

I left that house and came back to the mess.

It was during the time of the Non-Cooperation movement that National Schools were established at many places of India. I have given reference earlier to the National School at Comilla, and to the National College in Calcutta. These institutions were the centres of national and patriotic activities where revolutionaries as well as non-violent Gandhites got due place. There was also a National School at Kanpur. Manilal Avasthi was the headmaster of the School and Vir Bhadra Tewari was the first man whom Suresh Bhattacharjee introduced to me. He was a recruit of Suresh Bhattacharjee. He was an active man. The headmaster, Mr. Avasthi, who living with his family in a quarter inside the School, had also a sympathetic attitude towards us but was not active. So I found the first active man for our organisational work at Kanpur in Vir Bhadra Tewari and Kailash Narain though the former was more active. The National School also became a centre of our activities due to them.

My next acquaintance at Kanpur was a group of Arya Samajists. I came to know them casually but this gradually developed into friendship. One of the members of the Arya Samaj, Desh Bandhu Vidyalankar, was a sportsman and was very enthusiastic in our work. Another became a Vaidyaraj. He was also a Snatak of the Gurukul and studied Ayurved. He had a Ayurvedic dispensary at Nai Sarak. That dispensary also became a centre of our activities. Desh Bandhu asked me to read

'Satyarth Prakash' and supplied me with a copy of it. I read 'Satyarth Prakash' very thoroughly and was very much impressed. Though the basis of the book is the Vedas, the feeling of overwhelming patriotism is its outstanding feature. I realised the intense national feeling that Swami Dayananda Saraswati had. Just like Swami Vivekananda, who advocated more liberal views for the material and spiritual upliftment of the Indians as well as of the entire suffering humanity, Swami Dayanand Saraswati too was a great soul who gave a nationalist and patriotic lead to the Hindu society, suffering from horrible superstitions, ritualism and fantastic misconceptions. I was further thrilled to know that Shyamji Krishna Varma, who was a great supporter of the Indian revolutionaries in London, and who afterwards shifted to Paris, was a devotee of Swamiji and staunch believer in Arya Samaj. My reverence for Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and my understanding of the Satyarth Prakash also helped me in coming in closer contact with the group of the Arya Samajists at Kanpur.

Like the National School and the Ayurvedic dispensary at Nai Sarak, the Anglo-Bengali School was also a centre of our activity. All the teaching staff of the school were sympathetic towards me and in addition to them some students were also taking keen interest in our activities. The most remarkable students who were the students of Class IX and were recruited to our party were Bijoy Kumar Sinha, who was afterwards arrested in the

Lahore Conspiracy Case and transported to the Andamans to undergo life imprisonment; Batukeswar Dutt afterwards arrested in the Assembly Bomb Case with Bhagat Singh, also transported to the Andamans and Ajoy Kumar Ghose, who was also arrested in Lahore Conspiracy Case, acquitted and later joined the Communist Party of India and died as its General Secretary. Batukeswar Dutt was a very frequent visitor to our Patkapur mess as he was very close to Suresh Bhattacharjee. Bijoy Kumar also used to come to the mess.

One day Bijoy Kumar told me that his elder brother Raj Kumar Sinha, who was a B.Sc. student in Banaras Hindu University was interested in revolutionary activities and, if approached properly, could become an active member of the Party. I talked over this matter to Suresh Bhattacharjee but he told that Raj Kumar had applied for some job in the C. I. D., so it was not proper to take him in the party. But my impression was that from this solitary instance his entire character could not be estimated. So I told Rajen Lahiri and Modak to watch the movements and psychology of Raj Kumar in the University. Both of them observed his activities and later recruited him to our Party.

A word for an honest, genuine and competent teacher of A. B. High School is also required here. He was Nepal Banerjee, who was our sympathiser and not a member of our Party. He always spoke highly of us and praised our ideas and way of life before the students. He had the character

of a resolute man and he came to witness the Kakori Case trial in Sessions Court and remained there the whole day which an ordinary man would never dare to do for fear of catching the eyes of the police. He later opened a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission at Kanpur and become a monk.

From Kanpur we tried to expand our organisation to other district of U. P. also. Our first contact was with a respectable person of Hamirpur in Bundelkhand. Bundelkhand is well known through folk songs as a birth place of heroes and guerilla fighters like Alha and Udhal. The story of Alha and udhal in verses are sung in most parts of U. P. These songs are speciality of this area. The memories of Bundela heroes are kept ever fresh there by bards and singers. So it was not surprising to find that our heroic activities received a ready response from Bundelkhand.

Pandit Parmanand, who was a great fighter, arrested in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and transported to the Andamans, belonged to Hamirpur. He made Hamirpur a good field for our activities. Diwan Satrughna Singh also, through contact with him, became interested in the fight for freedom. Diwan Sahib was known to Suresh Bhattacharjee since he was interned and Suresh Babu made him our party member. He introduced me to Diwan Sahib. He came to my house at Kanpur and we had long discussions on our future activities. We tried to visualise a picture of free India.

I also came in contact with those who were

connected with the Mainpuri Conspiracy Case through Rana Pratap Singh and one Mr. Saxena. I went to Mainpuri and stayed with Rana Pratap Singh. Our next step was to contact Ram Prasad Bismil because Rana Pratap Singh was his associate in the Mainpuri Conspiracy Case. He accompanied me to Shahjahanpur to meet Ram Prasad Bismil. It was just a chance that he was out of station at that time. But we had talks with other persons who were friends of Ram Prasad Bismil. We met there Pandit Ram Dev Shukla, who was a student of M. A. class at that time and Prag Dutt. They seemed to be sympathisers. I came back from Shahjahanpur without meeting Bismil. But soon I went back to Shahjahanpur and met him. We had long talks and I wanted him to join our party. As he was already a seasoned fighter which he demonstrated in the Mainpuri Conspiracy, he understood our point of view very thoroughly and then agreed to work with us. He joined our party very earnestly and remained sincere to it up to the last moment of his life.

Suresh Bhattacharjee introduced me to Krishan Gopal Sharma, who was his fellow-journalist at Jhansi, and a local Congress Leader. I enquired from him about the general political conditions and the prospects of revolutionary activities in Jhansi. I accompanied him to Jhansi and stayed with him. It is through him that I met Rudra Narain, who was a teacher and well known sculptor there and generally known as 'Master Sahib'. There I met

Mr. Kanchan, who was a businessman and worked with us with full interest and enthusiasm. Mr. Kanchan introduced me to Mr. Sanyal, a good Bengali lawyer there. He had a good legal practice and showed keen sympathy for us.

After these contacts with the different districts in U.P. the arrival of a youth, who became a very remarkable man, took place in the Patkapur mess. First, however, I must narrate the background. I have earlier mentioned the name of the historian Jay Chandra Vidyalankar. He was a Professor of History in the National College of Lahore. He was also in charge of our secret party in the Punjab. He noticed an intense patriotic urge and revolutionary fire in the heart of a young Sikh student, Bhagat Singh. He was a very promising young man with a patriotic family background. His uncle was the famous revolutionary Sardar Ajit Singh, and Sardar Kishan Singh was his father. Bhagat Singh came in more close contact with Jay Chandra Vidyalankar. Vidyalankar recruited him to the party. But a disturbing state was created. Bhagat Singh's family and especially his grandfather insisted on his marriage in his life time. Bhagat Singh was now greatly perplexed. On the one side he had an intense urge to engage himself in the revolutionary activities and fight out British Imperialism in India and on the other side there was the proposal for marriage. Family pressure was trying to detract him and he went to Jay Chandra Vidyalankar for a solution of this problem. But what remedy could

Vidyalankar suggest ? It was during this time that Sachindra Nath Sanyal happened to arrive at Lahore. Vidyalankar told Sanyal about the case of the zealous young Sikh student. Sanyal expressed his willingness to see Bhagat Singh and eventually when they met Sanyal Babu asked Bhagat Singh whether he was fully ready to devote his life for winning the freedom of his motherland ? Whether he was ready to leave his family and relations for the cause ? The replies to these questions were of course in the affirmative. So at that very time the turning point in Bhagat Singh's life came. Sanyal Babu gave him a letter for me and sent him to Kanpur. It was in the day time that he arrived at our place and gave me that letter. We talked but I did not know where to put him up for the night. I was staying in Bengali mess where all the members were Bengalees. The sudden presence of a Sikh youth might create suspicions with the police. However, he had to be accommodated in the same mess. While coming from the station he put his luggage in some Dharamshala. He did not know the name of that Dharamshala. He and myself both went out to find out that Dharamshala and bring his luggage. We searched most of the Dharamshalas near the station but did not find the particular one in which he put his luggage. At last when we decided to come back to our mess disappointed, postponing the search for the next day, at about 10 P.M. he could find out the Dharamshala and we brought his luggage to the Patkapur mess. That was the

beginning of a new life at Kanpur. Although he had a full grown beard he was only a youth of seventeen at the time.

Since he was staying in the mess, his first acquaintances in Kanpur were its members. But he used to pass most of his time with me. He was an intelligent and very inquisitive youth, and he expressed his interest in many things. We used to talk and discuss for hours the general political life in the country, the form of revolution most suitable to the Indian conditions, different aspects of the revolutions in other countries and particularly in Russia which was looked on by the entire world as a laboratory experiment and pilot project, so to say, for the new systems to be introduced after the great coming of world revolution. Bhagat Singh wanted to know what the Communists stood for. His inquisitiveness was insatiable ; and he was no blind-follower. His youthful mind was ever alert to assess and grasp any new idea.

It was the time when the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case trial was going on in the sessions court and it was a topic of discussion everywhere in the city. Four persons who were accused in it, Nalini DasGupta, Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad and Shaukat Usmani were charged with having established contact with M.N. Roy who was incharge of the Eastern Section of the Third International with its headquarter at Moscow.

I also witnessed the trial in the court with the help of one of my intimate friends, Satya Bhakta.

He was a Hindi writer and read widely books on socialism. He used to come to our mess and we had very long discussions and he helped in our work though he was not a member of our party. One day he asked me to accompany him to witness the trial. I did not want to go to the court as at that time I was living incognito. He gave me repeated assurances that nothing would happen and I accompanied him to witness the proceedings of the trial. During the recess when the C.I.D. people left the court, he introduced me to all the accused. Not long after this each of them were sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment.

In the district of Rai Bareilly our party agent was Banwari Lal. He had some connections with the Pratapgarh district also. He was living a comfortable life and the party had also to send some money monthly. It will not be beside the point to mention here that once a Kisan rally took place at Rai Bareilly district under Baba Ram Chandra, the well known Kisan leader in Eastern U.P. I also went there and saw it although I could not take any major part in it as I had gone there incognito. Banwari Lal was also with me. Sometimes I used to go to Rai Bareilly to see how our work was going on there. Banwari Lal used to come to Kanpur occasionally.

We tried more and more for the expansion of our organisation in different districts of U.P. At Farrukhabad we were much helped by a man popularly known as Panditji as he was a school

teacher though he was not a member of our Party. He is now working as incharge of the Gandhi Ashram in the same district.

We also established a unit of our party in Etawah district. Pandit Jyoti Shanker Dixit was a secret agent of ours there. He was keenly interested in our work. I used to go to Etawah quite often to review the position of our party there. Pandit Jyoti Shankar became an important man in the Congress and eventually became the Secretary of U.P. P.C.C. But later he left the Congress and joined the Hindu Mahasabha as its U.P. General Secretary. He was arrested in the Kakori Conspiracy Case, but let off in the lower courts as no proper evidence was found against him.

After the inclusion of Ram Prasad Bismil, Shahjahanpur became a strong base of our party and I had to visit the place frequently. At Shahjahanpur I was introduced to Ashfaqullah and Thakur Roshan Singh, two important members of our party. Both of them were given capital sentences in the Kakori Conspiracy Case. Like Ram Prasad Bismil, they took up the membership of the secret party with all earnestness and worked passionately towards the final goal. I was also introduced to some other members who were with Ram Prasad Bismil.

It was through Ram Prasad Bismil, that I came in contact with two other important persons who were connected with the Mainpuri conspiracy. They were Deva Narain Bharti of Shahjahanpur and

Bhagwan Singh of Pilibhit district. Both of them were prominent in the political fields of their respective districts and later became members of the U.P. legislature.

In Allahabad Jitendra Nath Sanyal, younger brother of Sachindra Nath Sanyal, was the incharge of the organisation. He was working as the incharge of the Book Depot of the Indian Press, Allahabad, at that time. He had a good house and was living with his mother and younger brother Bhupendra Nath Sanyal, who was then a student. When Sachindra Nath Sanyal was in Allahabad, he with his family was living with him.

Bishnu Saran Dublish of Meerut, who non-cooperated as a B.A. student, and suffered imprisonment during the Movement of 1921, joined our party through Sanyal Babu. He was the incharge of our organisation in Meerut area and was looking after the work very earnestly and passionately. It would be interesting here to mention an incident. Once Sanyal Babu was going to Lahore and on his way he dropped at Meerut and stayed with Dublishji. Next day when he went to the Meerut Railway station to board a train for Lahore, he took the ticket but he found that his pocket was picked and all the money, six hundred rupees in all, was taken away. He was put in a very awkward position and had to go back to Dublishji. Dublishji managed to give two hundred rupees to Sanyal with which he went to Lahore.

It would be interesting to mention a few more

incidents here. The Ayurvedic dispensary of Vaidyaji at Nai Sarak, Kanpur, was a centre where we used to gather in the summer noons. From there we used to go to the Ganges to swim. This was almost a regular programme in the summer. All of us, Bhagat Singh, Deshbandhu, Vaidyaji and I, once went to Unnao and had mangoes from the orchard there. After that we started for Kanpur. At the railway station I wanted to purchase tickets but my friends stopped me and asked me to enjoy ticketless travelling as an adventure. We entered a compartment when the train had already started and incidentally a ticket checker also followed us into the same compartment. When he asked for tickets, we pleaded that as we were in a hurry to catch the train we could not purchase the tickets. But the ticket checker demanded payment with penalty. We did not have enough money so we promised to pay at Kanpur station. A cousin of Vaidyaji was working as a Goods Clerk at the Kanpur station and we thought that we would borrow the requisite money from him and pay for the tickets. When the train reached Kanpur, Bhagat Singh, calling me on one side, told me that he had kept a ten rupee note as safety money. If I needed that for the payment he could give it. I took that money from him and paid for our tickets.

Since the arrival of Bhagat Singh at Patkapur mess, we were cautious because the presence of a Sikh youth in a Bengali mess might have attracted

the notice of the police and made them suspicious. We had no source of income and consequently the financial duress was very hard. The addition of Bhagat Singh to our mess worsened our financial plight. We thought about the matter but there was no suitable place where Bhagat Singh could be shifted safely. It was at this time that a remedy to these problems was worked out by the circumstances. Jai Chandra Vidyalkar happened to come to Kanpur for some work. He also saw the practical difficulties involved in Bhagat Singh's stay at Patkapur mess. He met Vidyarthiji and referred this to him. Vidyarthiji gladly said that he would give a room to Bhagat Singh in Pratap office. Bhagat Singh would learn journalism there and it was a place where so many persons came, his stay there would not attract any suspicion. He gave Rs. 10/- per month to Bhagat Singh as scholarship to learn journalism. Bhagat Singh's room where he shifted from our mess was in the inner side of the building. So in this way the problem of his stay as well as of financial assistance were solved and we also felt relieved.

The National School of Kanpur was a centre of our activities. The headmaster Manial Avasthi and Vir Bhadra Tewari who was a teacher in the school, had contacts with professional outlaws and undesirable elements. One of the persons of that nature was introduced to us. His name was Chatarpal Singh. He was introduced to us as a revolutionary but later it was revealed that crime

was his profession and he had no political affiliation. We chalked out a programme to commit an action in Fatehpur district on Chatarpal's information. The place where the action was decided to be done was roughly ten miles south of Khaga railway station. We went there but at the time of action Chatarpal Singh failed to locate the place and we had to come back disappointed. This incident is enough to show the lack of seriousness of purpose of this man.

Another centre in Kanpur where we used to get together was a fuel wood stall. Thakur Jang Bahadur Singh, after leaving the educational institution where he was a student, opened this stall near Patkapur. He was a genuine party member. Pandit Shiva Saran a friend of Jang Bahadur Singh who used to come there also became our sympathiser. He was a handsome man. He had a licensed gun, a pistol and a rifle. Thakur Jang Bahadur Singh's brother also had a licensed gun.

With the expansion of our contacts our expenses also increased. The meagre income that we got from some sources was not enough to meet our expenses. It was a state of increasing financial stringency and no probable solution seemed to be visible in the near future. I received a demand for money from Banaras and many other places. In this financial duress, I thought of arranging some action. One day at the wood stall I talked to Thakur Jang Bahadur Singh in this connection. He suggested one place in Allahabad district. I accom-

panied him, for an on-the-spot study of the situation, to the village where the action was to be committed. We went and stayed at the house of one of his very intimate friends who was also living in the same village. I studied the location and other important facts of the house where the action was to be committed and came back to Kanpur. Here a plan of action was chalked out. Then the members, who were to take part, were requisitioned from our Banaras, Allahabad, Kanpur and Shahjahanpur units. So far as I remember now three persons came from Banaras,—Manmatha Nath Gupta, Rabindra Nath Kar and Pranabesh Chatterjee. Banwari Lal came from Rai Bareilly and from Kanpur Bhagat Singh, Jung Bahadur Singh, Vir Bhadra and I joined. Ram Prasad Bismil came from Shahjahanpur and for someone from Allahabad I asked Jitendra Nath Sanyal that if some local member accompanied us, it would be better. Jitendra Sanyal brought Pandit Keshav Dev Malviya who was then a student of the B. Sc. class in the University of Allahabad. After my talks with him I decided that it would not be advisable to take him with us. From Allahabad we went to that village and the action was committed out in the night. But we did not find any money there because they hid it under the earth. We thought it very wrong to inflict physical torture on the inmates of the house and we had to come back disappointed. The other disgraceful thing that took place there, which we came to know the next day,

was that one person of the adjoining village received a bullet shot and died. It added to our disappointment and I decided that it was not worthwhile to arrange such actions in U. P. villages. In U. P. inhuman torture was needed to get the confession of the hidden money and jewellery which was very often so little that it was of no consequence to us. No one except us had any information about this unsuccessful action even later.

But one day our defence lawyer in the Kakori case, Barrister Chaudhuri of Calcutta, told me when we were being tried in that case, that Mr. Horton, the Chief Prosecutor of the Kakori Case said that there was a case in which I could be given even capital punishment. I immediately thought that the reference was to the Allahabad village action. Ram Prasad Bismil and Sachindra Sanyal and I had discussions on it and all of us came to the conclusion that Banwari Lal who was a participant in it, had made a clean breast of everything to the police. In this connection it may also be mentioned here that Pranabesh Chatterjee sent from jail after his conviction a statement to the Chief Court, in which he mentioned this action among other things.

We failed to collect any money from Allahabad action. The pressure for money from all sides was getting heavier. Sanyal Babu asked for money from Calcutta as he said that he had to take delivery of arms from European sailors. Rajen Lahiri was also very hard pressed in Banaras and he had

taken a loan from some other sources. So he was also very much in need of financial help. Apart from these demands we had to pay some person monthly. At Kanpur itself money was needed to pull on.

Meanwhile an opportunity was provided to us. Thakur Todar Singh of Aligarh started a National School in his village. For that institution he was in need of a suitable man to be the headmaster. He talked to Vidyarthiji in this connection. Suresh Bhattacharjee was also contacted regarding this. Thakur Todar Singh saw Bhagat Singh and was very much impressed and wanted him to be the headmaster of his National School. Bhattacharjee told me about it and I had a talk with Thakur Sahib. I asked Bhagat Singh and he agreed to go to Aligarh. So I sent him to Aligarh to become the headmaster of the School. Though I thought that since he belonged to a good family and was brought up in the city, he might feel some difficulty in a village, yet Bhagat Singh happily affirmed that he would pull on there without any difficulty. So at the time of departure I embraced him and told him that whenever he felt like leaving Aligarh, he could come to Kanpur, without any hesitation.

I told him that he had enjoyed a reputation in the circle of acquaintance for his intelligence and strength of character and that he should keep his head high wherever he went. It was virtually our last parting as I saw him only once more, when he came into the court where we were being tried in

the Kakori case. And that was the last time I saw the magnificent young lion of Punjab, nay of the whole of India.

There were two motives behind my sending Bhagat Singh to Aligarh. The financial trouble was of course acute but we were pulling on somehow. We needed to expand the organisation and Bhagat Singh's going out as a headmaster of a school opened a great opportunity to us. His going to Aligarh meant an addition of another centre for our activities.

The pressing need of money became so acute that it seemed now impossible to pull on without financial help. This need for help led me again to go to East Bengal from where I had slipped out previously. The police in Bengal was still trying to trace my whereabouts. But there was no other alternative left and I took the risk. I decided to go to Comilla and obtain some money from Mahesh Bhattacharjee. So from Kanpur I went to Calcutta and stayed with Sachindra Nath Sanyal. I knew the address of the house where he was living incognito with his family. There I met Jatin Das for the first time.

SECRET TRIP TO COMILLA

From Calcutta I started alone for Comilla. I boarded the Assam Mail which reached Comilla at midnight. Though there was risk of being seen by the C. I. D. officials, I had eluded them so many times previously and I knew the method of getting

out of the platform safely. I opened my umbrella and hid my face behind it, gave the ticket to the ticket collector and crossed the gate amidst the hustle bustle of other passengers without being noticed. After reaching Comilla I went to my uncle's house and stayed there for the night. The next day, before dawn, I met Manindra Chakravarti. He advised me not to stay at my uncle's residence, as it involved a real risk. One of the clerks of my uncle who was previously our helper had become a police informer. So I decided to shift and the whole of the following day I stayed at another place and met my friends and partymen. It was in the night that I along with Prabhat Chakravarti went to see Mahesh Bhattacharjee at his place.

I told Mahesh Babu the situation the pressure of which had brought me to him. I told him that on a previous occasion I had agreed that I would not indulge in revolutionary activities as long as I was working in the House of Labourers. But as I had decided that the fight for freedom was the first and foremost duty of my life, I had left the House of Labourers and devoted my life for the freedom fight against British Imperialism in India. Now I had gone underground and was working as a wholetimer, with all my capacity and strength, for revolutionary party very far from Comilla, out of Bengal, but as the revolutionaries always face financial duress, I was also its victim. Our moribund condition compelled me to come to Comilla, taking great risk of

being identified and noticed by the C. I. D. people who all knew me, and to see him in this connection.

Bhattacharjee appreciated my plight and gave me a patient hearing. He asked me to come the next day and take one thousand rupees from him. But he also said that in case he failed to collect the whole of the promised amount he would give me whatever he could collect. During our talks he revealed an important and interesting fact. He told me that before the Alipore Conspiracy Case Aurobindo Ghosh along with Ullaskar Dutta came to him for obtaining some financial help and that he gave them money. He had a lion's heart and he never hesitated to help the needy, the poor, the patriot and the revolutionary. When I went to seek financial help from him, his greatness was again demonstrated. He even made a kind offer for rendering me regular help. He said that I should not come personally as it involved a great risk. I should, whenever help was needed, send one man in whom I had full confidence, to him for money. That man should go to him and tell him the password 'Haran'. That was the name by which he was known in his childhood and nobody except himself knew it then. Next night at the appointed time I went to his place and took one thousand rupees from him. The train by which I wanted to travel to Calcutta used to leave Comilla after midnight. So I had enough time at my disposal.

I went to my uncle's home with Prabhat Chakravarti. I went to the first floor of the house and

stayed in the room of our sister. She herself brought my meals to avoid the notice of the servants and the cook. While I was taking my meals Sailesh Chatterjee, my cousin, youngest brother of Paresh, who became afterwards a martyr in Deoli camp, came there after attending some function. He was tired and slept there while we continued our conversation. My uncle also came twice into the room but seeing me taking meals, he went back to his bedroom. My aunt came upstairs and we talked for a long time. It was about twelve when I left that room to start for the station. I went to my uncle's bed room where he was lying on bed. I hesitated to wake him up. But he said that he had not slept so far. He must have been very much worried about me, so he could not sleep. He said that what could he tell me : I must go carefully avoiding all chances of being noticed and caught by the C.I.D. From his voice the heaviness of his heart and the grimness of his mood was clear. I respectfully touched his feet and left, never to meet him again on this side of the valley of death.

He was a fountain of inspiration for me. I always respected and adored him. When I was taking leave, he asked that I must have been in need of money but I told him that I had enough. I reached the railway station and applied the same old trick of boarding the train. Prabhat Chakravarti took my ticket and entered a compartment to ascertain that no one in it knew me while I was waiting on the other side of the train. When the

train started I entered the compartment. He also accompanied me. After coming to Chandpur I did not take the Chittagong Mail steamer to Goalando but went to Rajabari by another steamer. From there I boarded the Dacca Mail instead of the Chittagong Mail. On the way came Lahajung, which was the only steamer station near my village. I wished, I could get down there and go to my home to see my family but there was much risk involved. The entire area was flooded with water and my home was under the strict watch of the police. If my arrival was noticed, I could have no way to escape. So I did not think it proper to take the risk. I gave one letter for my sister to Prabhat Chakravarti. He got down at Lohajang to go to my home with my letter.

As a result of his visit to my home with my letter, he became familiar with my family. After a month when I was arrested he had also to go under-ground. In that state, my home was the best shelter for him and he stayed there for about two years with an assumed name of one of my cousins. My younger sister, Induprabha, was keenly interested in our activities and she worked for the secret party as its member. Once Prabhat Chakravarti caught small pox in Dacca and our partymen brought my sister there. She nursed him in Mitford Hospital of Dacca. He was admitted to the hospital with an assumed name and my sister nursed him and nobody could know that he was an absconder.

I came to Goalando and took the train for Sealdah. On reaching Sealdah, I went to Sanyal Babu's house. He was very much pleased. He was also in need of money and took three hundred rupees from me. He told me that he was hard pressed for money and that he was getting money from different sources and yet he kept Rs. 300/- from me. That was not proper, yet he did it. He was always writing to me for money although I had no source in U. P. for getting money. He utilised the U. P. sources for his personal expenses in Calcutta.

During my stay in Calcutta I had discussions with Sanyal Babu, Trailokya Nath Chakravarti and others. The other important fact to be mentioned here is that at that time the party was trying to forge hundred rupee currency notes. Trailokya Nath Chakravarti brought one forged note to Sanyal Babu's place. I also saw it and compared it with a genuine note and found that there was not much resemblance between the genuine and the forged one. The ten rupee note which the party forged previously had a more genuine look and I myself cashed four of those notes in the market.

They accepted my view and those hundred rupee notes were never circulated. The other important thing that is worth mentioning is that the party needed one man to be sent to foreign countries for establishing foreign contacts. For this purpose I suggested the name of Keshav Chakravarty, who had a shop of old books in Cornwallis Street at

that time. He was a recruit of our party at Banaras but not much known among the party men in Calcutta. I personally met him and he agreed to go abroad as a Muslim sailor. I brought him to Biren Chatterjee, my cousin, who was working in a business house of our maternal uncles. We dressed Keshav Chakravarti as a Muslim sailor, putting on a Lungi and a cap etc. Then he accompanied me to South Calcutta where I introduced him to Sushil Banerjee who had connections in the circle of sailors. In the way Keshav Chakravarti was successful in going abroad disguised as a Muslim sailor and there he established some contacts.

From Calcutta I started for U.P. I stopped at Banaras and cleared the debts of Rajen Lahiri. After that I made an extensive tour of the different places in U.P. where our centres of activities were functioning. Money was paid wherever it was badly needed. And then I came back to Kanpur.

Rajen Lahiri and Ram Prasad Bismil used to visit Kanpur very frequently. For their stay I made arrangements in the 'Pili Kothi' Dharamshala which was situated in Pilkhana. It was near the Pratap office and they could stay there safely. Ram Prasad Bismil developed friendship with the Brahmin cook of the hotel which was in one part of the Dharamshala. Bismil used to take only one meal in twenty four hours. In the evening he took only milk. He maintained a very good physique. Physical exercise was a part of his daily routine and whenever at Kanpur, we used to go to an

Akhara on the bank of the Ganges. The Brahmin cook used to serve him very hospitably at the dinner time. So Bismil got something in return for his friendship.

I was also a frequent visitor to Shahjahanpur. There the routine of Ram Prasad Bismil was the same. In the day time he worked in his silk factory and every evening he used to go for a stroll on the bank of the river. I accompanied him in his strolls. There after crossing the railway bridge, he used to do physical exercises. He passed two or three hours daily there. Ashfaqullah also used to go with us to railway bridge. We used to sit some time on the railings of the bridge. Bismil knew good Bengali and sometimes insisted that I should sing a Bengali song. I used to sing for him and he very much enjoyed it.

During the period of my stay in Kanpur, our contacts expanded and units of our secret party started functioning at different places in U.P. So now it was thought proper to consolidate that expansion and then to proceed on more planned and methodical lines. A review of the work done previously and cool thinking on the prospective programmes was needed. After returning from Calcutta, when I made an extensive tour of all our centres in U.P., I had that idea in my mind and so I talked to my associates in all these places about the indispensable need of a provincial conference. And thus the Provincial Council of the Hindustan Republican Association was called at Kanpur, the

headquarters of the Party. The members of the Council came to attend the Council meeting. Those who attended it included Rajen Lahiri, Suresh Bhattacharjee, Vir Bhadra, Ram Prasad Bismil and myself. Bishnu Saran Dubish could not come from Meerut as the railway train stopped running that area due to a breach in the the railway bridge owing to heavy floods. All of them stayed at the Pilikothi Dharamshalla and the Conference was also held there. It reviewed the previous work that the party had done. Resolutions were placed before the Council for the prospective programme. The detailed discussions on the constitution of the H. R. A. will come in connection with the Kakori Conspiracy Case, but its fundamental principles may be mentioned here.

The Party aimed at setting up a republican form of Government in India. The Conference decided that the free Government of India should be against every form of exploitation of man by man. The party should hold progressive views, and preach and propagate the communistic principles and ideology. As regards the tapping of financial resources for the running of the party, the Conference resolved that the party would try to meet the requirements by contributions. Though it was not mentioned explicitly, it was in our minds that for meeting expenditures, the Party would not resort to money actions and dacoities.

In the meeting of the executive Suresh Chandra Bhattacharjee represented the Jhansi Division but

it was decided. before the meeting, that next time Sachindra Nath Bakshi, whom I was going to set up at Jhansi from Lucknow, would represent Jhansi Division. Bakshi was set up at Lucknow but unfortunately no remarkable success in work could be achieved there. So we wanted to utilise his talents in Jhansi. It would not be beside the point to mention here that when I came back to U. P. as an undertrial in the Kakori Conspiracy Case, I came to know to my surprise that Sachin Bakshi was not given the chance to attend the next Provincial executive council's meeting, held at Meerut, as the representative of Jhansi. It was, as I took it, a big lapse of the organisation because of which this injustice was done to Bakshi. He was a very sincere and an efficient worker and was one of the senior most members of the Party in U. P. Even the idea of his being neglected by other members during my long absence pinched me.

To come to the point again Bakshi accompanied me to Jhansi. There I introduced him to all the important persons with whom we had contact. They all accepted him sympathetically and in an appreciative mood and promised to render every help to Bakshi in his work. Bakshi very earnestly set himself up at Jhansi and engaged himself wholeheartedly in the party work. He achieved a remarkable success in creating a very favourable ground there for revolutionary ideas and activities. The reference to a few important facts is enough to show his success there. It was in Jhansi that

Chandra Sekhar Azad found safe shelter and stayed for a long time. A revolutionary cannot shelter himself safely unless he is backed, helped and loved by the people.

M. N. ROY ESTABLISHES CONTACT

Pandit Ram Charan Lal Sharma of Etah, U. P., was under warrant of arrest in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case of 1924. He evaded arrest and went to French Pondicherry and declared himself a political refugee, and the Pondicherry Government put him under restraint. He was confined in a high walled house in a small township not far off from Pondicherry. Just in front of his house, opposite the gate, was a house from which both British and French C.I.D. people kept a day and night vigil on him.

His confinement was undoubtedly very strict, yet from this place he maintained contact with M. N. Roy through Paris. Evidently, Roy was not really satisfied, though he must have thought that at the initial stage this was of much importance. Pandit Krishna Gopal Sharma of Jhansi had connections with Ram Charan Lal Sharma through the Madras representative of Ram Charan Lal.

From Krishna Gopal I received four undated letters from Comrade M. N. Roy, in two of which he particularly mentioned the names of Pratul Ganguli and Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee, the two important revolutionary leaders of Bengal. Roy expressed great eagerness to establish contact with

them. This was a great attraction for me, because foreign contact was very essential to carry on secret revolutionary activities against a powerful colonial rule.

Ever since I received the letters, I had a mind to make an attempt to exploit this source, although Krishna Gopal stated to me that the source was under the watch of the police. He also said that he was getting some money from time to time through this source, but the latest sum remitted was seized by the Government. Still I was ready to tap it even at a risk because if successful, this could be of immense help to us.

How I wished that I could consult Pratul Ganguli on this, but he was not available. We had lived together in Rajshahi Central Jail and I knew his ideas quite well. We read about socialism there and I knew how keen he was for socialism. He could certainly guide me in this. I had no inclination to have any talk on this with Sanyal Babu, because I knew thoroughly well that he was not for socialism. As a matter of fact, between myself and Sanyal Babu, my faith in socialism stood as a stumbling block and I found it almost impossible to work with him.

This was the trend of my thought at that time, but later when I came to know all the facts, I realised how mistaken I was. M. N. Roy had sent his own representative, Nalini Das-Gupta, for establishing contact. Das Gupta came to Bengal and he was sheltered by the Anushilan leaders, because

M.N. Roy's former associates, the so-called Jugantar or Calcutta Party leaders, were not very active in secret work, and could not give shelter to Das Gupta. Their ideas did not have the least similarity with those of Roy's. But as I had no direct contact with Bengal Anushilan leaders at that time, I did not know the real antecedent of Das Gupta. He knew how to make bombs, because during the First World War he worked at the explosive factory at Glasgow in U. K. The Anushilan Leader Pratul Ganguli gave him shelter at Dacca and naturally Das Gupta came in contact with many workers of the Party and they were very much attracted to Das Gupta when the latter started teaching them bomb-making. Taking advantage of this position, Das Gupta even succeeded in making many of them anti-Ganguli thereby partly disrupting the party organisation.

About the same time the old Anushilanite revolutionary, Abani Mukherjee, also came from Moscow. When M. N. Roy sent Nalini Das Gupta to establish contact with the Bengal revolutionaries in the hope that they would give their recognition to him and work in India in collaboration with him, Abani Mukherjee also took a great risk and came to Bengal with the same objective that he might be given the recognition. At this Das Gupta was much annoyed and, as I learnt, went so far as to shoot at him. After this the Anushilan leaders could not entertain high hopes about Das Gupta. They, however, sent Gopen Chakravarty to M. N.

Roy. Roy was satisfied with him and wanted more such young men to be sent. Abani Mukherjee also was not successful in his mission. He remained underground and left the country in that condition, but was very generous to advise the Anushilan leaders to develop contacts with M. N. Roy. When Gopen Chakravarti came back he was not hailed by the Anushilan leaders and gradually he went over to the Communist Party.

From what I have stated above it would appear to be clear that the Bengal revolutionaries, particularly the Anushilanites, who were all along carrying on an active secret organisation, could very well establish contact with Mr. M. N. Roy and thus create a powerful liaison with international Communism. But they did not.

Long after I was released from jail, I asked Pratul Ganguli why he could not utilise this source for our cause, as I knew he had the proper outlook for it. He stated in reply that he had the idea but he was surrounded by such a leadership in the Party that it was not at all possible.

I was quite ignorant of all these developments in Bengal. But from outside Bengal I was feeling a great need for the expansion of the organisation.

M. N. ROY, THE FAMOUS INDIAN REVOLUTIONARY

M. N. Roy, a Bengal revolutionary, became a world revolutionary figure, especially after he took up the charge of the Eastern Section of the Third

International at Moscow under Lenin's guidance.

Roy later entered India in disguise but was soon betrayed and arrested and was given a heavy sentence. He had been sentenced in U. P. in connection with the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case.

After release he resumed his work and succeeded in getting a good number of brilliant youths to work with him. When we were released from the Kakori case he sent us a wire of congratulations from South India and after meeting him, I with some others decided to work with him. But we could not pull on together long and we subsequently joined the Congress Socialist Party.

AT FRENCH PONDICHERRY :

After the Council meeting at Kanpur I posted Sachindranath Bakshi at Jhansi and from there started for Pondicherry to exploit the chances, if any, of contacting M. N. Roy. That great risk was involved and that I knew ; but I was quite optimistic that the main persons, though suspects, would at least be reliable. I went to Madras and lodged myself in a hotel in the Triplicane area. My addressee, Krishna Swami, was an inhabitant of Triplicane. He was a Brahmin and Triplicane was a Brahmin area in 1924 and even now it is mainly so. From the hotel I searched for Krishna Swami and found him.

He received me with endearing terms and requested me to leave the hotel and come to his home. I did so, because that was safer. He intro-

duced me to his family members and I became one of them. Swami sent a message through his source to Ram Charan Lal.

He introduced a Muslim young man to me, who did not know English but knew Urdu quite well. I thus stayed for three days in Madras and the Muslim youth was my constant companion. Madras city was not much developed in 1924. We visited almost every place in Madras in three days' time. I was thus thoroughly acquainted with the city. I introduced myself as a silk merchants' agent from northern India, because my associate, Ram Prasad Bismil, a Kakori martyr, was a silk manufacturer at Shahjahanpur. In fact I was wearing a silk chaddar over my coat, It was decided that one messenger would be sent first to Pondicherry and then Krishna Swami would go personally. I decided to go to Pondicherry after his return. The plan was executed and after his return, I boarded a train for Pondicherry. Swami told me how to reach the house where Ram Charan Lal was detained. The house was situated about six miles away from Pondicherry city. I had no difficulty in reaching the place and locating the house. Ram Charan Lal received me enthusiastically. He said that much risk was involved but the gain, if our plan could materialise, was great. We had elaborate talks on the general political movement in India, more particularly on the revolutionary side and some other plans and programmes. And then I unfolded my plan to him for

which I took the risk of going there. I told him that Kanpur was central and industrial place in India. Fortunately it was also the centre of our revolutionary activities in U. P. In Kanpur, we had connections with the people, engaged in the press, papers and publications. We also knew many other working people in the city. Our plan was that if we could get some financial assistance from Moscow through M. N. Roy, we would start a press and bring out our own publications. This would help us to a very great extent to speed up our activities as well as to solve our financial problems ; for a press, run properly, would definitely yield a good income. Ram Charan Lal was very pleased to know about this plan and he spoke with full confidence that M. N. Roy would definitely extend his helping hand.

Ramcharanlal put a particular proposal before me. He took me aside in his residence and showed me a very fine tiny five chambered revolver. He said, he kept it for killing Mahatma Gandhi, because the latter was the highest obstacle in the path of an armed revolution. I vehemently objected to this idea, because thereby the revolutionaries would alienate themselves from the people and Gandhiji would become a martyr. I also told him that the small revolver that he had would never be able to kill a man unless its shot entered some very vital part of the man's body. After discussion he agreed with me that he would give up the idea.

He said that he had kept some clothes for his

brother Shivcharan, who was to be released soon. I told him that I would be able to arrange for the clothes to be sent to him through a friend,—I meant Ram Prasad Bismil of Shahjahanpur, who being a former Mainpuri Case absconder must be knowing Shivcharanlal.

I sent a parcel of these clothes to Ram Prasad from Madras with a letter in it. Ram Prasad recruited him to the party and even made him a member of the Provincial Council.

I found another young man from Jhansi named Ayodhya Prasad, living with Ram Charan Lal. When I was at Jhansi, I was told about him. Ram Charan Lal told the C. I. D. people, who used to visit his place, that I was the uncle of Ayodhya Prasad and that Ayodhya Prasad's father had sent his younger brother to take the nephew back to Jhansi. It was a very natural explanation. The C. I. D. people also did not suspect anything. Ram Charan Lal further advised me to go to the Police Station and disclose the same identity and the purpose of my visit. He said this would eliminate all possible doubts from the mind of the police. I did so.

Now I had to leave the place to come back to Madras. The C. I. D. was very vigilant. Ram Charan Lal devised a plan to elude the C. I. D. In the house, adjoining the back part of his house, one Mr. Chettiyar, a merchant was living. He was Ram Charan Lal's very good friend and used to visit his place frequently. I was also introduced

to him but my political identity was not revealed. Now his help was required and so the real motive of my visit was disclosed to him. Ram Charan Lal asked him to hand a rope ladder from his house in the night by which I would reach his house, and from there I would take the road leading to the railway station at a distance of 28 miles. He agreed to help. In the night we waited in vain for the ladder. That plan failed. We had to think of some other way to leave the place safely. So I and Ayodhya Prasad both decided to go to Pondicherry. One C. I. D. man also followed us. After reaching Pondicherry, we roamed about the city to give the impression that our main object was sight-seeing. Then we went to the residence of a barrister, who was the most prominent barrister of Pondicherry. It was a huge building. In one part of the same building his son-in-law, Mr. David, an advocate, was also living. He was the man who had connections with Paris. Ayodhya Prasad went in and talked to David and then he came out. It was decided between us that Ayodhya Prasad would go out and roam around the city to delude the C. I. D. man as he would naturally follow him everywhere and in the evening he would again come back to the barrister's residence on his way to the railway station. When the C. I. D. man would follow him, I would leave Pondicherry. He did so. The C. I. D. man also followed him and then I went inside and talked to David. He assured me that our message would definitely be conveyed to

Paris. He called his younger brother and told him something in his own language. I followed his younger brother who led me by the back door of his house to a bus driver's place. The driver was his trusted man. He told me to wait beside a pucca ghat of a tank on the roadside about three miles away from the house. I left the house and waited there. After the bus came there, the driver signalled by footing his horn. I knew the meaning of the signal. So I quietly approached the bus and sat beside the driver. On the border of French Pondicherry, the usual searches were made by the authorities. I reached Cuddalore from where I boarded a train and reached at night time Egmore station of Madras. As I was acquainted with the roads, I straightaway walked to the residence of Mr. Swami in Triplicane.

CHAPTER VIII

FOLLOWED FROM MADRAS & ARRESTED IN CALCUTTA.

Next day in the morning I purchased a third class ticket for Calcutta and decided to board the train silently without being noticed and detected by the C. I. D. people. But it sounded to me very surprising when my host Mr. Krishna Swami insisted on accompanying me to the station to see me off. I told him that he was a suspect and his presence with me in the railway station would definitely catch the eyes of the police which would not be good for me in any case. But inspite of my persistent requests he insisted to see me off. I suspected some bad designs behind this insistence but as he was my host, I could not afford to be discourteous. He came to the station to leave me, but he did not insist on going inside. His designs were definitely to help the C. I. D. people by identifying me. I boarded the train. The compartment was full of passengers. I did not know that I was being followed by three C. I. D. officials. The Inspector was travelling in a Second class compartment. All of them were in plain dress. Early in the morning the train reached Vijayawada. There all the passengers of the compartment got down. Then my suspicion that some evil intention was involved in Swamy's activities eased for the time being and as

the people get down, new passengers filled the compartment. I thought that the risk of being shadowed was over. But it was not the actual position. Among the people who boarded the train from Madras, I alone was left in the compartment. Then the new passengers filled the compartment on the same station. There two C.I.D. people also entered the compartment, one was a Hindu and the other was Muslim who belonged to Hyderabad seemed to be quite talkative and intelligent. He sat beside me and talked with me. The Madras Police must have informed the Calcutta Police about my journey. The Calcutta special branch of C. I. D. sent two officials in advance to Kharagpur junction. When the train reached Kharagpur the C.I.D. officials from the Calcutta Special Branch entered the compartment. An Assistant Sub-Inspector of the Calcutta Special C. I. D occupied a seat just in front of me and opened a book and started reading. It was not a book but an album bound as a book. In that album photographs of revolutionary absconders were pasted and he was studying my face to compare it with my photographs in the album. They followed me upto Calcutta. After reaching the Howrah station I got out on the platform. I saw a very poor man standing outside the station. He begged to be employed as a coolie by me and I gave my attache case to him. While crossing the Howrah bridge for boarding a tram to go to south Calcutta, I found that I was surrounded by a number of C. I. D. people. I had a very important

document in my pocket. I first thought of throwing it into the river but there was every possibility of being caught and the papers being snatched away by the people who were following me just like my shadow. I came to know later that fourteen C.I.D. men were following me on the bridge. I crossed bridge and just on the junction of Strand Road and Harrison Road I asked the coolie to hand over the attache case as I could get a tram from there. As I was saying this to the coolie, two C.I.D. officers caught me simulataneously from my front and started fumbling into my pockets. I just laughed and told them that there was nothing in my pockets. The Assistant Sub-Inspector of C. I. D. who was following me from Kharagpur, with a view to giving the impression to his superior officers that he had earlier succeeded in identifying me, held my photograph in the album before me and said, "Jogesh Babu, here is your photograph." They did not make a thorough search there. I was led to an Ayurvedic Dispensary of a Ceylonese 'Kaviraj'. The compounder of the dispensing shop was a police informer. When I was taken there by C. I. D. people, the Kaviraj was not present in the dispensary. I sat there on bench and on my right sat the C. I. D. Inspector. Now a thorough search was to be made and the articles found with me were to be recorded. Some eye witnesses were also needed to sign the inventory of things found with me. The C. I. D. men caught hold of an Imperial Bank employee for this

purpose. Some members of his family was ill and he came to buy some fruits. He just by chance passed through that way and was asked by the C. I. D. people to be an eye-witness of the search. Meanwhile when they were busy, I found a good opportunity. I loosened a button of my coat and took out that important document from my pocket and silently put it under the 'shitalpati' (a country made mat), spread over the wooden bedstead. Nobody noticed it except the compounder of the shop. To my surprise, he signalled the C. I. D. officer. It was beyond my expectation as generally people used to extend their sympathy and helping hands to those involved in political cases. The C. I. D. officer came to him and the compounder again pointed towards the edge of the shitalpati. The officer pulled out the document from underneath the shitalpati. I raised my objection very loudly that it was only a mischievous manoeuvre of the C. I. D. to produce a paper from there about which I did not know anything. I said that the C. I. D. men always wanted to implicate others like that and that I had a thorough experience of such activities. Its effect was good. The search was made. The articles found with me were listed. But when the eye-witness, signed over it he put a footnote that all the articles except, item No. 1 (that document), were found with me in his presence. The C. I. D. men did not like this note and demanded that he should clarify his remarks, which meant a threat to an Imperial Bank officer.

So to further elucidate the matter, he added one more line that since he was standing on the other side, he did not see whether the document was recovered from me or not.

The Ceylonese Kaviraj came after the search affair was over and appeared to be very sympathetic to me. He offered me tea and a cold drink but I declined the offer with thanks, although I was very hungry and thirsty. The conduct of his compounder had annoyed me. Later I came to know in jail that the Ceylonese Kaviraj was a sympathiser of the revolutionaries and so his offer was quite genuine. This must be the reason why his compounder, a poorly paid man, was made an informer by the C. I. D. This man, as a well dressed Kaviraj, gave evidence against me, in Kakori trial court.

The police officers took me in a taxi to the Head Office of the Special Branch at Elysium Row. On the way they stopped the car before a sweetmeat shop and purchased quite a good amount of the best quality sweets. They offered and insisted that I should take some, but I had not the least inclination even to touch the sweets. They were jubilant because they could arrest me and hence enjoying sweets at my cost.

After arriving at Elysium Row, I was brought before the Assistant Commissioner of Calcutta, C.I.D. Police, Mr. Nalini Majumdar, who was then the head of the special C.I.D. police, under Deputy Commissioner Mr. Mills. In 1916, I had met him

for the first time in the torture house at 4 Kyd Street, when he was a Sub-Inspector of the Special C.I.D. Branch. After I had been tortured under orders of Manoj Pal from 6 p. m. till midnight, Majumdar had come on duty at midnight. I was put up before him in a very much exhausted condition and he gave me a little food and water with some sweet words. Then I was locked up in the stable-cell. All these I remembered when I saw Majumdar.

Majumdar offered me a chair. He was leafing through the files and also was talking to me. I saw that he had come to know that I was very hungry and yet I disliked taking sweets from his colleagues. So he offered me sweets and tea. I declined with thanks. But I took a cold drink. He said that there was no hotel near about that place. One Muslim Havildar said that he had meat and chapati ready and I might take that if I liked. But I declined this too with thanks.

They were all anxious for my meals, because they had come to know from their agents, who were following me very closely all the way from Madras to Howrah for nearly two days and nights that during this period, I did not take anything but fried gram and water. The watchers were under the impression that I was short of money. The Muslim watcher had even told me at Kharagpur that the train would stop at Kharagpur for long time and I might take my meals there. But I had replied that I would take my meals after reaching

Calcutta. Naturally they thought that I had no money. But they were astonished when they saw during the search that I had with me four ten rupees G. C. notes, two one rupee coins and another eight anna bit and a pice.

The thing is that when I came to U. P. to work for the revolution I was a very determined man. I had left my family in a bad plight, left the House of Labourers which I had helped to create and then at Banaras rejected the good and generous offer of my uncle when he suggested that I should start a business with my cousin in Calcutta and for which he promised to give a sum of rupees twenty five thousand. I thought and acted on it firmly that when I had dedicated my life for the cause of the country and the party even at the cost of sufferings which my departure brought to my family, then I personally had no right to spend much money on myself. I made it a matter of principle that I would not spend more than four annas on my meals at a time. That was the only reason why I did not take any meals except gram etc. on my way from Madras to Calcutta, as with four annas no other food could be had at the railway stations.

As I was arrested in the Bara Bazar Police Station area, my case had to be registered there. Nalini Majumdar asked his Assistant to telephone to the Incharge of Bara Bazar Police Station to manage for my meal from some local hotel. When I was taken to the Bara Bazar the Incharge asked me

whether I had any objection to taking food cooked at his own place. I told him that I had no objection. So a very nice meal was served to me in his family quarter situated in the police station itself. I was very hungry as I had not taken any meal for two days ; so I enjoyed it. After taking my meals I thanked my host for entertaining me so cordially, and then the official formalities were conducted.

Then I was taken to Lal Bazar lock-up by my escort. There a room was vacated for me. Three Chinese were kept in this cell. They were shifted to some other cell and I was put into it. The Chinese left their blankets in this room and when I entered it, I found a filthy and suffocating odour. But as I was very tired after the long journey and because of the strain of C. I. D. detention, I had a sound sleep. It was the plan of the police to detain me for some days without producing me in a Court. They knew that very shortly an ordinance was going to be promulgated by the Viceroy under which a large number of arrests and detentions of political leaders and workers would take place. That was the only reason why though the police followed me in my journey yet I was not arrested till I stepped into Calcutta. When I arrived at the Howrah Railway Station, the C. I. D. followed me just like a shadow but arrested me only when I crossed the Howrah Bridge and entered Calcutta. The reason behind arresting me in Calcutta was that the Police Commissioner, Calcutta, was bestowed with powers of a first class Magistrate. I was

produced before him. And after I was locked in Lal Bazar, I was daily escorted to the Police Commissioner's office just to fulfil the formality of receiving a remand to detain me for the next twenty-four hours. It was an illegal detention. The Calcutta High Court gave this ruling after some time in a Case, that the first class Magistrate's powers of the Police Commissioner should not be misused in this way and consequently this practice of receiving remand from the Police Commissioner was stopped.

I have stated that in the Lal Bazar lock-up cell I had the dirty blankets left by the Chinese. To use dirty blankets was revolting to me. But in an October night blankets were necessary, so I wrapped myself in them and slept very soundly. Cells in the jails are not so dirty. They are kept clean on sanitary grounds. But there was not the least sanitation in these cells of police stations. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had to pass a night in one of these cells and let me quote his words. He wrote in his book 'The Indian Struggle' on page 182 : "The room in the Police station was a dirty hole and thanks to mosquitoes and bugs, it was impossible to have a wink of sleep. The sanitary arrangements were horribly bad and there was no privacy at all. I then realised the truth of what others had said before, namely, that if there is a hell on earth, it is the Lal Bazar Police Station."

I was lodged in this hell on the 18th October, 1924 and was kept in it till the 25th when an

Ordinance was promulgated and a large number of revolutionaries were arrested and thrown into the prisons. Some of them were brought by batches to Lal Bazar lock up. Others we saw from the windows sitting in Police vans. One day I was taken into one of these vans along with many others and was brought to the Presidency Jail.

AGAIN IN CALCUTTA PRESIDENCY JAIL

Thus I was again in my old 44 cells in the Calcutta Presidency Jail. This time we were kept unlocked in the day time. There were old associates as well as many new ones.

The most remarkable thing that I saw on entering the yard this time was a very bold writing in Bengali on the wall which means : Non-violence has no place in world politics,—with the signature below : Gopinath Saha. Saha wanted to kill Sir Charles Tegart, but by mistake he murdered Ernest Day and was hanged in the Calcutta Presidency jail, not long before our arrival. This writing indicated how much pressure was brought on him on this question of violence and non-violence. Gandhiji brought the new technique of non-violence and it caught the imagination of the unarmed country and they stood solidly behind him in the 1921 movement. But the movement was called off in 1922 without any material gain. The Government thought that revolutionaries had changed their line of action and that the movement for national eman-

icipation would not again take this course of violence.

Therefore, they must have disturbed Saha too much with the question of violence and non-violence. The police must have insisted that by resorting to violence Gopinath had gone against the country's adopted principle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He must have left a reply to that by writing on the jail walls.

In fact it was a matter of big controversy throughout the country. Bengal Provincial Political Conference at Serajganj passed a resolution eulogising the bravery of Saha. Deshbandhu C. R. Das also participated in it. About this Netaji Subhas writes in his book 'The Indian Struggle' on page 145 : " Another resolution was discussed and passed which was to stir up a hornet's nest in the days to come. This was the Gopinath Saha resolution. Some months earlier, a young student named Gopinath Saha, had attempted to assassinate the Commissioner of Police of Calcutta, Sir Charles Tegart. Through mistaken identity, he shot at and killed another Englishman, Mr. Day. At the trial before the High Court of Calcutta, Saha made a statement which created a sensation at the time. He stated in effect that he really intended to murder the Police Commissioner and expressed his sincere sorrow for having killed the wrong person. He was glad to pay with his life and hoped that every drop of his blood would sow the seeds of

freedom in every Indian home. Saha was sentenced to death by the High Court and duly hanged.”

Colonel Simpson was the Superintendent of the Jail at that time. I complained to him one day that the cell life was telling upon my health and that really I was feeling giddy and also that I had a slight temperature. The Superintendent told the doctor to send me to the hospital for a check-up. I had been in this jail in 1916, 1917 and 1918, but those were very hard war days and our confinement was very strict. So to go to the hospital was unthinkable then. But I hankered after seeing the hospital, as this was the place where during the first Alipore Bomb Conspiracy Case Satyendranath Bose and Kanailal Datta had shot and killed Naren Gosain who had turned approver in the case.

The hospital became a very comfortable place for me. A sub-deputy collector sentenced for the misappropriation of a big amount of Government money, was there as a convict assistant of the doctor. In the absence of the officials he was all in all there. He was spending money for giving tips and every comfort was there for him. After the Superintendent's visit when the doctor also left after prescribing some medicines for me, the doctor's assistant asked me what food I would like to have. I could not understand the question properly and for clarification asked him what food would be available. He said in reply that he would get whatever I liked. He said I could have eggs, meat or fish ; as I was a bit indisposed I should have rice,

vegetables and fresh fish. He showed me that everything was available. For bath he supplied hot water, towel, soap etc. and showed me the closed bathroom on the ground floor.

In the afternoon, I was shown the places where Satyen and Kanailal were and how after the first shot Naren Gosain ran towards the office and Kanailal also followed him firing the revolver and Gosain dropped dead near the Jute Factory.

Next day I told the Superintendent that I was alright and that I would like to go back to my yard. He allowed me to go back. This Colonel Simpson later became the Inspector General of Prisons and he was shot dead by the revolutionaries in his office in the Bengal Government Secretariat.

From the Presidency Jail a few of us were often taken in batches to the C. I. D. office for interrogation. That was a new type of mental torture. They had some small chambers. We were taken individually to separate chambers and were forced to sit there for hours. Each chamber had two small chairs and a small table. To sit for hours in this condition was a terrible strain on the mind. Some officers would come and sit on the other chair for some time and would talk on some irrelevant things and then go away. One day a muslim Inspector sat before me. He said, he was Office-Incharge of Lohaganj Police Station. He had once gone to search my village residence where my sister gave them a lot of trouble. When I enquired from him the whereabouts of that brute of a man named Manoj

Pal who had brutally tortured me in 1916, he became very angry and threatened me saying that I was under arrest and such things might be harmful to me. I said in reply that once I was under their clutches they would do whatever they could. But in spite of his threats I would not change my opinion about Manoj Pal. Then he calmed down and told me that Manoj Pal was the son of a Deputy Magistrate and also that Manoj Pal was dead.

I have mentioned that Mr. Mills was at that time the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of the Special Branch, C.I.D. On one occasion I was taken to his room. He ordered everybody, even his orderly, to quit. Then he got up and bolted the door from inside. I have stated that Mr. Colson did so once in an office room in the Calcutta Presidency Jail in 1916. I could not understand his motive and was very curious. He sat before me and made a very earnest appeal to tell him one thing, whether I had been abroad. At first I tried to be evasive and told him that I would be the last person to confess anything to the police. He said again appealingly that he would not put a single cross question. At this I said that he might take it that I had not been abroad. He was thankful and I left his chamber. It was absolutely clear from his query that the police had no information about me after I left Banaras and shifted the Party Provincial Headquarters to Kanpur. Here my underground life was quite successful till I was betrayed by Krishnaswami at Madras.

BEHRAMPORE JAIL

Shortly after this some of us were transferred to Berhampore Jail. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose had already been transferred there from Alipore New Central Jail. The entire jail population was accommodated in a very big double storeyed building. After winning the battle of Plassey the Britishers erected a number of magnificent buildings on the bank of the river and one such building which was once an army hospital was the Berhampore Jail. The Hospital, the workshops and the convicts were accommodated on the ground floor and we, more than twenty ordinance detenus and five state prisoners under Regulation III of 1818, including Bose, were accommodated on the first floor. On one side of the building on top of the hospital, was the Female Ward. During my imprisonment it was mostly vacant.

The Superintendent of the Jail, who was also the Civil Surgeon, was an Ulster Irishman. He was a good doctor, but on one point he was a bit eccentric. He would discuss politics and would pass objectionable remarks about the leftist Indian Leaders, for whom we had great regard. This gradually took an unpleasant turn. We, therefore, requested him not to have any political discussions with us. But he could not help it. One day I took a strong objection to one of his remark and I said that we would not talk to him till he withdrew

his remark and tendered his apologies. All our associates stopped talking to him from that day. A struggle started and we elected one of us, Kshitish Banerjee, as our representative to talk to the officials in this connection. Everybody had full confidence in him. People of different groups were there, but the majority belonged to Anushilan and Kshitish Babu was one of them

The Superintendent used to come on his daily visit and we were indifferent to his coming and going. We did not even stand up when he came. The five state prisoners were separated from us by a partitioned wall ; but there was no restriction to our meeting them. Shri Bose did not like this silent protest, but there was no way out. We wrote to the authorities about our difficulties regarding medical needs. The I. G. came and talked to us for nearly half an hour, but Kshitish Babu did not raise the delicate point of our relation with the Superintendent although we all knew that the I. G. was in the know of everything. When I raised the matter the I. G. became resentful and said that Government would not care for our health. "We won't care for the Government then", was my retort. The I. G. sullenly got up and walked out. But within a week or so the Superintendent was transferred and Dr. Hazra, a reputed surgeon, came as the Civil Surgeon and Jail Superintendent. We were relieved of a constant unpleasantness.

As a pastime in jail, many of our friends wished to celebrate Saraswati Puja. A Government grant

was necessary for this. But the question was what could we do if the Government did not grant our request. We could never take a refusal lying down. So, it was decided that we should consult Netaji Subhas on this. Myself and Pratul Bhattacharjee met Bose. He supported the idea readily. With hesitancy I asked what had to be done in case the request was not granted. Prompt came the reply, "We shall resort to hunger strike". We did not expect this from him ; we were pleasantly surprised. When the news was broken to other friends all were jubilant. An application was forwarded to the authorities for this. Suddenly on the 25th January, a telegraphic transfer order for Netaji came. We knew only that he would be taken to Lalbazar Police Station in Calcutta.

We suspected that the news that Bose was ready to resort to hunger strike, must have reached the authorities and that might be the cause of his transfer. Naturally we apprehended the presence of some police agents among us. When Bose sent for me and asked me my opinion I told him that regarding his arrest there was difference of opinion amongst the C. I. D. officials and that his transfer from the jail might be a prelude to his release. But none of us apprehended that he would be sent to distant Mandalay Jail in Upper Burma. It is a well known fact that he resorted to hunger strike even in that jail and that it was terminated through the mediation of Maulana Shaukat Ali. His hunger strike in Alipore New Central Jail and subsequent

release and escape to Kabul in 1941 are now parts of thrilling history.

We held a meeting that day to give him a hearty send off and the words of Shri Anil Baran Roy still ring in my ear : “Subhas Chandra is the rising sun of India.” He was undoubtedly the rising sun in the political firmament of India, but unfortunately for the country the sun set at a time when the need of it was the greatest.

After the transfer of Bose from Behrampore Jail, one day in the course of our talk Professor Anil Baran Roy, who was then a trusted lieutenant of Deshbandhu Das and was a Swarajist M.L.A. told me how intimate Bose was with Das, He told many anecdotes on the relation between the two. To mention one such incident : Deshbandhu had invited Bose and Roy to take meals with him and Basanti Devi, the wife of Deshbandhu, was herself serving and while doing so she made a certain request to Das. But as no response was forthcoming she remarked, “You won’t even listen to me, if Subhas says you would respond promptly.” So intense was the feeling of Deshbandhu Das for the future Netaji Subhas. The jeweller of men knew the mettle of his disciple.

We had established secret contact with our Party men in the town and through our source secretly received on a particular day a copy of the leaflet printed outside. In this connection later Sachindranath Sanyal was tried at Bankura and was sentenced to 2 years’ rigorous imprisonment.

This leaflet came up very prominently in the Kakori Conspiracy Case at Lucknow, but that is something which I shall narrate later.

We used to prepare a hand-written monthly in which Netaji wrote one article on the Independence of Poland. Professor Anilbaran Roy used to edit the articles. The last article I wrote for the monthly was on the Easter Rising of Ireland. I was transferred to Hazaribagh Jail the very day I finished it. I have forgotten the name of the monthly.

Shortly after our arrival in Behrampore jail we proposed to have a competitive game of badminton between the State Prisoners and the detenus. From the detenus, myself and another young friend from Mymensingh were selected and from the State Prisoners Netaji Bose and Professor Anilbaran Roy played. We won both the games very easily. I easily became the Champion later, as even two could not beat me. As I had no rival I had to give up playing badminton. Many years after this when I was a Kakori convict in U. P. Jail, Netaji Bose visited Comilla as the President of the Indian National Congress. He took his lunch in my uncle's house. When he was taking his lunch, my name came up in the discussion and Bose stated that I was such a fine badminton player that I could be a champion. Such was his impression about my game.

We were arrested under the Emergency Ordinance (called Bengal Ordinance) promulgated by the Viceroy at midnight on October 24th, 1924.

It had to be passed by the Legislative Council within six months. A Bill was, therefore, duly introduced and the Government strained every nerve to have it passed into Law. The Government was worried whether they would be able to carry the Bill through because of the strong opposition of the Swarajists. Deshbandhu Das was then resting at Patna as he had been suffering from a nervous breakdown. But in spite of his ill health, he resolved to inflict a crushing defeat on the Government. On the appointed day he arrived at the Council Hall in time and had literally to be carried in an invalid chair. Once again the laurels of the day were his. "The bill was thrown out, but by virtue of the extraordinary power given to the Governor under the Constitution, the Governor was able to certify the Bill as law," writes Bose in his book.

THE BENGAL CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL, 1925

Sir Hugh Stephenson, the Home Member, Government of Bengal, in moving the Bill before the Legislative Council made a comprehensive statement in strong support of the Bill. He fully utilized the two documents, the "Revolutionary" leaflet and the document recovered from me after my arrest. Prior to this the Home Member mentioned the Rowlatt Committee, whose report brought havoc in its wake in India in 1919. The Home Member stated, "In the view of Government there are

weighty reasons for enacting the Bill in a permanent form.” Then he said, “This was the view of the Rowlatt Committee who says : ‘The powers which we shall suggest for dealing with future emergencies must be ready for use at short notice. They must, therefore, be on the statute book in advance.’” The Governments’ plea was that the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Bill was the first step in pursuance of the Rowlatt Committee’s recommendations for the suppression of revolutionary activities.

Sir Hugh mentioned Sachindranath Sanyal and quoted the following passage from the “ Revolutionary ” leaflet. “ Those who say that there is no revolutionary party in India and so the promulgation of the repressive laws is an oppression, are not telling the truth ; for such an organisation of a very big size really exists in India. This party is endeavouring to bring about independence of India through armed revolution.” After this he quoted a synopsis of a document alleged to have been recovered from a state prisoner.

Without mentioning my name (because of the adverse remark of the search witness) he stated that as regards the extent of the conspiracy he would refer to papers found recently with another member who was under restraint under the Ordinance and who had been commissioned to organise revolutionary activities outside Bengal by a secret Committee. These papers mentioned 23 districts in one area outside Bengal where there were district

organisers at work. A copy of the resolutions of that Committee was also found on him. I will quote five of these resolutions :—

- (1) That only two departments be set up at present :
 - (a) Department for Propaganda and
 - (b) Department for the collection of funds and arms,
- (2) That the following immediate steps be taken to do propaganda through newspapers and magazines :
 - (a) To start a campaign against the C. I. D. authorities ;
 - (b) To start a campaign against repressive laws and measures ;
 - (c) To criticise Congress activities that hinder revolutionary work.
 - (d) To collect stories, episodes and other materials in connection with revolutionary activities for publication.
- (3) That every possible care be taken as regards the secrecy of the activities of the Association ;
- (4) That every district organiser should try his best to help the local clubs and associations which follow the principles that may directly or indirectly promote the cause of revolution and try to become member of the Congress and take part in its activities whenever advisable keeping in view the rules of the Association.
- (5) To provide workers with work it is necessary

to divide the district activities into three categories :

- (a) Village upliftment
- (b) Secret revolutionary activities
- (c) Local social functions and activities connected with the clubs and associations.

The motion was lost by 66 votes to 57. After being defeated, the Government took to the device of legalising the illegal law. The Governor certified the Act.

To come back to our life in Berhampore Jail : In the Baleswar fight at Baripada, Bagha Jatin and Chittapriya Roy laid down their lives in a trench fight with the police and Niren and Manoranjan were hanged. The only survivor in this fight was Jatish Pal, who was sent to the Andamans under transportation for life. In the Andaman Jail he had lost his mental balance due to inhuman treatment and as a consequence thereof he was sent back to Bengal and was kept in the Lunatic Asylum at Berhampore. The news reached us one day that Pal had expired there. We were all mortified to hear this. Of the five Baripada heroes he was the only person alive. Who knows what had happened there in that memorable fight between the underground revolutionaries and the police force, headed by Sir Charles Tegart ? I wrote an article in our handwritten monthly under the caption "Homage to Jatish" and in the same issue another article on him was written by Santosh Datta, a colleague of theirs.

Once Gandhiji paid a visit to Berhampore town. He was once passing by the river side and many of us stood on the roof of the building from where everything was visible. The slogans of the procession attracted us to the roof. Seeing us on the roof Gandhiji left his car, stood up on a big wooden box provided by a Pan shop owner and waved his chaddar to us. We also shouted slogans.

We planned to escape from the jail and we sent the message to our friends outside. That was a serious matter and the local friends could not give any answer without consulting the leaders. So it took a long time to receive the reply. Four of us were permitted to make the attempt at escape. On receipt of this information we started our preparations and planning.

At this stage suddenly we received news that we need not now make any attempt at escape, as the question of our general release was in the air. In fact, our top leader, late Narendra Mohan Sen, who was then underground, personally came to Berhampore and conveyed the news to us. He was sheltered in a house visible from the jail.

Deputy jailor, Jamini Mukherjee, who had come from the Calcutta Presidency Jail on special duty as incharge of the affairs of the detenus, took me aside one day and told me that we might be released. I told him in reply that he had chosen an elderly man to cut jokes with. He was taken aback at this and stated that he had never been in

light mood with me and that he respected me. Mukherji's uncle was an Inspector of the C. I. D. and I thought that he must have come to know this from his uncle. We had already received such news from our friends outside and after Sen's arrival at Berhampore we knew definitely that we would all be released. One day the Superintendent, Dr. Hazra, also told the same thing to Professor Anilbaran Roy.

There was indeed a prolonged negotiation between Deshbandhu C. R. Das and the Government which the public came to know long after. About this let me quote what Netaji Subhas wrote in his book 'The Indian Struggle'. No one in India felt these persecutions more than Deshbandhu Das did. In a magnificent speech delivered from the Mayoral Chair of the Calcutta Corporation, he gave vent to the deep indignation which stirred the public at the time. He accepted full responsibility for what the Chief Executive Officer had done and challenged the Government to arrest him. The Government did not accept the challenge but replied in a different way. They opened negotiations with him for a settlement of the entire Indian question: At that time, Mahatma Gandhi was politically a back number. He had confined himself to the Khadi campaign, having retired from the political movement which was under the control of the Swarajist leaders. The memory of the negotiations in December, 1921, had left an impression on the official mind that it was possible to come to an

understanding with Deshbandhu C. R. Das if the major issues were tackled in an earnest and sincere manner. Lord Lytton personally had a very high appreciation of him as a man. And at the time no official felt the pressure of the popular movement more than the Governor of Bengal did. In those days, to settle with the Congress meant to settle with Deshbandhu C. R. Das. Therefore, unknown to the outside world, negotiations between the Deshbandhu and the Governor of Bengal, Lord Lytton, went on for some months. With his shrewd political instinct, the Deshbandhu thought of making use of the public feeling roused by the arrests of October, 1924. He appealed for a fund to be used for national reconstruction. The economic situation in the country was not favourable and many people thought that the response to the appeal would be disappointing. But the leader knew better. In spite of unfavourable forecast, he had a very good response and that was a further proof of public confidence in him. At the end of the year, the annual session of the Congress was held at Belgaum in Bombay Presidency. This Congress was presided over by Mahatma Gandhi and it was the last Congress attended by Deshbandhu. The proceedings were marked by extreme cordiality between the Mahatma and the Swarajists. The principal programme of work adopted for the coming year was extension of home spinning and home weaving and it was enjoined on every member of the Congress to produce a certain quantity

of yarn as his membership subscription. The only other significant fact about the Belgaum Congress was the attempt of Mrs. Besant to get her Commonwealth of India Bill ratified by the Congress. The Bill which was to confer Home Rule of India, had been drafted by her and her intention was to have it introduced in the British Parliament as a private Bill. She felt that her hands would be considerably strengthened if the Congress gave the stamp of approval to her pet constitution, but none of the Congress leaders could be drawn into her net. She therefore, had to leave the Belgaum Congress disappointed. Page 155 : of the 'Indian Struggle' by Bose " The political situation remained unchanged when the year 1925 was ushered in. Deshbandhu Das continued in power. In the early part of 1925, there was further trial of strength between the Government and the Swarajists in Bengal. The Ordinance which the Governor-General promulgated in October, 1924, conferring on the Bengal Government powers of summary arrest and imprisonment without trial, was to expire in April, 1925. Thereafter, if the Bengal Government desired to have those powers, they would have to introduce legislation to that effect in the Bengal Legislative Council.

"It has already been shown how the Bill was rejected and the Governor had to certify it." (p. 153) On page 157 Bose continues that soon after the Faridpur Conference, "Lord Reading left India for London, as the Conservative Cabinet and

the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, wanted to consult him. But that time it was in the air that negotiations had been going on between Deshbandhu Das and the Government though hardly any one knew the details. It was announced that after consulting Lord Reading, Lord Birkenhead would make an important pronouncement about India. Every one in India awaited his speech with the greatest interest and eagerness.

“Then came a sudden bolt from the blue. In June 1925, when Deshbandhu was having a rest in the hill station of Darjeeling, the summer capital of the Bengal Government, he fell seriously ill. After a brief attack he suddenly died.”

Before I come to the reaction of Das's passing away, I would like to quote more paragraphs from Indian Struggle. “The death of Deshbandhu on June 16, 1925, was for India a national calamity of the first magnitude. Though his active political career consisted of barely five years, his rise had been phenomenal. With the reckless abandon of a Vaishnava devotee, he had plunged into the political movement with heart and soul and he had given not only himself but his all in the fight for Swaraj. When he died, whatever worldly possessions he still had, were left to the nation. By the Government he was both feared and admired. They feared his strength, but admired his character. They knew that though he was a hard fighter, he was also the man with whom they could bargain for a settlement. He was clear-headed, his political instinct

was sound and unerring and unlike Mahatma, he was fully conscious of the role he was to play in Indian politics. He knew more than any one else, that situations favourable for wresting political power from the enemy do not come often, when they do come, they do not last long. While the crisis lasts, bargain was to be struck. He knew also that to sponsor a settlement, when public enthusiasm is at its height, needs much courage and may involve a certain amount of unpopularity. But he was nothing if not fearless. He was conscious of his exact role, namely, that of a practical politician, and he was therefore never afraid of courting unpopularity.

“In contrast with the Deshbandhu, the role of the Mahatma has not been a clear one. In many ways he is altogether an idealist and a visionary. In other respects, he is an astute politician. At times he is as obstinate as a fanatic ; on other occasion he is liable to surrender like a child. The instinct, or the judgement, so necessary for political bargaining is lacking in him. When there is a real opportunity for a bargain, as in 1921, he is liable to stick out for small things and thereby upset all chances of a settlement. Whenever he does go in for a bargain, as we shall see in 1931, he gives more than the takes. On the whole, he is no match in diplomacy for an astute British politician.” (p. 158) Bose further writes, “After the death of Deshbandhu Das the Mahatma spent several months in Bengal trying to raise a memorial fund in honour of the

departed great and helping to reorganise the Congress machinery in the absence of the leader. His public activities, nevertheless, continued on the whole to be non-political in character and the political mantle of the Deshbandhu therefore fell on Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Swarajist leader in the Assembly. While Lord Reading was still in England and Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal, was acting as the Governor General of India, the Pandit attempted to resume the threads of the negotiations which the Deshbandhu had been carrying on with the Government. But the Government in London had already decided to drop the negotiations for the time being and watch developments. Nothing therefore came out of this attempt of Pandit Motilal Nehru." (p. 159) •

The sad and heart-rending news of the death of Deshbandhu was given to us by a professor of Berhampore College in the night by shouting from outside the jail walls. We were all stunned. It was really a bolt from the blue for all of us.

The next day, the citizens of Berhampore went round the town in a huge mourning procession and they stopped for long outside the jail as we all stood on the roof. A mourning song was sung by one man and it was repeated by others in a chorus. Bengal was in deep mourning. On the Sradh day a song was composed by Jitesh Lahiri and we sang it in chorus and processions of the town again stopped outside the jail walls silently till our song was finished. The question of release vanished in

the thin air as England changed its mind.

I had already read in the newspapers that a large number of persons had been arrested from different places and transferred to Lucknow Jail after the Kakori train dacoity. One was arrested from Berhampore, brought to our jail and then sent to Lucknow under fetters. Sachindra Nath Sanyal was arrested and was being tried at Bankura. Rajendranath Lahiri was also arrested at the Dakshineswar Bomb Factory. These were all very bad news for me. I also read that Banarsi Lal of Shahjahanpur had given an incriminating statement to the police. I told my most intimate friends that I might also be involved in the matter.

Soon the C. I. D. officials from Calcutta came to take our photos and specimens of handwriting. We were a big number and they took about three days to complete their work. This was advantageous to me. I could guess that if there be a conspiracy at Lucknow then there was every likelihood of my being involved in it and in that case the paper recovered during my arrest would certainly be utilised against us.

Ramesh Acharya, the principal accused in the Barisal Conspiracy Case of 1913-14, was with us in the Behrampore Jail. Generally handwriting experts are put up for giving evidence in proof of handwriting. In Barisal Case a hand-writing expert was produced and examined. So Ramesh Acharya had knowledge of it. I received detailed instructions from him about the method and gave the specimen

in bold letters writing very slowly. Rameshda told me not to write in the characteristic way. I attained grand success in this, as will be told in connection with the Kakori Conspiracy Case.

My days were numbered in Berhampore Jail. We were not in any way interfering in the affairs of the jail so far as the convicts were concerned. But once when we were downstairs we heard a pathetic shriek from the Oil Mill Factory. Myself, Santosh Dutta and Syamananda Sen stepped in and found a young good looking convict who was working in mills bleeding profusely. We all saw that about 5" x 2" of his back was badly bruised. We rebuked the convict in charge for this and slapped him. The Head warder became very angry and he complained against us to the jailor and the Superintendent.

Next morning the Superintendent asked us what had happened and he understood the real position.

TO HAZARIBAGH CENTRAL JAIL IN BIHAR

Winter was approaching and we asked for winter clothes. But nothing was supplied. One afternoon when we were taking exercise in the field we were told that we were under orders of transfer to Hazaribagh Central Jail, Bihar. We said that we could not be transferred to a Hill station without adequate winter clothes. Because of this dispute the authorities did not allow us to go in, as they sensed that in that case we might resist with the help of other friends. So we were taken to the jail office and our

friends shouted from the roof and many outsiders gathered outside the jail walls.

The Police Superintendent came and brought a dozen of constables. They decided to lift us forcibly. As we were taking exercise we had nothing on us except a dhoti and a vest. In lifting us forcibly our scanty clothes gave them maximum trouble. I was taken up with my head down and there was a fresh shout from my friends. They dumped us into horse driven carriages and took us to the Berhampore Railway Station. Police officials physically carried us from the carriage to the waiting room and when the train arrived they carried us to the compartment.

At Sealdah station in Calcutta we were carried to the prison van from the train. From the railway platform to the police van was a long distance. We were taken to the Howrah Station which was over-crowded. People crowded to see us. One European Inspector and a sub-inspector with a dozen constables were escorting us from Berhampore to Hazaribagh. In the month of November three almost unclothed persons were being physically lifted from place to place. This was a very unusual sight. But people understood we were political prisoners. We were dumped into a compartment of a train bound for Hazaribagh.

When the train arrived at Hazaribagh Road Station, we posed a greater problem for the police, because we had to be lifted through the railway over-bridge. It was really a very hard job for the

police, particularly because Santosh Datta had a huge physique, 6 feet tall and equally bulky.

I was running high temperature and was shivering but the European Superintendent of Police of Hazaribagh who came to the station to escort us to Hazaribagh Jail at a distance of nearly 44 miles, was very rough in his behaviour. He made me sit in a van which was over-crowded.

When we reached the Hazaribagh Jail gate in the night, I told the Jail Officer that I was ill and also that I needed medical help. He sent for the doctor. My temperature was 102 degrees. I was given four blankets and was locked in a cell.

In the night my temperature rose to 105 degrees and then I became almost unconscious. The next morning the Superintendent saw me and sent me to the hospital. So I was separated from my friends for some days.

The news of our transfer in such inhuman way was published in the newspapers and Deshapriya J. M. Sen Gupta gathered all the information and shortly after he moved the historic motion in the Bengal Legislative Council. Only a day earlier, SenGupta had been at Hazaribagh on a professional call. This was also advantageous to him.

Let me quote from the official proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council. Mr. J. M. Sen-Gupta moved a motion for the adjournment of the business of the Council at its sitting on Tuesday, the 18th December, 1925 at 5 P. M.

“ Mr. SenGupta : Sir, I beg to move for an

adjournment of the Council to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, viz., the recent treatment of political prisoners as evinced by the transfer on the 22nd November, 1925, of political prisoner Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee (Ghosh by mistake) Syamanda Sen (Somesh Chandra by mistake) and Santosh Kumar Datta from Berhampore Jail to Hazaribagh Jail without any sort of clothing or without giving them any notice to make provision for their journey. Sir, it is perfectly clear from the wording of the motion that the attention of the House is drawn to the question of the treatment of political prisoners as a whole and as an example... Sir, I will not refer today to the feeling in the country against the Ordinance or Regulation III. The opinion of the Council has been expressed against them unequivocally more than once. We have condemned both the measures. We have asked the Government to repeal Regulation III and we have refused to pass the Bengal Ordinance under which most of the prisoners are being confined at present. Today I shall now refer, and I am sorry, I shall have to refer only to the three prisoners but I hope I shall be able to satisfy the House—and even though I am confined with regard to this resolution only to the case of three political prisoners, I hope I shall be able to satisfy the members of the House that such treatment should never be meted out to political prisoners by any Government which desires to call itself civilised.

“What are the facts of the case? The facts

are perfectly clear. On the night of 22nd November these three prisoners received a chit from the Superintendent or jailor that they were wanted at the office. At that time they had no clothes on the upper part of the body as they were taking some exercise. They were immediately marched before the jailor and then were told that they would have to take a journey immediately—a long journey from Berhampore to Hazaribagh. They had to go via Calcutta. They protested. They said they had asked for warm clothes from a month before. No winter clothes had been supplied. They said that they ought to be allowed to go back to their cells to get whatever clothes they could get hold of, warm or otherwise...That prayer was also refused. They were compelled to take their journey that very evening without any clothes and we know that these facts were published in the Press and the Government knew it on the morning of 23rd. Sir, happily or unhappily, I was at Hazaribagh on the night of the 21st as also on the 22nd when I travelled down to Calcutta. I know that at that time of the year it was very cold at Hazaribagh—much colder than we have had here in Calcutta, or in this side of Bengal this season. Not only were they not given any warm clothes but they were actually taken without any covering on the upper part of the body from Berhampore to Calcutta, at any rate. After that what happened I do not know. But I do charge the Government with mal-administration and illtreatment of political prisoners after detention

without trial. It may be that they have been under detention without trial, that they were confined under an Ordinance which we wanted to throw out—it may be that some members of the House opposed us at that time as they were convinced that there were some reasons of State for such detention without trial—and I ask today the members of the House opposite, particularly my English friends that they should not complain if the Indians think that they follow the Government into the lobby on every question without caring whether the Government is right or wrong. The question today is not whether the Ordinance is being administered in the spirit and according to the letter of the law. What do we find? Some of the prisoners are confined under the provisions of Regulation III of 1818. Section 6 of that Regulation says :

‘Every officer in whose custody any State Prisoner may be placed shall, as soon as after taking such prisoner into his custody as may be practicable, report to the Governor-General in Council whether the degree of confinement to which he may be subjected appears liable to injure his health, and whether all allowance fixed for his support be adequate to the supply of his own wants and those of his family, according to their rank in life.’

Section 6 is almost verbatim reproduced in Section 21 of the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1925 which replaced the Ordinance. That Section runs thus :

‘The Local Government shall make to every person, who is placed under restraint by reason of an

order made under sub-section (1) of Section II, a monthly allowance for his support of such amount as is, in the opinion of the Local Government, adequate for the supply of his wants, and shall also to his family, if any, and to such of his near relations, if any, as are in the opinion of the Local Government dependent on him for support 'an allowance for the supply of their wants suitable in the opinion of the Local Government to their rank in life.'

“It is the Government’s case that we look after them well, we house them well, we give them proper clothes, but for reasons of State we keep them confined. Once that is admitted, I ask you, is there any justification for not allowing these prisoners to go and get their clothes from their cells? Is there any justification for dragging them away on a wintry night without any clothes to cover them? There can be justification only if the Government’s case is this, namely, that we are treating them in that way so that their lives may be jeopardised, so that when they come out they will not be able to follow the ordinary advocations of life, they may not be useful to society, that their health may be undermined to such an extent that they may not carry on the work which they started—the work for the freedom of the country. Therefore, I ask the members of the House opposite who have all along supported the Government in passing the Ordinance into Law—I ask them today to think and ponder whether they will by thire

action tonight allow the Indian public to be more firmly convinced in their belief that the English members of the House do not care anything for the merits of any question and that they only want to follow the Government into the lobby simply because they think that the Government must be supported at all costs. I am sorry that I cannot give other instances by reason of the ruling of the President under which I am suffering tonight as we have suffered on many occasions on this side of the House. I am sorry I cannot give other instances of recent ill treatment of political prisoners, which horrify the members of the House. But if they will come to me—if the President will allow me another motion, I will cite other instances which will show that the treatment of political prisoners is a disgrace to the Government. We talk of the dignity of the House : We cannot protect our own citizens. We cannot protect the members of this very House. We ought to hang down our heads in shame for the humiliation and insult that have been offered to the members of this House.”

Sir Hugh Stephenson, the Home Member, gave a reply to this. But the Government case was very weak. With very scanty clothes on we were forced to spend two winter nights in the latter part of November. Mr. Sen Gupta or the public did not know that I was attacked with fever and my condition became even critical as a result of the inhuman way I was treated.

There were two non-official visitors of Jail at

Berhampore as members of Legislative Council. One was Kumar Srish Chandra Nandi, the landlord of Cossimbazar and the other was Khan Bahadur. Srish Nandi came to our Ward only once and was accompanied by the Divisional Commissioner, Mr. J. N. Gupta, son-in-law of the great scholar R. C. Dutta. Though a jail visitor Nandi was usually debarred from visiting us, the political prisoners. Only Khan Bahadur was allowed to visit us.

During the debate on Sen Gupta's adjournment motion, the Khan Bahadur supported the Government case very strongly stating that the state prisoners and the detenus in Berhampore jail were having a very comfortable life. They were well-fed, well-clothed and every care was taken by the Government for their health and general well-being. According to him they were living in veritable paradise. If I remember correctly after such a long time, some members perhaps asked the Khan Bahadur if he would be ready to exchange position with the prisoners.

After the Khan Bahadur, Kumar Srish Nandi of Cossimbazar stood up and said that although he was also a non-official visitor of Berhampore jail he was not allowed to visit the political detenus there. After Sen Gupta's stirring speech, the speech of Kumar Srish Nandi added fuel to the fire. The Kumar was not a revolutionary nor had he anything to do with politics. Not to allow such a person to meet the detenus, clearly indicated that there was

something wrong. Sen Gupta gave a spirited reply to the speech of Sir Hugh Stephenson and it was a crushing one. When the Adjournment Motion was put to the vote it was carried by the House by 58 to 50.

The Superintendent of Hazaribagh Central Jail was an Indian Christian from Madras and his wife was an English lady. He took much care for my speedy recovery in the Hospital. I was then removed to our cell yard where my two associates were lodged. Hazaribagh Central Jail was a celler jail. One cell wing was meant for us. Besides ourselves a sweeper was locked up in one cell. A convict cook came in the day time to prepare our meals. We were getting a daily allowance and food articles were supplied according to our choice.

The Head Jailor was a Bengalee. Everyday he and the Superintendent used to visit our yard. His attitude was also good towards us. I shall narrate one instance to give an inkling of this. Being Bengalees we were all very fond of fish. The Jailor had only one daughter and no son. The daughter was also very fond of fish. So the Jailor always tried to get fish for his daughter and we were also getting some occasionally, though it was difficult to procure fish at Hazaribagh. This Jailor was in Mandalay Jail when Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was there. He described to us how this great man of India passed his days deep in piles of books. Tilak wrote his *Geeta Rahasya* while in Mandalay Jail.

The news of the adjournment motion in the Bengal Council and the Government's subsequent defeat and the public knowledge of the manner in which we were transferred to the Hazaribagh jail made the local jail authorities a bit nervous. We were complaining to the Superintendent about our loneliness. He told us they would feel relieved if we were transferred back to Bengal.

We were supplied necessary clothings, both cotton and woollen, because we came only with one dhoti. Later we also received all our articles left in the Berhampore jail. So we had double sets of clothes.

Gardening was our only pastime. The Brahmin convicted cook was a vegetarian, yet he cooked our meat and fish. But he would not touch an egg. So we had to give up eating eggs. The Santal sweeper was an interesting companion. He was a tall and stout man and very simple. The greatest trouble for him in jail was that he could not get any liquor. Often he would entreat us to allow him to make liquor from rice. But how could we allow him to do that in Jail? He was given 5 years, rigorous imprisonment for murdering a woman who was supposed to be a witch. He told us that he was not the culprit and that the police falsely implicated him.

A simple man as he was, he was taking our jokes to be real. Once we told him that Santosh Datta after release would go to his place and start family life there by marrying a Santal girl. He

stated that he would bear the expenses. He had left Rs. 50/- buried under earth and he would spend that amount for the marriage ceremony. He was also teaching us Santal dance and songs.

One day we read in the 'Statesman' a long report on Kakori Case. A Special Magistrate had been appointed and three persons who were already in police custody would be transferred to Lucknow ; they were Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Chatterji and Rajendra Nath Lahiri. The jail officials did not read this elaborate and detailed report.

My two friends were unhappy to read this news. From that day they made it a rule that our lunch would consist of Polao and meat, because as a Kakori prisoner I was likely to be sentenced to long term imprisonment and in the U. P. jail I would be given food not to the taste of an average Bengalee.

Within a fortnight or so, the Superintendent on his daily round asked me if I would like to go to some other jail. He refused to discuss the matter further. We discussed amongst ourselves and we were sure that the order for my transfer had arrived but the jail authorities could not know the real thing because they did not know that I was under warrant in the Kakori Case which was to begin shortly at Lucknow. The Superintendent, however told me one morning that I would be transferred to a place that very day, but that it would be a temporary transfer. The transfer order

was like that. I was to go as a Bengal detenu, not as an undertrial in the Kakori Conspiracy Case.

Before the lockup time I was brought with all my belongings to the jail office.