

Revolutionary Movements in Midnapore: A Comprehensive Study

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Abstract: This article explores the revolutionary movements that emerged in Midnapore, a region historically significant for its role in India's struggle for independence. Focusing on key figures, events, ideologies, and their impact on the socio-political landscape, the study provides a comprehensive overview of how Midnapore became a crucible for revolutionary fervor during the colonial era. The ideologies embraced by the revolutionary movements in Midnapore were diverse but shared a common goal of overthrowing British rule. Influenced by both Indian and international revolutionary thinkers, these groups advocated for armed struggle as a means to achieve independence. They sought to inspire mass uprising and disrupt colonial authority through targeted actions against symbols of British power. The revolutionary movements in Midnapore exemplify the spirit of defiance and sacrifice that characterized India's struggle against colonialism. The legacy of these movements continues to resonate in contemporary narratives of nationalism and freedom across the subcontinent.

Keywords: Movements, Midnapore, Historical Region, Nationalism, Cultural, Ideological.

Introduction:

It was the deep-rooted grievances both economic and social that made the young men of Bengal, particularly of Midnapur, discontented. Traditionalism had lost its appeal to the young man of Midnapur. Emotional in nature, they were easily drawn to the daring terrorism. Some teen-age youths of Midnapur became restless and were almost itching for something revolutionary.(Ananda Bazar Patrika,1930) It goes without saying that the young man who had taken to terrorism knew well that murder of a few Englishmen and Government officials who were directly or indirectly responsible for repression of the terrorists and others who participated in the nationalist movement would not by itself bring independence for the country. The contempt of life that they had shown by undertaking the hazards of the life of revolutionaries, knowing for certain that they were walking into the jaws of death was for the purpose of instilling into the minds of the people so mighty as the British Government.(Bari, 2015)

The other purpose was to create a fear psychosis among the police most of whom were recruited from the natives so that they might not show their wonted over-zealousness in suppressing the nationalist activities for preferment or reward. Hence there began the second phase of terrorism in Bengal, particularly in Midnapur.(Goswami, 1977)

The previous movements conducted by the Indian National Congress, no doubt had an abiding influence on the young men of Midnapur. But the method and approach of the Congress with regard to the nationalist movement did no longer enthuse them, for the Congress could not wrest anything tangible from the British Government.(Bhattacharyya, Tarasankar, 1973) The influence of non-violence by which Gandhi had succeeded for a period to wean the young men of Bengal and particularly of Midnapur from the paths of terrorism did no longer have any effect on them. They were impatient for doing something spectacular in order to rouse the youth of the country

from the slumber into which the non-violent creed of Gandhi had thrown them. They were ready to sacrifice practically everything at the altar of freedom. (Ghatak,1964)

Objectives:

This article explores the revolutionary movements that emerged in Midnapore, a region historically significant for its role in India's struggle for independence. Focusing on key figures, events, ideologies, and their impact on the socio-political landscape, the study provides a comprehensive overview of how Midnapore became a crucible for revolutionary fervor during the colonial era.

Significance of the Study:

Midnapore's revolutionary movements were marked by ideological diversity and strategic innovations, including the adoption of militant tactics and the integration of socialist and nationalist ideologies. Studying these developments helps trace the evolution of revolutionary thought in colonial India, highlighting the adaptation of global ideologies to local contexts and the strategic responses to British repression. The study contributes to academic disciplines such as history, political science, and cultural studies. It provides researchers, educators, and students with a comprehensive resource for studying the complexities of revolutionary movements, the dynamics of colonial resistance, and the socio-political transformations in early 20th-century India.

August Movement In Medinipur (Tamluk) :

It was at this unfortunate crossroads that the August Revolution was abruptly initiated. The news of the widespread arrest of Congress leaders caused the people to explode emotionally, setting in motion a chain reaction that eventually became a massive revolution. At initially, the revolution was unorganized and led by outsiders, as no provincial or notational leaders remained. Some of the revolution's leaders, like Jaiprakash Narayan, Sucheta Kripalani, Aruna Asaf Ali, and others who were still free after a few days in prison attempted to rally the movement around a clear strategy.(Pramanik,1973)

Capturing powerful leaders like Satis Chandra and Ajoy Kumar and putting them in charge of capable lieutenants and admirer subjects was key to the Revolution's agenda. During the wee hours of September 28, 1942, all of the main highways, including the Panskura Tamluk Road and the Tamluk Township Road, particularly in the Contai and Tamluk subdivisions, were cut off. September 29, 1942, was the designated day for such an act. In addition, the plan was to cut roads, down trees, disconnect and damage telegraph and telephone lines, and uproot telegraph poles the night before (the 28th) in order to establish a blockade that would prevent any connection with the outside world.

Periodic Advancement of the Movement:

One of the main characteristics of the freedom fighting movement of Medinipur was its periodic advancement. Movement of Bengal was held in the nonviolent manner whereas the movement of Kshudiram, Satyen etc. was in the form with arms, acceptance of indigenous goods and boycott of foreign goods were performed spontaneously by the people of Medinipur. In 1920 - 1922, the contribution of Non-cooperation movement, boycott of court, and establishment of national schools, social reconstruction, stopping enhanced 'Chowkidari' tax, boycott of Union Board was done under the leadership of Birendranath and other distinguished freedom fighters. At the 1930s and 1930s, at the height of civil disobedience, many people in Medinipur took part in the Salt Satyagraha of their own will. Among them, at least 59 gave their lives as martyrs. Women and other marginalized groups made significant contributions during the second wave of civil disobedience (1932-1934), which aimed to halt various forms of increased taxation. In 1942, during the Quit India agitation, it was shown flawlessly and without external interference. The students' organization and the people of Medinipur were instrumental in the never-ending fight that forced the British imperialists to leave India. (Samanta,et al.,1946)

Anti-Partition Movement in Midnapore District:

By the Day of Swadeshi struggle, it was evident that Midnapore had established a solid foundation for the anti-imperialist and nationalist struggle. A gathering was conducted in Calcutta Town Hall on August 7, 1905, to approve the suggestion for a boycott of British products; at the same time, a meeting was held in Midnapore town's Bailly Hall opposing this separation. Under the direction of Jnanendra Nath Bose and Satyendra Nath Bose, students and young men staged a movement throughout the town and surrounding villages. They established student stores to sell indigenous items, held pickets outside stores selling foreign goods, and organized meetings, strikes, road rallies, and 'Arandhan' and 'Reksha Bandhan' on October 16th to support the Swadeshi or Banga Bhanga Birodhi Andolan.

Anti-Partition Movement in Tamluk:

The Midnapore District's Tamluk sub-division became a member of the Movement as well. A gathering presided over by Sri Kali Prasanna Kabya Bisharad, editor of "Hitabadi," was convened in the wide grounds of Rakshit Bati in the town of Tamluk. In 1905, Raja Surendra Narayan Roy presided over another large gathering at Brahma Baroari; attendees piled their foreign clothing in a pile outside the hall, and Kali Prasanna Kabya Bisharad personally set fire to the pile. In Mahisadal Thana, at Byabatter Hat, there was yet another massive gathering. Former Tamluk Hamilton High School student and subsequently renowned headmaster and educator Sri Shrutinath Chakraborty sang the national anthem to start the assembly. While protesting the sale of foreign clothing and bangles at a 1908 village fair in Bamunara Village, a group of volunteers led by Rajendra Nath Bhuia and Kunja Behari Bhakta threw away their own bangles. This area was the site of several 'akhras,' or gymnasiums, at this time. The youthful Surendra Nath Rakshit of Tamluk town established what is today known as Suren Gymnasium—a place for physical training, Kusti, and Lathi Khela—in the spacious courtyard of his house. Along with his brother-in-law Amritlal Roy, Khudiram Bose arrived in Tamluk in 1901. He remained here till 1904 and even attended the Gymnasium during that time. Khudiram Bose became a member of Midnapore's Mainstream of Extremist Movement in 1904. "Certainly the most outstanding individual from the initial wave of revolutionaries" was Hem Chandra Kanungo. (Sannal, 1994)

Non Co-operation Movement: In order to attain the "Swaraj," Gandhiji aspires to establish a robust mass movement. While Gandhiji was presenting a plan to launch a nonviolent, noncooperative movement during the 1920 Session of the Calcutta Congress, some prominent figures were opposed to the notion. However, at the session in Nagpur in December 1920, this proposition was approved by the majority. Birendra Nath Sasmal presided over the 1920 Midnapore District Congress Committee, which Satkari Pati Roy helped to establish. (14) At the same time, a sub-divisional Congress Committee was also established in Tamluk, headed by Mahendra Nath Maity and concealed by Chandi Charan Dutta. (Ghosh, Binoy Jibon, 1952)

In the Midnapore District, a sizable student body became involved with this movement. During the Non Co-operation Movement, around 50,000 students reportedly dropped out of Calcutta University, according to university officials. Students from the Tamluk sub division, including Sri Gunadhar Hazra, Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee, Satish Chandra Samanta, Kumar Chandra Jana, Ramani Mohan Maity, Sripati Charan Boyal, Ananga Mohan Das, and Ramesh Chandra Kar, were among the many who joined this movement. As part of the Satyagraha Programme, they also picketed outside stores that sold booze and clothing made in other countries. The Government of Bengal had suggested the establishment of Union Boards in the villages in the 1919 village self-Government legislation. The Midnapore District did in fact have 227 Union Boards established in April 1921 by the Government of Bengal. (16) Following this, Birendra Nath Sasmal chose to launch a district-wide "No Tax" campaign. Among the village movements, Sumit Sarkar cites Birendra Nath Sasmal's anti-union board agitation in the Midnapore District's Contai and Tamluk sub-divisions as the most efficient.

Salt Satyagraha in Midnapore District:

The Midnapore District and the rest of India became part of this movement on March 12, 1930, when Sri Mahendra Nath Maity presided over a public meeting in Tamluk Town. Mahendra Nath Maity and Satis Chandra Chakraborty were elected president and secretary, respectively, of a committee that was established in the Tamluk sub-division to oversee the Civil Disobedience Movement. Two separate Salt Satyagraha centres, one in Tamluk and one in Contai, Midnapore District, were agreed upon by this Committee. Protesters opposing this legislation began their salt Satyagraha here on April 6, 1930, with volunteers coming from all around Bengal. Two centres were established in Contai for the illegal production of salt: one at Pichhabani and another at Narghat in the Tamluk sub-division. Additionally, fifty-six centres were built in Contai. Additionally, in May of 1930, nine centres were established in the Tamluk sub-division for this same reason. (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 1338/1931)

Significance of The Revolutionary Movements in Midnapore: The revolutionary movements in Midnapore district hold significant historical and cultural importance within the broader context of India's struggle for independence. Here are some key aspects highlighting their significance:

Catalyst for Anti-Colonial Resistance: The revolutionary movements in Midnapore served as a catalyst for anti-colonial resistance not only in Bengal but across India. They demonstrated a proactive and militant approach against British rule, challenging the prevailing notion of passive resistance advocated by earlier nationalist leaders like Gandhi. This proactive stance inspired similar movements in other parts of the country and contributed to the overall momentum of the freedom struggle.

Mobilization of Youth and Intellectuals: These movements actively mobilized the youth and intellectuals of the region. Young leaders like Jatindranath Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin) emerged as inspirational figures who galvanized support and instilled a sense of nationalism among the educated youth. The involvement of intellectuals in revolutionary activities also contributed to the ideological depth and strategic planning of the movements.

Cultural and Ideological Influence: Midnapore's revolutionary movements were deeply intertwined with the cultural and intellectual renaissance of Bengal during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They promoted a sense of cultural pride and identity, emphasizing the need for self-determination and national unity. The ideological underpinnings of these movements, influenced by socialist, anarchist, and nationalist ideas, contributed to the shaping of India's political thought and strategies for independence.

Symbolism and Martyrdom: The revolutionary activities in Midnapore created enduring symbols of sacrifice and martyrdom. Figures like Khudiram Bose, who was executed at a young age for his involvement in revolutionary activities, became iconic symbols of resistance against colonial oppression. The bravery and sacrifices of these martyrs inspired widespread admiration and further fueled the spirit of nationalism and defiance.

Impact on Subsequent Movements: The legacy of the revolutionary movements in Midnapore extended beyond the immediate struggle for independence. They laid the groundwork for future revolutionary movements and armed struggles against oppression in India. The experiences gained and lessons learned from these movements influenced later generations of freedom fighters and contributed to the evolution of India's nationalist movement.

Cultural Heritage and Commemoration: Midnapore's role in the revolutionary struggle is commemorated through various cultural and historical markers, including museums, memorials, and annual observances. These serve as reminders of the region's contributions to India's independence and continue to inspire patriotism and pride among the local population. (Maity, 1975)

The revolutionary movements in Midnapore district were instrumental in shaping India's struggle for independence by fostering a spirit of resistance, mobilizing youth and intellectuals, promoting cultural pride, and leaving a lasting legacy of sacrifice and determination in the fight against colonial rule. Their significance transcends regional boundaries, contributing to the broader narrative of India's journey towards freedom and self-determination.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that the revolutionary movements in Midnapore district were driven by a combination of socio-economic grievances, cultural awakening, nationalist ideologies, effective leadership, and reactions to British repression. These factors intertwined to create a potent force that challenged British authority and contributed significantly to India's struggle for independence. The legacy of these movements continues to inspire generations, underscoring the region's pivotal role in the history of India's freedom struggle.

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