

**Revisiting of Political Activities in Jalpaiguri and Lower Darjeeling
Districts during Partition of India (1947)**

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Abstract: The national movement was not uniformly observed throughout the whole of Bengal, and in every region, the national movement was activated in their respective areas. As the Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts were under the control of the British, naturally anti-English movements were clearly manifested in this region. In 1770, the clash over the question of rights among the *Zamindar* of Boikunthapur with the East India Company, gave this region a special anti-British command. Darpadev Raikat helped directly in this struggle to protect *Zamindar* Devi Choudhurani of Manpolicestationraj Estate of Rangpur and Sannyasis and fakirs. Later on the anti-British feeling had been flourished in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district at the time of Swadeshi movement in Bengal. In the hands of educated employees, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts are getting associations. When Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district were merged with the administration of Assam and East Bengal, a section of educated immigrant society and local Rajbanshis people in this region came in the streets to protested against the British government's decision. Rabindranarayan Ghosh, Nripen Chandra Banerjee, Radhakumud Mukherjee and Binoy Kumar Sarkar took active part in National movement in this region. Finally, the Radcliffe boundary determine the fate of the people and the later had accepted boundary line and their long cherished integration had been perished and got the identity of Indian and Pakistani.

Key words: national movement, struggle, Swadeshi ,anti-British feeling, immigrant society, educated employees ,Radcliffe boundary, Indian and Pakistani

I. Introduction

The National Freedom Movement clauses were spread uniquely in different marginal regions of India. This marginal uniqueness has strengthened the national freedom and the British government was put under pressure. The national movement was not uniformly observed throughout the whole of Bengal, and in every region, the national movement was activated in their respective areas. Although the Kolkata-centric trends are absent in the marginal areas of Bengal, the movement, the national order against the Colonial Government, has not changed in any approach. The flows of the national freedom movement genuinely contacted people in the marginal area, and the result was a strong anti-British struggle. Although not very involved with the mainstream of the national movement, the genre of Indian freedom movement in northern Bengal was in line with East Bengal. In the present study our discussion will be confined into Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts. As the Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts were under the control of the British, naturally anti-English movements were clearly manifested in this region.

From the beginning of the English company, there is an outpouring of rebellion and dissatisfaction in the region of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling-Terai. In 1770, the clash over the question of rights among the *Zamindar* of Baikunthapur with the East India Company, gave this region a special anti-British command. When the East India Company employee Mr. Gross became interested in leasing the region, Raikat Darpadev of Baikunthapur was ignored. To consolidate the *Zamindari* of Dardadeb Raikat, the British Council ordered the attacking of Rangpur Collector, Mr. Parling, to attack Bhakundattapur. In order to resist the British attack, Raikat had taken help of Sannyasis and Fakirs. One of the main objectives of Darpadev Raikat was to maintain the right over the region. Even though, this war was defeated with Sannyasis and Fakirs. Nevertheless, the question of the British company's opposition to the illegal activities was closely linked to the local rulers of the region. Darpadev Raikat helped directly in this struggle to protect *Zamindar* Devi Choudhurani of Manpolicestationraj Estate of Rangpur and Sannyasis and fakirs.¹ The Sannyasi and Fakir rebellion flourished in this region. At this time, the Baikunthapur Raj (Zamindar) gave shelter and favour to the ascetics. Later, the direct influence of the Rangpur Peasant Revolutions was observed in this region. It will be seen in the discussion that anti-British attitude and

discussion among people of this region can be seen in the fact that anti-British attitude and the politics of communalism of the 20th Century influenced the people of this region.

II

After the established of Jalpaiguri district in 1869, the national freedom movement in this region could not be extended in that way. The geographical location, demographic system, thinking structure and the administrative orders of the Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts was distinct. Darjeeling district and Jalpaiguri Dooars Region were found to be under the rule of Non-Regulation Act only from commercial point of view. In this region, migrants from different parts of India, especially Chhotanagpur and various districts of Bengal province, came to search for livelihood. As a result, the major intention of these immigrants becomes the economic development of individuals. Due to the purpose of improving living conditions, an economic crossover has developed among the various migrant classes in the first phase. This never allowed religious communalism to head. People from different tribal communities who lived in the tea garden area lived in this area as workers. On the other hand, the educated community lives in urban areas due to the jobs. In the hands of educated employees, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts are getting associations. The association prepared a mutually agreed area between themselves. The first modern association of Jalpaiguri district was established in 1883.²

The activities of the National Movement have arrived in Darjeeling district on the almost equal level in the hill and plain land. The settlers migrated regularly to South and East Bengal to keep themselves updated about their national politics. Although a large part of these immigrants came from South and East Bengal For the continuation of cultural studies, various newspapers such as *The Englishman*, *the Statesman*, *The Hindu Patriot*, *Sanjivani*, *Amritabazar Patrika*, *Bangabasi* etc. to be brought from Calcutta. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were signs of political consciousness among Bengalis of the Terai region of Darjeeling district. In 1883, representatives from Siliguri were present at the Indian Association Conference. This public awareness of the Terai region was limited in certain classes.

In 1905, due to the partition of Bengal, communalism came into being with the Swadeshi movement in Bengal politics. In the tireless efforts of the English power, the seeds of this communalism were sought to be established in the minds of the Hindu and Muslim communities. In the northern part of Bengal, this kind of atmosphere was not present in politics, and in the case of national politics, the nature of this region was quite different. This period was associated with the national movement, people of the immigration class in the region; those who were educated employers, business persons, lawyers, etc in urban areas. Participated in the own initiative of the all India Political Party Conferences such as the National Congress and the Indian Association. In 1886, Dr. Tamizuddin Ahmed from the district of Jalpaiguri joined the National Congress Conferences.³ Through this educated community discussions and joining the national movement, various All India organizations have soon tried to open their branches in Jalpaiguri. The office of the National Congress was set up in Jalpaiguri in 1893. Umagati Roy, pleader of Jalpaiguri became the secretary of this branch office.⁴ Though some of the scholars shown that the branches of the Indian National Congress were opened in Jalpaiguri district in 1920 . We could found the anti partition feeling in 1905 in this region. When Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district were merged with the administration of Assam and East Bengal, a section of educated immigrant society and local Rajbanshis people in this region came in the streets to protested against the British government's decision.

III

At different stages of independence, indigenous Rajbanshis society of this region was once again engaged in anti-English movement.⁵ National schools were established in Jalpaiguri due to the anti-partition Swadeshi movement. Rabindranarayan Ghosh, Nripen Chandra Banerjee, Radhakumud Mukherjee and Binoy Kumar Sarkar were arrested on boycotting western education and promoting local education slogans. Attempts were made to spread ingenious clothes in Dinbazar in the *bazar* market of Jalpaiguri. A person namely Khegendranath Roy played an important role in spreading the ideas of Swadeshi Movement

among the people and tea workers of these marginal region.⁶ Anti-British revolutionary movements were also seen in the Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling area during the Swadeshi period. Revolutionary advocate Durgacharan Sanyal, at the Jalpaiguri station, shot two English officers. At the same time, Jalpaiguri revolutionary activities was close connected with in other parts of Bengal. The spontaneous participation in the Swadeshi movement prevented communalism in this region. The people came to contact with themselves in harmonious way against the British policy.

Another major reason for the absence of communalism is that the social and economic structure of this region. The structure of Darjeeling Terai and Jalpaiguri districts was different from other districts of Bengal. This region flourished with an amalgamation of Rajbanshis, Gorkhas, Bengali Hindus-Muslims, Santals, Mundas, and Biharis communities. The development of the tea garden industry made changes in economics in the Terai and Duars regions. The Duars of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Terai region was dominated by the labour classes ethnic group of people of tea garden industry. From the economic perspectives, the tea plantation industry was profitable, but it was related to wages of the labour class. The monthly wages of the workers in tea industry was only Rs.3/-. On the other hand, the workers engaged in farming in the same area had a monthly wage of Rs.7/-.⁷ Moreover, there was no independence in the work place. Consequently, either the workers had to accept the measurable condition or choice collective protest against this situation. In the nineties, the situation of discontent in Terai and Duars region came forward. In September 1903, fray took place due to workers protesting against additional work in a garden in Alipurduar subdivision, and ultimately the police controlled the situation.⁸ In the tea gardens, there was no exact organization of these workers due to torture of tea workers and the protest movement could not become a large agenda of politics. In 1905, the influence of Swadeshi movement against the partition of Bengal became the cause of consternation of the English tea owners. They feared that if the impact of anti-British movement of the tea workers becomes spontaneous, their unbounded profit interest could be broken rapidly. Consequently, these tea owners did not want to allow the Bengali nationalist sentiment to enter the tea garden areas.

IV

The ethnic heterogeneous character of this region worked behind the creation of an economical class-consciousness. The spread of the tea garden industry and the urban administrative activities accelerated this class-consciousness. The people of the educated class of the urban areas got the job of clerk and *Dafadar* in the tea gardens of this region along with the administrative work. These employees started thinking of themselves as a subject from psychological space. As a result, psychological differences with the Tea-workers of Darjeeling district and Duars region were developed. The place of this psychological difference has sometimes transformed into a place of 'dry-absorbed'. The British Tea owners strengthened their basis by tooling the class division among the native societies. The Members of the English Tea-Owners Association named 'Planters Association' and 'European Association' demanded the separation of Bengali from the name of 'Citizens of Darjeeling Hills' in 1906.⁹ In 1917, these two organizations again offered Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri Duars and Assam together to form of the 'North-Eastern Frontier State'.¹⁰ Actually, British businesspersons have taken this decision to keep tea workers from different national movements as well as political thinkers, even after thinking about trade and commerce. In addition to this, if a section of the Bengali educated class advances to improve the tea-workers, it is very strong for sharing the relation between the hilly areas. It is not effective in the opposition of the educated people of the urban areas, including tea-labour organizations, when demand for Darjeeling to be separated from Bengal in order to prevent the activities of the national movement of this region.

In the year 1909, the Government of India Act turned the political situation into a complex in this region. The importance of conservation of minority and the provincial election manifestation made it clear to communal discrimination. Transmitted by the Government of India Act of 1919, an increase of communalism was also the relationship between political organizations. On behalf of a delegation of the Muslim League, Mr. Aminur Rahman, pleader of Jalpaiguri submitted a memorandum to Montagu.¹¹ As per the Indian Government Act 1919, Jalpaiguri district was divided into two parts in the first election in

1921, one non-Muslim center, and the representative was Raja Prasanna Dev Raikat and Jalpaiguri-Malda was the other center of Muslim reservation. Congress Party members strengthened this national movement in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling during this period. The branch of National Congress was established in Jalpaiguri district in 1920 (of course 1921).¹² During this time, the District Congress President was Raja Jagdindra Dev Raikat and the secretary was Jyotish Chandra Sanyal. Under their guidance the educated youth of Jalpaiguri adopted the policy of national movement to spread the marginal zone of the district. Their enthusiastic activities were strengthened by the arrival of Gandhiji in Jalpaiguri district in 1925. Since 1921, Darjeeling started to break the trend of nationalist movement. The efforts of the tea-workers of this region to connect with the national movement were started. The British Tea-Owners wanted to stave off this trend of national movement. Instead of Hindu-Muslim communal politics, the English tea owners wanted to establish the theory of separation by thinking of regionalism in the flat-hilly regions and some of it was successful.

The propagation of nationalist movement under the leadership of Jalpaiguri district Congress was limited to the western part of the district only. Due to Non-Regulation Act in Duars region of Jalpaiguri district, it was not possible for the Congress organization to spread the movement everywhere. Prior to the establishment of the Muslim League or the rise of narrow Hindutva, communal politics of this region was not fuelled. At that time, the people of these two districts, irrespective of caste-community and religious, joined the movement under the aegis of the National Congress.

V

Apart from this, communal riots did not occur in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts until the partition of 1947. The communal attitudes were observed between the two communities since the 1930s. With the activities of the National Congress in the 1930s, an association called 'Hindu Sabha' was emerged.¹³ Unity among the Hindu community was the main purpose of this organization. The activities of this 'Hindu Sabha' were much like the Hindu Mahasabha, although it was not the Hindu Mahasabha branch. Most of the members of the organization

were intellectuals of the urban area, who were also Congress members and supporters. In 1931, 'Hindu Sabha' started campaigning for uniting all Hindu society. Their original claim was that the Tribal and the depressed communities of the census reports should be combined with Hinduism. Even though British India census reports initially showed the tribal class separately from Hinduism and apartheid community, apart from the caste indices were listed separately.

The demographic image of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling was different. In these two regions, the proportion of caste, backward communities, tribes and Muslims was almost equal. In 1931, the National Congress boycotted the census for political reasons. Many people resigned from the Jalpaiguri district congress in protest of this boycott of the National Congress and they were associated with 'Hindu Sabha'. One of the major arguments for the Hindu unification effort by the Hindu Sabha was that if the Hindu community were isolated, the Muslim community would become a majority in this region. Kshatriya Samity, a social reformer organization of the Rajbanshis community, was joined in this attempt of Hindu Sabha. Indeed, since the establishment of the Muslim League's branch in 1939,¹⁴ people who believe in Hindu ideology became worried about the future of Jalpaiguri. Conversely, the development of communalism has spread to the public, as the district congress is limited among the only Employers-Businessmen-*Zamindars*. In the Muslim community, there is a similar mentality.

A new generation of educated young man entered into the political Arena of Jalpaiguri district in the late 1920s and earlier 1930s. In 1931-32, a new type of search and questioning emerged among members of the Jalpaiguri Congress. Since 1937, the idea of this socialism began to be strong. In fact, from the end of 1920, the Jalpaiguri district Congress was limited only to high class, i.e. government servants, *zamindars*, advocates, etc., did not achieve popularity among rural areas or workers. Educated young people of New Generation were somewhat disinterested in the Congress Gandhian policy and higher-class mentality. These youths are attracted to the writings of the idea of socialism and Marx and Lenin.¹⁵ Inspired by this thought, they started attempts to unify the workplaces, workers, peasants and tea-workers of different sectors. However, conditions of the tea-workers in the Dooars and Terai region were always neglected to the nationalist leaders.

VI

In 1944, Rege Commission observed that there was no organization of workers in the tea-garden area.¹⁶ Virtually, the minimum demand for tea-workers has been denied by the tea-owners. On behalf of the Jalpaiguri District Congress, no decision has been taken to support this tea-worker. In December 1938, railway workers in Domohani formed their workers organization.¹⁷ From this time, the working class of different fields started to organize. The tendency to be organized by the working class will soon emerge in this region leftist ideology. Farmers under the leadership of leftist officials, the workers were presented with strong authority to their rights demands. This leftist ideology quickly spread to villages and tea-garden areas in the administration of the officials. Consequently, of this, the Tebhaga peasant movement was organized in 1946 in the pre-independence war of independence, in other districts of Bengal along with Jalpaiguri and Terai region. Tebhaga movement was not only a movement for peasants' demands, but also the struggle for freedom and equality against the ruler and administrators by the lower class of society. There was no place for religious-caste politics in the movement of these peasants and workers. Workers and peasants of the Scheduled Castes, Tribes and Muslim communities have gathered to fight for equality against landlords / *zamindars* and officials. The politics of communal riots has not been able to feed due to the movement of workers and peasants in Jalpaiguri district and Terai areas. However, attempts to converts to Hinduism were sporadic in some tribal areas under the leadership of the Hindu Mahasabha. Due to the continuous anti-communal propaganda campaign by leftist organizations since 1946, the politics of riots was not seen in this region.

The British colonial government split the Indian subcontinent due to religious communalism. With the intention of determine the boundary between the two new countries; the British Government formed a commission under the leadership of Barrister Radcliffe of London. Different boundary commissions were formed in Punjab and Bengal. The Bengal Province divided into East Bengal (East Pakistan) and West Bengal (India) by the recommendation of the National Congress and the Muslim League. Five representatives,

including Radcliffe, were nominated members of the Bengal Boundary Commission; among them, there were two representatives of the National Congress and two in the Muslim League. Charuchandra Biswas and Bijan Kumar Mukharjee was the representative of national Congress and Saleh Mohammed Akram and S. A. Rahman was the representative of Muslim League.¹⁸

The role of representatives of these two large groups was crucial in determining the borders for dividing the province of Bengal. Fundamentally, depending on them, there would be split lines in some areas of Bengal. Prior to Partition of India in 1947, the northern districts of Bengal were included in the Rajshahi division. According to the 1941 census report, the Muslim community was the majority in the Rajshahi division and almost twice the population from the Hindus. As part of the partition of Bengal due to the boundaries set by Bengal region, the northern districts included Malda, Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri. Since there was no single Muslim majority police station in Darjeeling district, entire Darjeeling district was included in West Bengal. The outcome of the partition of Jalpaiguri district was severely provoked. Among the most popular densities, Boda, Debiganj and Patgram Police station had become part of East Pakistan according to the Radcliffe Line. Furthermore, these police stations were the best in the district of Jalpaiguri for agriculture.

VII. Conclusion

This boundary was determined by Radcliffe in the southern part of Jalpaiguri, five police stations, such as Tetulia, Pachagarh, Boda, Debiganj and Pathgram, totaling 672 square miles of East Pakistan were included.¹⁹ The rest of the district of Jalpaiguri was included in West Bengal (India). According to the census report of 1941, Jalpaiguri Sadar sub-division had a collective population of 406749 people belonging to the Scheduled caste and Hindus, where Muslims had a population of 221604.²⁰ However, among the police stations in this Sadar sub-division, the collective population of Hindus was highest in Jalpaiguri police station, the Scheduled Castes population was more in them. The five police stations of Jalpaiguri district that had gone to East Pakistan at the time of partition, among them, were the population of

Muslims was more than the collective population of the Hindus in Tetulia, Pachagarh, and Boda police stations. Conversely, analyzing the population data of all police stations of Jalpaiguri Sadar sub-division will be seen that the number of people belonging to Scheduled Castes in this region was always high. In these police stations, the Muslim population was more than the upper caste Hindu. Now the question arises that this Sadar sub division of Debiganj and Pathgram police stations, where the collective population of Hindus was more than the Muslim community, according to the Radcliffe line these police stations became part of East Pakistan. The partition of India was happen based on minority-minority, approximately all the police stations of the Jalpaiguri Sadar sub-division could have become the part of East Pakistan. Again, if the Scheduled Castes were taken into the Hindu community, Debiganj and Pathgram police stations should have been included in India. Indeed, the ignorance of Radcliffe was about the political structure of India, the congress, and the Muslim delegation, the Hindu majority region of Pathgram and Debiganj police station went to East Pakistan. Finally, as per the Radcliffe Boundary settled the boundary of India and Pakistan and peoples had accepted this boundary lines and their long cherished integration also been perished and divided as Indian and Pakistani identity.

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Revisiting of Political Activities in Jalpaiguri and Lower Darjeeling
Districts during Partition of India (1947)

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