

CHAPTER THREE

A DETERMINED STEP

(1908-1913)

A Daring Experiment

(1908)

After various experiments a complete bomb could be prepared from Ullaskar's formula. It was time that a test should be carried out to examine its effectiveness. In February 1908, the Dighiria hill of modest height in Deoghar was selected for the purpose.

After making way through dense thickets at the foot of the hill, a place on the top was selected. There was a huge slab of stone, which was chin-high on the steep side, almost rising perpendicularly from the ground, and the other side sloped for about 15 to 20 yards towards the foot of the hill in mild gradient.

Shelter for protection was taken at a safe distance. Prafulla Chandra Chakrabarti was entrusted with the task of throwing the bomb on the slope of the hill while standing behind the slab. He had directions to sit down immediately the bomb was let off. The caution against waiting was palpably disregarded. Unfortunately before the bomb had received the impact of the ground the highly inflammable substance in it got ignited by the contact with air; a slight spark and a very small quantity of smoke were barely noticed when it exploded in mid-air producing a terrific sound, its echo reverberating from hill to hill. Simultaneously the comrades shouted out of glee: 'a grand success' from their respective stations.

It was apparant that the explosion occurred before the anticipated time, before Prafulla could hide himself behind the

'shield' and a part of the bomb-splinters may be, hit Prafulla on the head. A portion of the forehead with one eye was seen smashed and a quantity of the brain material oozing out through the wound. Prafulla, a moment before, so blithe, bubbling with the exuberance of youth, burning with spirit of patriotism lay still, all signs of life having left him in the fraction of a moment.

It was a problem with the young friends of Prafulla with regard to his mortal remains. Burial in the rocks of Dighiria Hill, where because of the rocky soil and dearth of implements, to dig a grave was out of the question. Cremation was not at all possible due to want of dry logs and twigs and in quantity sufficient for the purpose. Moreover, that was likely to draw the attention of the local people. Decision was taken for leaving the corpse over there to be devoured by wild animals.

It lay unattended. The next day the friends visited the place and found Prafulla lying just in the same manner as he was left—and as the friends said, without much putrefaction or decomposition of any sort. On the second day, when the friends went there to have a last look before leaving Deoghar for Calcutta, it was not there; even a most diligent search failed to discover even a shred of his clothing! It is a matter of guess as to how and where Prafulla disappeared even when life had become extinct.

The Birched Hero

(1907-1915)

'Discard Fear' had been the cry of *The Bande Mataram*, the *Yugantar*, the *Sandhya* in Calcutta and the nationalist papers of other parts of India particularly of Punjab. In a short time it did not fail to produce the desired result. Tales of skirmishes between the natives of the soil and the foreigners came thick and fast and where the 'white-skinned' opponent had been worsted, it produced a thrill of joy in the minds of even the common people not so much interested in the fight for country's freedom.

In *The Bande Mataram* prosecution case wild enthusiasm was

created in the public mind by the refusal of Bepin Chandra Pal to depose against Aurobindo, the Editor of the Paper. Young men would throng the police court in Lal Bazar, shout *Bande Mataram* and adopt other methods of expressing their hearty support to the stand taken by the witness. The hearing of the case, before Kingsford, had been proceeding on August 26, 1907, and the usual crowd was present in the court compound. As was usual in other days an order was passed by the Magistrate to drive out the noisy young men and to teach them lessons in good behaviour. The large number of helmeted and red-turbaned police would at once set out to give effect to the order by using their well-seasoned long (regulation) *lathis* and make a liberal use of them on the assembled public.

Indiscriminate beating caused a stampede in the unsuspecting passers-by and many were very badly hit and sustained more or less serious injuries. A young boy of fifteen took courage and tried to return the blow which was freely exchanged between him and a police sergeant. The incident was reported in great detail and with great gusto in the nationalist press. The *Sandhya* described it on August 31, 1907, thus:

“Everybody who saw Susil’s heroic conduct of the affray at Lal Bazar was amazed. Susil, when he saw a red-faced *daroga* assaulting a number of people without any provocation, stepped into the fray and in so doing got assaulted.... Susil is a youth of 15, whereas the red-faced one was a huge and heavy fellow. But Susil’s zest was a thing to see.... The red-faced fellow was thoroughly worsted..... Let nobody get frightened by the big show the *feringhi* fellows make. Inside them is all straw and Susil dragged it out and smashed up their showy exterior.”

A criminal case for assault was started on the complaint of the sergeant in the Court of Kingsford, the Chief Presidency Magistrate, on August 27, 1907. A story of the assault was given by the complainant. The accused replied:

“I don’t know anything about being guilty or not. I was coming from Sealdah. At a short distance from Lal Bazar I saw a large gathering. I came to the place and tried to ascertain what the matter was. At this moment this sergeant (pointing to the complainant) came and assaulted anybody and everybody he met there. I returned the blow. He then began to beat me again and again and to prevent him I too returned the blows. A few other police officers came up and threw me down into the street.”

The bias of the trying Magistrate against the accused even before any evidence had been tendered was expressed in the words: "There is a feeling among young men that the Bengalis can resist the Police." The defending lawyer retorted that the police believed in their turn that they could do anything and everything with the Bengalis. Even yesterday the police assaulted many in this Court.

Kingsford: Why not? They should be bludgeoned as in other countries.

He ordered the boy to receive fifteen stripes "by way of student discipline".

There was a sense of horror in Bengal and outside at the inhuman severity of the punishment. Young Bengal took upon itself the task of dispensing justice to Kingsford. An English Paper, *The Nation*, commented that

"the flogging of an educated man for a political offence is surely a novel infamy. The flogging of politicals is rare even in Russia. Its frequency under Austrian rule in Italy was one of the circumstances most potent in alienating even the sympathy of English Conservatives in 1848."

And in 1907 the Liberal Lord Morley accorded approval by promoting Kingsford in his service.

The Bande Mataram eulogised, (November 11, 1907), Susil for the simple reason that when brutally flogged in jail he maintained such a stoic attitude that he did not move or stir because he thought it "derogatory to national cause to betray any sign of weakness to the servants of the bureaucracy." According to the Paper the list of convicted young patriots had been growing larger and

"everyone of them displayed such unprecedented moral courage that it called forth universal admiration and struck terror into the hearts of the bureaucracy."

It continued:

"Fill up the gap in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
'Stablish, continue our march
On to the bound of the waste,
On to the City of God."

Susil's *alma mater*, the National College, closed for a day in

his honour. He was congratulated in a big public meeting held in College Square on August 28, 1907, on his valiant coming out of the ordeal. Surendra Nath Banerjea sent a gold medal to the President of the meeting to be awarded to the hero. The meeting over, he was taken in a hackney carriage round the city in accompaniment of the famous song:

*"Jai jabe jiban chole,
Jagat majhe tomar kaje 'Bande' Mataram' bole ;
Bet mere ki ma bholabi, anra ki mar sei chhele,"*

"Let life depart if it will in carrying out your work uttering *Bande Mataram.*"

Would you make us forget our Mother by flogging?
Never think that such sons of our Mother we are."

After a lapse of nine months Susil was arrested on May 15, 1908, in his village home in Baniyachong, Sylhet, and placed on trial in the Alipore Conspiracy Case with Aurobindo, Barindra and other stalwarts of Indian Nationalism. He was found not guilty by the Assessors and the Judge disagreeing with them awarded him seven years' rigorous imprisonment. In the High Court appeal the two Judges differed and his case with that of three others, was referred to a third Judge. He was acquitted of all charges on February 18, 1910.

Susil Kumar appeared in another role in 1915. On April 28 a few young men appeared at Pragpur in the Nadia district in two boats. They seemed to have come from a long distance. Two dacoities were committed in the locality on April 30 and on May 2, 1915, in which these young men were apparently involved. Chased by the villagers they crossed the river to reach Khalilpur. There they got down to cook food in a cowshed when they attracted the notice of a man to whom they would not disclose any name. It aroused his suspicion and he informed the police. A party of policemen hurried to the scene and some of the strangers got into the boat. The police fired shots which were replied. There was exchange of shots between the retiring men and the police. One of the fugitives slipped his foothold and the firearm in his hand let off a bullet which hit one of the comrades. The body was at once lifted on the boat. It started at full speed chased by the people on the river bank and by the police in boats that had been

requisitioned and had arrived in the meantime. It was a tense situation for the fugitives. Darkness of the night deepened by gathering clouds and a raging storm helped the escape.

The boy hit by the stray bullet was the 'birched hero' Susil Kumar Sen. He was alive just to ask his comrades to sever his head from the body on his death and throw it away which would relieve them of the load of a carcass. Moreover, in such a case, even if the body was found, identification would be difficult and the chances of a successful Government prosecution would be meagre.

The advice was followed to the letter. On May 6, 1915, at the Kristipur Chur (Khalilpur) a policeman noticed a bamboo stuck in the mud near the brink and also a small portion of boat above the water. The place was thoroughly searched and a spent cartridge was found. A drag-net was used in the shallow water and pieces of cloth were found but not the body.

Susil Kumar got seriously into the service of the Mother-land in his early youth. He is known to have delivered the "book-bomb" to Kingsford's house sent for killing him by an explosion as soon as the book had been opened. He happened to be one of the group of young men responsible for the death of Inspector Suresh Mukherjee at the crossing of Manicktola and Cornwallis Streets.

He was a boy exceptionally endowed with intellectual and moral qualities and he followed upto the last day of his life his mission with uncommon zeal and devotion till cruel hand of death brought respite on May 3, 1915, to a restless spirit.

A Portentous Phase

(1908)

The terrible repression of the people of Bengal at the hands of the police and ruthless suppression of outlets of public resentment to Government measures forced the movement to go underground. The secret political organisations that had hitherto come into existence but was in a moribund condition decided upon meeting force with force irrespective of the consequences. Removal of brutally oppressive Government officials, of which there was precedent at Poona (June 22, 1897), was given a high priority in the programme of revolutionary action in Bengal.

Indications were very clear that Indian nationalism had been entering upon a new and portentous phase the ultimate significance of which was at that time very difficult to gauge. It literally started with, (*The Statesman*: May 4, 1908) "the partition of Bengal, the crowning folly of Lord Curzon's regime" and "a different spirit had manifested itself whose weapons are apparently to be bombs and dynamite." Fuel was added to this spirit by the judgments of Kingsford, Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, from August 1904 to March 1908, inflicting merciless punishments to all who showed signs of patriotism in their action and or in their writings. The Government had been feeling nervous about Kingsford's safety and he was transferred from Calcutta as the District and Sessions Judge of Muzaffarpore on March 28, 1908.

It was decided upon by the leaders that Kingsford must die and for this reason his track should be followed wherever he might go. Two young boys were selected for the purpose and sent to Muzaffarpore with the necessary weapons for the murder of Kingsford.

Commissioned with their task Dinesh Chandra Ray and Khudiram Bose reached Muzaffarpore at the end of the third week of April, 1908 and put up in a room in a Dharamshala. They ran short of funds and took a loan from a local gentleman, an influential employee of a local Zemindar, with whose help they

could also find shelter in the Dharamshala. They received a money order from Calcutta through this gentleman who was later hauled up before the Court for rendering help to these boys.

The two young heroes waited for a week for a suitable opportunity. Kingsford did not move out of his quarters and go anywhere except to the Courts. They once visited the place but desisted from taking any action because of the chance of a large number of innocent lives getting involved.

On April 30, 1908, the two friends reached a place in front of Kingsford's house at about 8 p.m. and kept waiting under a tree for their victim.

While Dinesh and Khudiram had been waiting in ambush Mr. and Mrs. Kingsford and Mrs. and Miss Kennedy had been playing bridge at the club at about 8-30 p.m. They left for home in two separate open carriages both very similar in appearance and each drawn by a single horse. The house of Kingsford was situated very close to the Club and Kennedy's, a mile away.

The vehicle in which Mrs. and Miss Kennedy were seated preceded that of their friend's Victoria by a few seconds. As the first carriage drew level with the first entrance of Kingsford's grounds, Dinesh and Khudiram sprang from the shadow of one of the tall trees that lined the broad thoroughfare separating the residential buildings from the maidan.

At the time they had in their possession three revolvers and one bomb. Evidently if the bomb had failed in its purpose, they would have to take recourse to the use of the revolvers to complete their job.

The psychological moment arrived and Khudiram ran deliberately towards the carriage and poising the bomb in his outstretched arm above the head threw it with full force at the carriage which he believed to have been carrying Kingsford in its hold.

The sound of the explosion startled the town. Both Mrs. and Miss Kennedy and the syce were seriously injured. The carriage was shattered and nothing but the ribs of splintered woodwork was left of the rear portion torn and rent and charred by the explosion. Miss Kennedy died within a few minutes of the explosion, and Mrs. Kennedy a little later.

It was sheer good luck that saved Kingsford from a sure death. Incidentally it may be mentioned that an attempt was

made to kill him while he was in his Garden Reach house in Calcutta through a novel bomb placed inside a book. It was a tin case of picric acid concealed inside the body of the book of 1200 pages, 600 of which had been scooped out to accommodate it. Springs were set in such a manner that, on the cutting of the string with which the book was tied up, the cover would fly open and a detonator of fulminate of mercury would be struck by a nail.

The 'book bomb' was sent to Kingsford and the *chaprasi* put it on the table of the *sahib*, who in turn placed it among his other books on the idea that it was returned by some friend who had taken it on loan. The book was hunted up in connection with the case. The spring was rusted but the explosive was found in tact.

The two assailants immediately left the place leaving their shoes at the place which indicated that they had been going bare-footed. Thus the shoes supplied a valuable clue to their arrest. There was also found a tin can near the football posts on the maidan. It served as a container of the bomb that was carried to the scene of occurrence. After covering a long distance they parted company one running towards Samastipore and the other in another direction.

An alarm was sent forth to different quarters for the apprehension of the culprits. The District Superintendent of Police sent two Sub-Inspectors down the railway line, one to Bankipore and another to Mokameh with instructions to leave constables at each station along the route and to arrest all suspicious or suspected persons. Among the men thus sent two were despatched to Waini station by train.

Dinesh Chandra Ray

From the place of occurrence Dinesh Chandra Ray reached Samastipore, a railway station on the B. & N. W. Railway on May 1, 1908 and took an inter class ticket for Mokameh Ghat. He had in the meantime changed his dress and was at the time wearing new clothes and a new pair of shoes. He attracted the notice of a Sub-Inspector of Police, Nandalal Banerjee, who on the expiry of his leave had taken the train from Muzaffarpore to rejoin his duties at Singhbhum.

The appearance of Dinesh aroused suspicion of the Sub-Inspector who suspected him as having some connection with the outrage at Muzaffarpore of the previous evening. He got into the same compartment with Dinesh and started conversation with him on various matters.

Dinesh got down at Semuriaghat and proceeded towards the Ganges to allay his thirst. He came back but because of his disgust at the other man's inquisitiveness, Dinesh got into another compartment. Alighting at Mokameh Ghat he purchased another inter class ticket for Howrah.

The Police Officer here tendered apologies and again became friendly with him. Meanwhile he had telegraphed his suspicions to Muzaffarpore and at Mokameh Ghat received a telegram directing him to arrest the suspected person. On the strength of this message Dinesh was arrested, but because of his great physical fitness he was able to wrench off and dash down the platform pursued by two constables who had by previous intimation been kept there on guard. Almost at the end of the platform after finding that escape was impossible he turned back and fired a shot at the constable nearest to him. The bullet missed and the constable closed up with his victim.

Dinesh somehow managed to release his hand with great effort and fired two shots at himself from his Browning pistol, one of which entered under the chin and the other passing through his left collar bone. Death was instantaneous.

On May 1, 1908, at about 6 p.m. the second martyr in the cause of freedom, the first being Prafulla Chakrabarti, sacrificed his life at the Altar of the Motherland. The *Hitakari* (June 15, 1908) commented:

"His soul has now flown to a higher tribunal where kings and beggars, revolutionists and their rulers stand on the same level and no distinction is made of their respective positions in the dispensation of Justice."

The head of Dinesh was severed from his body and was brought down preserved in spirit of wine, to Calcutta, for identification. After a lapse of a few days it was established beyond doubt that Dinesh Chandra Ray was no one else than Prafulla Kumar Chaki of Rangpur.

Prafulla was a remarkable lad when he joined the revolutionary party. He possessed enormous physical strength and an

iron constitution. In this respect he was the best boy in the Rangpur National Institution. During a visit to that district on a secret mission, Barindra Kumar Ghose was very much impressed with Prafulla's qualities of head and heart and his courage marked him out for the first deadly venture that was to strike terror into the heart of every oppressive ruler. It was unfortunate for the country that this attempt misfired and ended in a grim disaster. (*Vide* Appendix 'A', p. 168).

Khudiram Bose

Khudiram dashed towards the railway line with the idea of reaching a station and thence proceed to Calcutta. He reached Waini, a station on B. & N. W. Rly., a distance of twenty-four miles from Muzaffarpore. He was barefooted and quite exhausted due to the strain of the journey of such a long distance without food and drink.

He strolled into the bazar a few yards from the Waini Station and was seen at about 8 a.m. eating a handful of parched rice near a shop. When just going to drink, he was arrested by the police.

He was elaborately questioned by the Police Officer. In reply, apparently evasive, he said that he was on his way to Bankipore. When it was pointed out to him that in such a case he ought to have alighted at Muzaffarpore and not at Waini, all he could say was that he felt extremely thirsty and got down at Waini to quench his thirst. At the time of his examination he once tried to slip away but he was firmly held and pinioned. He tried to draw a revolver from his coat, carried under his arm, but was prevented from giving effect to his desire.

When arrested Khudiram had in his possession two revolvers, one of which was fully loaded, Rs. 30 in notes and coins, 37 rounds of ammunition, an Indian railway map and cuttings from a local time-table.

The suspect was brought back to Muzaffarpore by the evening train; the station was densely crowded by people anxious to have a look at him.

When he alighted from the train his appearance did not betray the slightest sign of agitation or fear. He was calm and collected and had even a cheerful look, but without any trace of bravado.

As he seated himself in the carriage for the police station he shouted *Bande Mataram*. But for the undaunted look in his eyes, no one could even dream that the slender faint-looking lad of 18 or thereabouts to be the performer of an act, the sound of which echoed and re-echoed till it reached the horizon.

In his statement before the District Magistrate he said that he had intended to kill Kingsford as he looked upon the latter as the greatest tyrant in India and that he threw the bomb on the carriage on April 30, in the belief that it had been carrying Kingsford and not two innocent and unfortunate ladies.

The Muzaffarpore Bomb Case was opened on May 21, 1908. The prisoner's non-chalance was remarkable. He did not, as if seem to realise the ultimate end awaiting him. During the proceedings the accused looked as unmoved as stone and during part of the trial he was seen to dose. He gained two pounds in weight during the undertrial period and he betrayed no emotion whatsoever.

The accused was committed to the Sessions on May 25, and the trial commenced on June 8, 1908. The prisoner pleaded guilty. The case ended on June 13 with a verdict of death. When the Judge addressing the prisoner enquired whether he had understood the implication of the sentence passed on him, he nodded and smiled. His face brightened up: it seemed that he had had nothing to do with it.

On June 11, 1908, he had an informal talk with his lawyer in the course of which he said:

"I am a resident of Midnapore Town and have no father, no mother, brother or uncle, paternal or maternal. I have got a sister, my elder, who has got many children, the eldest being about my age.

* * * *

I read up to the Second Class. I gave up my study two or three years ago. Since then I began to take active part in the *Swadeshi* Movement.

I wish to see Midnapore for once and my sister and her children. I have no trouble in my mind.

I am treated fairly well in jail. The food is coarse and quite unsuited to me which has told upon my health. Otherwise I am not ill-treated. I am confined in a lonely cell, where I am

kept day and night. I am allowed only once to come out, when I go to bathe. I am tired of being alone."

To a question by the lawyer Khudiram replied that he had no cause of fear. He had read the *Gita* perfectly well. There was no question of his pleading not guilty as he felt fully conscious of his responsibility in the matter and he was sorry that Kingsford was still alive and that two innocent ladies had been killed instead.

The stoic attitude of Khudiram was not relished by the trying Judge who remarked:

"I am unable to find on the face of it any ground for mitigating the penalty, and I need not prolong the prisoner's agony and suspense, if indeed he feels, as I would feign hope him capable of feeling by saying one word more."

An appeal was preferred in the High Court on July 6, 1908. After a short hearing the sentence was confirmed on July 13, 1908.

Khudiram's execution took place on August 11, 1908, punctually at 6 a.m. in the Muzaffarpore Jail.

He walked to the gallows firmly and cheerfully and even smiled when the cap was drawn over the head.

A quiet funeral on the Gandak finished a stormy career that had from adolescence served the Motherland with unflinching devotion unmoved by the frowns of the minions of foreign Government holding India with brute force. (*Vide* Appendix 'B')

Kingsford did not die but the shock and fear of life were so great that he fell ill and left for Mussoorie with the entire family on May 3. His enthusiasm displayed in the trial of political cases in Calcutta left him for good and for all practical purposes he was dead to Indian administration though living in flesh and blood.

The Empire (an evening daily) published the following editorial on August 11, 1908:

"Khudiram Bose was executed this morning....it is alleged that he mounted the scaffold with his body erect. He was cheerful and smiling.... It is said that when his pleader visited him in the jail the day before the execution, Khudiram told him that he would die as fearlessly as the Rajput women of old did on funeral pyres."

Khudiram had a golden past so far as unstinted service to the country was concerned. He had even in his younger days no fear of the police or for his sufferings at their hands.

On April 1, 1906, an Industrial Exhibition was opened at

Midnapore in the presence of the District Magistrate when shouts of *Bande Matoram* were raised by some boys and everybody was struck with terror because of the consequences of this unpardonable offence. On the closing day of the *mela* (fair), a leaflet was distributed containing abusive language against the English rulers in India.

Previous to this on February 28, a mere boy of 15 was arrested by a Head Constable for having in his possession three copies of the offending leaflet. The boy who was no other than the hero Khudiram, was ready to go wherever he was wanted to by the police, but he insisted on having his hands free as his offence had not yet been proved or even cited. He must be treated as an honourable citizen. He was insulted by the same constable for his attitude and he tried to drag him by force to the local Police Station. Khudiram felt indignant at this treatment and he wrenched his hand by force and left the place.

From the next day, i.e., March 1, 1906, police investigation was started with great vigour and several respectable gentlemen, together with an informer, were summoned to the Magistrate's quarters where they were shabbily treated. On the top of it, a Government employee of some standing was served with a notice of dismissal.

Khudiram, because of his leanings towards *Swadeshi*, had to leave his family and to take his residence in a boarding house attached to the local weaving school. On May 31, 1906, two Sub-Inspectors and about ten constables forced their entrance into the boarding house at 1 a.m. and arrested Khudiram from amongst a number of other boys sleeping there.

Experience of the lock-up thus started with Khudiram from this tender age. Bail could not be secured in spite of the best efforts. He bore the trial patiently and heroically.

On April 4, 1906, Khudiram was released on bail. On April 17, he was committed to the Sessions on the ground that "on or about 28th February at Midnapore old jail compound he attempted to bring the Government into hatred or contempt" (Section 124A I.P.C.) and "with intent to incite or which was likely to incite the native community against the European community and thereby committed offence under section 506 I.P.C. (criminal intimidation) by circulation of leaflets."

He was brought before the Court with his hands firmly handcuffed as if he had been a hardened criminal with records of escape from custody behind him.

He was allowed bail on April 18 and his case was, on the ground of his tender age, withdrawn on May 16, 1906.

This early lesson laid the stone of a solid foundation of a service and sacrifice in future.

A few among the revolutionists expressed their sorrow at the death of two innocent ladies in the belief that their future efforts might fail by the curse of God. The *Yugantar* (article reproduced in *The Englishman*: June 9, 1908) tried to dissipate the nervousness of such faint-hearted fellows with the following exhortation:

"If any youth aspiring to freedom has really said so, then he has not yet become fit to obtain freedom. Hard-heartedness is necessary to trample the enemy under foot. When during the *Treta-yuga*, the *Rakshasas* were perpetrating frightful oppression in the Dandaka forest, Rama extirpated the whole race of the *Rakshasas*, Lakshman Thakur cut off the nose and ears of Surpanakha, the beautiful sister of Ravana, and then let her go. It is not necessary to give illustrations if in the attempt to destroy the enemy a woman is accidentally killed. Then God have no cause of displeasure like the English. Many a female demon must be killed in the course of time in order to extirpate the race of *Asuras* from the breast of the earth. There is no sin in this; no mercy; no affection!" (*I'ide* Appendix 'B', p. 169).

APPENDIX

(A)

A correspondent from Bogra wrote to *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* on May 30, 1908, on Prafulla Chaki:

..... That a boy of such a tender age, meek and docile would come out of such a "sleepy hollow" as Bogra to join a secret brotherhood was beyond our conception.

Born of a quiet, religious family, and the youngest of the five children of the late Rajnarain Chaki of Behar, a village some twenty miles north of Bogra, Prafulla instead of being 'gay' as his name indicates, was dedicative and thoughtful from his early boyhood. He was rarely seen at play with his comrades, but would sit alone for hours in a pensive mood.

Although of a somewhat dark complexion his broad forehead, "pencilled" eye-brows and resolute face indicated a strong mind.

He was one of the eighty boys who left the Rangpur Zilla School as a protest against the interfering measures initiated by the Fullerian Government and formed by the stand they made the nucleus of national education in Bengal.

Though his career has been wild and brief, he came of a cultured and well off family . . .

Prafulla took formal leave of his mother more than a year ago; the mysterious words of farewell he uttered were then Greek to the old lady, but are now full of meaning.

Even in his fearful new mission he could not forget his mother, and wrote two letters to her from different places without any postal designation; but assuring her at the same time that 'her child' was not unhappy in the least and not uncomfortable in his present situation. Moreover, he informed her that he had espoused the order of *brahmacharya*, and was making fair progress in his religion, and in the study of his subjects and there was no case of anxiety for him.

All went on smoothly till the beginning of this month, when the whole family were rudely shaken by the news of the tragic end of their beloved. When the cruel news was flashed in the Papers that the head of the deceased had been severed from his body and preserved in spirits, people were literally stunned with horror.

Verily, we could not make out what the paternal Government would gain by this unseemly act, when photos for identification had already been taken. The dead bodies even of enemies are respected by all civilized nations. The revolting decapitation of the corpse reminds one of the treatment which the Committee of Public Safety, during the French Revolution, meted out to the dead body of Valaze, one of the Girondists who made away with himself with a poniard, just after the sentence of death was passed on him. The President decreed in ghastly words that the warm corpse of Valaze would be carried to the prison, conveyed in the same cart with the accomplices to the scaffold, and interred with them.

I close this imperfect, and hasty sketch with the last words of Prafulla as he stood on the brink of eternity: 'Ha, Ha. You a Bengalee, my countryman, have come to arrest me.'

(B)

The Bande Mataram, (August 16, 1908, editorial for August 12, 1908) presents before its readers the spiritual side of the action that transcended the fears and misgivings of the flesh:

His last wish was to partake of the 'Prasad' of the local deity by way of receiving its blessing. In the prison he was absorbed all day in the

study of religious and patriotic literature. He was preparing to die and his conduct on the scaffold.... shows how complete was the preparation. He has completely falsified the theory that it was an artificial enthusiasm that supplied him with the motive of his action. He all along knew to what extent he was responsible for the crime. But that he was prepared to bear his full share of responsibility cannot in the least be doubted. His ambition was perhaps to die for his country like the Rajput women on the funeral pyres. Beautiful as he was like a fairy nobody could suspect him to be an assassin. During his trial at Muzaffarpore a Beharee gentleman came to scoff but remained to doubt his crime and admire his conduct. But now that he died so fearlessly the assassin is totally merged in the hero. It is not given to every man to overcome the weakness of flesh in this way. People can never forget how the Spirit got the better of the flesh in this young man. We are really reminded of the spiritual strength of yore.

Philosophy of the Bomb

(1908)

The echo of the Muzaffarpore explosion reverberated throughout India and reached the shores of England before it died down. The nationalist press while condemning the act commended the spirit of selfless sacrifice of the two young lads, one of whom took away his life with his own hands and another who lost it on the gallows.

Naturally enough the British-owned Papers all over India went into hysterics and demanded the heads of the known as also of the unknown leaders and men of the revolutionary movement on a charger.

Some of the nationalist Papers advised caution and urged upon the Government to find out the real cause of such unrest and violent manifestation of temper of a class of people who had by now developed one passion and that of liberty irrespective of the sufferings they have had to undergo.

"The remedies suggested by the Anglo-Indian Press is sure to fail," wrote the *Kesari*, (May 5, 1908), "as these have failed in Russia and elsewhere."

It was followed by the *Prakash*, (May 5, 1908):

"The English have been greatly frightened at the change which this engine of destruction has wrought in the politics of the country."

The Punjabee, (May 6, 1908), rightly analysed the cause as the result of a deep-seated malady:

"It shows the depth of intensity of discontent which brought about by the existing state of things and has converted even the timid, docile, westernised Bengali into an anarchist."

It is incumbent on the Government "to deeply ponder over the causes that are leading people to commit such offences" advised the *Kal*, (May 8, 1908). There can be no effect without a cause and the Indians must have been given sufficient incitement "to resort to violent means." Moreover the Bengalis have overcome their fear for the prison and the gallows. The *Hind Swarajya*, (May 9, 1908), stated that "they declare in open court, their readiness to die in the country's cause."

In analysing the spring of action the *Mahratta*, (May 10, 1908), held that the action "was criminal in character" goes without saying, "but there was not the shadow of self-interest which is the usual motive for crimes. . . . There is no private grudge, no mean spite, no sordid revengefulness against any individual. The confessions made appear on their face to be straight forward and honest; and they prove that the boys were guided by the sole consideration of the futility of the ordinary methods of political agitation and the irresistible desire to make terrible protest against the existing state of things so far as lay in their power, and . . . the remote responsibility lies on the head of the Government itself."

The attitude of Englishmen "in maintaining a permanent sway over India simply for the sake of Imperialism" says the *Bhala*, (May 11, 1908), will exacerbate Indian sentiment still more "which every now and then make its existence felt by means of bomb outrages."

The same argument is advanced by the *Kesari*, (May 12, 1908), in which it treats the matter of bomb outrages and their causes in great detail. It argued,

"The desire of the people gradually to obtain the rights of *Swarajya* is growing stronger and stronger and if they do not get rights by degrees, as desired by them, then some people at least out of the subject population being filled with indignation or exasperation will not fail to embark upon the commission of improper horrible deeds recklessly.

* * * *

"If rulers do not want them, they should impose restriction upon their own system of administration.

"All thoughtful people seem to have formed one opinion that the bomb party has come into existence in consequence of the oppression practised by the official class, the harassment inflicted by them and their obstinacy in treating public opinion with recklessness. The bombs exploded owing to the official class having tried the patience of the Bengalees to such a degree that the heads of the Bengalee youths become turned. The responsibility of this calamity must, therefore, be thrown not on the political agitation, writings or speeches, but on the thoughtlessness and obstinacy of the official class."

It is the motive, that lends strength to the mind and hands of those who fearlessly come forward to court death. In this violent action the *Mumukshu*, (May 14, 1908), finds

"a divine dispensation that the Bengali race which has long been looked upon as most pusillanimous should have produced a score of youths ready to sacrifice their lives for their country, and Chapekar-like undergo any punishment with dauntless courage and cheerfulness"

Certainly they will be punished heavily

"but all who think of their extraordinary courage, their outspokenness, and their noble and pure motives cannot but feel admiration for them, and even those who condemn them for their thoughtless actions cannot but praise their disinterestedness. Their aim might be mistaken but their motive was pure. Will any one ever be able to court death without pure motives?"

The effect of the outrage will produce a sense of "insecurity of lives in India in Englishmen" (*The Hind Punch*: May 13, 1908).

There can be no regrets over the outrage which killed "only two women", according to the *Swarajya*, (May 16, 1908),

"because the police must have sent many thousands to the other world by their persecutions. Their (the patriots') conduct is quite unselfish and they had devoted themselves solely to the service of the country.

* * * * *

"Why should patriots, whose motive is to render service to the country be dubbed anarchists? They are as good patriots as the Moderates or the Nationalists, if not better; perhaps their patriotism having reached its acme may have followed a wrong direction."

Further dilating the point the Paper says in the course of the same article:

"The band does not appear to be mean-minded, but far-sighted in their aims and unbending in their determination. They have placed before them

the noblest ideal of independence and they did what they deemed to be their duty to achieve it! It is clear that though their brains were on fire, their hearts were strong and holy. Their souls were not stained with guilt of the ordinary murderers or dacoits."

The *Dnyanottejak* (May 16), the *Jain* (May 17), the *Bhala* (May 21) wrote in the same strain extolling the motive of the action.

The Muzaffarpore incident takes a different colour because those who have "organised these plots" are "not ignorant or uneducated men". It is necessary to explore the reasons writes the *Gujrati* (May 17, 1908) :

"What then is the reason that educated men, though well aware that they will have to sacrifice their lives, launch themselves into such dangerous undertakings? When such political madness seizes the educated, the authorities should infer that the people have no longer the patience to suppress their dislike for the administration."

A thorough disregard for personal safety, the noble motive and rare courage displayed by two young lads extort unstinted admiration of the *Sudhakar*, (May 16, 1908), but it has no sympathy for their dastardly action.

The real motive of the outrage in both Poona and Muzaffarpore is ascribed by the *Vihari*, (May 18, 1908), to the oppression of the English officers concerned, viz., Rand and Kingsford. And "there is not a single man who would not admire these anarchists for the nobility of their aspiration."

The birth of the bomb presages the advent of a new era. The *Kesari*, (May 26, 1908), writes:

"Neither the Jubilee murder of 1897, nor the reported deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, nor the reported tampering with the Sikh regiments had produced so much commotion, and English public opinion seems inclined to regard birth of the bomb in India as the most extraordinary event since the Mutiny of 1857." (*Vide Appendix*)

The *Yugantar* which had been suppressed earlier reappeared on May 5, 1908, and the very same issue contained articles which plainly and without reserve called upon the people to loot the treasuries and in the name of the *Chamunda nrimunda-malini karal-badani Kali* to engage in war with the enemy.

The *Hitakari*, (May 28, 1908), was not slow in holding before

its readers the distinction between the 'revolutionaries' and 'anarchists' and it boldly asserted that

"they (the boys of Bengal) do not desire the subversion of law and order as European anarchists do, although their conduct may lead to disorder and confusion."

They should be judged by the motives that forced them to resort to bomb-throwing. It balances the argument of the calumniators of the action and the point of view of the actors themselves:

"If it is said that Khudiram was guilty of murder, cowardice and of using infernal weapons, the revolutionists can reply that every ruler who oppresses the people and sends them to the gallows is also guilty of the same crime. It may be said that Khudiram is a fiend because he killed two innocent ladies. It is true; but will a judge be considered a fiend if by mistake he sentences an innocent person to be hanged who has been sent up for trial by the police willingly or unwillingly?"

There are always two sides of any action out of the ordinary. It is difficult to reconcile these conflicting views. But there were no two opinions about the loftiness of their ideal. Writes the *Hindusthan*, (May 29, 1908), to the following effect:

"The principal characters were praised by some for their heroic unselfishness, denounced by most for their crack-brainedness, admired by a few as idealists and abhorred by many as Nihilists. However much opinions varied on one point, all agreed that there was no touch of meanness in them. Grand and lofty they loomed in the simplicity and truthfulness of their avowals."

The *Yugantar* declared, (May 20, 1908), that

"the country is impatient to take vengeance on the traitors. The hour of vengeance is come and those who gave the police information and even those who may be mistaken for the traitors will suffer.

"The *shastras* say: Be he brother, or father or son, kill him if he be a traitor; there is no sin in it.

"The handful of police and soldiers will never be able to withstand this ocean of revolutionists. These prisoners may die but thousands will spring into existence. Don't be afraid! With the blood of the heroes the soil of Hindusthan is always fertile. Don't be broken-hearted. There is no dearth of heroes. There is no dearth of money. Glory awaits you! A single frown (a few bombs) from your eyes have struck terror into the heart of the foe! The uproar of panic has filled the sky! Before the curtain has actually been raised a glimpse of the splendour of the stage, while the

orchestra still plays, has made the heart of the audience mad with joy. Swim with renewed energy in the ocean of war!

"The mental condition of the prisoners (of the Alipore Conspiracy Case) is excellent, some have gone to heaven by killing themselves and snapping their fingers at the enemy; others have bidden eternal farewell to their comrades."

In securing equilibrium between two contending forces, society seeks its own level, (*Kesari* : June 5, 1908), for finding out some means:

"It is true that no thoughtful man would lend his support to such murderous excesses, but eminent historians have pointed out that even such wicked tendencies have in them a latent power of doing good and therefore such men should not be looked upon as the enemies of mankind.

"... Society automatically gives birth to certain harsh remedies when the two powers are disproportionately balanced and secures equilibrium."

The contention of the *Kesari*, (June 9, 1908), is that the cry that has been raised by the Government of India "that the cult of the bomb in Bengal is destructive of social order just like its prototype in Europe" is not the whole truth. According to the Paper

"while the cult in Europe is the outcome of the wealthy classes, the Bengal cult has got at its root an excess of the patriotic sentiment."

It goes on:

"The English have evidently emasculated the whole nation and reduced it to a state of impotence simply to enable even the lowest of their officials to exercise their high-handed sway with impunity. The English possess neither the magnanimity nor the power of the Moghuls who never disarmed the Indian.

"As compared with the Imperial sway of the Moghuls, the English Empire in India is extremely weak and wanting in vigour from the point of view of military strength. The Emperor Aurangzebe exercised tyranny of various kinds over the Hindus from the point of view of religion though not from the point of the distribution of wealth; and his ten or twenty lakhs of troops also perished completely during his Deccan campaigns of ten or twenty years. Still the Empire of Delhi lasted for one hundred and fifty years... albeit in a hobbling manner, after his death. If the English army in India were to be confronted by difficulties similar to those which Aurangzebe's forces encountered then the English rule will not last in India even for a quarter of a century after (that). The principal reason of this is that the English remain in India like temporary tenants or mere birds of passage."

The people are disarmed while the Government has all the military strength in its favour. The result is that the Britishers think themselves the absolute masters of the situation. But the bomb has changed all this. Because,

"hitherto the Government had no means of knowing the degree of desperation to which some of their hot-headed subjects have been driven through exasperation at Government measures. The people only petitioned and their representation was regarded as mere froth worth no attention."

"The bomb has put a potent weapon into the hands of the people and it has lessened the respect for the military prestige of the Government. England will not henceforward be able to carry on the administration of the country in a smooth manner unless Englishmen deign to take people more into their confidence.

"Manufacture and possession of arms can be prevented by law and police supervision, but the same cannot be said about the bomb. It resembles more a magical charm than a visible object manufactured in a factory.

"The bombs required by hot-headed madcaps bent on violence do not require large quantities of materials for the manufacture as was shown by the bomb-factory unearthed at Calcutta. It appears that the Government have failed to learn a lesson from the discovery. No law possesses the power to keep the knowledge of the manufacture of bombs from those that are bent upon using them, for such knowledge is no longer regarded as a secret in Europe. It is still a secret in India, but if a policy of repression succeeds in adding to the number of the hot-blood in the country, the knowledge will in no time spread to the other parts of India from Bengal."

There were several other Papers particularly in Maharashtra and Bengal which indirectly supported the Muzaffarpore outrage. One of these was the *Kal* which wrote:

"People are prepared to do anything for *Swarajya* and they no longer sing the glories of British rule.... Bomb-throwing in India is different from bomb-throwing in Russia. Many of the Russians side with the Government against these bomb-throwers, but it is doubtful whether much sympathy will be found in India. If even in such circumstances Russia, got the Duma, *a fortiori* India is bound to get *Swarajya*. It is quite unjustifiable to call the bomb-throwers in India anarchists. Setting aside the question whether bomb-throwing is justifiable or not, Indians are not trying to promote disorder but to obtain *Swarajya*."

Giving an estimate of the Bengali character, the *Aftab*, (August 2, 1908), says that the boys have conquered the fear of death and any attempt to suppress the resolute spirit of the patriots would intoxicate their mind and add strength to their muscles. The language and argument would be read with interest:

"A change seems to be passing over the country. It commences in Bengal the people of which were first to be swayed by the creed of nationalism. They used to be regarded as cowards by their fellow countrymen, but this estimate of their character has turned out to have been unfounded. They are proving themselves as the saviours of India. They have lost all fear of death, while imprisonment has no terror for them. Blessed are those who sacrifice their lives for their country and make themselves immortal thereby. The Bengalis are resolute and no power can stand in their way. The more Government tries to suppress them the more they will gain in strength."

If nothing else the prestige of the Government received a very rude shock from which it could seldom recover in later years.

APPENDIX

(A)

Extracts from the article under caption *Philosophy of the Bomb* published in the *Kesari* on May 26, 1908:

Owing to the murders of 1897, the attention of the authorities was directed towards the disorder (in) plague (administration), and since that time the aspect of the plague administration began to change and complete transformation took place in the plague administration soon after. It is at present being asserted that the Government care two straws for the bombs of the Bengalis. What do the words care 'two straws' mean? The Bengal bomb-makers have themselves admitted that the English Government cannot be overthrown by the bomb.

Some things must be viewed from the people's stand-point; it is by no means enough to look at them only from one's own point of view. The light had not dawned upon the minds of authorities. The light dawned (upon their minds) owing to the murder of Mr. Rand and the conceit of wisdom having produced knowledge (within itself), the conceit left the authorities so far at least as plague administration was concerned. What was there amiss in this? Where was stigma cast upon the might of the British Government in this? That (one) should not forget to make use of the eyes while walking. When is the (lesson) to be learnt if not when one has (actually) submitted?

Just as the liquor shopkeepers and the prostitutes in a village (feel) overjoyed to hear the news of the death of the father of a licentious son, so *The Bombay Times* (which is) stupidly intoxicated by nature, and some native (news) papers of Poona (and) Bombay included amongst journals indirectly supported by Government, seeing that the troubled times of the bomb have overtaken Government, are beginning to think that they would

(now) fare sumptuously. This (overjoyed) band of blackguards are saying to Government that the Government have had the stumble (in the shape of) the bombs owing to the writings in newspapers and the speeches of the national party; (and) that, therefore, paying without any heed to the bomb, Government should muzzle these papers and speakers.

In 1897 these set of blackguards had brought very similar imputation (against newspapers) and Government have tasted, in the shape of bombs, the bitter fruits of that policy of repression that has been continuously maintained by them for the last ten years on account of their being half-influenced by the imputations. If Government do not change this policy at this time, its consequence will not fail to be even more terrible than at present to the rulers and the subjects.

It is known to all the mutinies and revolts of the Nihilists, that frequently occur even in Russia, take place for this very reason; and looking (at the matter) from the point of view (one) is compelled to say that the same state of things which has been brought about in Russia by the oppression of the official class composed of their own countrymen, has now been inaugurated in India in consequence of the oppression practised by alien officers. There is none who is not aware that the might of the British Government is as vast and unlimited as that of the Russian Government. But rulers who exercise unrestricted power must always remember that there is also a limit to the patience of humanity.

Old and experienced leaders, so far as they are themselves concerned, keep this indignation permanently within certain prescribed limits with the help of (their) experience or (mature) thought; but it is impossible for all the people of the country thus to keep their spirit, indignation or irritability always within such bounds; nay it may even be said without hesitation that the inhabitants of that country in which it is possible for this feeling of indignation to always remain thus within prescribed bounds are destined to remain perpetually in slavery!

(B)

In its inimitable analytical vein the *Kesari*, (May 27, 1908), draws a subtle distinction between the spring of action of the Chapekar brothers and the bomb-throwers of Bengal:

If daring and skill in execution are to be considered, the Chapekar brothers must be accorded the palm over the bomb-throwers of Bengal, but from the point of view of the motive and the means used, the latter deserve the greater praise. The Chapekar brothers had only the oppression resulting from the plague operations in view, they had not before them the larger question that system of administration was faulty, and that there were no hopes of the bureaucracy consenting to change it unless individual members thereof were subjected to threats. Modern military science has

strength and the position of the rulers in all countries has improved by placing the subjects totally at a disadvantage. But if modern science has placed deadly arms of precision in the hands of the rulers, it has also given birth to the destructive bombs.

* * * *

If Government does not profit by bombs, it will prove to be its own enemy.

Alipore Debacle

(1908-1910)

The unfortunate episode at Muzaffarpore, on April 30, 1908, resulting in the death of two innocent ladies and loss of life, almost for nothing, of two dare-devil boys of the organisation spelt disaster to the preparation for an armed struggle rather at the initial stage.

The police had long been keeping watch over certain premises used by the suspects. With the incident at Muzaffarpore the police simultaneously searched on May 2, 1908, (i) No. 32, Muraripukur Road, Manicktala Garden, (ii) 38-4, Raja Nabakissen Street, (iii) 15, Gopi Mohan Dutta Lane, (iv) 134, Harrison Road, all in Calcutta, and (v) Sil's Lodge, Deoghar. The total number of persons rounded up was forty-one.

In course of the search the police seized a mass of seditious books and literature, explosives at different stages of manufacture, arms and ammunition, complete instructions in writing for the manufacture of high-explosives, etc. It transpired that the collection of materials and preparation for waging war against the Government had been going on for a fairly long time. It is to be noted that even before the discovery of the conspiracy and preparation just mentioned, there had been some incidents of revolutionary character happening at various places in Bengal. It transpired later that they were carried out by members of the party under arrest. Moreover, as has already been stated, a valuable life was lost in Deoghar in testing the violence of a bomb manufactured with new type of chemicals.

The successful search and arrests on May 2, 1908, and thereafter resulted in the Alipore Conspiracy Case with 38 persons

as accused. The part played by the *Yugantar* was immense and some of the accused in the trial made no secret of the great influence of the inflammatory writings in the said Paper that had incited them to adopt the risky path of freedom.

There were many hundreds of young men who supported the objective of the organisation actively or otherwise. There were many units independent of the Manicktala organisation which had been preparing themselves for the fray in the best manner they could.

The ultimate aim was unfettered independence, but the immediate objective was reprisal or punishment of those who had made themselves a nuisance by their conduct that had been detrimental to the interests of the nation.

The evidence collected from various sources went to show that a number of *bhadralok* youths had entered into conspiracy to wage war against the King Emperor. The accused were "for the most part men of education and strong religious convictions". It was a criminal conspiracy of great magnitude that the revolutionary party had started. The members showed considerable "enterprise, daring and determination" in the pursuit of their ideal.

The accused were placed before a Magistrate in two batches. The trial of the first batch started on May 4, and lasted up to August 18, 1908, and of the second, from October 14, 1908 to March 4, 1909. Of the total number 38 persons of the first batch were committed to the Sessions on August 19, and the second batch on September 14. The Alipore Sessions started on October 19.

On May 6, 1909, the Sessions Judge delivered his verdict awarding capital punishment to two and various terms of imprisonment to seventeen others, including transportation for life to ten. Seventeen accused were acquitted.

The High Court on appeal commuted on November 23, 1909, the death sentences to one of transportation for life and reduced the sentences of others. One was acquitted and one died during the course of the hearing. The Judges differed in the cases of five which were referred to a third Judge. The verdict for acquittal of three and confirmation of sentences of two was delivered on February 18, 1910, bringing the first sensational political conspiracy trial of the British rule to a close.

A Traitor's Doom

(1908)

The Alipore Conspiracy Case had been proceeding along its wonted course before the Sessions Judge. In the first batch was KANAILAL DATTA arrested on May 2, 1908, from 15, Gopi Mohan Dutta Lane and Narendra Nath Gossain, arrested on May 5, 1908, from Serampore. In the second batch was SATYENDRA NATH BOSE, a prisoner convicted in an Arms Act Case, Midnapore. He was first produced before the Magistrate on July 21, 1908.

Without the knowledge but under unremitting suspicion of the co-accused, Narendra was taken out of the prisoners' dock and placed in the witness box for the Crown on the strength of a King's pardon that was tendered and accepted on June 23, 1908. He was examined on June 24, 25, 29 and July 3. He would say before the Court what the police had taught him the previous night. Several political leaders were named who had nothing to do with the conspiracy. Stories were told about the accused which had never occurred. There was a regular consternation amongst the accused more for those that had sympathised with the cause or helped it in their own way than for their own selves.

In the Court and in Alipore Central Jail, where the accused were quartered, Naren was allowed a certain amount of liberty. In the court room he mixed with the police officers and other hangers-on and was as free as any of them till the time came for the prisoners to be taken back to the jail. He was separated from the other accused and put in the European Ward.

A tense situation indeed! Naren's evidence admissible under the law would spell disaster, it was realised, not only to the persons concerned but to the cause itself.

In the meantime, Satyen a sickly fellow attending the court in a prisoner's costume, was absent on July 26, 27 and 28, 1908. He was first removed to the hospital for illness on July 17, and discharged on the same date. He came back to the hospital on July 27. On August 30, he had two interviews with outsiders.

Kanai complained of severe colic on August 30 and was

admitted in the hospital on the same date. He was to help a co-accused who could walk but could not dress himself.

On August 29, 1908, Naren went to the Superintendent of the jail and told him that he had received a message from one of the undertrial bomb case prisoners in the hospital to the effect that he wanted to make a confession. With the Superintendent's approval Naren saw Satyen in the same evening as also on the very next day. A further interview was arranged on the succeeding day, August 31, in the morning.

On August 31, a convict watchman came and informed the man in charge of the European Ward that Satyen wanted to see Naren. Accompanied by Higgins, the convict overseer, Naren started on the fateful journey. When they had been nearing the hospital Satyen was seen waiting on the first floor near the netting of the verandah. He went away towards Ward No. 1 as Naren and Higgins climbed up the stairs. They entered the dispensary room at about seven in the morning. Naren asked Higgins to call Satyen for discussion.

Kanai had been occupying a different ward and was not expected to be present there at the time. He was seen coming from the direction of Ward No. 1. Both entered the dispensary and came very close to Naren. Then the three together went out to the verandah. Higgins was kept waiting in the dispensary.

Before it was ten minutes, the sound of pistol shots was heard. Naren was hurt in one hand and came running towards the dispensary shouting, "For God's sake, save me, they will kill me." He was closely followed by Kanai and Satyen. Higgins pushed Naren inside the dispensary and got between Naren and his pursuers. He grappled with Kanai and in raising his arm to knock the revolver of Kanai upwards was shot in the back of the right hand, the bullet passing through the ball of his thumb. Higgins fell on the floor but almost immediately got up. Naren was standing at the corner of the dispensary and Satyen pointed his revolver at him.

Naren had by this time picked up sufficient wits to run out of the dispensary and get down the steps where he was followed by Kanai and Satyen, both firing while running down. One of the bullets struck Naren on the back of the hip.

Naren and Higgins managed to get out of the hospital.

They followed the passage running towards the east from the hospital gate along the south end of the weaving mill shed. At the south-east corner of the shed, another passage met it at right angles and ran northwards between two portions of the factory to the open space near which were (and still are) the jail gate and the offices.

They were determinedly followed first by Kanai and then by Satyen who fired a few more shots while chasing their prey. Another convict overseer, Linton, came hurriedly to their aid and caught Satyen almost unawares who fell on the ground. Kanai had been keeping his eyes fixed on his victim when Linton came up and caught hold of him. Kanai hit the muzzle of his pistol on the forehead of Linton but failed to secure his freedom. In spite of such a handicap Kanai with supreme effort got loose his hand and fired the last shot at Naren from a very close range. Naren fell as if spinning round with half of his body in the drain and the other half on the pathway.

Both Kanai and Satyen made no further efforts to injure any body else or to secure their own freedom. Kanai threw away his revolver which had discharged all the five shots that it might hold. It was rather of a big size, a R. I. C. '450 bore. Satyen used a smaller one, '380 bore, by Osborne. It had six chambers but contained only four cartridges all of which had been discharged. These revolvers were not ejectors, the spent cartridges had had to be pushed out with the help of a rod.

The *Indu Prakash* made the following caustic remark on the incident on September 5, 1908:

"The Bengal anarchists may be considered to be the most romantic lot in the whole anarchist world, and in point of bravery, rascality and cunning they simply cast into the shade Russian and Spanish desperadoes, quick in action, quick in revenge, smart in overpowering powerful European warders, and smart in getting rid of an approver."

In its view: "The anarchist law is terrible indeed", and their creed in this respect was

"better let go half a dozen spleen-cracking Europeans than allow a traitor to escape."

There was the usual judicial enquiry into the incident and the accused were committed to the Sessions, Kanai refusing the aid of lawyers. He admitted his guilt. The trial opened on

September 7, 1908. A few prosecution witnesses including the two convict overseers and the Medical Officer were examined.

The verdict of the Jury, one of guilty, was unanimously against Kanai. In respect of Satyen, a majority of three against two, declared him to be 'not guilty'.

Kanai was sentenced to death and Satyen's case was referred to the High Court.

On October 21, 1908, the High Court pronounced its judgment awarding capital punishment to both the accused.

The sentence of death fell flat on Kanai. He seemed to be absolutely unperturbed over the event. His countenance disclosed blissful composure of his mind. There was no tinge of sorrow, nor of distress. It looked like a charming lotus in full bloom with its inherent joy in self-fulfilment. He looked at death with the same equanimity as he viewed upon life. It was plain that he had realised the eternal Truth and to him the prison, the guard, the gallows had merged into Nothingness. He gained sixteen pounds in weight which was a proof positive of the inner strength of controlling thoughts and he steeped as if in Heaven's Grace.

After the judgment he refused to see any of his friends or relations except his brother whom he saw on the 9th. He declined to have the last rites done by the priest.

During the night previous to his execution, he slept so soundly that he had had to be roused by the dutiful jail officials for getting ready. He attended to his usual morning duties and got prepared for the exit. He was pinioned at five minutes past six. He walked up to the scaffold escorted by four European warders. He moved on with firm steps and maintained the same callous attitude that had characterised him throughout the trial.

He ascended the steps of the scaffold unaided; the black cap was pulled over his face; the noose was adjusted round his neck. At a given signal the lever was pulled and Kanai dropped a few feet and was next seen hanging by the rope round his neck.

This memorable event of history happened on November 10, 1908, in the Alipore Central Jail at about seven in the morning.

It was decided to consecrate his mortal remains on the funeral pyre at Keoratola, Kalighat. A spontaneous procession of several

thousand men and women moved from the jail gate to the burning ghat.

A very large number of people had already gathered at the cremation ground to show their respect to Kanai. They were found weeping bitterly when Kanai's dead body came within view. A gentleman procured several maunds of sandal wood by raising subscription on the spot.

After the body had burnt out, the small remains of the bones were broken to pieces and carried off as relics. The ashes could not be thrown into the Ganges because a great number of people produced containers including silver boxes and filled them with the residue. Pinches were done up into paper parcels, possibly for despatch to moffusil admirers. Local flower vendors vied with each other to offer their wares free of cost to do honour to the dead.

In the afternoon a procession was formed at College Square to march through the streets with the song *jai jabe jiban chole*, while women had been producing tremendous blasts on their conchshells. An old man sang:

"Forget the love of all that's dear,
Forego the world's worry and care,
Close in sleep thy shining eyes!
Where no darkness prevails or no tear
Where glory decks the hero's bier,
Up! Kanai, up to Paradise!"

The Revolvers

The public was left guessing as to how the revolvers could be smuggled into the jail where such strict watch was maintained from the gate to the person of each individual accused. Who might be the persons who had carried the revolvers inside the jail and how could they reach the accused. Moreover, how could the accused remain in possession of the weapons in the jail hospital, especially when one was not of an insignificant size which could be easily kept concealed, as it happened to be bulky and of an old Webley type.

The mystery further deepened due to the fact that a general jail parade of all persons was held in the morning of August 30, 1908. Any way, those who could unravel the mystery had not done

* *

so but it is now known that two friends covered the revolvers held in their hands with their wrappers and while coming out transferred them to the retiring prisoners. It is remarkable that these could be so effectively concealed as to escape detection of the jail officers and warders who had instructions to keep a strict watch over these interviews.

Satyendra Nath

Satyen's execution was delayed for a few days till the result of his petition to the Lieutenant Governor had been known. In the meantime Pandit Shiv Nath Shastri met Satyen at his request in the jail on November 5, 1908. His last letter to a relative disclosed his deep love and respect for his mother. He wrote:

"I have a first and last request to make and that is you will look after my mother in her old age properly. I wish to be cremated with religious service."

Satyendra Nath Bose was executed on November 21, 1908, in the morning and was cremated inside the jail compound.

Profited by the experience of wild public demonstration after Kanai's execution, the Government revised Rule 840 of the Jail Code which empowered the jail authorities to burn or bury the dead body of an executed criminal "unless claimed by their relations or friends." This provision was altered by a Press Communique dated November 17, 1908, directing that

"the body shall not be delivered to the friends of criminal, if in the opinion of the Superintendent, there is likelihood of its being made the occasion of a public demonstration, or otherwise improperly treated."

The Government was determined to stop demonstration in every shape and form. Some people took into their heads to carry an effigy of Satyendra from the jail and perform the last obsequies on the bank of the Ganges. The Government forthwith promulgated an order under Sec. 144 Cr. P. C. prohibiting thereby all procession in connection therewith because "if allowed", it was likely "to cause obstruction and annoyance to the public" and might "disturb public peace and tranquillity". As a corollary the "public must abstain from taking any part in the procession".

Satyen had a political past. He was the Captain of the National Volunteers at the time of the Midnapore Agricultural

Political Conference. When the leaders disagreed on the approach to political issues, he joined the extremist section. He was dismissed from service in the Land Acquisition Department on April 1, 1906.

In a specific case against him in Midnapore, he was charged on June 28, 1908, at the first instance, with abetment of murder at Muzaffarpore. Subsequently, this was altered to one of collecting arms and ammunition for waging war against the British Government. There being no evidence he was enlarged on bail.

As a licensed gun and three unlicensed swords were found in the course of a search of the house where Satyen lived, the police after a month of the institution of the first suit, filed a case under the Arms Act, in which Satyen together with his guardians were implicated.

On July 4, 1908, judgment was delivered under the Arms Act, Sec. 19(c) and (f) for having carried his brother's gun without license. He was sentenced to two months' rigorous imprisonment. On July 18, 1908, his appeal was dismissed by the Sessions Judge. He was in the meantime named as an accused in the Alipore Bomb Case and transferred to Calcutta to stand his trial. Since the spirit of service to the Motherland got the better of him, he was unceasing in his efforts to do something that might weaken the chain that had held India in bondage.

The unprecedented and most unexpected manifestation of public grief and resentment at a time when British administration was held more in awe than respect, showed the direction in which the wind had started blowing. If it had gone to prove anything it was that the suppressed urge for political emancipation had discovered an avenue through which it erupted in an unwonted manner. The British Government tried further to send it underground with the result that there was bloodshed and more bloodshed till Independence was wrested away from the clutches of a stubborn enemy.

Heaven's Award

(1908-1909)

The Muzaffarpore outrage made the Government lose its head and it would not stop carrying its spirit of vindictiveness to the death's door of its prey.

It was apparent to the authorities that the spirit of patriotism had infected even the boys in their teens and they had entered the area of fight with the same degree of enthusiasm and courage as their elders. There were cases when it was found that young boys had been in charge of duty that would do credit to those advanced both in years and intelligence. ASOKE NANDI was a lad of nineteen or just twenty when he was marked with the distinction of having been involved simultaneously in two cases of a serious nature against the State.

Asoke was arrested on May 2, 1908, from 134, Harrison Road, a house which formed one of the branches of a grand conspiracy having its centre at Muraripukur Garden, Manicktala. Firstly, he was charged under the Explosive Substances Act for having in his custody bombs alleged to have been manufactured at Manicktala. He was also charged in another case with conspiracy to wage war against the King along with Barindra Kumar Ghose and others of the Alipore Conspiracy Case.

In the first case started on July 28, he was acquitted by the High Court Sessions on August 7, 1908, and every right-thinking man expected him to be restored to liberty. The Government adopted a different procedure. He was detained in prison in the expectation of a conviction in the second case.

While in prison Asoke developed tuberculosis of the hip-joint and the condition of his health deteriorated at an alarming rate. Bail petition was moved again and again which was rejected summarily by the courts at the intervention of the police.

He was convicted in the Alipore Conspiracy Case by the Sessions Judge and was sentenced to transportation for seven years. An appeal was preferred to the High Court which dragged on its weary length in the usual fashion.

In the meantime the physical condition of the appellant became really serious. He lost eleven pounds in weight from his frail constitution. Bail petition was again moved on May 11, 1909, in the High Court on the ground that as the appeal would not come for hearing before two months, it was apprehended that the accused would be a dead man by then. The Hon'ble Judge of the High Court stuck to the letter of the law and held that the usual practice was that long term prisoners were not admitted to bail pending hearing of the appeals.

The lawyers for the Crown opposed the application on the ground that at the time the accused was in the phthisis ward of the jail hospital which was airy and a very comfortable abode. There was no dearth of respectable supporters of even the most perverted views of the Government. The Magistrate, 24-Parganas, wrote that it was an airy two-storied ward with a double-verandah and was much more suited to open air treatment to phthisical patients. In his benevolence he did not forget to say that it was much better than ordinary Calcutta houses, presumably better than where the patient could be removed.

The Civil Surgeon reported that there were still some signs of vitality in him because he was not in a dying condition. Chitta Ranjan Das (C. R. Das) who had been defending the accused said,

"This open air treatment which is so necessary for a patient did not strike them at all till Your Lordship's Rule was served upon them. Moreover, there was every chance of the accused being acquitted as nothing definite had been proved by the prosecution. On the day the Rule was served the patient was removed to the hospital."

One responsible doctor, a Government servant, reported: "He is very ill." The Judge remarked that the patient's disease had been the sole cause of his solitary imprisonment and now that the arrangements made were suitable and all that could be reasonably expected had been done for the petitioner, the Rule was discharged.

The patient was in a desperate condition of health. Chittaranjan advised the distracted father to move the Lieutenant Governor whose heart might be softer than that of the Judge whose duty of dispensing justice might not harbour any weak sentiment. The father prayed for the release of his son or in the alternative to

suspend the execution of sentence and restore his ailing son to his home pending the judgment in appeal as it was apprehended that he might not live to enjoy it if it was to come from a judgment of the High Court.

On July 2, 1909, by an order of the Government of Bengal, Asoke Nandi was released on bail.

At the proceedings before the High Court on August 17, 1909, Chittaranjan mentioned before His Lordship that Asoke Nandi had escaped the vendetta of the Government and its myrmidons because on the previous night he had gone to a place which the long arms of the law would be too short to reach.

Asoke Nandi was successful in having the judgment of the appeal delivered on November 26, 1909, in his favour, but it was too late for him to enjoy the liberty secured after very many long months of uncertainty in investigation, trial and appeal. It was poor consolation for the parents because their dear son had been spared a prison life in the Andamans for seven years. God in His infinite Mercy released him from mortal coil and relieved him of all troubles that had dogged his path since the sinister eye of the police had descended upon him.

Organisational Ramifications

(1906-1910)

The Muzaffarpore outrage and the Alipore Conspiracy Trial opened the eyes of the authorities to the magnitude and distribution of the revolutionary organisations in Bengal. The far-flung nature of the ramifications of the revolutionaries who were out to drive away the British through the use of arms could be gauged from the findings of some of the conspiracy trials that were started by the Government during the early stage of the movement.

Criminal cases were started against individuals or group of individuals for any particular overt act or for not a very clearly defined conspiracy which was regarded by the public as a multi-purpose measure based on racial arrogance, fear, vindictiveness and administrative inefficiency. Any way, they presented a partial

picture of the revolutionary ideas and activities of Bengal and elsewhere.

Harvey Adamson, Home Member to the Government of India, while introducing a Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council for expeditious trials, without jury, gave an outline of the secret associations, their aims and activities on December 12, 1908.

In the course of his speech he said that disloyal associations known as *samitis* and consisting of volunteers were first founded in 1902 but they did not come much into evidence till 1906. With the intensification of anti-British feeling there was a rapid expansion of such *samitis* particularly in the districts of East Bengal. In his view, "majority of the associations are maintained with the object of training youths in the use of arms and fitting them to take part in a general revolution that is hoped for." They "practise drill, engage in sham fights and parades, encourage a martial spirit with an ultimate object for which there is little attempt to conceal." Moreover, an "insulting demeanour towards Europeans is constantly paraded and it is a cause of common complaint." In some cases there had been reports of serious assaults, of dacoities, endeavour to interfere with investigation and suppression of evidence even to the extent of removing an important prosecution witness from the arena.

The Government received reports that the secret societies had split their work into different branches which can be classified as follows:

One dealing with the publication and the press. The military section prepared bombs and collected arms. The financial section made the collection of funds its main business. The intelligence department watched the movement of the police. According to the exigencies of the situation the most responsible work was allotted to the tried and trusted workers only.

The Government hurriedly passed an Act for suppression of assemblies which, in the opinion of the police were engaged in 'unlawful activities'. By an order published in an Extraordinary Issue of the Gazette of India, dated January 5, 1909, the following associations were declared unlawful:

(i) The Anusilan Samity, Dacca, (ii) The Swadesh Bandhab Samity, Barisal, (iii) The Brati Samiti, Faridpur, (iv) The

Suhrid Samiti, Mymensingh, and (v) The Sadhana Samaj, Mymensingh.

Two months later on March 1, 1909, the Jubak Samiti of Calcutta and the Brati Samiti of Kumira in the Satkhira Sub-division, Khulna, were added to the list.

Individual Prosecutions

(1907-1910)

Enumeration of the political cases of importance of the early (1907-1910) revolutionary outburst would give an idea of the extent of preparation for a wider field of action in a later period.

A large number of political "actions" were resorted to not with the sole object of collection of funds for appropriate use, but also to prepare the young minds for acts of daring, to suffer privations and to culture a mental attitude of detachment to family and less love for life and limbs.

Some of the prominent events with the result of prosecutions are related below in chronological order.

CHINGRIPOTA: One of the earliest events occurred at Chingripota Railway Station, P. S. Sonarpur, 24-Parganas, when railway cash was looted on the night of December 6, 1907. Some local young men were arrested of whom three were placed on trial. For want of corroborative evidence the case was finally dropped on February 11, 1908.

BARRAH: In the District of Dacca, at Barrah, P. S. Nawabganj, a dacoity was committed on the night of June 2, 1908, where four persons, including a *chowkidar*, were killed in the course of pursuit of the raiders. A large number of young men were arrested of whom four were placed before the High Court Special Tribunal on April 19, 1909. The case ended in acquittal on May 10, 1909.

BAJITPORE: At Bajitpore, Mymensingh, on August 15, 1908, a dacoity was followed by prosecution resulting in the conviction of two persons, sentenced to a period of one and half years and one year's hard labour, respectively.

BIGHATI: A case was started against about a dozen persons in connection with a dacoity committed on September 16, 1908, at Bighati, P. S. Bhadreswar, Hooghly. Judgment of the High Court Special Tribunal was delivered on March 29, 1909, in which one accused was sentenced to six years', two to five years' and one to 3½ years' rigorous imprisonment.

MIDNAPORE CONSPIRACY: A case started with about twenty accused in September, 1908. During the course of the trial some of the accused were released on heavy bail ranging between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 50,000. The case was withdrawn against all the accused excepting three on November 9, 1908. After a protracted trial the convicted persons whose sentences were ten years' for two and seven years' transportation for one were acquitted by the High Court on June 1, 1909.

NARIA: The small village of Naria, P. S. Palong, Faridpur, was the scene of a great commotion on October 30, 1908, when a large number of young men were noticed participating in a case of dacoity. All the raiders decamped with the booty without much trouble. The police arrested on suspicion about a score of persons out of whom 16 were put on trial. At the outset, on February 24, 1909, most of the accused were discharged and two were granted bail. Ultimately the case fell through for want of sufficient evidence.

MOREHAL: About half-a-dozen persons were placed on trial in March 1909 for alleged complicity in a dacoity committed on December 2, 1908, at Morehal, P. S. Krishnagar, Hooghly. All the accused were either discharged or acquitted in the lower court except one. On May 1, 1909, the case of the lone accused was referred to the High Court which sentenced him on July 8, 1909, to undergo rigorous imprisonment for seven long years.

NETRA: In Netra, a village under Diamond Harbour P. S. a dacoity was committed on April 25, 1909, when a large number of men raided a house and decamped with a fairly big sum and jewellery. A number of men were arrested and kept in *hajut* for a considerably long time. A case was started against only a section of the arrested men which dragged on till June 2, 1910, when all the accused were discharged.

The police tried to establish connection with other events

taking place at distant parts of the Province and held in custody more than 50 suspects who along with others were placed on their trial in what is known as the Howrah Gang Case.

NANGLA: About ten persons were arrested in connection with a dacoity committed at Nangla, P. S. Tala, Khulna, on August 16, 1909. The stage was set before a Special Tribunal which started hearing on March 3, 1910. The prosecution pinned its faith on the confession of one of the accused. On March 15, the approver retracted his confession and the case was withdrawn on the very next day. The approver was proceeded against by the Government, may be to save face, before the same Tribunal on June 6, 1910, under Section 345 I.P.C. and was sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment on June 27, 1910.

RAJENDRAPUR: A running train dacoity involving a large amount was committed between Joydebpur and Rajendrapur. Dacca, on October 11, 1909. The culprits decamped with the booty half of which was subsequently recovered during search.

The usual arrest of a lot of young men went on in November but the man most wanted by the police successfully evaded arrest for a long time. In the meantime a case for dacoity was started by the Government in which all the accused in the dock were discharged on or about February 26, 1910.

The absconder was arrested on November 10, 1910, in the Malda District. A case was started against him in the Dacca Sessions Court on April 18, 1911. The jury passed a verdict of 'not guilty'. The case was referred to the High Court and the accused was sentenced to transportation for life in August 1911.

HALUDBARI: In the early hours of October 28, 1909, a dacoity took place at Haludbari, P. S. Daulatpur, Nadia, which was followed by a random round-up of suspects. About ten persons had to stand their trial before a Special Tribunal at the High Court which started hearing the case from April 4, 1910, under Sections 307 and 395 I.P.C. Judgment was delivered on April 25, 1910, in which five persons were sentenced to eight years', one to seven years' rigorous imprisonment. One was acquitted.

MAHISA: In regard to the dacoity that occurred at Mahisa,

P. S. Mahmudpur, Jessore, on July 5, 1910, the party responsible for such actions suffered seriously in man-power. In the case started against the raiders one was sentenced to six years' and another to five years' rigorous imprisonment. The police was on the look out of another man who was arrested on April 5, 1911, at Calcutta. On March 6, the Sessions Judge at Khulna sentenced the accused to three years' rigorous imprisonment.

Conspiracy Cases

(1908-1911)

Besides proceeding against persons alleged to be connected with individual overt acts, the Government started big conspiracy cases to rope in as many persons as it thought to be "undesirable" from its point of view. A few typical cases are enumerated here that took place between 1908-1911 to give an idea of the nature and scope of such trials.

NANGLA (KHULNA) CONSPIRACY CASE: A big case, the Khulna Conspiracy Case, was started against a dozen youngmen on the omnibus charge of being members of a conspiracy to wage war against the King. After the preliminary enquiry a Special Tribunal of the High Court started proceedings on July 18, 1910. Judgment was delivered on August 30, 1910, in which five men were sentenced to transportation for seven years, three to five years', two to three years' rigorous imprisonment. Only one was acquitted.

KHULNA GANG CASE: Twenty persons suspected of complicity in the Nandanpur and Soleganti (Khulna) and Dhulgram and Mahisa (Jessore) dacoities and for incidents at other places were hauled up before the District Magistrate, Khulna, on October 21, 1910. The accused numbering 18 were convicted by the trying Magistrate under Section 400 I.P.C. for being members of a gang of dacoits and awarded various terms of imprisonment. The convicted preferred an appeal to the High Court which was heard on April 2, 1911. All the prisoners pleaded guilty. At the instance of the prosecution, the High Court took a lenient view of the case and all the accused were bound down to be of good

behaviour and in case of lapses to surrender and serve the sentence passed by the Magistrate. One was acquitted by their Lordships. Two absconders were subsequently apprehended and sentenced to long terms of rigorous imprisonment in a separate case.

MUNSHIGUNGE CONSPIRACY CASE: With 17 persons as conspirators the Munshigunge Conspiracy Case was started in Dacca on November 12, 1910. All the accused except three were discharged in the course of the trial. A case was started against the three accused before the Sessions Court on March 2, 1911. One was sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment under Section (4) (b) of the Explosive Substances Act on April 10, 1911. An appeal to the High Court proved infructuous.

DACCA CONSPIRACY CASE: Exasperated at the failure in protecting the property of the citizens of East Bengal, the police took recourse to the most easy step of starting a big case in which there were no less than 55 accused, young and old, students, the leaders of men, persons most respected in the profession of whom 44 were in custody.

Preliminary enquiry for commitment was started on August 8, 1910, and a Special Magistrate began sitting from September 30. The accused were committed to Sessions on November 22. Before the Additional District Judge the case commenced on January 3, 1911, and the Judge delivered his judgment on August 7. Three were sentenced to transportation for life, eighteen to ten years' and fourteen to seven years' and one to three years' rigorous imprisonment. Eight were acquitted. In the appeal before the High Court in October 1911, the sentences of fourteen accused were confirmed and the rest were set at liberty.

HOWRAH GANG CASE: A very big case was started before a Special Tribunal at the Calcutta High Court under Sections 121, 122, 123 I.P.C. on Dec. 1, 1910. The prosecution tried to rope in all persons suspected of complicity in almost all political events of a revolutionary nature including Chingripota, Netra, Haludbari and other dacoities, tampering with the loyalty of the 10th Jats, then stationed at Alipore, murder of Government pleader and police officers, etc. Selected men of as many as twelve political groups were placed among the accused. Judgment was delivered on April 19, 1911. Of the 46 accused originally placed on trial

five were discharged and case against one was dropped. One died. Thirty-three were acquitted and six were further convicted over their sentence in connection with the Haludbari Dacoity Case.

There were several other cases relating to different incidents under the cover of 'conspiracy'. Some of these were the Midnapore (1908), Madaripur (1913), Barisal (1913-14), Raja Bazar Bomb (1914-15), and several others, till the end of the British rule in India.

The history of the revolutionary movement if ever written out in detail, is bound to bring into prominence the contact that was established and the mutual help rendered to different organisations in Northern India under the Punjab and Bengal leaders. This would be an important and interesting subject deserving special attention.

Conspiracy in the South

(1897-1910)

Secret organisations had their inception in the Western India much earlier than anywhere else. The Government came to realise more fully the influence they wielded over young minds and the extent of their preparation after the murder of Rand. It took some further time to get ready for conspiracy cases as such after the assassination of Ashe. As a result some cases such as Gwalior, Nasik, Satara, etc., were started in 1909-1910, a little after the Alipore Conspiracy Trial had ended.

The TINNEVELLY CONSPIRACY CASE was started almost along with the trial for the murder of Ashe. Altogether thirteen accused were placed on trial for murder, conspiracy and abetment of murder. Judgment was delivered on February 15, 1912, by the High Court in which nine accused were convicted and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment ranging from one to seven years. The third judge differed with the other two and convicted only four instead of seven. The case was referred to a Full Bench of the High Court and hearing was held in March 1912. The original judgment was not materially altered.

Gwalior Conspiracy

The *Abhinav Bharat Society* spread its ramifications far and wide and almost every important place in the whole of Western India enjoyed the distinction of having a branch in it. Bombay, Nasik, Poona, Pen, Aurangabad, Hyderabad and even the State of Gwalior did not fail to offer their young men in the fight for freedom.

The *Nav Bharat Society* in Gwalior chalked out a programme of action for attainment of liberty. It was mainly divided into two sections, viz., (i) Education, including *swadeshi*, boycott, national education, entire abstinence from liquor, religious festivities, lectures, libraries, etc., and (ii) Agitation, aimed at "target shooting, sword exercise, preparation of bombs, dynamite, procuring of revolvers, learning and teaching the use of weapons and missiles." It further directed that

"should an occasion for a general rising in any province at a proper time arise, all should help that cause and attain liberty. Confidence itself is a means to shake off servitude; we are fully convinced that if thirty crores of people are prepared to fight, none can thwart them in their desire. First, education will be given to prepare the mind, and then a rebellion raised; the war of independence will be carried on by resorting to cunning and craft."

Signs were not lacking at the time of secret societies extending their activities to a wider area. They had been gaining experience by practising acts of daring and resourcefulness. Ahmedabad was not very slow to come and in November 1909, it manifested its preparedness through an overt act by throwing a bomb at the car of the Viceroy, Lord Minto, which fortunately for him failed to explode at the time. After the procession had passed off two cocoanut bombs were discovered on the road and an unsuspecting public lost one of his hands by explosion while picking up one of them.

The materials collected during police investigation in connection with the activities of *Abhinav Bharat Society* contained correspondence between the revolutionaries working in Nasik and the State of Gwalior. In collaboration with the Government of India, the State started conspiracy cases before a Tribunal constituted for the specific purpose with 22 accused of the *Nav Bharat* and 19 belonging to the *Abhinav Bharat Society* resulting in the conviction of more than half of the accused.

The charges against all the accused were that they at Nasik and at other places in British India and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in London (i) attempted to wage war, (ii) conspired among themselves to wage war, (iii) conspired amongst themselves to commit offences punishable under Sec. 121 I.P.C., (iv) conspired to deprive the King Emperor of the sovereignty of British India, (v) conspired amongst themselves to overawe either by criminal force or show of criminal force the Government or the Government of Bombay, (vi) collected arms and ammunition with the object of waging war, and (vii) concealed by an illegal omission the existence of a design to wage war. (Sections 121, 121A, 122, 123, and 125 I.P.C.)

Nasik Conspiracy

The murder of the District Magistrate of Nasik on December 21, 1909, was followed by vigorous investigations into the secrets of the organisation responsible for the death of Jackson. It was found that it was the outcome of a deep-seated conspiracy that imparted strength to the hands of the persons involved in direct action.

No less than thirty-eight men were hauled up before the court in what is known as the First Nasik Conspiracy Case. It transpired in evidence, mainly confessions, that the members of the *Mitra Mela*, started in 1899 by Vinayak Savarkar and changed to *Abhinav Bharat* (or Young India Society) in 1904 were responsible for the outrage where a Browning pistol, brought by Chhatrabhuj Amin from London was used.

The aim of the Association was revolution, unalloyed, where the model and the methods of Russian secret societies were to be adopted. The whole organisation was to be divided into small groups, one individual unit would not know the members of any other, the connecting link being the accredited head of the organisation. The members were bound by oaths of secrecy individually and collectively when a whole group was concerned.

It was the endeavour of the Government to rope in (Ganesh) Vinayak Savarkar into the conspiracy so that he might be put out of the way for as long a period as the law allowed. It was not difficult for the prosecution with the resources at its disposal to

secure evidence to establish connection with the other accused and Vinayak Savarkar.

The judgment of this historic trial was delivered on December 24, 1910, in which (Vinayak) Savarkar was sentenced to transportation for life. There were thirty-eight accused most of whom were convicted and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment.

From the pamphlet entitled *Bande Mataram* produced in the trial it was evident that the immediate aim of the organisation was assassination of officials, so that the cause of independence might speedily advance.

A few sentences from the document were sufficient to disclose its purpose. It ran as follows :

“Terrorise the officials, English and Indian, and the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. The persistent execution of the policy that has been so gloriously inaugurated by Khudiram Bose, Kanai Lal Datta and other martyrs will soon cripple the British Government in India. The campaign of separate assassinations is the best conceivable method of paralysing the bureaucracy and or arousing the people. The initial stage of the revolution is marked by the policy of separate assassination.”

The judgment in the case gives an inkling into the working of the organisation and Vinayak's share of responsibility in the matter :

There was evidence that there existed an association under Ganesh Vinayak Savarkar named *Mitra Mela* which was established prior to 1906. Membership was offered after closest scrutiny and under heavy oath about secrecy in matters related to the Association. Small groups of young men working with the common object were attached to the parent body. Literature was published, for disseminating sedition suggesting methods for preparations for war. Instructions were issued for the purchase and storing of weapons in the neighbouring countries to be used when opportunities should occur. It also suggested

“opening of many very small but secret factories at some distance from one another for the manufacture of weapons clandestinely in the country seeking independence and the purchase by secret societies of weapons in other countries to be secretly imported in merchantships.”

About Savarkar the Judges remarked :

“We find the accused guilty of the abetment of waging war by instiga-