

## QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN NORTH BENGAL

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Received: 12 May 2021

Accepted: 16 May 2021

Published: 31 May 2021

### ABSTRACT

*The Quit India Movement of 1942 has occupied a very important place in the history of India as well as Bengal in the history of the Indian National Freedom Movement. It is to be noted that many scholars and historians have written and researched a lot about the Quit India movement in general, but there has been little discussion of this movement in the field of regional or local history. I have proceeded here to write an essay on the spread and impact of the Quit India Movement on North Bengal in northern part of West Bengal. Before entering into this subject, it is necessary to shed some light on the word "uttarbanga".*

**KEYWORDS:** *Quit India Movement, North Bengal, Uttarbanga*

### INTRODUCTION

During the Quit India Movement of 1942, the whole country erupted. The people of North Bengal were not left behind in this movement either; they too raised their voices all over North Bengal in the echo of "engrej Bharat Charo, Union Jack nipat jack". Generally, North Bengal refers to the northern part of Bengal and now consists of eight districts, namely- Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Malda, Alipurduar, Kalimpong, Kochbihar, North and South Dinajpur. However, in the administrative sense, "uttarbanga" is not found in any regional official document. Although not found in official documents, the word North Bengal has profoundly affected the people of North Bengal for the last 150 years. The name "uttarbanga" is so numerous that there are so many government and non-government organizations in North Bengal that it is not difficult to prove that North Bengal continues to have a distinct status. Among these eight districts of North Bengal, the radical centres of the movement were Balurghat of South Dinajpur, Kumargram of Jalpaiguri, Bhaluka and Par Bhaluka of Malda and Siliguri of Darjeeling districts. Cooch Behar was not so much influenced by the wave of the movement, because it was a native State.

The failure of the Cripps Mission provoked strong reactions in Indian politics. The compassion and sympathy of the British government towards the Indians became clear in broad daylight. The mask of goodwill of the English was removed. So after the Cripps mission, the anti-English attitude of Indians increased. The attitude of the Congress became tougher. The failure of the Cripps Mission motivated the Congress to a larger movement. Gandhiji, who was opposed to any mass movement during the war, also became militant against the British. Gandhiji jokingly called the Cripps proposal "A post dated check on a croching bank".

Gandhiji told the British to leave India, leaving India to its fate. He was of the opinion that if the British left India, Japan would probably not invade India. In the April 26, 1942 issue of The Horizon, he expressed the view that if the British left India in a timely and orderly manner, the security of both Britain and India would be at stake. Gandhiji's

inflexible and uncompromising attitude led to the proposal to leave India. Although most of the Congress leaders sided with Gandhiji, not everyone could agree on this. Against the backdrop of the international war, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru thought that the fascist forces would be nourished if they went on the path of movement at this time. This time he was in favor of building an active resistance against the Japanese invasion while he was against the Japanese invasion. In the end, he accepted Gandhiji's offer, and at Warda a meeting of the Allahabad Congress Walking Committee, it was decided that Britain should relinquish other Indian powers only for the sake of India. On 14 July 1942, the Congress approved the Quit India Movement at the behest of the Walking Committee.

In the year 1942 the August Revolution spread all over India with a view to pressurizing the British to Quit India. Inspired by the Gandhian suggestion of "Do or Dai" millions of workers, peasants, students, professionals, shopkeepers and employees launched the movement and took part in processions meetings, demonstration, sabotage activities and other forms of underground operation in the sincere belief that the time had come to fight the final battle of the struggle for freedom.

The people of Jalpaiguri district played an important role in the Quit India Movement. The town of Jalpaiguri witnessed a massive strike in September. Congress leader and Municipal Commissioner Dr. Charuchandra Sanyal was arrested. The main centers of movement in Jalpaiguri district are Jalpaiguri (Sadar), Alipurduar, Kumargram, Falakata, Kalchini and Madarihath. The top leaders of Jalpaiguri (Sadar) are Dr. Charuchandra Sanyal, Khagendranath Dasgupta, Shashadhar Kar, Rabindranath Sikder and others. On September 1, 1942, the agitated people raised the slogan "engrej Bharat Charo". The police station, the court was burnt down, the railway line was thrown up. The women of Jalpaiguri district played an important role in the Quit India Movement. On 9th August 1942, a grand procession led by Mrs. Tara Banerjee and Rama Dasgupta toured the city of Jalpaiguri. Hira Prabha Sen and Sandhya Kar were arrested during the Quit India Movement. The main centers of this movement of the Communist Party of Jalpaiguri district were Boda, Pachagar and Tetulia areas.

The Quit India Movement started all over North Bengal on 9th August but it took place on 26th September at Alipurduar. The Alipurduar Subdivision Congress Committee decided that the communication system would be cut off, the telegraph lines would be cut and government offices, police stations and post offices would be demolished. For this dynamite, its cutting machine, shovel, gunpowder were collected and delivered to five police stations in the subdivision. Police searched the houses of Subodh Kumar Mitra, Piyushkanti Mukherjee and Nalinikanta Pakrashi, but found nothing. (1) Madharihat Police Station- Subodh Kumar Mitra & Haridas Chatterjee, (2) Falakata Police Station- Nalinikanta Pakrashi, (3) Kumargram Police Station- Shri Sunil Sarkar, (4) Kalchini Police Station- Dattasingh Sannyasi and Piyushkanti Mukherjee and (5) Alipurduar town were in charge of one person each.

In Alipurduar Subdivision, the movement was led by veteran Nalinikanta Pakrashi and his associates - Subodh Kumar Mitra, Haridas Chatterjee, Dattasingh Sannyasi, Piyushkanti Mukherjee and others. The top leaders took part in the Kumargramduar movement at Kulkuli Hat, where the middle class also played a unique role. Indigenous, illiterate people of the region also led the movement. The people of Kumargram were integrated against Baksa Fort prisoner's problem. Deonia, who was called Maha Deonia tried to mobilize the people through the Hat meetings. They had a deep connection with the National Movement in all over India. They had deep connections with the national movement all over India. Under the leadership of Sunil Sarkar, slogans like "Do or Die", "engrej Bharat Charo", "British sarkar dhongsho hok" were raised. In short, it was a picture of the popular revolution in Kumargram. Swadeshi Mela, Mahila Swadeshi Mela was organized to take the vision of liberation from foreign bondage. Besides, Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar Dal has promoted the

spirit of freedom struggle. Besides, Frontier Gandhi Subodh Kumar Mishra played a unique role in the Alipurduar region.

A particularly notable aspect of the Quit India Movement in Kumargramduar is the contact of tea workers with the nationalist movement. The people of Kumargram participated in the movement with bows, arrows, spears and sticks. Ramanath Tagore, Deben Das, Lalit Roy, Subit Roy, Swarna Mohan Pandit, Motilal Pandit, Payatu Roy, Sadhu Dutta, Motilal Roy, Yogen Bagania and others made important contributions in this movement.

Gyanada Baisnabi, Surbala Ganguly and Giribala Banerjee were the main leaders of the 1942 movement in Alipurduar Sub-division of Jalpaiguri district. A large number of dynastic women participated in this movement. In this movement, Shailrani Das Gitarani Das of Madarihat helped the revolutionaries to attack Tarakata and Thana. In Falakata, Gitarani Das, Bakularani Das, Pusparani Basu and many others participated in the movement. Ashoka Mukherjee of Alipurduar, Kamala Mukherjee also worked at great risk in 1942 to communicate with the political prisoners of the Buxa Camp.

Here is a special part of all the songs composed by the village poets at that time centering on this movement.

“Bhat Dim, Pani Dim, Khajna Dim na,  
Jan Dim, Pan Dim, Taxo Dim na,  
Engrajer Khajna Dim na,  
Bilaitir kapra Parum na,  
Hat Bhandha Kulkuli,  
Bandemataram Hamar Buli.”

The Quit India Movement took a massive shape in the Siliguri Subdivision. The branch of the National Congress was established in Darjeeling district in 1921 but the branch of the National Congress was established in Siliguri in May 1931. Satin Sen of Barisal was the one whose presence played a special role behind this success. Another famous person who established this branch was Shiumangal Singh. He came to Siliguri from Bihar on business, but later became involved in politics. He was particularly familiar with Gandhiji.

The Quit India Movement started on 9 September 1942 in Siliguri. Police arrested Shiumangal Singh and Dr. Brajendranath Bose Roychowdhury on August 18 before the movement began. A silent procession was held in Siliguri to mourn the death of Mahadev Desai and it was for this procession that the Congress workers were arrested by the police. The strike was observed on September 1, 1942 in Siliguri. Siliguri Women's Congress workers took an active part in the strike. On September 9, 1942, a procession of one thousand people, led by Sita Bose Roychowdhury, daughter of Dr. Brajendranath Bose Roychowdhury and Mrs. Kalidasi Sengupta, marched around the city and marched towards the police station. The slogan in the procession was "engrej Bharat Charo", "British sarkar dhongsho hok". When the crowd reached in front of the police station, they were anxious to enter it. The Sub-divisional Magistrate immediately ordered the firing. Five people died as a result. Those who took part in this movement are Haridas Majumder, Manomohan Roy, Santosh Kumar Das, Baradakanta Bhattacharya, Ashutosh Biswas, Vijay Krishna Ghosh (Deshbandhu Para), Chittadayal Chakraborty (Hakim Para) and others. Students also played an important role in this movement. They are Dilip Kumar Roy Sarkar, Upendranath Das and Dipendranath Roy Sarkar. Notable among the female participants in this movement is Savitri Sengupta. A significant aspect of the movement is the participation of women from middle class families.

Bhadru Singh and Pathar Singh participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942 and were imprisoned. Chaitan Sannyasi of Mallaguri and his wife Smt. Abuswari Sannyasi were arrested and imprisoned in this movement. During the 1942 movement, Kunjalal Malakar of Ramkrishna Jote and Govinda Chandra Das of Dimpur Jote near Bidhan Nagar were also imprisoned. Meanwhile, Tarak Chandra Roy Sarkar, Balendra Nath Roy Sarkar, Amritlal Roy Sarkar, Chandrakanta Singh, Udanu Singh and others from Kharibari joined the Quit India Movement. Abani Kumar Singh of Kharibari was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

Gaga Chhiring and Putulimaya Devi of the Darjeeling Hill tracts played a significant role in the Quit India Movement. Putlimaya Devi and Saryu Prasad were arrested from a public meeting in Kurseong on August 12, 1942 and sentenced to one and a half years in prison. Mrs. Helen Lepcha was active in the Quit India Movement. Those who took part in the 1942 movement in Darjeeling district were: Jambir Sapkota, Rahut Chhetri, Kul Bahadur Rai, Mangal Singh Lama, Lal Bahadur Basnet, Narbir Lama and others.

The movement was more militant in the district of Dinajpur. The role of Balurghat can claim a front-rank the history of the freedom movement. The main causes were serve famine, crisis of food, burden of excessive Tax, physical torture on men and women. The Quit India movement of Balurghat was mainly the movement of the Congress. The lions share of the movement was taken by the Rajbanshi, oraon and Munda Krishak against the British under the banner of the Congress. Civil Court building were set the ablaze and records were burnt, Government servants resigned from their respective posts. Peaceful processions were organized with shouting slogans "Do or Die", 'Bandemataram', 'Jai Swadhin Bharat' etc.. The top leaders of this movement were Saroj Ranjan Chatterjee, Pulin Bihari Dasgupta, Abdul Jabbar Mia, Shailendra Sundar Das, Bishwaranjan Sen (Kanu Sen), Biren De Sarkar, Radhamohan Mohanta and others. Congress workers propagated the ideals and aims of this movement. Meetings and processions were banned. Top Congress leaders have fled. Police have arrested 138 people. Pitambar Mandal, Fulchand Mandal, Raghunath Barman, Sania Orao, Jatadhar Barman, Buddhi Orao and others led in the rural areas. When the Quit India Movement completely failed, the local leaders of Balurghat revolted in their own way. The Quit India Movement of 1942 took on an all-India character at Balurghat in Dinajpur district. Balurghat became independent on September 14, 1942. Led by city and country leaders, a procession of 7,000 dynasties, 3,000 orangutans and 1,000 others marched through the city this morning. This procession first went to the treasury. The coat inspector was saved in the treasury as a result of the government opening the food warehouse. The huge procession later set fire to the court, sub-registry office and co-operative bank. Besides, the mob also looted telegram wires and devices, post office and union board office. Instead of Union Jack in the sub-divisional office, the Teranga national flag was flown by the struggling crowd. Prabha Chatterjee of Balurghat and Aholya Saran, an indigenous woman, played a significant role in this movement. Nirupama Chatterjee and Shivani Mitra of Dinajpur were arrested at this time.

The people of Malda district were also agitated as a result of the Quit India Movement. The Quit India Movement was started in Malda District centered on Harishchandra Pur Thana. Subodh Kumar Mishra was the most successful leader of this movement. Besides, Ramhari Roy, Sourendra Mohan Mishra, Surendrabala Roy, Dyutidhar Roy, Debendranath Jha, Bhupendranath Jha, Mukutdhari Singh and others joined the movement. A large group of youths led by Subodh Kumar Mishra attacked Harishchandrapur police station. Set fire to the Railway station. Lifted the railroad. Violent activities such as displacement of telegraphs and railways were carried out in some places. On the other hand, the villagers under the leadership of Sourendra Mohan Mishra demolished Bhaluka station. The villagers also set fire to Eklakhi and Adina Stations. At Habibpur police station, a mob set fire to a Gaza and liquor store in Gopalpur village, a few kilometers from

the Singhabad Railway station. The movement continued with full force. The Malda Student Federation took part in this movement. The most prominent leaders of this movement in Malda district are Harinandan Brahmachari, Radhakanta Sarkar, Tubai Mandal, Amritlal Mirdha, Bibhuti Bhushan Chakraborty, Satya Ranjan Sen and others. Surendrabala Roy was fully associated with the Quit India Movement. Tarubala Sen participated in this movement. Lavanyalata Chandra, Alo Mandal, Mrinalini Devi, Girijasundari Devi, Shailbala Roy and others played significant roles in this movement.

In 1942, a wave of Gandhiji's Quit India movement entered Kochbihar. Congress workers from Jalpaiguri used to hold meetings in different areas of Kochbihar. Keshab Chandra Dutta and Anil Chakraborty were arrested while attending a rally in Kochbihar to promote the Quit India Movement. Keshab Chandra Dutta was jailed for one year and Anil Chakraborty was jailed for three months. The Quit India Movement began to have meetings in various parts of the state of Kochbihar - the Rajbangshi people began to join in groups. The situation became so tense that Maharaja Jagaddipendra Narayan himself declared at a meeting at Bhup Lansdowne Hall, "I firmly believe that the Congress is now leading the people of the country astray without realizing the real situation. So I hope you will keep a close eye on public opinion so that it does not go astray." (Kochbihar Darpan, 3rd September, 1942). Not only that, when the Maharaja ordered the expulsion from Kochbihar, the student leaders - Durgesh Niyogi, Durgakinkar Bhattacharya and some other dynastic students and youths. As a result, the dynasty began to form.

Despite the frenzy of the people of North Bengal and the immense breadth and depth of the movement, in the end the movement failed. Various reasons were responsible for the pain of the Quit India Movement. (1) The people were completely without leadership, they had no organization, plan or program. Top Congress leaders were jailed before the movement began. No leader was out to lead the masses. There was no coordination among the rebellious people. So the movement in each region was different. (2) All the political parties and people of India did not unite and join this movement. Its failure was inevitable as a large number of people from the Muslim League, the Communist Party, the Hindu Mahasabha stayed away from the movement. (3) The government's brutal repression policy is one of the reasons for the failure of the movement. The British government suppressed this movement in a very well-planned manner through brutal repression and oppression. (4) According to the historian Amalesh Tripathi, one of the main reasons for the failure of this movement is the timeliness of the movement.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Quit India Movement in the districts of North Bengal had the same results as in other parts of India. We have already seen that the movement could not reach the desired goal due to lack of grassroots organization, competent leadership and precise program of action. But it was not a disappointing failure, as it clearly demonstrated the firm commitment of the Indian people that it was liberated and contributed to the growing sense in the country that British rule could not last long. So far we have discussed the participation of women in the struggle of rebellion and revolution against the British in North Bengal. Thousands of women from North Bengal have participated in the Indian independence movement. The women of North Bengal not only participated in the national struggle, they also participated in the progressive protest movement for the country. An in-depth judicial analysis shows that in every movement in North Bengal, women from upper class families participated in the initial stage, but in the later stage, women from all walks of life participated. Women came forward like a dam, but unfortunately the picture of their self-sacrifice was not mentioned by historians, so the widespread spread of the freedom struggle, especially the participation of women, has almost disappeared from the memory of many people. The century-long liberation struggle could not have been strong without the participation of women.

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