

# Historical Analysis on Swadeshi Movement with special reference to Bankura District

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## Abstract

*To write the history of the freedom movement of Bankura district and to study the spirit of nationalism we should discuss briefly the history of Bankura in the early period. During the Mohammedan rule, the landlords or the local kings were not in agreeing mood to pay tax to the Muslim rulers, though subdued to them by force. They liked to rule freely or independently. King of Bishnupur ruled freely for a long time during the Muslim period. Still now the ruins of many temples, bich etc. of many independent rulers of the locality may be seen. Even many of the landlords or feudals were dissatisfied to pay the land revenue to the East India Company, in 1832 under the guidance of Ganganarayan Singh the cultivators and three thousand Chuard armies declared revolution against the British. Though this revolution was not the freedom movement, yet it created the nationalism in the mind of the people and gave lesson to the inhabitants of Bankura to fight against the British for their reasonable rights. The people of Bankura also became angry with the Hilkar Sahibs when the Indigo Movement came out in Bengal.*

**Key Words:** *freedom movement, Indigo*

## Introduction

The district of Bankura is included in the Burdwan Division of West Bengal and lies between 22°38' and 23°38' North latitudes and between 86°36' and 87°46' East longitudes. It is bounded on the north and a part of the north-east by the district of Burdwan, from which it is separated by the natural barrier of the Damodar River. The south-east of the district is bounded, over a small distance, by the district of Hooghly, while along the entire southern and western boundaries of Bankura lie respectively the district of Midnapore and Purulia. The headquarters of the district is located at the municipal town of Bankura. The district has two subdivisions: -The Sadar or Bankura and Bishnupur. During the Partition of Bengal, the wave of the movement reached Bankura also. Sjs. Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Naren Goswami, Bibhuti Sirkar and other revolutionists set up a secret centre or camp in the jungle of Chedapathar of Bankura. There they kept fire-arms and prepared an underground den there for this purpose. Training was given there how to prepare bombs. The revolutionists also used the Akhra of Bam Das near a wood-apple tree in the western side of Harisabha of Bankura Kalitala as a sheltering place. There was a two-storied building known as 'Bipiabi Bari' which was used as secret place of the revolutionists.

## Swadeshi Movement in the district

During the Swadeshi Movement, organized efforts were made in the district for the boycott of foreign goods. Between November 1907 and January 1908 there were 22 or 23 cases in the district in which young men raided shops of businessmen dealing in foreign goods and damaged the merchandise. The method commonly used was to pour kerosene into bags of sugar and salt and to burn foreign cloths. The volunteers also warned the shopkeepers not to stock foreign goods for sale in future, it appears that the students of the Kotuipur and Kuchtakol schools took part in such raids under the leadership of the Bankura Secret Society. It is mentioned in contemporary official pamphers that no one could be found to give evidence against the students and others.

## The non-cooperation Movement

The resolution carried at the instance of Gandhiji at the Nagpur Congress of 1920, planning a countrywide non-cooperation movement made itself felt in the political life of the district in 1921.

During 1917 British Government Issued order to the district authorities of Bengal to arrest those who would not help the British in the time of Great war. At that time Sm. Sindhubala Devi gave shelter to Amar Chatterjee, Kuntal Chakravarty and Bhupendra Nath Dutta, the revolutionists of Jugantar Party, in the railway cabin at Tiijala. Police got the secret news about it. in the meantime, Sm. Sindhubala Devi went to her native village of Indus of Bankura. Sri Bholanath Chatterjee, Police Superintendent, went to Indus village with a warrant to arrest Sm. Stndhubala Devi. There were two Sindhubala Devi in the same name in the same village. Police Superintendent then arrested the two Sindhubala Devis. The real Sindhubala Devi was pregnant. They were brought to station and from station to thana on foot. They were detained in jail hajat. After a few days they were released. Sri Akhil Chandra Dutta, the Congress President, criticized this incident in the Provincial Congress Conference held at Hooghly in 1917.

Wave of Non-co-operation Movement also reached Bankura. The Non-co-operation Movement began at Bankura due to the efforts rendered by a Hindustani saint. Be influenced and convinced the people of Bankura to take part in the movement.

The name of that saint was not known. Locally he was known as "Sadhuji". He inspired the students of the district. As per his advice and instruction, students of schools and colleges began to take part in the movement. During 1922 two distinguished persons namely Kamal Krishna Boy and Manindra Bhusan sinha appeared in the political field of Bankura. They organised the movement at Bankura with the help of the Congress workers. The name of Badhika Chakravarty of Jamjuri village under Onda P.S. may be mentioned here. He was the first man who inspired the women of Bankura district for spinning. Accordingly, he started spinning by Katunis. (lady spinners) in different villages of Onda thana. Then in Gangajalghati thana he also introduced spinning by Katunis (lady spinners). Under his guidance a 'Khaddar Prachar Samity' was established in Bankura. Thus the women were engaged to produce thread for hand-made cloths in the distinct and thus they helped the Swadeshi movement. Though during the Hon-co-operation Movement the women of Bankura district did not take part directly, yet they engaged themselves to produce thread and to produce Khaddar in Bankura district.

The Katunis of Bankura produced about 7 maunds of thread by spinning and, in the National School of Bankura, Khaddar was produced in large scale.

In 1924 the first Bankura District Congress Conference was held at Bankura town. Sm. Hemaprabha Majumdar, the eminent leader, became the Chairman of the Conference. Sm. Santosh Kumari Devi and Kaji Najrul Islam were also present in the Conference. Many women of the Bankura district also attended the meeting. Gradually women of the district became conscious about the nationalism and importance of the freedom movement. A Mahila Sammelan was also held in Bankura at that time.

Sm. Santasila Palit of Betur devoted herself for the freedom movement during this time. Sm. Santasila was born in 1882 at Ilsoba Mandalai village, P.S. Kalna of Burdwan district. Her father was Prasanna Kumar Basu and mother was Kunja Kamini Devi. Sm. Santasila was educated at Patna (Bihar) in an ideal school established and organised by Sm. Aghor Kamini Boy, mother of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Boy of West Bengal. She was married with Sarat Chandra Palit of Bankura. Sm. Palit got inspiration from her husband and learnt many things including nationalism. Though Sarat Chandra Palit was an employee of the British Government in high rank, yet he was the supporter of Indian National Congress. Sm. Palit devoted herself for the National Movement since 1921. Always she thought how to free the Motherland from the British rule.

During 1930 Sm. Palit took active part in Civil Disobedience Movement at Kammila. She took the leading part among the lady volunteers. She gave inspiration to the women during that time to march forward. She violated the Sec. 144 Cr. P.C. She gave training to the women volunteers in the camp. Sec. 144 Cr. P.C. was imposed at Kammila. Sm. Palit with her daughter Sm. Usharani Devi and Sm. Yamuna Ghosh, sister of Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, took part in the procession to violate Sec. 144 Cr. P.C. As a result, they were arrested.

During 1932 after release Sm. Santasila Palit came back to Betur (Bankura) at her village residence. Here also she began to organise the party for the movement. She conducted the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bankura. Her house was confiscated by the police and it became the police camp. But she was not disappointed. She advised all the revolutionists to proceed in full spirit.

Numerous students left their schools and colleges and plunged themselves into the struggle. As a part of this movement, a national college at Bankura and a number of national schools — both at high school and middle school levels were set up in Bankura town, at Gangajalghati (later transferred to Amar Kanan), in Bishnupur town and at Gosaipur in Bishnupur, at Sonamukhi-proper and at Bada Chatra in P.S. Sonamukhi. Most of these schools were closed down after about two or three years, but the National School at Sonamukhi continued to function till 1926. The institution was known as Deshabandhu Vidyalaya.

Boycotting of law courts was one of the chief features of the Non-cooperation Movement. Several important members of the bar at Bankura gave up their practice and Congress workers went about setting up 'Salisi Boards' in numerous places which were to settle disputes among villagers without approaching the regular courts.

From 1921 onwards, the movement gathered momentum and more than 150 local Congress Committees sprang up in various parts of the district. A litho-printed political weekly came to enjoy a circulation of about 250 copies. There was, at the same time, an intensive and successful campaign for the wide spread Use of the 'Charkha' (the spinning wheel), and substantial funds were collected for the purpose. One such centre of activity later became well-known as Amar Kanan.

At this time there was an agitation all over Bengal for staying away from ceremonies in connection with the ensuing visit of the prince of Wales to Calcutta. Almost all the important Congress leaders of Bengal along with a large number of their followers were placed under arrest. More than a hundred volunteers banded themselves in Bankura and went to Calcutta to court arrest.

In August 1926 Sarojini Naidu addressed a public meeting at Bankura. The Congress party decided in the same year to oppose the establishment of Union Boards in the district as a measure of non-co-operation with the authorities. The Chairman of the Bankura District Board who was a member of the Swarajya Party within the Congress, toured extensively throughout the district opposing the establishment of Union Boards and in April 1927, a decision was taken at the district conference of the Congress party to form Committees in each thana to carry on propaganda against the formation of Union Boards. But all the attempts failed and Union Boards were duly established. The District Board of Bankura, as a protest, allotted only one rupee as a grant to each Union Board for 1928. In the south western part of the district a boycott of Union Board Presidents and Members was organized.

## Conclusion

The agitation against the Union Boards continued throughout 1929, 1930 and part of 1931, the local Congress party giving out that it would establish Congress Boards in place of the official Union Boards. The hold of the Congress over the district was amply demonstrated in 1929 when a Swarajist candidate was elected from the Bankura East non-Mohammedan constituency defeating J. N. Gupta, a moderate and formerly of the Indian Civil Service. A Congressman was also elected to the office of Chairman of the District Board, but the Govt, refused to recognise the election and appointed another man in his place. In October 1929 boycott of foreign goods was organized and volunteers picketed before shops and urged people to use khaddar. In November 1929 the Headmasters of two local schools were prosecuted under Section 124(a) of I.P.C. for having delivered allegedly seditious speeches at public meetings in September and October 1929 which resulted in their rigorous imprisonment for eight months and one year respectively.

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