

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# THE VICTIMS OF VENGEANCE

### *raison d'etre*

This section is most likely to give rise to controversy simply because its victims, emerging out of the opposite pole from which the martyrs came, were engaged in the sordid business of acting as traitors to their own country; and under the protective wings of the enemies of the land.

It has to be remembered in this connection that with each action the assailant exposed himself before the highest penalty of the law, and, if arrested, had to pass through all the engines of diabolical torture of inferno at the hands of the dismayed police smarting under a sense of the loss of an agent who had earned credit for his immediate employer, a police officer of some position.

The incidents present in bold relief the 'exploits' of those who toyed with their own lives to remove the poisonous thorns that retarded the march towards the goal.

In the context of the fight that had been going on between a foreign Government and the unrecognised 'army' of India at the time, it was absolutely certain that had not these stern measures been applied by the revolutionary party, there would have been legion of spies and informers, every weak-kneed fellow feeling tempted to work clandestinely and betray the best interests of the country. These foes in disguise could creep into the secrets of the revolutionary party and secure information which was not possible for the police who could be easily recognised.

Such killings injected new hope, new spirit of courage in the heart of the fighters for freedom and overawed the faint-

hearted greedy creatures from helping those whose one aim was to hold the country perpetually under their sway. These assassinations had their own peculiar value, which taken away from the the context of critical warfare may lose a good deal of its pristine colour. Spying is an age-old institution with every State, but a nation trying to assert itself and wrest the reins of Government from unwilling hands with the chances of secrets leaking out, had to resort to this effective method to prepare for sallies into enemy ranks and march forward from strength to strength till the goal was reached.

A few cases have been recorded here :

#### TURNCOAT'S REWARD

It seemed to be the first case known of disciplinary action being taken against party men who had betrayed the cause. *Sukumar Chakrabarti* was first arrested by the police for his close association with the *Anusilan Samity* for some time. To secure his release he made a statement implicating some of the leaders and disclosing some secrets of the organisation. Sukumar was released on bail and before long he was found missing and his whereabouts could not be traced. It subsequently transpired that to prevent further mischief, he was secretly assassinated on November 14, 1908, at Ramna, Dacca, and his body was disposed of in secret.

#### TREADING A RISKY PATH

In November 1908, *Keshab Chandra Dey* and *Annada Prasad Ghose*, once belonging to the revolutionary organisation, were killed in Dacca by their co-members of the *samiti* as their movements and contact with the police gave rise to grave suspicion in the minds of those interested in the welfare of their organisation and safety of its members.

#### FOR OTHER'S SINS

Revolutionary reprisals had some time exceeded the bounds of justification and in the early days when both the Government and the Indian militant nationalism were confronted face to face against each other, there had been a case which left a mark of sorrow even in the minds of those who had been responsible for the event.

A weak-kneed man when arrested in connection with a case of dacoity, made a statement before the District Magistrate of Faridpur implicating many persons including some absolutely innocent people. He also came to the rescue of the police in the Dacca Janmastami Stabbing Case and made himself a target of attack by the revolutionaries.

On June 4, 1909, the assailants went to the house of the accursed man and through mistake shot his brother *Preonath Chatterji*, a mere lad of 16 and a student of the Brajamohan College, Barisal. The real culprit, Preo's elder brother escaped.

#### FATE OF A HANDY WITNESS

The police found in *Manmohan Dey* a handy witness to depose in favour of the prosecution in both the Dacca Conspiracy and the Munshigunge Bomb Cases and his evidence had been going on very much against the accused persons.

It was thought expedient to prevent him from doing any further mischief and a very bold step was undertaken to kill him in his own house. On April 19, 1911, at about 11 p.m. when Manmohan had been sleeping in his room, some people called him by name from outside. Manmohan became naturally suspicious and did not open the door.

Thereupon three persons, who had come with hurricane lanterns, broke open the door with the help of an axe, rushed into Manmohan's room and shot him with a revolver in his bed in the presence of his wife and children. The victim received three shots, one bullet piercing him through his chest.

There was no trace of the culprits who could not be arrested.

#### ON SUSPICION

A young man was suspected of having supplied information about his leader who was later arrested.

*Sukumar Chakrabarti*, an inhabitant of Chandarphul, started from Dacca on February 11, 1912, to see the police chief next day, the 12th February. On the same day his dead body was found in an out-of-the-way place in a highly mutilated state.

#### DISCIPLINARY MURDER

Defection though looked upon with extreme disfavour was tolerated, but not treachery. *Sarada Chakrabarti* was a member of the revolutionary party at Feni, Noakhali, and it was deemed necessary to take action against him for his harmful activities. In June 1912, he was found murdered by unknown assailants. It was a gruesome murder, the head being severed from the body and thrown into a tank at a great distance to prevent identification. It was taken as a 'disciplinary murder' essential for '*samiti* reasons'.

#### 'IMPORTED' ASSAILANTS

The Government started a series of conspiracy cases against the suspected revolutionaries or even persons displaying sympathy towards the political workers of advanced views. *Manmohan Ghose* was found a handy agent of the police for eliciting secret information about workers and helping the prosecution. As could be ascertained later he was murdered with the

help of local boys on December 11, 1913, by persons who had come all the way from Dacca to Barisal, the place of the incident.

The disappearance of Manmohan remained shrouded in mystery which was unravelled when an approver in a conspiracy case at Barisal disclosed the fact in course of his evidence.

#### IN HIS OWN TRAP

Several young men were arrested in a goldsmith's house in November 1912, for possessing revolvers and other implements generally used in dacoities. *Debendra Kumar Ghose* was one of the accused among the fourteen persons arrested. He was the son of a senior pleader in the local Munsiff's Court and was successfully influenced to make a confessional statement very much detrimental to the interests of the accused.

At about 7-30 p.m. on January 14, 1913, Debendra was passing through a quiet part of the town of Comilla when three or four men attacked him suddenly and a struggle ensued that was noticed by one of the passers-by from a safe distance. It was noticed that one of the assailants brought out a revolver from his waist cloth and shot Debendra dead on the spot and quietly disappeared.

#### MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The blow meant for a police informer fell on an innocent man for the simple reason of his keeping company with one who happened to be the target of the revolutionaries.

On June 19, 1914, *Satyendra Nath Sen* of Dhalghat, was shot dead on Sadar Ghat Road at about 8 p.m. The victim was returning to his house from a stroll with another person, an approver in the Dacca Conspiracy Case, and as such the *bete noire* of the revolutionary party. The approver, because of a guilty conscience, was always on the alert and heard sounds of distant footsteps. He turned and noticed a man aiming his revolver at him from the back. He ducked and escaped injury while Satyen was hit by the bullet and died instantaneously.

#### UNDER ORDERS OF THE MASTER

An unpretentious man of the very common type was suddenly found to become very active and trying to come quite close to the 'political' workers of Dacca. He was suspected to be completely under the influence of the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Basanta Kumar Chatterji.

In the heart of the Dacca town, *Ram Das* the informer, was shot dead on July 19, 1914, when he was walking over the Buckland Bund in the evening. The assailants, as in most other cases of the time, managed to escape without being arrested then or thereafter.

#### UNDISCLOSED ARRANGEMENT

Quite beyond the age of an average student *Srish Chandra Ray Chaudhuri* of Noakhali, was sent up at the age of 25 on January 9, 1915.

\* from the Raj Kumar Jubilee School for appearing at the Matriculation Examination. In the meantime he secured nomination for the River Police Sub-Inspectorship, may be for his meritorious services to the Government, and was to have joined the Training School after appearing at the Examination (which must have been deemed to be prerequisite for securing the job).

At about 6 a.m. quite early for a January morning of the 10th, Srish was called away by some persons, whose identity could not be established, and he was found dead at a place nearly half-a-mile away from his house.

Three loud reports occurring in quick succession at the early hours of the morning brought the local people to the place who found a man dead from bullet wounds at several places of his body. One bullet passed just behind the neck and two others pierced the right and left forearm, respectively. Portions of the wrapper and the coat of the deceased were singed by fire indicating that the shots were discharged from a very close range. No arrests were made.

#### UNWANTED VOCATION

The spirit of nationalism did not fail to influence the students of the Comilla Zilla School which happened to have as its Head Teacher, *Sarat Chandra Bose*, whose sense of loyalty militated with the views of his students and a section of the local public

Early in January 1915, a leaflet entitled, "Loyalty and Ambulance Corps", was sent to the teachers and students of the School which in the opinion of the Head Master was highly seditious. He did not rest there but informed the police about the document and reported against two students in particular as having had to do something with the circulation of the leaflet.

Sarat was returning to his house at about 6 p.m. on March 3, 1915, when he was shot dead by three persons coming on cycles on the public road on the north bank of *Nanui Dighi* and in front of Yusuf School. His servant also received gunshot wounds from the effects of which he eventually died.

#### FOR HIS SON'S SINS

A boy of sixteen had been cited as a witness in a case of political robbery committed on August 2, 1915, at Agarpara. He was warned on the score of danger that might befall him for his action.

On August 26, 1915, a well-dressed young man came to the house of the boy at Agarpara at about 10 at night and called *Murari Mohan Mitra*, the father of the lad, asking him to come outside for some urgent business. The gentleman came with a child on his arms and the stranger forthwith shot Murari for nearly half a dozen times. Murari fell dead on the spot. The child was also hit though not seriously.

The assailant ran towards the Barrackpore Trunk Road where a motor car and a couple of friends had been waiting for him. When the party

was on the point of starting two constables who happened to be on the spot tried to stop them. The policemen in their turn were shot and left wounded on the road. Nobody could be arrested.

#### FRIENDS NOT SPARED

Comrades with a record of service and suffering were not spared when it became manifest that they had been working against the party's interests.

A young man of 25, once convicted in the Bajitpur Dacoity Case and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment, was shot dead on November 16, 1915, at about 7 p.m. on the Banglabazar Road at its junction with Pratap Chandra Lane. *Basantu Kumar Bhattacharya* received four revolver shots, one penetrating the left nipple and another piercing the back under the right shoulder.

The victim was a probationer in a local steamer company. It was suspected that forgetting his past history of suffering, he found it more profitable to enjoy the confidence of the police than his erstwhile colleagues.

#### A RENEGADE'S FATE

While attention towards policemen for reprisal was not relaxed, their agents were also having at this period a very bad time at the hands of the 'soldiers of freedom'. Of all the districts of Bengal, Mymensingh acquired a fame in this respect particularly in the early years of World War I.

A young man *Dhirendra* (Debendra) *Nath Biswas*, in the first flush of youth and without proper training joined the Bajitpur Group and subsequently lapsed into his inherent nature of going over to the police and acting as a spy and or informer. On December 19, 1915, he was assassinated at Saserdighi in Mymensingh by unknown assailants. Like so many other cases of the time no clue could be secured of the culprits.

#### COMMON FATE

It came to the knowledge of the leaders of the revolutionary party at Mymensingh that *Sasi* (Sarasi) *Chakrabarti* had been playing a double role and it was necessary to deprive the Government of the valuable help it had been receiving through him. Some workers were ordered to kill him at the first opportunity and this was done on January 19, 1916, at Bajitpur in the Mymensingh District.

#### THE SECOND HEAD MASTER

A teacher went out of his way and began to take a little more interest in the political views and activities of his students than in their studies and unfortunately had to pay the penalty for his indiscretion with death.

*Nabin Chandra Basu*, the Head Master of the Maldah Zilla School, became very unpopular with the local revolutionaries by giving assistance to Government in the suppression of patriotic sentiments of his pupils.

He first joined his services as Head Master of Jamalpur, a Government-aided High English School. In 1910, he gave evidence in the Dacca Conspiracy Case in which several young men were sent to prison. In 1911, he was a prominent witness against one of his own students charged with bad-livelihood, a handy section in the Criminal Procedure Code where no specific offence could be alleged. On July 15, 1911, the town of Jamalpur was placarded with posters abusing him. He was transferred and reached Malda on May 5, 1912. Here he intercepted a seditious literature addressed to the students and teachers of the Institution and handed it over to the Superintendent of Police.

On January 28, 1916, Nabin along with an assistant teacher went out for a walk and while returning they parted near the bungalow of the Superintendent of Police. He did not return home in time and his relations became very nervous. On a search, his body was found near the Guru Training College between 6-30 and 7 p.m. He was stabbed at several places on his body and death was attributed to serious loss of blood.

One boy was arrested in this connection and in a trial that followed he was sentenced to transportation for life.

#### TRUNK MURDER

A man, Upen Ghose by name, earned a very bad reputation as a police informer amongst the members of a secret organisation. It transpired, that Upen *alias Debabrata Brahmachari*, was murdered on August 10, 1916, in a garden at Sinthee, and as the *post mortem* examination revealed, by throttling. His body was put inside a trunk and left in a railway carriage. While waiting at Bandel Station the trunk, unclaimed, was taken charge of by the police. It was long before his identity could be established beyond doubt. The three accused in the case were acquitted after a prolonged trial.

#### ROYALIST OUTBURST

During 1930-32 systematic acts of violence particularly against the Europeans and their henchmen became very frequent. One incident has been singled out just to show how the Royalists, composed predominantly of Europeans residing in Bengal, reacted to these acts demanding drastic steps against the miscreants.

The incident took place in Calcutta on October 29, 1931, when a young man in trousers and *fes* entered the office chamber of the head of a mercantile firm who happened also to be the President of the local European Association.

Three shots were fired, two missed the target and the third hit the back of the victim. The assailant was overpowered and handed over to the police.

On the very next day leaflets were circulated to all Europeans and their supporters, to the newspaper owners and editors, bearing the following

words which displayed the great nervousness that had overwhelmed the redoubtable ruling race of the Indian Empire:

Congress  
**TERRORISM**  
 must be  
 Crushed  
 -----  
**BENGAL OUTRAGES :**  
 -----  
**MURDERED !!**  
 Lowman  
     Simpson  
         Peddie •  
 Mukherjee  
         Garlick  
             Ashanulla  
 -----  
**WOUNDED !**  
 Hodson  
     Nelson  
         Cassels  
 -----  
**DONOVAN sent home for**  
**SAFETY**  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----  
 Yesterday . . . . Durno  
 This Morning . . . . Villiers  
**WE WANT ACTION**  
**ROYALISTS**

Printed for the Royalists by W. H. Armour, Ganges Printing Co. Ltd., Sibpur, Howrah.

**SUSPECT'S FATE**

One-time known as a Congress 'Dictator', *Sisupal Datta* acquired a very bad name as a police informer in the circle of underground workers. He was warned on three or four successive occasions through letters to the effect that as he was a police spy, he should be prepared for his end. Sisupal did not seem to have taken any serious notice of the threats.

He was sleeping in his house in Salpa Bahirdia, Khulna, on October 17, 1932, when he was shot by an unknown assassin resulting in his instantaneous death. The bullet pierced his body near the collar bone and came out at below the armpit. He was also hurt in one of his legs.



## ROUGH AND READY JUSTICE

A veritable nuisance to the members of a secret organisation in Comilla, a police informer *Abdul Khalek Pathan alias Mali*, of Sarail, was singled out for speedy revenge.

On November 20, 1932, Khalek was returning from a *jatra* performance at Kalaikatchha at night when he was shot at the left side of his chest with a revolver by an unknown assailant who was accompanied by five or six other persons.

Khalek had not sufficient strength to relate the incident, not even to say whether he had recognised any of the assassins. He died a few hours later.

## NONE TO ESCAPE

When a young boy of 20 was induced to tender evidence in the Manicktola Dacoity Case, he did not suspect that he had thus been exposing himself to danger of his life.

While returning from the press, where he worked for his livelihood, on December 30, 1932, at about midnight, *Ashutosh Neogi* was followed by the assassin from the head of the lane leading to his house.

As soon as he stood on the ledge of his residence and called out at the door for opening it, somebody fired a shot at him hitting him in his temple. He raised an alarm and fell to the ground. When the inmates of the house reached the place, life of the victim was extinct.

## ALONG THE TRACK

A Naraingunge message dated November 8, 1934, stated that an informer, *Hirendra Nath Guha*, was murdered by some unknown men. Usual arrests of some suspects followed who were discharged by the enquiring Magistrate for want of evidence.

## IN PEACOCK FEATHER

With a view to allow better facilities for their work, spies and informers were sometimes given the colouring of political suspects who maintained a show of labouring under the same restrictions as a genuine stuff.

The movements of some young men in an area of Dacca were restricted under the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act by an order of February 24, 1935.

Another man, *Hiralal Chakrabarti*, of the same locality and belonging to the same political party, was, for all practical purposes, accepted as a political suspect. He had to report himself to the Sutrapur P.S. and the District Intelligence Office every Wednesday ostensibly for reporting himself to the police, but really for secret purposes.

The crow of Hiralal under adornment of peacock feather did not take long to fall off, and it was decided by the revolutionary party members to put a permanent stop to his nefarious double game.

Hiralal gave his *hasira* as usual at the thana and he was, as in duty bound, going to the I. B. Office, which was about two miles from the thana for communicating the result of his watch during the week.

It was 1 p.m. on July 3, 1935. Hiralal was decoyed to the Company *bagicha* where he was stabbed by two persons who were recognised as political suspects under restriction and happened to be his friends. Hiralal died at six in the same evening in the hospital.

The suspects were arrested and put on trial before a Special Tribunal which sentenced both the accused to death on September 10, 1935, with the remark that it was found on evidence that the deceased had been acting as a spy and the murder of a spy who was giving information to the police in political matters was just as much an act striking at the organisation of an ordered Government as the murder, say, of a high Official.

One of the accused, a boy of only 18, deserving a lesser sentence for his tender age, was also awarded the highest penalty as "he was a desperate terrorist."

The High Court heard the appeal on November 27, and on December 12, 1935, passed its judgment reducing the sentence to one of transportation for life for both.