

# INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE AND THE BENGALEE TEA ENTREPRENEURS OF JALPAIGURI

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## ABSTRACT-

The Bengalee tea entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri of colonial period can be described as a 'distinct class'. The tea entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri included both Hindu and Muslim entrepreneurs. They have difference of opinion regarding Indian National Movement. But in worth mentionable that majority of them could not keep themselves aloof from the movements of Indian National Congress. The Swadeshi and Boycott movement, the Civil Disobedience movement and the Quit India movement touched Jalpaiguri along with the Bengalee entrepreneurs. They also published several magazines to spread nationalist propaganda and thus became a part of India's Struggle for Independence.

**KEY WORDS**-Indian Freedom Struggle, Bengalee Tea Entrepreneurs, Jalpaiguri.

## I. INTRODUCTION: -

The Bengalee tea entrepreneurs of Jalpaiguri motivated by the nationalist spirit participated in Indian struggle for independence. The tides of freedom movement spreaded all over colonial also touched Jalpaiguri. Ranajit Dasgupta, Charuchandra Sanyal wrote how Indian freedom struggle touched Jalpaiguri. But they have not written much on the Bengalee tea entrepreneurs and their participation in Indian struggle for independence. Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Malay Shankar Bhattacharya wrote on the same theme but have not mentioned the Bengalee tea entrepreneurs separately.

## II. INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE BENGALEE ENTREPRENEURS:-

Most of the leading Bengalee entrepreneurs were members of Indian National Congress and participated in its various sessions. On 1896 Tarini Prasad Roy joined in the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual session of I.N.C., which was held at Calcutta. Sri Jogesh Ch.Ghosh represented Jalpaiguri in the 1905 Benaras session. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh also represented Jalpaiguri in 1906 Calcutta session of I.N.C. along with Tarini Prasad Roy; Ananda Charan Sen. The Jalpaiguri Congress Committee was formed in the year 1922. Tarini Prasad Roy was its president, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh was vice-president and Jyotish Chandra Sanyal was its secretary. Suhasini Devi, wife of Jogesh Chandra Ghosh led the I.N.C. women cell at Jalpaiguri.<sup>i</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> June, 1925 Gandhiji came at Jalpaiguri along with Mahadeb Desai and others. The provincial congress organization was strengthened with the coming of Gandhiji at Jalpaiguri. The 1926 congress session at Guahati was represented by tea entrepreneurs like Santosh Kumar Neogi and Makhnallal Sanyal. This session was remarkable in the history of Jalpaiguri as it marked the first women participation in I.N.C. session. This woman participant was Jogesh Chandra's wife Subhasini Devi. In 1927 District session of I.N.C. the congress leaders demanded to the entrepreneurs about a permanent office of Indian National Congress at Jalpaiguri.

## III. NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND THE TEA ENTREPRENEURS:-

The Swadeshi and Boycott movement also touched Jalpaiguri. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh played a pivotal role in it. He arranged the 'Rakhi Utsav' near Rajbari dighi.<sup>ii</sup> In 1906 foreign cloths were burnt at Dinbazar under the presence of Jogesh Chandra Ghosh.<sup>iii</sup> He was associated with revolutionary terrorism movement and secret societies. He founded a secret society at Jalpaiguri with Ananda Charan Sen and others. A Muslim trainer was brought to train the youths. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh also gave shelter to revolutionaries like Mani Lahiri.

National School was founded at Arya Natya Samaj in 1907. 'Yuvak Bhandar' was opened at Jalpaiguri by Tarini Prasad Roy and Sashi Kumar Neogi. Swadeshi Bhandar was established at Sashi Kumar Neogi's house. Joychandra Sanyal, Keshab Dutta was the members of Union Club, a secret society for youths. The British Govt. took many steps to oppose this. At last in 1914 'Union Club' was closed. Jogesh Chandra Ghosh and Ganesh Chandra Sanyal helped C.R. Das with cash and ornaments. It is worth mentionable that Suhasini Devi donated all her ornaments to help Deshbandhu Chittyanaranjan Das.

Debesh Chandra Ghosh and B.C.Ghosh popularized 'Charkha' at Jalpaiguri. Swadeshi salt was sold at Jalpaiguri. Subhasini Devi spreaded the swadeshi movement among the women of Jalpaiguri. A swadeshi weaving school was opened at Jalpaiguri in 1922. The 'Seba Samity' was founded at Jalpaiguri town under the president ship of Rajendra Kumar Neogi. Khagendranath Dasgupta opened a 'Khadi Bhandar' at his house.<sup>iv</sup> Debesh Ghosh started a weaving school at Raikatpara. This school was closed by the year 1927. Gandhi once wrote to C.R. Das ".....At Jalpaiguri too I had the experience as elsewhere spinners are there, but nobody organize them...."

During the Civil Disobedience Movement the youths and peasants of Jalpaiguri actively participated in nationalist movement. Khagendranath Dasgupta, Sachin Neogi Santi Neogi, Hiraprabhu Sen were arrested during this movement. The 1928 youth conference at Arya Natya Samaj was headed by Nalini Ranjan Ghosh, the famous tea entrepreneur. There are many instances to show that tea entrepreneurs like Tarini Prasad Roy helped the Congress Relief Fund several times. In 1939 Bengal Provincial Conference of I.N.C was called at Jalpaiguri in which Subhas Chandra Bose was the chief guest.<sup>v</sup> The Quit India Movement of 1942 also touched Jalpaiguri. The Jalpaiguri District Forward Block Committee was founded at the house of tea entrepreneur Satish Chandra Lahiri. The 'Indian' records that Jalpaiguri District Congress office was established in 1893. Tea entrepreneurs like Dhiren Neogi, Shanti Neogi were the founding members of Communist Party of India, Jalpaiguri Branch. During this period a number of papers and magazines were published under the patronage of the tea entrepreneurs which had an indirect impact on Indian Freedom Struggle. The 'Trisrota' magazine of entrepreneur Shashi Kumar Neogi played a vital role in spreading nationalist movement among the youths. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal published 'Barendra'(1925) and 'Janamat'(1924) which popularized the movements and aims of I.N.C.

#### **IV.MUSLIM ENTREPRENUER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS FREEDOM MOVEMENT:-**

Regarding Indian freedom movement there was deviation of opinion between Hindu and Muslim tea entrepreneurs. So we can see that the participation of Muslims was limited in Indian freedom struggle from Jalapiguri. They mainly protested against the use of 'Hindu Symbol'. They were members of Central National Muhammedan Association. The branch of Islamia was founded in Jalpaiguri in 1892. Munshi Rahim Baksh was its founder president. The branch of Indian Association was also there in Jalpaiguri. Jalpaiguri Muhammedan Association was founded in 1894. There was another side of the coin. Begam Rahimunnesa, wife of Lutfar Rahaman also came forward to support the youth during Civil Disobedience Movement Entrepreneurs like A.F. Rahman, and M.L. Rahaman helped the Congress Relief Fund several times. A magazine was published by the Muslim tea entrepreneur's family namely 'Nisan' from Jalpaiguri during this period. Later it became the mouthpiece of Muslim League. The Muslim League Jalpaiguri branch was opened in 1928. Mosaraf Hossain and A.F. Rahman were its founder members. Mosaraf Hossain founded the United Muslim Party in 1936 at Jalpaiguri.



SUBHAS BOSE AT THE HOUSE OF TEA ENTREPRENUER TARINI PRASAD ROY



SUBHAS BOSE AT JALPAIGURI DURING 1939 CONGRESS PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

<sup>i</sup> Uttarbange bangali cha udyogpatider bikash o biloy, Supam Biswas, Kolkata, 2015

<sup>ii</sup> Interviewed Bharati Mukherjee(Rahut), 21.5.2018

<sup>iii</sup> Jogesh Jibon, Bhubaneshwar Mukhopadhyay, Siliguri, 2013

<sup>iv</sup> Jalpaiguri zilla satabarsiki smarak grantha,Jalpaiguri, 1970

<sup>v</sup> Interviewed Kamakhya Prasad Chakraborty, 8.9.2009