. Wood, declared in Calcutta Gazettee that in accordance with Section (3) of the Act V of 1919 the Government has decided the extension of that Act. As a result, 227 Union Boards were dissolved in the districts of Midnapur.

Birendra Sasmal, was at one time a Congressman. He had tried to get permission from Gandhi to strate no-tax movement in August 1921. But he was not allowed him to do this.

The anti-settlement work movement at Bogra and Bibhum is another example of people's initiative outside the purview of Congress direction. Initially Congressmen Jiteniralal Banerjee was leading the movement. Mr. Macherson I.C.S. Assistant settlement officer Bogra, was assaulted by volunteers at Dakumachhat. Opposition to settlement works, continued as a result of

63. Amrita Bazar Patrika 21.10.1921.

meetings held by Mr. J.L. Banerjee and supported extended by volunteers. On 29th October an Amin was surveying a field he was obstructed by 30/40 villagers. On the night of November 6th, the houses of Amins at Paikpara was burnt down. In village Katha, Mohendra Narain Choudhary, who gave shelter to an Amin was socially boycotted and at other places Amins found it difficult to obtain labour to conduct their work. 64

In Bogra and Birbhum too there was obstruction to settlement work. Mr. Robertson who had gone on tour to Pabna-Bogra to conduct settlement work; faced troubles - while crowds of people opposed him with the slogan of "Gandhi Maharaj-Ki-Jay", Robertson told them

64. Home Department Political Proceedings F.No. 415 1921; a document purporting to contain information regarding NCM in Bengal.

that it was the hukkam of the Sarkar to continue the settle ment work. But the people told him that his life and that of any other government servant who came there to assist him would not be safe unless the work was abandoned.⁶⁵

From Rajshahi Jail, on 21 March 669 prisboners escaped .

There were smaller jailbreaks at Serajguni, Netrakona, Dintapur, Midnapur and Barisal. In the case of Rajshahi Jail it was a⁶⁶ result of a careful plot planned from outside. The prisoners observed a hartal inside the geol and declared hence forwarded they would obey only Gandhi and not the Sarkar. At mid day they made a rush at the gate while wardens were being changed, Crowds⁶⁷ people forcing their way through, marched in armed with lathis. They fought a pitched battle with the police force and overpowered them. Some were rearrested - but most of them escaped from the geol.⁶⁷

Prisoners broke the Central jail of Midnapur. They were instigated by outsiders to do this. They were told that rupees and notes were being issued in the name of Gandhi as on that the British Raj was over.⁶⁸

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65. Home Political Proceedings (Deposit) November 1921, Report on political situation in Bengal for the first half of November 1921.
66. NAI, BMR, January-June 1921, pp 575, 604, 605, 606, 625.
67. Hon. Pol. Polgs (Deposit) F. No. 45 June 1921.
68. Hon. Pol. Polgs (Deposit) No. 1, Sept 1921, P. 11.

On the night of November 4th (1921) a procession returning from a Khilafat meeting attacked policemen in Howrah town and besieged the police stations. 5 rioters were killed in the attack. The volunteers instigated house-wives and shopkeepers in that area to boycott the police. General public was instructed to refrain from giving any evidence, before the official enquiry. In an attempt to break a Tram-strike in Belgachia a deputy commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, and ~~two~~ other police officers, received serious injuries

69.

Hom. Pol. Progs (Deposit) F. No. 18, Novemebr 1921m p-11, Report for first half of Novemebr sent by the Government of Bengal.

After the Chauri-Choura incident Gandhi suspended the NCM on February 1922. Since none of the Bengal leaders were ready for the suspension of the movement the announcement to that effect left the Bengal leaders bewildered and dismayed. They could not decide upon any alternative programme of their own.

The period that followed the withdrawal of NCM marked the beginning of a new phase in Bengal Politics. It put an end to the Non-cooperation Activities organised by the Congress leadership. Due to popular initiative civil-disobedience continued in many rural areas till July 1922.

One of the most important factors which was quite crucial in the growth of popular militancy - was unfounded rumours mostly dealing with the impending collapse of the British rule and the coming up of Swaraj or Gandhi Raj very soon. The idea that all existing authority was collapsing with the emergence of Gandhi Raj-inspired the people.

At some of the places the radicalism of the movement - took the form of class - struggle. Non-payment of rents was in chief characteristic of this struggle. And, as we know, Congress had not yet sanctioned the strategy of no-tax campaign - the last item in the non-cooperation programmes. After the movements started in violent form, the Congress leaders were trying to check it.

Congress stood for a peaceful mass movement and never forget that mere violence does not make a movement more revolutionary. The movement became radical in those places where the pre-existing popular grievances sought an outlet through the broader national movement, i.e. Midnapur and Contai.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS NON-CO-OPERATION

The challenge which Gandhi posed in 1920-22 was treated quite differently from the one which he had posed in 1919. In 1919, there was the breakdown of communication between the Government of India and the Provincial Governments and each Provincial Government handled the issue according to its own conception. Being pressurised by British Parliament and British Public: in 1920, the Government of India took direct control over policy to deal with the NCM and men like D' Dwyer, even though they remained in the provinces, were no longer allowed to suppress ruthlessly the demonstration of popular will.¹

The colonial state was not based on force solely. It was also based on the creation of civil-institutions and on rule of law, a certain amount of civil liberties, and a certain toleration of and civil behaviour towards its opponents. As a semi-democratic Government it observed certain codes of Administration. The non-co-operation movement was the second major confrontation with British Government, in Bengal, after the Swadeshi movement (1905-1908).

Gandhi was quite conscious of the dangerous implication of large masses of people going into Action and he sought to eliminate the attendant risks by constantly emphasising Ahimsa.

1. Ravinder Kumar, "Essays on Gandhian Politics", (Oxford, 1971) p-8

As he thought, the best way to discredit the British concept of Empire at the sword-point was to keep the Liberation Movement totally devoid of violence. Actually Gandhi's method was a dilemma for the British. They found that neither indifference, nor repression really worked against Gandhi. Non-intervention allowed the agitation to snowball; on the other hand, repression of unarmed men and women.....won the sympathy of the multitude, and deepened the alienation of the British Rule.² It was never the British Policy of relying on force naked and undisguised.³

2. B R. NANDA, "Gandhi and his Critics" (Delhi, 1985) p-69; Also see BIPANCHANDRA, "Long - term dynamics of Indian National Congress", (New Delhi, 1988) p-25:

3. NB. With the progress of Research into the politics of the Raj, there has been a growing realisation that the relationship between the Imperial Administration and the politically conscious section of Indian Population was not one of bare confrontation, at any time. (Emphasise mine).

Repression was only to give stimulus to the movement. The Government did not try to make martyrs of the fanatical leaders. Moreover the Government had known well the sincerity of Gandhi's teaching of NCM.⁴

4. Non-Cooperation Movement was, no doubt, illegal. Gandhi himself had mentioned, non-cooperation, was strictly a moral movement, deliberately aimed at the over-throw of the existing Government. It was, therefore, legally seditious in terms of the Indian Penal Code: (Young India - 29.9.1921). In other words, however peaceful the professed doctrine of a movement may be, if its propaganda be accompanied by acts of hostility to state, or infringes Public tranquility, such acts were seditious according to law. The promotion of hartals was unlawful, and amounted to the offence of criminal conspiracy. Sections 124 (A), and 153 (A) of the then Indian Penal code were quite clear to the fact that if an action was to bring the Government into contempt or hatred, or was to cause disaffection towards it, the offence was complete. For example, although it was correct that everyone got the right to shut his shop whenever he liked, and the shutting up of a single shop was not to cause disaffection towards the Government. But in effect of a general closure of shops was destined to cause that feeling and the concerned persons could be dealt under the above clauses of the IPC, or Under Section 120(A) of the IPC which dealt with criminal conspiracy: Or else the applicability of the part II of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act 1908 (Act XIV of 1908) was valid for them. See Home Department Political Proceedings, F.No.411, 1921.

The Government for the time being followed the policy of non-interference.⁵ It was a policy of non-intervention; studied forbearance; a policy of firmness and restraint combined with delaying tactics before taking any ^{provocative} step. In other words the government adopted the policy of wait and watch. Trying to non-cooperate with the non-cooperators.

In the early part of 1921 individual congressmen in Bengal had been arrested from time to time; and sentenced under ordinary laws, while the top leaders like C.R. Das, B.C. Pal, J.M. Sengupta, and Birendra Sasamal, were left untouched. It was a policy of dealing with the Rank and file, while leaving the upper echelons to do whatever they liked within the specific framework of the movement.

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5. Home Pol Progs; #. No. 66, December 1920 p -43
Telegram from Vice-roy of India to Secretary of State,
8 November 1920. ^{Telegram from V} The Viceroy wrote, we will therefore continue our present policy, and are about to issue resolutions to provincial governments explaining that hitherto adopted, i.e. non-interference, so far as it is compatible with Public safety, and it is our intention to continue this policy, unless and until we are compelled to abandon it in the interests of the law-abiding citizens to whom strong appeal has been made for a concealed effort to stop any further extension of this bad propaganda, to influence students and illiterate masses.
6. See Home Pol. Progs (deposit) #. No. 35 February 1921 p-12

At the national level, too, the Government did not arrest Gandhi. . Gandhi and the top-Gandhians were left to be humiliated before the public, and the official response was that, the movement was to collapse within short period and loose people's support.⁷ The government was waiting for Gandhi to put himself in palpably wrong position, so as to make it impossible for anyone to say that the Government should ignore what he was doing. The strongest argument for the arrest of Gandhi, was that if the Britishers did not prosecute him then, it would not be able to prosecute him at all; for, the spread of his mischievous propaganda during the recruiting time was to advance beyond the academic stage, and spread amongst the Army. Then there was to be greater risk in arresting him. That if Gandhi was left untouched the movement was to go to such an extent at last that Gandhi himself would be unable to control it. How hard it would be for the government to check it then. Moreover, the Government believed that people were sure to become tired of Anarchy; and, if the movement was left to itself, it was sure to collapse.⁸ The Government adopted this policy, trusting the good sense of the educated classes for a rejection of the non-cooperation doctrine in near future.⁹

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7. See Home Department Political Proceedings, F.No. 303; 1921; pp - 12-13. A document purporting to contain argument for and against the arrest of Gandhi and top Congress leaders.
8. Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F.No. 66, December 1920. p -43
Telegram from the viceroy of India to Secretary of state, 8 November 1920. n
9. Home Department Political Proceeding; F.No. 327 1922:
Also see Home Pol.Progs (deposit) F.No. 66, December 1920 p-43
See also Home Department Political F.No. 415, 1921 p-12

Towards July, 1921; the Arrest of Gandhi's Allies started (e.g. allies of All-India stature , namely Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali), but the Provincial leaders still left untouched. In fact, between July and December 1921 the Bengal leaders became most vociferous in trying to push the movement to rural areas.

As we have seen towards November 1921, the movement became militant , with doses of initiative from below. In November 24, 1921 the central government issued instructions to the Provincial and Local Governments to be stern in dealing with the movement. The Bengal Governor, Ronaldsday attended the Bengal Legislative Council and delivered a long speech calling upon the members (moderate) to support the authorities in suppressing lawlessness. He mentioned:

"The time has come when we have to come down one side of the fence or the other. Those who are not on the side of law and order are on the side of revolution; and the revolution means anarchy. The Government of Bengal will not hesitate to make use of all powers which it possess to quell disorder".¹⁰ Meanwhile the government was arming itself to suppress the movement and wanted the authorities in Britain to sanction this ruthless suppression. But the authorities in London were still not willing to give a blank cheque to the Indian bureaucracy.

10. Sukhbir Choudhury, " Non-cooperation, Khilafat, and
revolunt movement", (Srijani Prakashan, New Delhi, 1972) p -153

Duely directed by the Home Authorities, the Chief secretary government of Bengal wrote to his counterpart in the Home Department Government of India:

" In my opinion that it is both unnecessary and undesirable to have recourse to any special measures like the Defence of India Act, or Regulation - III of 1878; in order to deal with the present situation in Bengal.....The Indian Penal Code (IPC) is as comprehensive and as complete a code of crimes and punishments as has yet been enacted by any state; and, the legislature has embodied in Criminal Procedure Code many preventive and anticipatory provisions of a drastic character with a view to aid the Executive Authorities in preserving Public Peace and tranquility. There are also, the local acts, such as, the Calcutta Police Act, Containing further provisions to maintain Public Peace. The Indian laws specially bearing on utterances, writings, and acts, can not in any way be described as affording any loopholes for the escape of any seditious propaganda..... not can we characterise them as lenient or insufficient."¹¹

The Government was always looking for a provocation from the side of people so that it could meet the 'violence' of the Congress with the counter violence of the state, and destroy the nationalist movement. In the face of violence from the side of the people in November 1920 neither the Government remained quiescent as before nor did it resort to drastic measures to deal with the movement.

11. Home Department Political Proceedings; F.No. 415.1921 p-27.
From Chief Secretary to Government of Bengal to Secretary Home Department of India, 30 November, 1921.
Home Department

It took the middle - path. The Government to show its strength to the people in full vigour; in order to prohibit fresh adherence to the cause.

Special laws like the criminal laws Amendment Act and Sedition meetings Act, were made.¹² Volunteer associations were proscribed and numerous meetings were prohibited, and those who flouted government orders were readily arrested. In other words, the policy of outright repression was developed gradually; Where the non-cooperators instigated persons from British Indian Army to resign, prosecution was started immediately.

More-over during this time, the Bengal Government challenged the policy hitherto followed by the Government of India.¹³ The Bengal Government in its bid to have a full-scale show of its strength - suggested that troops should be freely employed as a means of re-inforcing the Police and encouraging the law abiding citizens. Military pickets were stationed in different parts of Calcutta, particularly on 9 & 10 December. However, it was not posted to do ordinary police works, but were posted at important places to check mass-outrage, if it occurred.

12. Home department Political Proceedings ; F.No. 527, 1922.
Document purporting to contain measures taken by Bengal Government November 1921 to deal with non-cooperation movement:
Also see Home department Political Proceedings; F.No. 340
1725 KW, 1922. Ibid.

13. Home Department Political Proceedings; F.No. 415, 1921. Ibid.

14. Letter from Henry Wheeler to Sir William Vincent: Calcutta
16 December 1921: Home department political F.No. 415, 1921.

Troops were stationed in important areas of the city; to give the public in full view of British strength. Troops were provided with modern weapons and equipments. The Government propose in case of exigencies, to move troops through districts where they had not been seen for many more years.

Viceroy Lord Reading was at Calcutta, inspecting the situation, before the prince of Wales visited Calcutta, in last week of December, 1921 - clearly the Government instructed not to arrest leaders during the Prince's visit to Calcutta. In short, Measures were still largely aimed at suppressing the most dangerous manifestations of the movement rather than the all out direct suppression of the movement.¹⁵ The riots and other manifestations of violence had been local and isolated events. The Bengal Government claimed that the conscious, educated and law-abiding public opinion of Calcutta was strongly in favour of taking a more bolder stand against the NCM.¹⁶

15. Home Department Political Proceedings op.cit. p -2

16. Telegram from Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal to Chief Secretary, Home Department Government of India; Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) P.No. 18, November 1921. The government perception was that the average law abiding citizen of Bengal were being resentful of what appeared to him to be inaction of the Government. Whenever there was violence, the law-abiding public opinion held the Government responsible for it.

However, not only the pro-government law abiding citizens of Bengal protested against the policy of Government but also the European Association of Calcutta, had been more vociferous in this regard. Because of its dubious interests and intentions, the latter had pressurised the Government to deal more vigorously with the movement from the very beginning.¹⁷

In conjunction with the decisions of Ahmadabad Congress (December, 1921) while arrangements were in full swing to start no - tax campaign, in near future, the Government started arresting in the top leaders of Bengal in January 1922. And after, Chauri-Choura incident in February 1922, Gandhi was arrested in March - and awarded six years imprisonment.

¹⁷. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F. No. 42, April 1921 p -2.
A document purporting to contain details about the attitude of the European Association towards the ICM in Calcutta. Through frequent meetings the Europeans of Calcutta condemned the government attitude of acquiescence with lawlessness, and incipient anarchy.

The government took certain steps to check the spread of non-cooperation ideology. It tried to provide the movement with all the ropes it needed to hang itself by not taking drastic actions to suppress it at the first instance; At the same time it adopted strategies to curb it indirectly.

The moderates under Surendra Nath Bannerjee, and other non-Congress-vested-interests were ready to work the new Reform Scheme. They urged that nothing should be done by premature or excessive repression, to make those retrace steps who were prepared to cooperate. In other words, the moderates were to be checked in their slide towards Congress movement.^{18.}

And whatever, minor special measure the Government took from time to time, it was with due approval of the moderate-legislators in Bengal legislative assembly.¹⁹

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18. NAI Montagu Papers (Microfilmed) Reel No. 1 part II, Columns 12. In his instruction to Indian Government, Montagu, the then SOS, pointed out that the extremists were younger, less-educated, and impetuous men. The oldermen amongst the educated Indians were the moderates. He gave instructions to woo them so much that at no time, they were to complain that the Government was not taking them into confidence, and they were being isolated. British Rulers sought, moreover, to split the nationalist ranks with a view to create a working entente with its less vehement sections. The Government policy was formed with due opinion of the moderates; and at the time of fighting election under the ^{Swadeshi} party, the extremists held the moderates responsible for the atrocities of 1921-22.
19. From Chief Secretary to Government of Bengal, to Chief Secretary Govt. of India Home Department 30 November 1921. Home Department Political Proceedings; F.No. 415, 1921 p-28.

The Government opened the chamber of princes in conjunction with the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms to have the support of the Princely states. Hindu-Muslim difference was fully exploited, in pursuing the Divide and Rule Policy.²⁰ Bengal Governor Ronaldsday, invited Prince of Wales to visit Bengal, in December 1921, while he was in India at that time. At that time, the Government, no doubt, tried to divert the attention of the people from Gandhi, to Prince of Wales.

20. See. R.J. Menon "The crisis of Indian Unity" (GVP, Delhi, 1974) P - 5

The Bengal Governor tactfully utilised the provisions of Dyarchy, to curb the capacity of the Hindu Nationalists and establish the Anglo-Muslim alliance. However, the divide and rule policy did not end there. A recent historian has mentioned about the nexus between the government and the lower caste namasudra peasants- for which the latter was quite anti-NCM in attitude, and they were demanding separate electorate during the period. At that time the namasudra population in Bengal was around 25 lacs. They had got an Association with Mukunda Mallick as their leader. He was supporting the government. See Rajat Roy, "Social conflict and political unrest in Bengal", (Delhi, 1984) P-234

In order to wash away Gandhi's Ideology of prohibition from people's mind; the Government distributed pamphlets, describing how Napoleon, Caesar, and all great persons in History, were drunkards; thereby instructing people to drink and not accept Gandhi's Ideology.²¹

Also the Government tried to get the support of the High-ups in Calcutta against non-cooperation movement. While the movement started with full vigour in December 1920. On 8th December 1920 the Bengal Government arranged a Durbar in Calcutta consisting of people from top-schelons of Calcutta, to convince them not to favour the movement.²² The transmission of objectionable Telegraphic and Postal matters, was stopped, under the Telegraphic and Postal Codes. The Government with-hold Government -sponsored advertisements from the the papers which propagated non-cooperation ideology.²³

21. Young-India, 6.10.1921.

22. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F.N. 55, February 1921, Fortnightly report sent by the Government of Bengal, for the first half of December 1920.

23. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F.No. 66, December 1920; A document purporting to contain various steps the government undertook to check NCM.

The Government formed special schemes, much Draconian in character than the schemes it implemented and kept it in reserve with the cognisance of the situation: in case of exigencies those were to be adopted.²⁴ Gandhi, directly countered the Viceroy's proposal for talks and told the Government to release the Non-cooperation prisoners before the Round Table Conference. The Congress meeting at Ahmadabad in the last week of December 1921, clearly issued warning not to enter into any agreement with the government.

Anti-non-cooperation propoganda formed one of the important aspects of British Policy. As usual, publication of Articles in Newspapers did not solve the problems, as ~~the~~ people read the newspapers. The Government resorted to literary information; visual information and employing paid Agents to strat Anti-non-cooperation propoganda.²⁵

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24. Ibid. Also see Home Political Proceedings: F. No. 885, 1922 (Bengal Emergency Recovery Bill) From Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department 6 May, 1922. The provisions of the Bill indicated that the Recovery officer was to personally visit the recalcitrant Areas backed by sufficient force; Convey the issue to all persons in that Area through beating of drums; and if the demands were not paid on the spot, he had to sell the defaulters' property movable and immovable, to the immediate landlord. "The Bill was not to be introduced; but to be kept in readiness, to be implemented at short notice".
25. Home Department Proceedings (A) F.No. 335; March 1921. A document purporting to contain information regarding the propoganda steps the government adopted during non-cooperation movement. Regarding the paid-Agents, the document is clear that the Government instructed them not to expose themselves as agents of the Government. They were to pose themselves as active members of the moderate party; they were to win over as many newspapers as possible, by giving bribe: publish Pamphlets and Distributives; They were to bring to their side, as many youths as possible, through public lectures, public and private meetings to instigate religious figures like Pandits and Moolavis to start protests in rural areas.

Local governments were instructed to start vigorous counter propoganda against non-cooperation movement. At the same time, they were instructed to withdraw restrictions on the Press and to leave²⁶ unfettered.

The government widely circulated the Book "Gandhi and anarchy" written by Shankaran Nair; to win public opinion against NCM. Counter propoganda was to be carried on by retired officers who were to move to Villages explaining to the people the folly of the movement. For counter propoganda against Khilafat, the Government employed the soldiers who had fought against Turkey, in the first world war.²⁷

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26. Home Department Political Proceedings; F.No. 265, 1921. A document purporting to contain information to local government to start counter-propoganda against NCM. Local - Government meant the municipal committees; district Boards; Union Boards; or other Authorities leggly entitled to, or entrusted by the Government with the control or management of local funds. Regarding visual information See Home Political (A) proceedings; Nos 192-203; July 1920. Anglo-oriented film Corp. Produced films explaining the folly of NCM.
27. Demi-official letter from the Secretary, Government of India, Home Department, To all local Governments and Administrations 3, July 1920. Home Department Political (A) Proceedings; F.N. 333, March 1921.

Broadly speaking, the following were the targets of Government Policy:-

1. To bring to the surface the different strands of opinion which had rallied round Gandhi.
2. To divide the moderates and Extremists.
3. To suppress the extremists, the moment they lost the support of moderate opinion.
4. Prosecution through ordinary law when it was likely to be successful.
5. Resort to lies and half-truths by means of official statements and communiques whenever it was of sufficient importance to justify above methods.
6. Strict enforcement of the provision of Press Act.
7. Close watch on attempts to influence rural Areas and labouring classes.
8. Virorous prosecution of non-cooperators who were guilty of making seditious speeches insigating violence; enforcement of a general respect for law in case of the unlawful assemblies.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION AND TECHNIQUES OF MOBILISATION

The weakness of NCM in Bengal really lay, as we have already seen-in roots within the province itself. In Bengal, the non-cooperation movement was plagued throughout, and ultimately torpedoed, by numerous ambiguities and misunderstandings. Understanding the levels of participation of various sectors of society in the movement; the mental world of different social groups; the tactics the leaders adopted to mobilise masses: it becomes amply evident-the clash of ideologies of Bengal leaders and Gandhi was a least important factor, responsible for making the movement weak, in Bengal.

I

Undivided Bengal was a muslim majority province. Muslims comprised 24 percent of the city population of Calcutta. Any way, in Bengal, the muslim community was not a monolithic social, linguistic, and historical organism. Muslim community was multi-faceted, and diversity prevailed acutely within the community with linguistic and cultural division. The muslims formed a conglomerate community which grew slowly as a result of conversions and intermarriage. It had led to the various subgroups within the community - defined in terms of geographical, racial and caste origin. A host of Hindu lowercastes i.e. Namasudras, Mahatos and Rajavanshis had been converted to Islam. Neither they had severed all connections with Hindu society nor they were totally mixed with the muslim community. The word "knilafat" bore a strange meaning for these people. Either they failed to

understand its importance and remained passive; or else, they mis-interpreted it as the Urdu word "khalif" meaning "Against"; which was mainly responsible for the initiative from below, during December, 1921.¹

Calcutta was dominated by the Urdu speaking real-Muslims. But they failed to make use of their numerical superiority; as they were totally blind to the interests of other groups and violently opposed to any form of social change within the community. They regarded themselves as respectable men, who had little interest in the affairs of poor muslims. In other words, the class division within the Urdu speaking muslims weakend its strength.²

The inner dynamics of the struggle in the countryside and the periodic outburst of communal fury - clearly showed that the basis of Hindu-Muslim alliance was based

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1. Home Pol. progs (Deposit) F No. 18 November 1921, p-11 Fortnightly report on political situation in Bengal for the first half of November, 1921-sent by the Government of Bengal.
 2. Home pol. progs (Deposit) F No. 74 December 1920;p-12 Fortnightly report sent by the Government of Bengal for the first half of November 1920-that the Bengal Khilafat committee was more worried for collections of funds than to make propaganda in favour of the Khilafat. Funds were generally contributed by the high ups in society which was at par with the leadership so far social status was concerned.

on the un-reliable foundation of religious sentiment, without taking into account the operation of material forces which alone could bring about a solid and durable unity. The Ram-Rahim approach of Gandhi failed to bring about unity as in Bengal, communalism had an agrarian base.³ The appeal of the small enlightened Hindu intelligentsia and their nationalist muslim comrades to the muslim peasantry in the name of progressive nationalism went unheeded. While muslim students were told to leave Government schools and colleges in East Bengal, the muhammadans thought that the whole thing had been engineered by Hindus with a view to retard development of the Muslims.⁴

There were muslim leaders in Bengal during NCM, who told that strikes were not allowed by the shariat. They thought it blasphemous to shout Bande-mataram along with Allah-o-Akbar. Those who supported NCM were often thought to have lost their religion because of their cooperation with the Hindus in various meetings, their leaving the practice of cow killing-worshipping the statue of BG Tilak.⁵

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3. The greater part of peasant population in Eastern Bengal was muhammadan. The majority of Zamindars were Hindus. And it is quite well known that the Zamindars' oppressions of peasants often took communal form. In fact, the agrarian set up in rural Bengal largely kept the muslim peasants aloof from NCM. The party which gave a powerful ideological legitimation to (their) rejection of the old economic, social and political set-up, was only to succeed to get their support. FazlulHaq's Krishak Praja party won in 1937 election in Bengal, with its jotedar-peasant base and antilandlord programmes.
 4. Home Pol progs (Deposit) F No. 74 December 1920; Fortnightly report sent by the Government of Bengal for the first half of November 1920.
 5. Navayuga, 16.4.1921: NAI, BNNR January - June 1921-p-439.

The different sections of muslim community; princes, feudatory Chiefs, landed Aristocracy, and the intellegatia, and educated section - had different notions regarding Khilafat. The educated muhammadans did not support the Khilfat; rather, they supported Kamal Attaturk as he willed to modernise Turkey. The uneducated masses failed to understand the meaning of Khilafat, The princes, landed Aristocracy and feudatory chiefs supported the British Government to farther own interest. Murhirul Hassan,⁶ in his recently published work - has mentioned that Khalifa was the head of Sunni muslims; not of the shihas. And, the muslim leaders who supported Khalifat had only half-hearted support, to it. They took interest in he future of ottoman Empire not so much because of their religious feelings, but in order to own further political future in India.⁷ While the Turkey peace terms were made public, they feared to mobilize the masses against it.⁸ Against this background Mustafa Nural Islam opines, that the Bengal muslim thought Turkesh Sultan as their spiritual head, and, at the same time,

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6. Murshirul Hassan, "communal and pan-Islamic trends in India"
Manohar Publication (Delhi, 1985) p-3
 7. Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F. No. 88 July 1920 p-9; Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Bengal, for first half of February 1920.
 8. Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F. No. 95 July 1920 p-9; Report on political situation in Bengal for second half of May 1920, sent by the Government of Bengal - that before the muslim leaders expressed their willingness to adopt NCM; they admitted that it was to be a failure. If left to themselves-the Bengal muhammadans were to remain quiet, but if outside leaders start working on their religious feelings - a dangerous situation was sure to arise.

they regarded the British King as their temporal head. Therefore the allegiance was divided, (Bengal muslim public opinion as reflected in B. Press; Dacca, 1973. P-6366).

Not large number of muslims joined in the campaign for boycott in general, and that of foreign clothes in particular. In many places of Bengal, the muslim shop-keepers opposed the boycott-of foreign clothes. At the annual session of the Amjuman-i-Wagan presided over by Abudakr of Hooghly district, the boycott of British goods was rejected. The conservative muslims accepted the chelmsford-montagu reforms. It is due to their failure to capture the muslim-league from pro-Congress muslims that they were busy in organising opposition against the muslim-Hindu alliance. For example, Iman-ul-Haq, through his paper muslim-Hitaishi, declared-that the Bengal muslims had severed their connection with the the league because of their failure to voice their rightful demands for which it was created. Persons like Nawab Ali Choudhury resigned from the Bengal Presidency of the muslim league; and revived the central National Muhammadan Association to carry on the Anti-NCM Agitation. Important muslim leaders who were supporting the NCM in the initial phase, changed their stand when the movement started. Fazl-ul-Haq started obtaining fatwas from learned maulavis against Non-Cooperation, and gave hints how to conduct the anti NCM movement.⁹

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9. Telegram from Chief Secretary Government of Bengal to to Chief Secretary Govt. of India, Home Department, 30 July 1920-Home Department Political (B) proceedings F. No.338/387 & KW August 1920. Also see Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F. No. 74 December 1920-Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Bengal for first half of November 1920. Fazl-ul-Haq was pioneer of the non-cooperation movement at the initial stage.

Presiding over the Bengal provincial muhammadans Conference, Fazl-ul-Haq denounced the Boycott of schools and colleges; and described the NCM as immoral, unjust and selfish. It was destined to reduce the muslims to the stage of political Helots.¹⁰ This was, no doubt, a serious loss to the nationalist movement, as Haq was one of the most important leaders of the muslims amongst whom the Urdu-speaking Khilafat leaders like M.A. Azad had not enough influence. M.A. Azad had a strong hold over the extremist section of muhammadans and through their support he was willing to become the shaikh-ul-Islam in India -¹¹ to assume every control over Khilafat movement. Before the NCM was formally started in August 1920, at the Bengal muhammadans political and literacy conference held at Serajgunj, the President Nawab Sayyed Nawab Ali Choudhury had appealed muslims not to support the Gandhian movement.^{12.}

- 10 . Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 22 December 1920; Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F. No.35 February 1921, p-2.
- 11 . Home Pol.Progs (Deposit) F. No. 105 July 1920; Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Bengal for the first half of July 1920.
12. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F. No. 47 July 1919. Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Bengal for second half of April 1919.

Sayyid shurawardy contested election under the Reform Act - 1919, and he was dead against Non-cooperation.¹³ Continuing his allegiance towards the British the Nawab of Dacca issued declarations condemning the non-cooperation movement.¹⁴

Of course, some amount of muslim participation can be traced virtually in every aspect of the NCM. But it was quite insignificant in a muslim majority province. The Bengal provincial Khilafat conference under the leadership of Abdul Bari - failed to mobilize the large sections of the muslim masses against the government. Dr. Mushirul Hassan is correct in saying that the Congress muslims during the NCM had not a large following amongst masses.¹⁵

In Bengal, muslim-Hindu relations posed the greatest challenge before non-cooperation movement, and ultimately considerably retarded the success of the movement. Non cooperation against the Government meant solid cooperation amongst the governed. It could not be achieved. Even in 1921, the peak year of unity, the divergence of Congress and Khilafat aims and methods was already apparent. In retrospect - it is amply evident that in dealing with muslim-Hindu relation, Nationalist Historians have been influenced more by stereotypes and less by the actualities of life.

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13. Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F. No. 66 December 1920; Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Bengal for second half of October, 1920.
 14. Telegrams from Victory to Secretary of State, 24 October 1920; Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F. No. 59 December 1920 p.59.
 15. "Mushirul Hassan" congress (Muslims and Indian Nationalist" in South Asia-new series VOL- VIII, Nos.1 and 2 June-Dec. 1981

Most significant of these stereotypes ^{is the} belief in a kind of Golden Age of Hindu-Muslim unity, which was deliberately destroyed by British rulers. But, in fact, there were formidable barriers to unity set-up by traditions, and by the attitude of many Muslim and Hindu nationalists. Political relationship between the two communities, was to a large extent conditioned by the social relationship amongst them.

II

Before the inauguration of the Chelmsford - Montagu reforms - by the declaration of General Amnesty, ¹⁶ on December 23, 1919 - the leaders and workers of the ex-revolutionary organisation had been released from jails and detention: Warrants against some of the leaders were withdrawn. ¹⁷

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16. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F. No. 45 January 1920; Fortnightly Report sent by the government of Bengal, for the second half of December, 1919 - The Royal proclamation was read by Governor Ronaldsday from the steps of Calcutta Town-Hall at 12 A.M. on 24 December, 1919.
17. Home Department Political (B) proceedings; F. No. 661/663 June 1919:p.-4,8 - An extract from the proceedings of Bengal Legislative Council held on 21 January, 1919. The document is quite clear regarding the fact that all the imprisoned-Terrorists were not to be released by the Government.

C.R. Das called a conference of Ex-revolutionaries - attended by Gandhi - to win over them for the cause of NCM. The Yugantar party persons supported NCM and voted in favour of it in Calcutta Congress. The Revolutionaries formed a strong lobby in Nagpur Congress, December 1920 - as the supporters of C.R. Das.¹⁸ During the initial phase of the movement, the ex-revolutionaries also made efforts to spread the movement.¹⁹ However, there is not sufficient evidence to the fact that the ex-Revolutionary Terrorists gave cent per cent support to the NCM. They were not totally owned by Gandhi and C.R. Das. Even during non-cooperation there existed in Bengal three samities eg. Anushilan, Yugantar, and Atmannuati. Two recent scholars - Arunchandraguha and Shanti Moy Roy²⁰ have tried^{to} show that the Revolutionaries secretly met in the Cherry Press Enclave, Bowbazar; where the Revolutionaries from other parts of India came.²¹

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18. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F. No. 41 April 1921; p.8 Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Bengal for the first half of January, 1921 - that C.R. Das's supporters in Nagpur Congress included some 300 ex-detenus and ex-convicts of the dacca anushilan smithi under the leadership of Suresh Chandra Chatterjee.
19. Ibid. Telegram from Viceroy of India to Secretary of State, 23, January, 1921, p-26
20. Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Aligarh, 36 session, 1975
p-605 passim.
21. In order to get a more clear view of the revolutionary mind of Bengal, refer Fathardabi: Saret Chandra Chatterjee's novel.

The revolutionaries were being influenced more by the mighty convulsions of the October Revblutions in Russia.-

At the time of non-cooperation movements too Sporadic Acts of Violence continued throughout in many parts of Bengal, Madaripur a district in Faridpur sundivision-provides a good example of the enthusiasm which the ex-Revolutionaries exhibited in reviving the Revolutionary organisation, under the captions of Shanti Sena, ^{and} Swaraj Sena.²² More explicitly the Anu Anushulan party decided to work against the movement; not withstanding the fact that some of its followers ^{supported} the NCM. The Anushilan party put its men in different parts of the province to oppose NCM. Also, they published a pamphelt, called Haq-Katha (truth) denouncing the NCM and its insistence on Non-violence.

III

The bitter expereince of the Swedshi movement (1905-1908) instigated people not to fully support the boycott in educational institutions. It attracted only a section of the Western educatéd class. Boycott of schools and colleges got for less support from t teachers and professors than from the students.²³

22. Home Department Political Proceedings; F, No. 327. 1922 A document purportig to contain information regarding volunteer movement in Bengal.

23. O.V. Bhawal, "~~Modern~~ India", (London, 1926) P- 213.

However, educational boycott did not last long because people realised that educational qualifications from recognized establishments meant profit, power and prestige. Here the law of diminishing returns operated; and, the results were not in proportion to the labour put into it. Despite persistent propaganda of the congress, instigating students to leave educational institutions, at the peak of the movement march, 1921 the matriculation examinations passed away with substantial participation from the students.²⁴ In Urban areas students to a large extent participated in the movement. The government closed temporarily the institutions in which problems arose so as to free the students from the influence of the non-cooperators.²⁵ The exodus even for these student who have left the colleges the congress organisation did not formulate practical plans to engage them - in national educational institutions or elsewhere. A student who had joined the National College at Dacca, wrote to his friend in Calcutta, who had not left the government sponsored institution.

"Practically speaking I am a loosey..... I shall go back to Calcutta and read in the same college where I was reading. This non-cooperation movement has lost me one year, and hence forward I will not take part in politics".²⁶

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24. Home Pol. Pngs (Deposit) F. No. 65 June 1921 p-3; Fortnightly Report on Political situation in Bengal, sent by the government of Bengal, for the first half of March 1921.
25. Home Pol. Pngs (Deposit) F. No. 42; A document purporting to contain information regarding the various steps the provincial governments under-took against NCM
26. Englishmen (Calcutta) 5.3. 1921; NAI, BNNR January -June 1921 PP-269-270. This single example has been quoted here as a sort of sample to study the general mood of students who participated in NCM.

Nisith Ranjan Roy, Gautam Chhbtapadhay, and Amarndra Nath Roy through their recent Articles have shown that this mighty wave of student movement was confined to urban areas only. However, in only one district i.e. Midnapore, the message of Swaraj reached the rural students.

Nothing compared to Anti-circuay²⁷ society of Swadeshi days, grew up in Bengal during this period. Moreover, the government took stringent measures to convince the parents of students regarding the fate of their children in National Institutions.²⁷

There was no established organisation of students, to ensure their greater particiaption.²⁸ A teenager, Biren Das Gupta formed a students association in Calcutta, with Achatya Prafulla Chandra Roy as its chairman, it did commendable work to mobilise students in Calcutta and its suburbs. An young revolutionary student Naranjan Sen Gupta tried to form the All-Bengal students organisation which failed.

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27. Home Deptt. Political (B) proceedings; F. No.259 February 1921 p-5 - that the government took every step to interest the parents in existing educational institutions.even by the formation of the committees of parents in these institutions. Also, see, Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 24 October, 1920; Home Pol. Prog (Deposit) F. No.59, December, 1920 p-49.
28. Student Movement got an added impetus in the year 1928 - while the All-Bengal students ' Association was formed.

With the start of the non-cooperations movement, in Bengal, ~~lab~~ labourers in various undertakings started participating in the movement, as we have already discussed. The coolies of Chandpur Tea-gates started a fullscale strike that ultimately led to a strike in Assam-Bengal Railway. The true face of Gandhi's attitude towards labour strike, was revealed-then. Gandhi hated political strike to be camouflaged by economic grievenaces. In other words, he had denounced the political use of factory workers.²⁹ Being swayed by Gandhi's instruction³⁰ Congress workers could not become fully involved in those strikes. And after their expereince in Assam-Bengal railway strike the Bengal non-coopetators become shy of particiaption in labour questions.³¹

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29. Home Pol.progs (Deppsit); F. No. 12, June 1921 p.26: Fortnightly report sent by Government of Bengal, for first half of February 1921.
30. Modern Review, Vol.XXXI No. 4 April 1922. p. 518: Also see, - ibid, Vol. XXXI No. 3 March 1922 p.278. By June 1921, Gandhi had issued a strong warning in young India against the use of labour strikes as political weapons and they were almost ce=rtain to lead to violence. He mentioned that labourers should strike while that was the last recourse left. But, they should not be used by anybody as pawns in the political game. Of course Gandhi serched for a non-violent equivalent of class-struggle in which he failed during NCM.
31. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit) F. No. 18, October 1921 p.11: Fortnightly report sent by the Government of Bengal for ~~1st~~ half of October 1921.

Marwari Capitalists of Calcutta like. G.D. Birla, Kesoram Poddar, and Sukhlal Karani supported the Congress and contributed vast sums to the congress.³² Their support was total. In this regard, it should be noted that, during the first world war, the hold of British Capital over Calcutta metropolis was substantially weakened. The investment by Indian - capitalists saw a fantastic increase of 1609.4 per cent, a sixteen fold increase achieved nowhere else in India. After the war in Calcutta, the indigenous capital seemed to be growing in strength in relation to foreign capital.³³ Indigenous capitalists saw openings for investment in other sectors from which they had been excluded by Europeans. And to pursue their goals they extended a solid measure of financial support to the freedom movement led by Gandhi. Moreover, the demand that Gandhi made for protection to Indian Industries was a Capitalist demand. Apart from Big Capitalists, the congress, movement in Calcutta was financed by Businessmen, Traders, and commercial magnates.³⁴ During the war, the Marwari Businessmen of Calcutta made huge profits, and not remaining subservient merchant community as before, they became an aggressive Business community in post-war period. The marwari commercial class extended its support to the congress and became its chief patron in Calcutta.³⁵

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32. Home Pol. Progs (Deposit); F. No. 48, July 1919: Fortnightly report sent by the government of Bengal for the first half of April 1919 - That the up-country marwaris were mainly responsible for organising Hartals in Calcutta.
33. Rajat Roy "Social conflict and political unrest", Raika, 1989 p-226.
34. Ibid p- 230.
35. Ibid

The traders of Calcutta, marwaris or others, could not abide by the advice of Gandhi not to deal in foreign clothes. They dealt in foreign clothes stealthily.³⁶ The greatest opposition to Gandhi's boycott propaganda in Bengal, came from the side of the Bhatia, Oswal and Khetri Trading community along with some marmaries. Besides; those were the people who had popularised European goods in Bengal. The majority of the marwaris were buying Estates in Bengal and were trying to settle-down there. So they had some sort of sympathy for what the Bengal leaders told them to do. But, other sections were worried only for their trade^{of} mill-made and European goods. The musalmans of Delhi and other parts of North India who were trading in foreign clothes in Radhabazar, and canning-street Areas were opposing boycott ideology.³⁷

36. NAI, BNNR, July-December, 1921 p-75.
37. Nayak (Calcutta) 12, July, 1921; NAI, BNNR July-December pp 101-102.

The participation of women in the movement was very little. It was purely an Urban phenomena. Gandhi - while he went on tour to Calcutta-addressed special Ladies meetings; and when he asked for funds - the letter give to him their ornaments i.e. Bangles of Gold, anklets, wristlets and guineas³⁸. These included not only the Anglicised ladies, but those of the most orthodox type - both Hindus and Muslims³⁹. But so far leadership was concerned, women of urban elitist groups, particularly of elitist Brahmin families, participated in the politics. Amongst all sectors which responded more fully to Gandhi's call for boycott of Government institution, were lawyers.⁴⁰

38. Telegraph, 5.2. 1921: NAI, BNNR, January-June 1921 p. 161.

39. Telegraph 5.2. 1921.

40. Ofcourse the response of any service sector to Gandhi's call for boycott, was largely conditioned by what was the alternative. If students left educational institutions, they joined national schools and colleges-or, went to mobilise people in the movement; if lawyers left law courts, they become teachers in national schools and colleges. But if businessmen stopped their business they had to sit at home.

II

It is widely accepted notion that during the NCM, the Bengal provincial congress mounted a province wide political campaign against British rule.^{42.} It created a populist massbased nationalist movement. And in its regard, the mechanisms the provincial congress used for making the congress a mass-movement, need a closer analysis.

Touring was of prior importance. The provincial leaders, and the leaders of All India stature, ie Gandhi, Muhammad Ali, and Shaukat Ali toured different areas of the province, and addressed mass-meetings. Their speeches made powerful impact on the listioners, In these speeches they attacked the British Administration-and abuse of the Government and European in general.



- 41. Letter from Henry Wheeler to Sir Willam Vinnent; Calcutta, 16 December, 1921: Home political department proceedings; F. No. 415,1921, p-6
- 42. Rajat Roy, "Social Conflict and political unrest", opcit pp-297,298, passim. All see Pruthi's Chandra Roy, "Life and times of C.R.Das;" (Calcutta 1927) p-237.

The modern techniques of mass-contact along with some ~~old and indigenous~~ old and indigenous methods were also adopted. Publication of Articles in newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, placards, and ~~distahes~~ or manifestoes to authorities in the knowledge of the peopel were some of the modern techniques. Amongst the old and traditional techniques - priority was given to holding of religious conferences and rallies to circumvent police action under 144 section of IPC, ^{meetings} were held very-often inside mosques.

The Gandhian Ashrams established during NCM fostered the cause of education in the province. These Ashrams zoomed 43. ^{Home depart ent pol} with a new lease of life, even after the movement ended. The Best known of these, was the Abay-Ashram founded by Suresh Banerjee in East Bengal. The sale of Khilafat notes- a sort of paper currency was introduced on behalf of the Khalif by the Khalifat committee promising its encashment in case of the victory of the movement.⁴³

The congress volunteers were recruited from amongst the masses; mostly in urban and semi-urban areas, who helped to implement the congress plans and programmes. Even there is refrence to the fact, that the Khalifat organisation employed paid-agitators to rouse people.⁴⁴ Poems, Ghazals, Shairs and other means of popula communication were resorted to. They recalled the past glories of Islam; and how it had declined in course of time, and urged the mukims to work for their liberations.

The Khalifat volunteers, communicated to peole, that Gandhiji was

43. Home Pol. progs (deposit); F. No. 33 January, 1921 p-10: fortnightly report for second half of November, 1921.

44. Home political(B) proceedings; F. No. 49, 1921 p-25. A= document containing the activities of Khalifat committee in Bengal.

not a Hindu, but the much-awaited Imam-mehdi of the muslim traditions who was to emerge on the scene at the end of an epoch to defeat the christians. Muslims who did not support NCM, were declared to be behind the. irreligious⁴⁵.

Philanthropic activities was also undertaken to win over peoples' support for congress. Under the active guidance of C.R. Das - a fund was raised - and at the time of drought and cyclone relief was given to people out of this fund⁴⁶.

Gandhi visited Bengal in the last part of 1920, and beginning of 1921. Both the times he toured only the urban areas. He spoke in Hindi, and people could not understand him. The language and idiom through which he expressed his concepts of politics, were quite Hinduised. Concepts like Satyagrahas, Hartal, Harijan, Ram Rajya could not appeal to the muslims.- and to them Gandhi appeared in the guise of a Hindu politician.

A large number of muslims maulvis and mullahs participated in the movement. The Bengal leaders contacted the ex-wahabis at certain places - in order to mobilise people.⁴⁷

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45. Home Pol. Progs (Desposit). F. No. 33, January, 1921 p-11- fortnightly report sent by Bengal Government for second half of November - 1921.
46. Home department political (A) proceedings: F. No. 741, 1922. Confidential Report from the commissioner of police, special branch, 14 Elysium Row, Calcutta; 29 Juen 1922.
47. Telegram from viceroy of India to Secretary of state. 6 December 1921; Home pol. progs (Desposit) F. No. 18 November, 1921.

Very often "force" was used by congress volunteers to achieve their ends. Snatching of foreign clothes from businessmen, was a regular feature in Chittagaong, Backergung, Faridpur and 24 praganans.⁴⁸ Similarly, at many places there was passive resistance by student volunteers, who lay-down on roads and blocked them by linking Arms to prevent examinees from entering into examination Halls.⁴⁹ Threats of social boycott were made in Noakhali to induce Choukidars to resign.⁵⁰ Obstacles were put on the way for finding sites for liquorshops; drunkards were garlanded very often with shoes in many places like Dogra, sweepers threatened to throw excreta upon anyone found drinking. Deliberate attempts were made to boycott Europeans, and to molest them by intimidating thier servants into quitting works.⁵¹ Threats of violence and social boucott were used in collecting money for Tilak-Swaraj-fund⁵³

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48. Home department political proceedings; F. No. 415, 1921 p-24. A document purporting to contain volunteer activities in Bengal, during non-cooperation movement.
49. Home Pol. Progs (deposit); F. No. 42 April 1921 p.10: fortnightly report for second half of January, 1921, sent by the government of Bengal.
50. Home Pol.Progs (deposit); F. NO. 63 June, 1921 p-10 fortnightly report sent t by the government of Bengal for the 1st half of May, 1921.
51. Home Pol.Progs (deposit); F. No. 64 June, 1921 p-4. fortnightly report sent by the Government of Bengal for 1st half of June, 1921.
53. Home pol. Progs (deposit); No. 1 September, 1921 p-10: fortnightly reports sent by government of Bengal, for 1st half of July, 1921.

Often before meetings started large pictures of Goddess Durga were hanged on the pandal and the proceedings opened with the singing of songs praising the ten-headed Goddess.⁵⁴ Similarly in market places a posture was put, with the title of "SESFRSHI-BASTRA HARDAN". There was shown mother India being humiliated at Court in the form of Drapadi. Dussas, in the form of British Government was dis-robbing her by pulling her sarees. meanwhile, in the guise of five pandawas, Muhammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, C.R. Das. Lajpat Rai and Motilal Nehru - were ready to punish Dussasan with swords, bows and arrows. And Gandhi, in the form of Krihsnan, was busy in supplying clothes for Drappadi from his own charkha, in the form of Sundarshan Chakra.^{55.}

In another pitute Gandhi was shown to be in Brindwan stadding in Krishna's famous Trivangi pose with the flute of non-cooperation. All the above mentioned leaders as Braja-Balaks were dancing^{56.}

54. Navayuga (Calcutta) 4.4. 1921; NAI , BNNR Jan-June 1921 p.397.

55. Navayuga 16.4.1921; NAI, BNNR Jan-June, 1921 p-439.

56. Ibid.

However, the main drawback of the movement lay in the fact that the leaders could not push it into rural areas. The movement remained primarily urban in character. At certain places, it percolated to the rural areas i.e. Midnapore, Chandpore and a few other places. Urban centres were in the central and western districts- especially along the river Hooghly, for example, the districts of 24 parganas, Howrah, and Murshudabad. In Eastern Bengal the urban centres were much fewer. The largest concentration of urban population was in Dacca and Maymensingh. Calcutta was an extensive hinterland spreaded on both the sides of river Hooghly, ^{with} Chinsura, Serampore, Naihati, Bansberia, and Agartala. ^{around it.} It was in these areas that the movement prolonged until it was suspended. The response of all these areas was not equal.

The Congress Organisation in Bengal was dominated by the Bhardalok class. The Bhadrakok-Chagi dichotomy very much remained as before. Stain Das Gupta (Bengalis Gandhi) in his book "Bharate-Samyabad" has mentioned vividly about the lack of contact between Badralok leaders and villagers in general. In this regard, the intelligentsia's role was that of an alien observer, with hardly any personal involvement in problems of rural society notwithstanding the fact that the intelligentsia felt and wrote about the down-trodden profusely. Tarakrishna Basu in his case study of Kachnapur village has mentioned clearly- how the congress programmes did not affect the villages.⁵⁷ The important events those occurred outside had no attraction for Kanchanpur people. They scarcely saw any newspaper or magazine. Often the village post-office received some newspaper and journal addressed to the residents of nearby villages. The village people read it and returned immediately to the peon for delivery to the proper addresses.

The Congress organisation's institutional activities in the mufussil were restricted to annual provincial conferences. As in the Municipal Politics there, too, the lawyers remained in the forefront.⁵⁸

57. Tarakrishna Basu, "Bengal peasants from time to time", ASIA publishing house (Bombay, 1962) p - 141 Passim.

58. Home Pol Progs (Deposit) F.No. 84 December, 1920 p -7 Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State; 1st October 1920 - that only during the Union Board Elections the city-politicians becoming interested in rural politics. Otherwise, fearing the terrible consequences, they were, as per practical avoiding to bring masses into politics.

In a case-study of a mofussil-town Burdwan, Indrani, Ganguly has mentioned-during NCM a Congress Organisation was established there. But, it failed to make NCM- a mass movement there. Here and there in rural areas some Khadi institutions had been established. These places acted as the central meeting places, for the ideological committed men of the surrounding areas to discuss politics.⁵⁹

The ideology of NCM could not reach these areas, but rumours did. In other words the masses believed in most rumours and most reckless statements from above - and perceived the movement in their own way.⁶⁰

The Zamindars were against non-cooperation movement. Moreover before starting NCM in Bengal, C.R.Das much against Gandhi's advice, had thought that the Zamindars were to be the chief stumbling Blocks against the spread of NCM which proved prophetic.⁶²

⁵⁹ Indrani Ganguly, "Social History of a Bengal Town", ASA publishing house (Bombay, 1987) pp -142,144.

⁶⁰ Home Political (B) Proceedings; F.No. 49, 1921 p -25. A document purporting to contain informations regarding the impact of rumours on rural peoples.

⁶¹ Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State; 15.1.1921, Home Pol.Progs (Deposit) F.No. 41 April 1921 p -3.

⁶² Home Pol.Progs (Deposit) F.No.18 September 1921.p-40. Fortnightly Report sent by the Government of Bengal for second half of September 1921 - that the leading Zamindars and landholders in many districts - of Bengal were co-operation movement. Also see Htavadi (Calcutta) 24.12.1920 NAI. BNNR January-June 1921 p-4r. Moreover the election under the New Act 1919 had strengthened the hands of the landlords many of the Zamindars became candidates in the election. And duely supported by Government they won the election at many places.

Zamindars, in general, in Bengal - increased their oppressions on the peasantry so as to stop them from supporting the Gandhian movement.⁶³ Some notorious examples amongst such Zamindars were: Rai Bahadur Mani Lal Ghosh of Burdwan; Jogendra Nath Ghosh Bahadur and Ashwani Kuman Nag Mazumdar of Khulna; Dharendra Nath Roy and Kiran Chandra Roy of Mirpur and Benipur; Joginder Nath Bose of Gopal dighi; Rai Bahadur Avinash Chandra Banerjee of Birbhun, Jogendra Nath Sinha Roy of Mooghly; and, Girija Bhusan Chatterjee and Saroj Bhusan Chatterjee of Jessore. The zamindars never allowed their people to engage in anti-British activities; and their Zulum on the raiyats remained quite in tact during NCM. The rental was increased from 4 annas to Rs. 2/- Labourers were forcibly made to work without payment. If a tenant failed to pay rent, it was realised by selling his property. No tenant was allowed to cut down the trees he had himself planted. All good variety lands remained under zamindars khansama possessions. If rain water flow into his field the tenant was forced to pay an additional water cess. If any coolie left his village, in search of a better job, at the inspiration of zamindars sepoys came to his house and abused his women-folks.⁶⁴

⁶³- NAI Bengal Native Newspaper Report, January-June 1921.
pp-4, 9, 128, 454, 467, 499.

⁶⁴- ~~Also~~ see Hitavadi 24-6.1921: NAI BNNR July-December 1921
p-12 *passim*.

C O N C L U S I O N

The history of the first Gandhian movement in Bengal (1921-1922) started with lot of fanfare but soon it parted out. The agonies of Bengal during revolutionary terrorism accompanied by repressive policy of the government during the first Great War, left Bengal completely exhausted. Before the start of NCO movement the moderates dominated the Bengal politics. The NCO movement, for the first time, helped the ordinary people to over-come their sense of fear of the colonial police. At the same time, it left a feeling of disappointment, even of anticlimax, as the hopes and aspirations raised by the movement remained unfulfilled.

In Bengal, it were the Bengal Gandhians who were responsible for the poor state of the NCO. In their activities they failed to understand properly the social forces amidst which the political movement was unleashed. The political movement has begun to ^{operate} within the social system prevailing in rural areas, while the leadership suffered from an abysmal ignorance about the actual conditions in rural Bengal. These leaders did not understand how the Bengal society was organised, and how people lived in the villages.

Non-cooperation resolution was adopted through a process of hard competitive bargaining between Gandhi and the Bengal leaders who were divided among themselves. The available evidence shows that even though Bengal leaders have given their consent to launch NCO yet they were not

totally committed to Gandhi's ideas and programmes. As a result of this the provincial leadership failed to dig roots among the rural areas.

Whatever mass participation was there it helped in loosening the political hold of colonial rule and promoting nationalistic spirit among sections of the Bengal Society. There is no doubt that the movement had created a surge of popular feeling when it was unleashed. At one stage even the Rickshaw pullers were drawn into the vortex of freedom struggle. The movement did not percolate fully into the rural areas and essentially remained an urban phenomenon. But the movement as a whole was limited in scope and failed to make a powerful impression on the Government and the people of Bengal.

Moreover in this period the issue of Bengali sub-nationalism within the greater Indian nationalism also began to emerge as the control of the movement was getting out of the hands of Bengali leaders. In Bengal the two streams pan-Indian and regional nationalist aspirations - combined in the struggle against imperialism for self-determination.

Non-cooperation movement was weak in Bengal not only due to Bengal's aversion to Gandhian ideas. Partially it was due to the lack of enough initiative on the part of the local leaders. Also Bengal being a muslim majority province,

many of the people could not perceive Gandhian movement in its proper perspective. Lack of co-operation Between Hindus and Muslims in fostering non-cooperation ideology was also one of the significant factors. But, the suspicions of the Muslim masses vis-a-vis the Congress leadership, its plans and programmes, and regarding the post-independence set-up in India, remained intact. Orthodox religious leaders were quick to denounce Hindu paintings featuring Muslims leaders, the singing of Bande-Mataram and display of pictures of mosques, and joint Hindu-Muslim meetings.

The opposition to Muslim religious practices by Hindu Zaminders, coercion of muslim peasants into buying Swedeshi goods and the playing of musical instruments before mosques were some of the irritants in the path of national unity.

Gandhi did not have to light the spark of nationalism in Bengal, as he did in Gujarat, Bihar, and other Hindi speaking areas of Norther India. Bengal had a strong tradition of its own nationalism, long before Gandhi appeared on Indian political scene. This fact made the assimilation of the Gandhi type nationalism very difficult for this province. Many tensions between Gandhi and Bengal leaders can be traced back to this fundamental problem.

Even though mature, Bengal nationalism, however, had its own inherent contradictions. The different sections within the Bhadraklok status-group could not hide their basic differences behind the screen of their traditional solidarity. In fact, there were several shades of nationalism in Bengal by the time, Gandhi, entered into Indian Politics. Bipin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Chittaranjan Das, Jitendralal Banerjee, and Shyam Sunder Chakravarty each had his own variety of ideas to put into practice. It was due to these internal contradictions that Gandhi's influence was not felt strongly in Bengal.

Moreover, as discussed in the first Chapter, Bengal leaders opposed Gandhi ideologically before the movement started. Even though later on they consented to it but the consent was half-hearted. From January 1921 to February 1922, no doubt, there were incidents manifesting the Gandhian movement. Due to the internal weaknesses and repression coupled with diplomacy of the British - the movement was sabotaged. The flaws in the techniques which the leaders adopted to mobilise the masses reduced the levels of participation of various social groups in the movement.

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