

Genesis of Nationalism and Nationalist Movement in a Bengal District

Maldah, 1905-1916

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ABSTRACT:

The paper is dealt with the genesis of the regional form of national Consciousness that has been emerged during the year from 1905 to 1916 in one of the regions of Bengal namely Maldah. This period has also witnessed the emergence of a new class of English educated intelligentsia, which had been the chief vehicle for spreading nationalist consciousness in this district. Maldah, as one of the regions of colonial Bengal, proved to be significant in many respect in these years of nationalist struggles and paved the future discourse of this movement. The distinct entity of intelligentsia has been developed in the first two decades of the twentieth century in Maldah and it has spread across the region to influence the minds of the people of whom educated played a crucial role. This paper also analyses the diverse role of the intelligentsia and students in two important movements, one was the anti-partition of Bengal (Swadeshi) in 1905 and the other was the revolutionary terrorism. This has also given birth to a new hope and aspirations for participating in these struggles and proved crucial in the ongoing national movements.

KEYWORDS: Maldah, Nationalism, Anti-partion, Terrorism, Swadeshi, Intelligentsia.

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The emergence and growth of national consciousness and subsequently nationalist movement in Maldah from 1905 to 1916 is the main thrust of this paper. Initially, it has been argued that the emergence of a new class of English educated intelligentsia had been the chief vehicle for spreading nationalist consciousness in this district and there is growing number of discussions have been evolved in recent times centering on this issue. The first two decades of the twentieth century saw the distinct entity of intelligentsia has been developed in Maldah and it has spread across the region to influence the minds of the people of whom the educated played a crucial role. Besides, this paper also analyses the diverse role of the intelligentsia and students in two important movements in which they were actively involved, one was the anti-partition of Bengal in 1905 and the other was the revolutionary terrorism, which started to emerge since 1906 onwards. The period saw the spreading of nationalism and its essence in Maldah upon which was built the organizational contours of future nationalist movement. This could be seen as the beginning of a new phase of modern politics in Maldah. On the other hand, the colonial opinion generalized the notion that Maldah had been all through a politically backward district compared to others in Bengal presidency.

¹ Thus, the colonial apparatus had been able to argue that as it was the land of big zamindars in comparison to other districts of Northern Bengal, the progress of the nationalist movement was disenchanted. However, the in-depth study would reveal that the district of Maldah while sustaining the anti-British sentiments at the same time it translated into movements against the colonial state machinery and showed adequate agitations to form counter-revolutionary tone here in this district. The people across the region got infected with these anti-British notion of protest and highlighted their indignity towards the colonial rule. The following section would explicate the paradigm of protest movements, which formed the basis of such anti-British outlook and proved significant for the people of Maldah at large.

I. TRADITION OF PROTEST:

Naturally, it is quite evident that the district of Maldah has had a rich tradition of protest against the colonial rulers and their Indian compatriots. Initially, the district also witnessed the resistance movement against the colonial oppression. The earliest of these were the Sannyasi and the Fakir rebellions, which had stunned Northern Bengal and its adjacent areas of Bihar between 1763 and 1800. The Dasnami Sannyasis, known for their martial tradition, were involved in landholding, money lending and trade in raw silk, piece goods, copper and spices.² Both these rebellions showcased armed resistance and their long term sufferings from the Company's vindictive revenue demands as well as the exploitative tendencies made the situation even worse for the East India Company rule here. Their frequent attacks caused alarm to the Company's Maldah establishment.

During the year 1760-1800 recurrent confrontations between the Sannyasi-Fakirs and the armed forces of the Company took place in a wide region of Northern Bengal, including Maldah. Rebel leaders like Johuri Shah, Majnu Shah conducted armed rebellion in Maldah and its adjacent areas.³ Though, the considerable quantities of arms were seized from the jungle of Pichchli in Maldah by the Company. Majnu Shah, the noted leader of the Sannyasi-Fakir rebellion, was injured while fighting with the Company's army at the village of Manjura of Bogra district. Yet, the flame of that rebellion was carried out by his followers. Later, the British administration considered the uprising as problem of law and order and the rebels were portrayed as primitive savages resisting civilization.⁴ Despite having passive opinion of the colonial administrators, the fact remains that the Sannyasi and Fakir rebellion bears ample testimony to the anti-British attitude of the people of Maldah and it has further translated its agitation for creating total opposition towards the Company rule in the country.

The ongoing agitation has been further strengthened by the Wahabi⁵ movement, which had deep impact on the district of Maldah as well. Colonial administrator-authors like W.W. Hunter informs that a great many of the Muhammadans belong to the Faraizi and Wahabi sect, and in 1869 several for prosecutions for abetment of waging war against the Queen were instituted in this district.⁶ The movement appeared so strong and organized in Maldah that in 1868 the District Magistrate thought of using the orthodox mullahs against the reformist preachers as a counter measure to contain their influence over the common people. Hunter goes on to say that there would not have any doubt regarding the Wahabi movement in Maldah and represented a very vigorous force and will so continue until they meet the moulvies with their own weapons.⁷ In Maldah, the organizers of jihad set up compact organizations in rural areas which systematically levied men and money and forwarded them by regular stages to the jihad camps in the frontier. The Officiating Magistrate of Maldah J.O. Kinealy, in his report to the Government, dated 20 October 1868, stated,

The depositions show that during many years past the Wahabees have pursued a system of raising supplies for the support of the fanatics... who are waging war against the Government.⁸

After receiving the news of such fierce agitation by the Wahabists, the Company had taken action against them and as a result Rafik Mandal was imprisoned in 1853 to send a message to the agitators. Yet, the Wahabi movement had been further conducted by Malauvi Amiruddin, son of Rafik Mandal, for continuing their anti-British spirit and kept the people against such notion.

Later, the peasant uprising that took place on the indigo plantations in Bengal in 1859-1862 had its profound impact in the district as well. Indigo trade became a rich source of high profits for the East India Company in India and it had a long tradition of capturing the attention of the people of Bengal. The planter acquired lands from native zamindars in Bengal and Bihar and extended cultivation of this crop on a large scale as a plantation industry. It has been seen that the tenants were forced to grow indigo under a system of great oppression as propounded by the Company.⁹ Agitation revolving around Indigo and subsequent cultivation was spread all over the indigo growing districts in Bengal. Therefore, peasant resistance first initiated in Pabna and Nadia in 1859 and it soon spread to places like Jessore, Khulna, Rajsahi, Dacca, Murshidabad, Malda and Dinajpur and influenced. The planters and their kuthis were attacked and subsequently burnt. The riots were organized under the leadership of Morad Biswas, Suhas Biswas and Lal Chand Saha of adjacent M in Maldah.¹⁰ On 20 March 1860 some three hundred ryots attacked the Bakrabad factory of Kaliachak Police station owned by David Andrews. The rebels entered the office and destroyed the ledgers and tried to establish their sway over here. They next attacked the residence of the manager and carried off several guns and a sword. Next day a large number of ryots, armed with spears and swords, attacked a neighbouring factory managed by Mr. Lyons. Under terrible condition, Lyons opened fire on the mob, killing two and injuring five. Fortunately, for the planter a government steamer arrived at a point opposite the factory and rescued Lyons. Somehow, the ryots were dismissed while Morad Biswas and Lal Chand Biswas, together with twenty four rebels, were arrested due to their rebellious action. Peace was restored in the district at the end of March 1860.

Maldah and the Partition of Bengal in 1905:

The announcement and consequently the partition of Bengal in 1905 was one of the epoch making and significant incident in the history of India under the British East India Company rule. Thus, 1905 was one of the most eventful year that simple changed the political landscape of Bengal as well as the country. The Viceroy Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal announcement provoked to led ground ready for the Swadeshi Movement, which upset the 'settled fact' of partition and during which various new techniques of political mobilization were successfully attempted to generate anti-British agitation.¹¹ Bengalis both Hindus and Muslims in Western Bengal mainly Hindus in east Bengal came out against the imperial policy and developed the ideology of what is commonly attributed as 'Swadeshi Nationalism'. It had been able to circulate its ethos to the large areas of Bengal and introduced hitherto unknown devices of political mobilization to India's freedom struggle by directly confronting the dominant attitudes of the British raj.

Swadeshi Movement had witnessed the emerging role of the *mufassil* districts of Bengal to a large extent to organize and subsequently mobilize the people for achieving their lost freedom. Here, the district of

Maldah did not lag behind in this phase of nationalist movement. The district itself was included in the newly created Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Apparently, it has been seen that the anti-partition movement in Maldah began as an urban middle class movement in which leadership and inspiration were provided by people like Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radhesh Chandra Seth among others. Archival record shows that Benoy Kumar Sarkar stood first in the entrance examination of the Calcutta University in 1901 as a student of Malda Zilla School. While studying in the Presidency College of Calcutta, he came under the direct influence of Satish Chandra Mukherjee, the founder of the Dawn Society and a prominent leader of the Swadeshi Movement. Later, Sarkar became a member of the Dawn Society and carried out his activism under the influence of Satish Chandra Mukherjee. Besides, he had also developed a close relation with Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, the editor of the nationalist periodical, the *Sandhya*.¹² Now, it can be argued that Sarkar had been associated himself with the ongoing socio-cultural mobilization in the name of Swadeshi.

On the other hand, the people of the Maldah had begun to express their objection through numerous meetings against the partition of Bengal and inclusion of the district in the proposed province of Eastern Bengal and Assam.¹³ While Benoy Sarkar was busy showing his anti-British activism through the lens of Swadeshi, Radhesh Chandra Seth took a leading role in arranging mass gathering as well as meetings in which leaders from various places including Calcutta spoke on nationalistic subjects to motivate the people of Maldah so that they too could be part of the Swadeshi movement.¹⁴ Seeing the growing anti-British sentiments, Sir Andrew Fraser, then the Lt. Governor of Bengal, thought it necessary to enlist the support of the people to the proposed measure and decided to come to Maldah for keeping this turbulent situation under control.¹⁵ Colonial administration asked Andrew Fraser to deliver speech in Maldah in which he tried to convince the people of various advantages of the proposed transfer of the district to the new province and of the necessity of the creation of the new province and requested them to maintain law and order in the district. However, his speech did not have any impact on the people as they were already got agitated and mobilized themselves in the name of Swadeshi movement.¹⁶ As we have already seen that the people of Maldah did not lag behind the other parts of Bengal in registering their protest against the partition of Bengal. Legal Practitioners, teachers, students were collectively had taken active part in the movement.¹⁷ Rakhi-bandhan was observed by all Bengalis as a symbol of brotherhood and vanity of the people of Bengal on the day of 16 October, 1905. Subsequently, the day was observed squarely in Maldah as a mark of protest to the Company rule.¹⁸

It has also been seen that the people of Maldah showed their disrespect towards the exploitative Company rule and tried to galvanize their strands. On the other hand, expressions of nationalist feeling had been exhibited through diverse mechanism and the Swadeshi movement proved to be crucial here. In this direction, one must understand that a thought provoking revulsion against western education became a major stand in the Swadeshi Movement, which led to take two forms of calls for boycott of official schools and colleges and attempted to build up a parallel and independent system of national education policy so that they could accommodate the youth of our country into the indigenous education system.¹⁹ While Maldah proves to be significant for the Swadeshi Movement, in Calcutta a group of bright young students under the influence of Satish Chandra Mukherjee's Dawn Society had issued a manifesto in September 1905 calling for boycott of the forthcoming M.A. and P.R.S. examinations. Among the youths, Benoy Kumar Sarkar of Maldah, holder of the Ishan Scholarship was one such Swadeshi activist.²⁰ Recent researches show that he made several noteworthy efforts to organize several meetings in Maldah advocating educational boycott and stood against the oppressive Company rule. Radesh Chandra Seth and Bepinbihari Ghose, the two pioneer nationalists of Maldah wholeheartedly helped Sarkar in those endeavour and they soon collectively organized public sphere by displaying their various acts of protest and adequate dissent.²¹ There was also a new yet intriguing move that the agitators against the partition were drawn mainly from the Hindu society and the Muslim community together. People like Moulvi Mohammed Nur Bux, a distinguished nationalist leader of Maldah presided at a few anti partition meetings and provided his able leadership along with his counterparts Radesh Chandra Seth and Bepinbihari Ghosh for organizing district-wise protest march.²²

Witnessing the overall mass mobilization in the name of Swadeshi movement, the EIC had taken several oppressive measures so that they could firmly suppress the rebellious tendencies of the people. Under such condition, tension intensified among the British administration to see the spontaneous participation of a large number of students in the Swadeshi movement. This ultimately forced the government to issue two circular subsequently, namely the Carlyle circular on 10 October 1905, which was meant to threatening the withdrawal of grants and scholarships of institutions which failed to prevent student participation in politics and the Lyon Circular on 16 October 1905 in East Bengal banning the *Bande Mataram* slogan and adding that students of recalcitrant schools and colleges could be debarred for government service immediately after identification by the government.²³ In this respect, the administration in Maldah did the same thing and wanted to send a message that any kind of such activism would not be tolerated by the government and immediate actions would be followed after words. The District Magistrate of Maldah issued a circular in 1905 directing the students not to take part in political agitations wanted to keep them out of the anti-partition agitation. However,

the circular, it has been observed, seemed to have little impact on the student agitators in Maldah and that produced inordinate apprehension among the British government.²⁴

National Education and *Malda Jatiya Siksha Samiti*:

Boycott of foreign goods and to the observance of Partition day were not the main motto of the Swadeshi movement. Rather, it also rapidly spread in the fields of education and make necessary changes in it. Naturally, sincere and comprehensive efforts were made for the growth of national education across the Bengal presidency in general and Maldah in particular. The passing of the *Indian University Act* on March 21, 1904 proved to be a reactionary measure in terms of the higher education in the Indian subcontinent.²⁵ In this regard, the National Council of Education was constituted on 11 March 1906. It drew up in 1906 a curriculum for a three year primary, seven year secondary and four year collegiate course. Literary and Scientific studies were proposed to be combined with some amount of technical training up to the fifth year of the secondary course after which the three streams would be divided.²⁶ Provision was made for a system of affiliation and grants in aid. Eventually the Bengal National College and School started on August 15, 1906 in Calcutta, with Aurobindo Ghosh as its first Principal and Satish Chandra Mukherjee as superintendent. The young men initially trained by Satish Chandra through the Dawn Society – Benoy Kumar Sarkar of Maldah, Radhakumud Mukherjee and others formed the core of the teaching staff and subsequently rendered their service for the people of Bengal.²⁷ These young educated men like were got attracted with the notion of Swadeshi and boycott and the crucial leadership by Satish Chandra and his Dawn Society had been able to capture the minds of these young men, who later carried out the flames of these movements in different districts of Bengal and Maldah proved to be one of the evolving area of exhibiting anti-partition propaganda with full swing.²⁸

A number of National schools were established in several districts of Bengal to promote national education among its native people. Benoy Kumar Sarkar took a leading role in the establishing the Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti on 6, 1097. The President and the Secretary of the organization were Prankrishna Bhaduri and Bepinbhari Ghosh. Radhesh Chandra Seth and Mohammed Nur Bux served as its Vice-Presidents.²⁹ They were honorary office bearers and the Secretary was in control of the financial infrastructure of the council including the fund-raising activities. In the first place, it was not affiliated to the National Council of Education (NCE) founded in Calcutta up till December, 1909. Yet, this had been able to display the same spirit and fervour of national consciousness as propounded already by the NCE. All these men, who were associated with it were leading lawyers well known for their social and humanitarian work. The Maldah organization had a committee of forty-five members with many of them coming from the rural areas and several of them were representatives of the Maldah municipalities. An executive committee had also been formed by the process of election among the members of the council. It had prepared an examination system of its own, and unlike the Calcutta prototype tried to concentrate its efforts on mass education. The Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti had set up eight schools with 748 students by June 1908, three of them primary.³⁰ These schools were located at Maldah, Kutubpur, Kaligram Dharampur, Parampur, Jadupur and Malatipur.³¹ In order to spread mass education the Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti had established night schools at Kutubpur, Kaligram, and Dharanpur.³² The Samiti also tied to spread female education. Therefore, Girls' schools were opened at Kaligram and Dharampur.³³ Not only that, the lower classes people were also being given opportunity to admit and subsequently train in the national education, which was originated due to the boycott of the English education in the subcontinent.³⁴

While the major initiatives of the National Council of Bengal were instrumental in moulding and improvement of the standard of the secondary and higher education of the people, the chief attention of the Maldah Samiti since its inception had emphasized the importance of mass education from primary level. In doing so, the organisers had taken special initiatives for writing textbooks in vernacular so as to reach to them in a maximum numbers.³⁵ Radhesh Chandra Seth and Haridas Palit engaged themselves in writing textbooks in history and geography.³⁶ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, however, took the leading role in this respect. During this period, he wrote *Prachin Greecer Jatiya Shiksha* (1910), *Bhasa Shiksha* (1910), *Siksha Sopan* (1912), *Aitihāsik Prabandha* (1912) and several other books in vernacular to solve this problem of scarcity of text books.³⁷ Prominent scholars like Radhakumud Mukherjee, Radhakamal Mukherjee, Bidhusekhar Shastri, Kumudnath Lahiri were invited to deliver lectures and to encourage higher research in Bengali.³⁸ The Maldah Samiti founded a Literary Research Department in 1911, which greatly patronized the folk culture of the region. Haridas Palit was encouraged by the Literary Research Department to compose his *Addyer Gambhira*, which was published in the journal of *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*.³⁹

Highlighting the importance of the mass education through the vernacular, the Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti laid stress on technical education and vocational training as well. Many National Schools had their own laboratories for providing practical knowledge among its pupils. Also, a number of craftsmen were appointed as teachers while the Kaligram National School had a small workshop.⁴⁰ It is commonly argued that Benoy Kumar Sarkar and his initiative helped a number of students associated with Maldah Satiya Shiksha Samiti to take admission to various prestigious universities of the U.S.A. for receiving higher education in the field of Science,

technology and Art.⁴¹ The students are as follows: Binoy Kumar Sarkar received his higher education in Economics from the Harvard University, Dharendra Kumar Sarkar received degree in Applied Chemistry from the Yale University, Banerjee Das took admission in Chemical Engineering in the Illinois State University, while Rajendranarayan Chowdhury received his degree from the Ohio State University on Agriculture. Both Khagendranarayan Mitra and Nabin Chandra Das received their respective degrees on Biology and Sociology as well as Pedagogy from the Wisconsin State University. Later, Birendranath Dasgupta had taken admission in the Purdue University on Electrical Engineering.⁴² Even, several students associated with the Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti had been sent to Allahabad, Vrindaban and Lahore for taking training on technical education.⁴³

Thus, the Malda Jatiya Shiksha Samiti under the leadership of Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radhesh Chandra Seth played a pivotal role in spreading 'national' education and national consciousness among a large number of student of Malda, many of whom in later years employed in several Colleges and Universities as well as industrial sectors of our country to exhibit their skill and talents and subsequently strengthen the scientific and industrial sectors.⁴⁴ Therefore, we might say that the period of Swadeshi movement saw the germination of nationalism in Malda and the nationalist activities had several responsibilities to uphold in the society. Their fruitful participation in the welfare of the society gave new impetus to the young generations of Malda at large that reverberated within the arena of Swadeshi movement.

Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in Malda:

The atmosphere through which the revolutionary activism grew in Bengal is one of the contested areas of historical enquiry under the colonial rule. It was primarily categorized as 'revolutionary nationalism' and it was one of the several political strands that went into the making of the Indian national movement under the colonial rule.⁴⁵ While this was occupied the center stage, another branch of it, mainly the political Swadeshi was certainly on the decline. Later it was taken over by individual terrorist activism against the British officials and their Indian collaborators, who proved to be detrimental for the revolutionaries. Recent research adequately highlighted this trends. Historians like Sumit Sarkar pointed out that a shift from non- violence to violence and from mass action to elite action necessitated primarily by the failure of the mass mobilization efforts in the larger backdrop of the Swadeshi movement.⁴⁶ As we all know that the real story of terrorism in Bengal began from 1902 with the formation of mainly four groups, three in Calcutta and one in Midnapur under the British rule. The first was the Midnapur Society founded in 1902 and this was followed by the founding of a gymnasium by Sarala Ghosh in Calcutta, the Atmoroti Samiti by some central Calcutta youths and the Anushilan Samiti by Satischandra Basu in March 1902. The beginning of the Swadeshi Movement in 1905 brought an unprecedented upsurge in secret society activism in undivided Bengal and these prepared young women and men to mount an armed resistance against the British.⁴⁷ The Dacca Anushilan Samiti was born in October 1906 while a revolutionary weekly called Yugantar started in the same year to mobilise the public opinion against the British exploitative rule. A district group within the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti headed by Barindrakumar Ghosh, Hemchandra Kanungo and Prafulla Chaki soon started action. Several swadeshi dacoities had been taken place to raise funds, which were used to organize and a bomb- manufacturing unit was set up at Maniktala in Calcutta by avoiding the strict surveillance of the British government.

While the entire Bengal had been a place for revolutionary terrorism, Malda as a district town proved its worth for delivering the ground for such activism and exhibited gallantry and organised secret society activism and helped the revolutionaries to form counter-attacks as opposed to the oppressive British rule. We have been able to see the branches of both the Anushilan Samiti and the Brati Samiti in Malda.⁴⁸ It has been seen that the Brati Samiti was formed under the leadership of Manoranjan Guha Thakurata who was closely associated with the Dacca branch of the Anushilan Samiti. Places like Khulna, Faridpur, Malda had branches of it.⁴⁹ Satish Pakrashi in his book 'Agniyuger Katha' mentioned that he evaded the police in connection with the Rajabazar Bomb Case and after changing his name shifted his field of activity to Malda. Here he recruited some of students of the local national school for the terrorist movement in this region⁵⁰ while Trailokyanath Chakrabarti, the noted revolutionary, has mentioned the names of Hangshagopal Agarwala, Mahendra De, Dakshina Lahiri and others as the represented of the Anushilan Samiti in Malda.⁵¹

Under such growing tension of terrorist activism in Bengal, Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, the two members of Maniktala group of the Calcutta Anushilan Samiti made an abortive attempt at Muzaffarpur to kill the Presidency Magistrate Kingsford. However, it was pity to say that they had mistakenly killed two European women instead of Kingsford. This incident led to the arrest of the entire Maniktala group, including Aurobindo Ghosh and Barindra Kumar Ghosh. At Maniktala, the police seized several bombs, dynamite, revolvers and other weapons along with numerous letters and various other documents indicating the existence of a secret society and their collective terrorist activism against the government.⁵² The activists were tried in the Alipur Bomb Case and awarded in February 1910 various terms of imprisonment, including transportation for life. Here, one must note that Aurobindo was ably defended by C. R. Das and later he was released as the government could not be able to prove any allegation against him in terms of the Alipore Bomb case.

The youngest person tried in the Alipur Bomb case was Krishnajiban Sanayal in Maldah, aged about 16 years.⁵³ He was ousted from Maldah Zilla School for raising the slogan 'Bande mataram' in the class. Later his guardian sent him to Bihar where he was admitted in the Giridi High School.⁵⁴ At Giridi, Krishnajiban came into connection with Barindra Kumar Ghosh and decided to join the Maniktala Secret Society.⁵⁵ The members of the Maniktala Society were, with few exceptions, young Bengali Hindus. Most of them were from the 'respectable' castes and most of them fairly well educated.⁵⁶ During the preparatory period of the Maniktala society, its members were concerned chiefly with the collection of men, arms and money.⁵⁷ All the recruits did in fact spend much of their time in study. There was a special emphasis on religious texts, in particular the Gita and Upanishads. Bomb making formed part of the general curriculum. In his statement before the police, Krishnajiban Sanayal said that in the garden Upen Babu used to teach us Upanishads and politics and Barindra Babu [taught] Gita and History of Russo - Japanese war and Ullas Babu delivered lectures on explosives.⁵⁸ In the Alipore Bomb Case, Krishnajiban was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year.⁵⁹

The British government realised it clearly after the Alipore episode, a section of students of Maldah had a direct involvement in the revolutionary activities, while the district administration let loose various repressive measures to scare the people away from swadeshi campaign and boycotting of foreign goods and government institutions.⁶⁰ Suddenly, the situation in Maldah was so panic-stricken that the editor of a local newspaper wrote that:

"there is a general sense of insecurity throughout the district. People feel that any moment their houses may be searched and they may be arrested if only they have incurred the displeasure of the police."⁶¹

Later, indiscriminate police repression with a great number helped to contain revolutionary activities for the time being in this region and people were arguably received the news of the British government that they would suppress the movement by any means.⁶²

However, the revolutionary activities provided a ground for constructing the public sphere and again came into operation around 1915. During this time, the students and youth who were associated with revolutionary activities were Harimohan Jha, Mahendra Das, Pashupati Jha, Gopal Majhi, Hanshagopal Agarwala, Narayan Saha and others. On January 28, 1916 Nabinchandra Bose, the headmaster of Malda Zilla School, was stabbed to death.⁶³ The revolutionaries suspected that Nabinchandra Bose had been supplying information to the police about the political activities of his students.⁶⁴ As soon as the news of assassination spread, the police swung into action. Mahendranath Das, a student of Malda Zilla School who was suspected to have a revolutionary linking and was seen on the spot of murder, was arrested immediately. The police raided and ransacked his house, seizing some books, letters and other documents.⁶⁵ A few days later some other students namely Harimohan Jha, Kalipada Ghosh, Narayan Saha were taken into custody. The trial of Mahendranath Das and others created a sensation throughout the district. It had the effect of raising the level of political consciousness in Maldah.⁶⁶ After the trial was over Mahendranath Das was sentenced to transportation for life. Four others- Harimohan Jha, Pashupati Jha, Kalipada Ghosh, Narayan saha were sentenced to five years to one year of imprisonment.⁶⁷

The district administration was keen to wrap up the so-called troublemakers. It let loose various repressive measures to scare the people. Indiscriminate police repression was effective for the time being in containing terrorist activities in Maldah. It, however, contributed to raise the level of political consciousness in Maldah. Previously, majority of Maldah inhabitants were largely indifferent to the activities of the nationalists, repression brought to them the realities of the Swadeshi Movement, which provoked the local administration to undertake measures to combat the participants.⁶⁸

It is historically argued that the Swadeshi movement provided a solid foundation upon which was built the edifice of future nationalist movement. Local nationalist leaders like, Radesh Chandra Seth's demise in 1911 considered as a great blow to the nationalist movement in Maldah as well as North Bengal and suddenly his followers took it a point of great loss for the nationalist leadership in this region.⁶⁹ Later most of the young educated youths, who had strongly supported the boycott and subsequently swadeshi movement, started to leave Maldah for higher studies. Around this time people like Baneswar Das, a young and energetic nationalist leader in Maldah, had left for the USA to receive higher education⁷⁰ while Benoy Kumar Sarkar himself had left for the USA in 1914. This obviously proved to be detrimental for the nationalist movement in Maldah and such void never filled up.⁷¹

¹ See G. E. Lambourn, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Maldah*, Calcutta, 1918; J. C. Sengupta, *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Maldah*, Calcutta, 1969, Siddhartha Guha Roy, *Maldah, Subarnarekha*, 1986, p.11.

² B. P. Misra, *The Sannyasi Rebellion*, Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal, 1985. P.31.

³ Letter from the Magistrate of Dinajpur to the Governor- General in Council, Judicial Department (Criminal), Original Consultation, dated 20 December 1793.

- ⁴ A. K. Dasgupta, *The Fakir and Sannyasi Uprising*, K. P. Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1992. P.28; William R Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India*, California Press, 1996, pp. 24-25.
- ⁵ The Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya movement owed its original to the school of the eighteen century Sufi Saint Shah Waliullah of Delhi and derived its inspiration from Shah Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareli, the followers of whom were commonly known in colonial parlance as ‘ Wahabis’- see ‘ Iman O Nishan’ (Honour and the Flag), Goutam Bhadra,, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1994.
- ⁶ W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol. VII, District of Maldah, Rangpur and Dinajpur, D. K. Publishing House (Indian reprint) Delhi, 1974, p.47.
- ⁷ Records on Wahabi Trials, p. 280; note from J. O.’ Kinealy, Officiating Magistrate of Maldah, No. 24, dated 20 October 1868.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ L. Natarajan, ‘ Indigo Cultivator’s Strike 1860’, in A. R. Desai,ed., *Peasant Struggles in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1979, p.148.
- ¹⁰ Blair B. Kling, *The Blue Mutiny*, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1977, p.92.
- ¹¹ Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1905-08*, People Publishing House, Delhi, 1978, p.24.
- ¹² Radhakumud Mookherjee, ‘My Reminiscences of Benoy Sarkar’, in Pradyot Ghosh , ed., *Archarya Benoy Kumar Sakar, Benoy Kumar Centenary Committee, Maldah*, p. 128; Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, *The Origin of the National Education Movement*, Calcutta, 1957, p.19; Haridas Mukherjee, ed., *Benoy Sarkarer Baithake*, vol.1, Calcutta, 1942, p. 285.
- ¹³ J. C. Sengupta, *Maldah District Gazetteer*, op. cit., p. 60.
- ¹⁴ Haridas Palit, *Maldaher Radheshchandra*, op. cit., p. 19.
- ¹⁵ J. C. Sengupta, *Maldah District Gazetteer*, op. cit., p. 61.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Haridas Palit, *Maldaher Radheshchandra*, op.cit.,p.21; J.C. Sengupta, *Maldah District Gazetteer*, op. cit., p. 52.
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