

MURDER OF
BRITISH
Magistrates

BINOY JIBAN GHOSH

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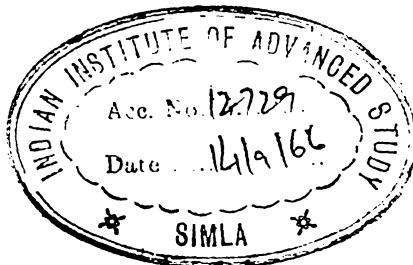
MURDER OF BRITISH MAGISTRATES

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THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS DEDICATED TO
GREAT AND GLORIOUS INDIA
THAT IS TO BE

PREFACE

This small volume is based chiefly on my memoirs, and the memoirs of my family. The names of many persons which should have been there have not been mentioned. I offer my apologies to all such. In writing the chapter on Douglas Murder I have been helped by the Bengali brochure—"Sahid Prodyot"—written by my father's friend, Shri Isan Chandra Mahapatra of Midnapur. Lastly, I have to thank my old friend—the friend of my days of wandering in the wilderness—Shri Tridibesh Basu, who readily agreed to publish it.

Calcutta,
The 1st January, 1962.

BINOY JIBAN GHOSH

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I

Prologomena

It is a strange paradox that we complain that the world and our earthly existence is full of sorrows and evils, yet in retrospect everyone's life seems to him an enchanting romance, and thrilling drama.

For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'r resigned.
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind.

The longing lingering look at life's canvas loves to dwell on every detail. But matters which are of moment to me may not be of general concern or interest. Why should I inflict on others the story of such events and experiences.

My theme shall be only such parts and incidents of my life and the tale of my family as will excite and attract the interest of people at large, and serve as a humble contribution to the nation's history.

When was I born? That is really of no importance. I was born on the 25th of Baisakh, Bengali year 1314, or the 8th of May, 1907, the eldest of a number of brothers and sisters. By the way, that happens to be the day on which the great poet Rabindra Nath was born. Is there any magic potency in that particular day of the year? Nothing of the sort. For if you argue that the World renown of Rabindra Nath

had something to do with the day of his birth, how will you account for my utter insignificance.

Where was I born? That also is not of much moment. Everybody must be born on some spot of the earth, and there are no magic carpets on the globe. My mother, Shrimati Pravas Ranjini Ghosh came from the



Pravas Ranjini Ghosh

Palit family of village Dhamasin in the district of Hooghly, and about two miles from the railway station of Khanyan, on the Eastern Railway, about thirty-five miles north of Calcutta. I was born there. My maternal grandfather was Khagendra Nidhan Palit, and my maternal grandmother, Shrimati Kiron Bala. In the same village of Dhamasin was also born my fifth younger brother, Nirmal Jiban Ghosh, who was hanged on the 26th October, 1934 in the Midnapur

Central Jail in connexion with the Burge Murder Conspiracy Case.

At the mention of the name of Khanyan one recalls that the immortal Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (Bhabani Charan Bandopadhyay) was born in that village. In my student days I heard stories about Brahmabandhab, and his epoch-making "Sandhya," and my heart glowed with reverence and admiration for the great patriot. But how strange that though I and my brothers had gone, at least, twenty times into the village of Khanyan, nobody in those days ever whispered to us that the illustrious Brahmabandhab was born in that village. It was only a few years after the achievement of Independence that the little sleepy village awoke one day to the chanting of praise by distinguished visitors from Calcutta to the memory of one who had secured for their tiny hamlet an honoured place in the history of India's national struggle.

As I view it, the place of one's birth is more or less an accident. In this fast-moving age people are sometimes born in an aeroplane, a railway compartment, or even in a public bus. We belong to the district of Midnapur. Our ancestors for countless generations had lived in the village of Baloon, about seven miles from the railway station of Balichuck, on the South-Eastern Railway. My grandfather, late Upendra Nath Ghosh was for over forty years a lawyer in the town of Midnapur. My father, Shri Jamini Jiban Ghosh practised in that town as a lawyer for over half a century. By caste we are Dakshin Rari Kayasthas.

II

British Magistrates of Midnapur And Our Poor Family

“Vitriol was at the end of my pen when I wrote for His Excellency the Governor of Bengal my report regarding Binoy Jiban Ghosh and his family”: thus blared forth Mr. Blaire, I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, in 1944 to Mr. Saheed Suhrawardy, elder brother of the far more prominent and



Jamini Jiban Ghosh

historic Saheed Suhrawardy, last Chief Minister of undivided Bengal. In politics, temperament, and outlook the two brothers were poles apart. The elder, Saheed was an erudite, cultured cosmopolitan.

The Suhrawardys came, as did our family, from the district of Midnapur. Mr. Saheed Suhrawardy was a few years junior to my father, but they had been friends in their schooldays, and Mr. Suhrawardy in those days used to seek sometimes my father's help in preparing his English lessons.

The desire for higher education and wanderlust then took away Mr. Suhrawardy from India, and he roved all over the European continent through twenty-two long years. On his return to his native land—if I remember aright, in 1932—he rushed down to the town of Midnapur to meet his relations, and old friends there. One of the first persons he sought out in Midnapur was my father. I was then the Lecturer of History in the Midnapur College. My father introduced me to Mr. Suhrawardy who seemed to be most delightfully surprised to find that his friend had such a grown-up son. Mr. Suhrawardy was a bachelor all his life.

When early in 1934 I was tossed into Calcutta, a hunted political pariah dog with the Police watchers constantly at my heels, one amongst the few places where I was welcome, and received with real warmth and friendship was in the bachelor's apartment of Mr. Suhrawardy on the ground-floor of 40 Theatre Road, the residence of his father, Sir Z. R. Z. Suhrawardy, retired Judge of the Calcutta High Court. The wide disparity in social status, rank, culture, education, wealth and age never stood in the way of Mr. Suhrawardy's treating me as a person very near and dear to him. He was full of sincere love and affection towards his old school-friend, and his stranded and politically stigmatized son.

Again, while I was rotting in detention under the Defence of India Rules from early in 1941 to the end of 1945, Mr. Suhrawardy felt greatly pained over the sorrow of his old friend, and his heart also went in solicitude for his son behind prison bars. His younger brother was then the Finance Minister of Bengal. More than that, the Chief Minister of Bengal, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin was the elder Suhrawardy's friend since their student days in England, and Mr. Suhrawardy was at the time the Bridge partner every evening of Khwaja Nazimuddin. He pleaded and interceded with Mr. Nazimuddin, and his younger brother, Saheed for the release of his friend's son, for whom through years of association in Calcutta Mr. Suhrawardy had come to have a warm corner in his heart.

Little did Mr. Suhrawardy realise the relentless policy of British Imperialism in India, and the vehicle of that Imperialism, the steel-frame of British bureaucracy. For all his efforts a curt and rude rebuff was what Mr. Suhrawardy received from the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Mr. Blaire, I.C.S., a few of whose words I have reproduced in the opening sentence of this chapter: "Vitriol was at the end of my pen when I wrote out the report regarding Binoy Jiban Ghosh, and his family".

And why?

Byron's famous lines, though oft-quoted, will bear one more repetition in this context:

Freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son
Though ever lost is ever won.

In our case, though not exactly from sire to son, freedom's fight was handed down from one generation to another.

The great Carthaginian general, Hamilcar Barca, had taken his son, the immortal Hannibal, then aged only nine years, to the temple of the gods to swear eternal enmity to the Roman name. Destiny seems to have ordained something like an eternal enmity between our family and British Rule in India. By a strange coincidence this hostility to the British Power in India assumed in this case a specific and concrete form—British Magistrates in charge of the district of Midnapur versus “Jiban Ghoshes” of that district. The succeeding chapters will unfold this drama of historic destiny.

III

Attempt at Murder of Mr. Donald Weston, I.C.S. District Magistrate of Midnapur

The Midnapur Bomb Conspiracy Case

Bengal was jerked into a startled consciousness about a violent revolutionary upsurge among her young men by the sudden flash of Bomb explosions on the evening of April 30, 1908 in the distant town of Muzaffarpur in Bihar. Two brave young souls from Bengal had gone there to remove from this earth Mr. Kingsford, the District and Sessions Judge, who had before this, in his capacity of Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, earned the hatred of Bengal revolutionaries in connexion with certain political cases.

Through a terrible tragedy of error they mistook the carriage of the local lawyer, Mr. Kennedy, for that of Mr. Kingsford; the result was that Mrs. Kennedy, and Miss Kennedy, who were in the carriage, were blown to bits by the powerful Bomb.

Sometime after one of the youths—Prafulla Chaki—committed suicide to avoid falling into the hands of the Police, and the other—Khudiram Bose was arrested.

Who was this Khudiram Bose? He came from the district of Midnapur, and he lived in the town of Midnapur. He was initiated, and trained up in the revolutionary cult by Hem Chandra Das (Kanungo), who had gone to France expressly with the object of learning how to prepare high explosives, and had

returned to Midnapur after fulfilling his mission abroad, and by Satyendra Nath Bose, who later mounted the gallows in the Alipur Central Jail for murdering inside



Khudiram Bose

the Jail the approver of the famous Alipur Bomb Conspiracy case, Narendra Nath Goswami.

A close revolutionary comrade of Khudiram Bose in all his activities in Midnapur was my uncle—my father's youngest brother—Jog Jiban Ghosh. It would seem that due to severe and atrocious torture perpetrated on him by the Police, Khudiram had made certain statements regarding the revolutionaries, and revolutionary activities in Calcutta and Midnapur.

In the early dawn of 2nd May, 1908, the Bengal Police simultaneously raided several places both in Calcutta and Midnapur, and arrested such figures as

Aurobinda Ghosh, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Hem Chandra Das (Kanungo) and others, and Satyendra Nath Bose, Jog Jiban Ghosh and others in Midnapur.

The celebrated Alipur Bomb Conspiracy Case, and its twin the Midnapur Bomb Conspiracy Case are really one and the same case. Only the question of local jurisdiction led to the starting of two separate Conspiracy Cases.

Satyendra Nath Bose was arrested in Midnapur, and then transferred to the Alipur Central Jail, and was made an accused in the Alipur Bomb Conspiracy Case. It should be remembered that Khudiram Bose came from Midnapur; another stalwart Hem Chandra Das (Kanungo) belonged to Midnapur, as also Purna Chandra Sen, arrested in the Muraripukur Garden.

This was bound to be so. The great Brahmo educationist and nationalist, Rishi Raj Narayan Bose had been during the most part of his life the Headmaster of the Midnapur Zilla School. When he relinquished that post he was succeeded by his younger brother, Abhoya Charan Bose, who also continued to live in the same house in which Raj Narayan Bose had lived. One of Rishi Raj Narayan's daughters was married to Dr. K. D. Ghosh, and the marriage was solemnised in what is now the Quarters of the Principal of the Midnapur College, then occupied by Rishi Raj Narayan. One son of Dr. K. D. Ghosh was Sri Aurobinda Ghosh, and another son was Sri Barindra Kumar Ghosh. Martyr Satyendra Nath Bose was the second son of Raj Narayan's younger brother, Abhoya Charan. Aurobinda Ghosh and Barindra Kumar Ghosh when

they returned to Bengal from Baroda with the avowed mission of spreading the revolutionary cult in Bengal, visited Midnapur and stayed in the house of Abhoya Charan Bose, which, indeed, they regarded as their maternal uncle's place. The Ghosh brothers had close consultations with their maternal uncle, Martyr Satyendra Nath Bose, and revolutionary organisations were started almost simultaneously in Calcutta and Midnapur.

The Midnapur Bomb Conspiracy Case (Emperor Vs. Jog Jiban Ghosh and others) was picturesque pageantry, although parts of it were bizarre and ghastly. Both in its Dramatis Personae, and its denouement it was a fantastic and fascinating forensic show.

When the case started the total number of the accused was no less than one hundred and fifty-four. The list of the accused included a titled Raja—Narendra Lal Khan, Zemindar of Narajole; a number of other important zemindars like Jamini Mullick, and Abinash Mitter; Upendra Nath Maity, leader of the Midnapur Bar was also an accused, and a number of other lawyers, doctors, and traders; there was, of course, a number of the more dangerous young men of the town. Even pimps and beggars were not wanting to give the list of the accused a completely representative character. Bail was refused to the accused by the Midnapur Courts, and even Raja Narendra Lal Khan had to rot in Jail Hajat for a few weeks before obtaining his bail through moving the Calcutta High Court.

Twenty-seven only out of these were being prosecuted before the Committing Magistrate, when the Advocate-General, Shri S. P. Sinha (afterwards Baron

Sinha of Raipur), who had gone down to Midnapur to conduct the Crown case, withdrew from the prosecution, on the 9th November, 1908, twenty-four of the accused, who were thereupon discharged. The case was ultimately pressed only against three accused—Jog Jiban Ghosh, Santosh Kumar Das, and Surendra Nath Mukhopadhyay. From 154 it had come down to only 3.

So much about personnel. But what was the charge against them? It was that "there was a conspiracy by a secret society working at various places at Midnapur and elsewhere, and having as one of its objects the assassination of the District Magistrate of Midnapur by means of bombs, explosives, or firearms".

Actually Hem Chandra Das had made a few powerful bombs, and they were stored in the house of Satyendra Nath Bose at Midnapur. But just on the eve of the Police search of the house of Satyendra, Jog Jiban and the sisters of Satyendra managed between them to remove the trunk containing the bombs to a hiding place, and they never fell into the hands of the Police. The Police in Midnapur had, thus, really missed the bus. They now fell back upon concocting a Conspiracy case. Crude crackers were planted by the Police in some houses, and then discovered in course of subsequent searches. One such house was that of Santosh Kumar Das, husband of my father's first cousin. Witnesses were suborned and a case was trumped up. The Prosecution case was contained in two documents which purported to have been compiled out of reports and information alleged to have been supplied by a paid

Police informer, Rakhal Chandra Laha. But there must be corroboration of Rakhal's version, and above all, a conspiracy case must have an approver. The Police and the European officers of Midnapur fixed on Santosh Kumar Das to be that scapegoat. They utilised the alleged finding of a bomb in his house as the lever for terrorising Santosh, and his whole family.

But Santosh proved a hard nut to crack. He was illegally kept in solitary confinement in the Jail Hajat for a fortnight, and terrorised and tortured. Even Santosh's mother, Basanta Kumari (mother's sister of the great Sir Rash Bihary Ghosh) was threatened by the Police officers that their properties would be confiscated, their two other sons would be arrested and tortured, and Santosh would, of course, be sent to transportation if Santosh were not asked by his parents to follow the dictates of the Police, and make a statement as advised. The District Magistrate himself, Mr. Weston sent repeatedly for Santosh's father, Peary Mohan Das, and asked him to persuade his son, Santosh to do as instructed by the Police, and then ask for King's pardon.

Still Santosh refused to accept the bidding of the British authorities. Infuriated, and exasperated, Mr. Weston took a brutal step. He suddenly ordered the arrest of the old father, Peary Mohan Das without a charge. For five weeks in the Jail Hajat the aged father was subjected to terrible treatment before the eyes of the son, who was told that the father was being chastised for the obduracy of the son. It was a beastly stratagem on the part of the authorities. Unable to bear any more the sight of the suffering of his father

Santosh, at last, made a confessional statement on the lines tutored by the Police. Next, the same methods were used against Surendra Nath Mukhopadhyay, and at last he had to yield also, and to record a statement dictated by the Police.

Curiously enough the confessions of both Santosh, and Surendra tallied exactly in the order of events, and in the details with the two Police documents prepared from the reports of the Police informer, Rakhal Chandra Laha even in regard to particulars where Rakhal was admittedly and obviously incorrect.

The accused were alleged to have held seditious meetings—where bombs were freely exhibited, and the plan for murder of British officials were openly discussed—in 22 different houses in the town. The list of these places of meeting of the conspirators was no less interesting than the original list of the 154 accused. These 22 houses included the Midnapur town premises of the Raja of Mahishàdal, the house of Shri Upendra Nath Maity, the house of Shri B. Dey, I.C.S., and the houses of two prostitutes of the town—Kamini, and Rajabala.

As soon as Santosh, and Surendra were produced in Court they retracted their confessions. Even Rakhal Chandra Laha, first, handed over to a defence lawyer the statement which was written up by the Police, and given to Rakhal to memorise and reproduce later as his evidence before the Court.

And on the 4th of November, 1908 Rakhal Chandra Laha—drunkard, paid informer of the Police—did what was for him a miraculous feat—a performance no less

striking than brigand Ratnakar's turning into the poet of the Rainayana. On that day while deposing in Court Rakhal Chandra Laha gave a detailed account of the threat, pressure, and inducements brought to bear on him by the Police, and the District authorities to compel him to act as a police informer. Even the District Magistrate, Mr. Weston himself held out to him these threats and inducements. He further stated that the document (Exhibit G) which purported to be the record of the information given by him to the Police from day to day was not entered from day to day, but had been prepared in one sitting, and had been signed by him practically under compulsion from the Police. Rakhal let the prosecution cat completely out of the bag.

As to the prosecution witnesses in the case, they were mostly people who had been involved as accused in criminal charges, such as forgery etc., and who had been induced to depose on the assurance that the criminal cases pending against them would be withdrawn.

Such was the Midnapur Bomb Conspiracy Case which the frustrated Police of Midnapur fabricated to chastise the nationalist agitators, and revolutionary young men of Midnapur. Jog Jiban was the main target of attack. Jog Jiban, the police knew, was a close associate of Khudiram Bose, and Satyendra Nath Bose. He was the leading spirit of that famous "Akhra", or Gymnasium of Midnapur town with a poetic name—the "Basanta Malati Akhra". Jog Jiban excelled all others in sword and "lathi-play". Khudiram

and Satyendra Nath had been removed from the scene. Jog Jiban must not escape from condign punishment. One Abdur Rahman had been Jog Jiban's "Ostad", or instructor for teaching sword and lathi-play. The police paid a heavy sum to this Abdur Rahman to



Jog Jiban Ghosh

depose against Jog Jiban. Abdur Rahman said in Court that Jog Jiban had asked him to help in preparing a bomb. Jog Jiban had told him that a bomb must be made, and Mr. Weston must be killed.

Another allegation against Jog Jiban was that he, accompanied by Khudiram Bose, had gone with a revolver to Jhargram in the district of Midnapur with the intention of murdering the District Magistrate, Mr. Donald Weston, who was scheduled to go on inspection to Jhargram. For some reason or other

Mr. Weston did not actually visit Jhargram at the expected time.

The Prosecution also attempted to prove that the two revolvers found with Khudiram Bose at the time of his arrest at the Waini Railway station in Bihar, belonged, one of them to Satyendra Nath Bose, and the other to Jog Jiban Ghosh.

Before this, Jog Jiban, along with Satyendra Nath Bose, and Sarat Chandra De, had been convicted under the Arms Act for going about in the streets with a sword in hand, and had undergone rigorous imprisonment for one month. At the time of the first search of our house two swords, and a bayonet had been seized by the police. By the way, how many times has our house been searched by the British Police in my lifetime! At least a score of times! For the first time on 2nd May, 1908, and for the last time on the 19th May, 1941—full thirty-three years of ceaseless struggle on one side, and horrid persecution on the other. Incidentally, that covers the entire period of our national struggle for liberation from foreign thraldom.

However flimsy and farcical the prosecution case might appear to others the British officials of Midnapur, whether belonging to the Executive, or the Judiciary, were bent on chastising fellows who had defied their rule. Disagreeing with the verdict of the two Assessors, Mr. M. Smither, Additional Sessions Judge of Midnapur convicted all the three accused under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908, and sentenced Jog Jiban, and Santosh Kumar Das to ten years transporta-

tion, and Surendra Nath Mukherjee to seven years transportation.

All the three accused appealed to the Calcutta High Court against their sentences. My grandfather was determined to do all that lay in his means to wrest his son from under the paws of the British Lion. He sold away the finest part of his paternal estates to secure the necessary resources for the purpose. Both my grandfather, and my grandmother, Nityamoyee were overwhelmed with grief at this fate of their youngest and best beloved son.

The leader of the High Court's Criminal Bar, the far-famed Dasarathi Sanyal was engaged to defend Jog Jiban. Among others who were engaged for the three accused were Mr. A. Chowdhury (afterwards Justice Sir A. Chowdhury), Shri K. B. Dutt, and Shri Amarendra Nath Bose—both Shri Dutt, and Shri Bose—belonged to Midnapur—and Shri Manmatha Nath Mukherji (afterwards Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherji, Acting Chief Justice of Bengal).

The Appeal was heard by the Chief Justice, Sir Lawrence Jenkins, and Justice Sir Ashutosh Mukherji. The judgment was delivered by the Chief Justice. Sir Lawrence held that the confessions of Santosh and Surendra, made under extremely suspicious circumstances, and retracted afterwards were inadmissible as evidence not only against others, but even against themselves. The Chief Justice made short shrift of the prosecution version of the case. About Jog Jiban he observed:

“Jog Jiban, who has been described as a “leading

spirit among the conspirators" was according to his father's evidence considerably under 16 in December, 1907, the time to which the prosecution traced the commencement of the conspiracy with which he is now charged; and he was then still pursuing his studies. There can be no question that he was keen and skilful in his gymnastic exercises, and that he joined the Bande Mataram processions, and picketing operations in Midnapur. But from this to the serious conspiracy with which he is charged is a far cry."

All the three accused were acquitted by the High Court.

The Midnapur Bomb Conspiracy Case had two sequels. Santosh Kumar Das's father, Peary Mohan Das filed a suit for damages against Mr. Donald Weston, I.C.S., District Magistrate of Midnapur for unlawfully arresting him, and causing him to be ill-treated and tortured. Mr. Justice Fletcher of the Calcutta High Court scathingly criticised the circumstances under which this aged and respectable citizen of Midnapur was arrested, humiliated and tormented, and awarded a damage of rupees one thousand to Peary Mohan Das against Mr. Weston. But on appeal Mr. Justice Woodroffe reversed the decision of Justice Fletcher.

Poor Rakhal Chandra Laha! the fury of the authorities fell on him. He was prosecuted for Perjury —giving false evidence in Court. Mr. Forrester, Sessions Judge of Midnapur convicted him, and passed a vindictive sentence. He was sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment, and a fine of rupees three

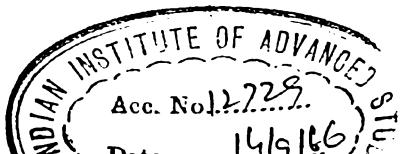
thousand. On appeal to the High Court the fine was remitted, and the term of imprisonment was reduced to three years. The noblest deed of Rakhal Laha's humdrum, and even sordid, life was his magnificent volte face' in Court on the 4th of November, 1908 due to his reaction to popular feeling against him for his previous conduct. Let us freely acknowledge it was a heroic act of faith for any man, and for that he had to pay a grievous penalty. Let us be reconciled to this irony of human fate, borne out by all history, that we have to suffer for our noble acts. Through our evil activities we often flourish and prosper.

Jog Jiban was a student of the Intermediate in Arts Classes at the time of his arrest. After acquittal he continued his studies in the Bankura Wesleyan College, and the City College, Calcutta from where he graduated in 1911. He remained a Bachelor all his life. He was a well-known figure of his time, and had countless friends and admirers in all walks of life. Among his life-long friends were such persons as Natyacharya Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, and late Nirmal Chandra Chunder. He also associated closely for sometime with the great novelist, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. He had personal contacts with a number of young literateurs like Probodh Kumar Sanyal and others. For his excellence in lathi-play he had almost as much reputation as Pulin Das of Dacca. He maintained his mastery over lathi-play even in his fortieth year, and at the Mohurrum festival each year his lathi-play was a great draw on the townsmen of Midnapur.

During the First World War (1914-1919) he was

interned in his home. He never gave up infusing revolutionary ardour into young hearts, and encouraged them to read the revolutionary literature of the world.

While at Banaras in 1930 he turned a Sannyasi, and died as such in December, 1945 in his beloved town of Midnapur.



IV

Murder of Mr. James Peddie, I.C.S. District Magistrate of Midnapur

We now come to a new generation—almost a new age—the thirties of the century. A score of years had rolled by since the days of Khudiram Bose. Mahatma Gandhi had appeared on the scene with his message of non-violent struggle, and he shone as the Sun in India's political firmament.

In 1930 came the Salt Satyagraha, and Civil Disobedience movement. The whole district of Midnapur plunged into the political fight with tremendous enthusiasm and determination. The masses responded with splendid courage to the call of the Mahatma. Civil Disobedience spread to almost every village in the district. At Pichaboni in Contai was started a huge Satyagraha camp for the illicit manufacture of salt. Terrible repression was let loose on the district by the forces of British Imperialism. Lathi-charge, caning of volunteers, assault and arrest of Satyagrahis continued with fierce fury. As the momentum of the national struggle gathered strength, the repressive measures of the British agents—the Police, the I.C.S., and the B.C.S.—headed by the District Magistrate, Mr. James Peddie, I.C.S., reached a new crescendo of brutality. Burning of houses and granaries of Satyagrahis, and above all, firing on unarmed crowds became frequent. Naturally this created

a feeling of deep hatred, and resentment in the hearts of the people of Midnapur.

The most gruesome incidents in connexion with the Civil Disobedience Movement in the district of Midnapur centered round Chechua Hat in Police Station Daspur in the Ghatal Sub-division. Trouble started in Chechua Hat on the 3rd June, 1930 over boycott and bonfire of foreign cloth, and the caning of a Congress worker by the officer-in-charge of Daspur Police Station right before the eyes of the people assembled in the Hat. The infuriated populace killed on the spot the Sub-Inspector, Bhola Nath Ghosh, officer-in-charge of the Daspur Police Station, and his assistant, Aniruddha Samanta. They also destroyed all traces of the two dead bodies.

In savage retaliation the Sub-divisional Officer of Ghatal—a Mahomedan B.C.S.—Fazlul Karim—ordered firing on an unarmed crowd a few days later at Chechua Hat on the 7th June, 1930. Fourteen unarmed peasants were killed by the police firing.

Subsequently, in the Daspur Sub-Inspector Murder case the following twelve persons were sentenced to transportation:—

1. Shri Munindra Chakravarti
2. Shri Bhut Nath Manna
3. Shri Sital Bhattacharya
4. Shri Kalipada Samanta
5. Shri Jiban Pati
6. Shri Brojo Bhuiyan
7. Shri Ananta Hazra
8. Shri Kala Chand Ghati

9. Shri Suresh Bag
10. Shri Jogen Hazra
11. Shri Binode Bag
12. Shri Parbati Dula.

But in April, 1930 occurred also the Chittagong Armoury Raid—the biggest and most daring revolutionary exploit of Bengal. In the town of Midnapur also a small group of young men formed a revolutionary nucleus. Subhas Chandra Bose came to preside over a Youth Conference held in the town.

Early in 1930, my next brother, Santi Jiban Ghosh, who was in the B.Sc. Fourth Year Class, fell ill, and expired. In that year I got a first class in General History in my M.A., and in February 1931, I joined as Lecturer of History in the Midnapur College. We were living at the time in a house in Colonelgola quarter of the town.

Twilight before evening on the 7th of April, 1931—I was talking to a knot of young men standing on the Golkua Chak—that is, the four-points crossing with the round well. The Chak was just at the southern end of the Midnapur College, and Collegiate School premises. Our house was about fifty yards farther south. Suddenly a few boys of the Midnapur Collegiate School came breathless and running to the spot, and broke the news that two young men had just shot at Mr. Peddie with their revolvers. Who the young men were nobody could tell. They had rushed in, opened fire, and then disappeared with lightning speed. An Educational Exhibition was being held in the building of the Midnapur Collegiate School. Mr. Peddie had

gone there that evening to declare the Exhibition closed. Two young men dashed into the room from the dark hall by its side, and instantly shots rang out.

As the lamp-lighter was lighting the street lamp on the Chak a horse-drawn carriage sped past towards the hospital. In the back seat of the carriage Mr. Peddie was sitting bleeding profusely. Two men were supporting him. People in panic began to hurry to their homes. What further information I could gather from the few teachers, and the boys who were present in the room at the time of the occurrence, was that Mr. Peddie had been hit in five or six places in his body, and that most of the shots had been fired by a boy in his "teens," who wore a striped grey shirt.

As the evening wore on my father began to grow restive. Everybody had returned to the house, except my third younger brother, Jati Jiban Ghosh. The streets were practically deserted except for police people and officials who seemed to be moving about in great hurry and turmoil. Some Police people told my father, who was standing on the door-way, that a few young men had been arrested, and some houses in the town were being searched. I was all the time keenly watching my father, and constantly keeping an eye on him. My father was saying that Tia (the nickname of Jati Jiban) must have been arrested by the Police somewhere, otherwise why was he not returning home. At about 10 P.M. I saw my father putting on his shoes. I asked him "where are you going"? My father replied "I am going to the Thana to inquire about Tia." I then firmly interposed saying "Are you mad; Going to

the Thana! are you sure Tia is not one of the assailants.” At these words my father’s eyes bulged out in terror and amazement. He said: “What is this you are saying! Oh God! we are all ruined.” I told my parents what I had heard about one of the assailants wearing a striped grey shirt. Out of the same piece of cloth one striped grey shirt was made for me, and another for Jati. The Oriya cook, and the two maid servants were asked to return to their homes. As soon as they were gone, mother cut to pieces my striped grey shirt, soaked the pieces in Methylated spirit, and burnt them up. The whole night my parents and myself could not lie on the bed; we sat huddled together in a corner of the room and whispered to each other all through the night.

In course of the night the conviction gained even on my parents that Jati Jiban was one of the assailants of Mr. Peddie. We had also no difficulty in guessing who the other assailant was; it was Bimal Das Gupta, because, Bimal, we had seen, was the constant companion and associate of Jati Jiban. Bimal Kumar Das Gupta was the third son of Kaviraj Aukshoy Kumar Das Gupta, who came originally from Basanda in the district of Barisal, but the family had settled down in Midnapur.

At early dawn, next day, came complete confirmation of the worst fears. At about 4 A.M. we heard gentle knocks on the door at the back of our house. As we opened the door who walked in but Kaviraj Aukshoy Das Gupta. Aukshoy Babu told us that Bimal had been missing from the house since last evening. We held hurried consultations, and decided that we should

be extremely careful about our movements in the future, and stoutly deny having noticed any association between Bimal and Jati.



Bimal Kumar Das Gupta

In the morning we heard that two boys had snatched away, at the point of revolvers, the bicycle of a friend of mine on the road to the East of the Collegiate School building at about the time Mr. Peddie was shot at. The two young men were seen to ride away to the north on the bicycle. In the afternoon, while I was in the College, news came that Mr. Peddie had expired in the Hospital.

The owner of the cycle, Shri Phanindra Nath Mukherjee, son of Shri Ram Chandra Mukherjee deserves special mention. His conduct was both patriotic and wise. He knew both Bimal Gupta, and

Jati Jiban. If he had told the Police their names it would have been all over with them. Even if he did not want to betray them to the Police, he might have reported the matter to the Police immediately saying that two unknown young men had snatched away his bicycle. In that event also Bimal and Jati could hardly have got away. Shri Phanindra Nath Mukherjee did not do that. He ran back home, and consulted his neighbour and relation, Advocate Shri Jatindra Nath Banerjee (better known as Kantoo Babu), who is also a very dear friend of our family. Kantoo Babu advised him to say that the two youths were utter strangers to him. Kantoo Babu also counselled him to go to the Thana several hours later so that the two young men could find the time to escape safely. As an explanation for the delay in reporting to the Police Phani Babu was to state that he had run to his house, and became senseless there for some time out of fear and excitement. As soon as he recovered he was coming to the Thana to report the affair. Mr. Norton Jones, Additional Superintendent of Police, who was then at the Thana took down the statement of Shri Phanindra Nath Mukherjee.

The problem at our home was what should we say about the whereabouts of Jati Jiban if the police came. My father and I decided to tell the Police, if such an emergency arose, that Jati Jiban had gone to Calcutta about a week ago, that is, on the 1st of April, for proceeding from there to his maternal uncle's place—village Dhamasin in the district of Hooghly. The police were sure to interrogate the menials of the household. I

took on myself the task of dinging into the ears of the cook, and maidservants as well as into those of my younger brothers and sisters that Tia had gone to maternal uncle's place several days ago.

While searching the house of a young man—Prafulla Kumar Tripathi—the Police found a list of volunteers. Bimal Das Gupta's name was on that list, but not Jati Jiban's. Following up that clue the Police went to Bimal's house, but could not find him there. Moreover the maidservant of the house, and her nine-year old son blurted out certain things. The Police became almost sure that Bimal Das Gupta was one of the assailants. He was declared an absconder, and a heavy reward was announced for help to arrest him.

About a week after the shooting a young man of Jati Jiban's revolutionary group came to our house. He told us that Police had not yet been able to trace out Jati's complicity in the affair, and that if we would shoulder the risk, they could arrange for his return home. Some relation should bring him down from Calcutta.

I volunteered to go and fetch Jati down. A dangerous and momentous, and most painful decision had to be taken by my parents. My father said he would not give any opinion either way. He would only say what he thought of it as a lawyer, and then let my mother decide. My father said that if Jati could be brought home, and then if he was arrested by the Police from his home the case for defence would be definitely stronger. But if Tota (my nick name) were also detected and caught by the Police, while attempting to

shield Tia, the Police would certainly start a conspiracy to murder case, and then both the sons might be hanged. That was the legal position, and my mother should weigh the consequences carefully before giving her decision. It was an excruciating ordeal for my mother. She wept silently for half an hour, and then finally gave her verdict: "If Tota wants to risk his life in an attempt to save his younger brother, why should we stand in the way; either I lose both sons, or I get back both". It was settled that Jati Jiban would be sent to our maternal uncle's place at Dhamasin, and I would go there, and bring down Jati to Midnapur. If however, my maternal uncle would agree to escort Jati to Midnapur that arrangement would be safer, and preferable.

After snatching away the cycle Bimal Das Gupta and Jati Jiban rode at breakneck speed in the dark to the railway station of Salboni, about 15 miles north of Midnapur. At Salboni they waited till past midnight, and then boarded the Purulia-Gomoh Passenger. Next morning they got down at Gomoh, and after staying there for a few hours, proceeded by rail to Calcutta via Asansol. All the time they kept their revolvers with them ready for any emergency. At Calcutta both Bimal and Jati were kept in the houses of party members and party friends.

My next problem was how to slip out of Midnapur undetected by the Police. Luckily the College closed for four or five days due to Easter. Every evening I used to go to a friend's house for playing Bridge. That day also I went there as usual. After a little

while I asked them to excuse me, and give me leave to go away as I was—I told them falsely—feeling pain in my stomach. In those days I used to have occasional attacks of Colic, which would keep me confined to bed for a few days at a stretch. From there I walked straight to the railway station—a good mile and a half —. I had taken money with me. At the Midnapur railway station I got into a local train to Kharagpur. I chose a compartment in which there was no other passenger. As the train was about to touch the platform at Kharagpur I got out on the far side. I moved about in the town of Kharagpur for a couple of hours, and then caught a train to Howrah. At Howrah I roamed from one platform to another, and at last got into a Burdwan Local.

When I reached Dhamasin my maternal uncle, late Amulya Nidhan Palit agreed to take Jati down to Midnapur from Calcutta. It was decided that my uncle would accompany Jati to Midnapur by the night train on a certain date few days later, and I was to hurry back to Midnapur in the meantime.

Jati reached Dhamasin after I had left. I had spoken to my grandmother, Shrimati Kiron Bala Devi, about the striped grey shirt. My grandmother took from Jati the striped grey shirt, and burnt it up. My maternal uncle and Jati broke journey for a day or two in Calcutta, and then proceeded to Midnapur by the appointed train on the appointed night.

I returned to Midnapur to await the arrival of my maternal uncle and Jati. The night train reached Midnapur station at about 1 A.M., and they were likely

to arrive at our home at about 1-30 A.M. From midnight I sat quietly alone in the dark in our front room in breathless suspense and expectancy. At about 1-30 A.M. a hackney-carriage halted at our doors; instantly I opened the door, and Jati slipped inside past me. My uncle talked with the driver, paid him his fare, and talked to me trying to give the impression that he alone had come in the carriage.

Immediately my parents, my maternal uncle and myself held a conference regarding our future line of action. It was decided that now we would tell the Police that Jati had been all along at home in Midnapur. Jati was asked to remain indoors, and not to stir out of the house. My maternal uncle went back to Calcutta after a few days. Now it was my task constantly to din into the ears of the cook, the maid-servants, and my younger brothers and sisters that Tia had gone nowhere, but had been all along at home in Midnapur. The changed situation led to this complete reversal of what I had been teaching them to say since the morning of the 8th of April.

A week after his return, and about three weeks after the murder of Mr. Peddie, the Police came at last to search our house, and arrest Jati Jiban. Nothing incriminating was found in our house, but Jati Jiban was taken away by the Police.

After being produced before a Magistrate, Jati Jiban was kept in the Thana Hajat for a week. Two days after Jati's arrest my father, as soon as he returned from Court, was called to the Thana. At the Thana, the Officer-in-charge, Ashgar Ali, who used to call my

father Dada, or elder brother, produced two men before my father. Their faces were covered with cloth so that they could not be identified. Both of them stated that they had themselves seen Bimal Das Gupta, and Jati Jiban Ghosh firing the shots at Mr. Peddie, and then



Jati Jiban Ghosh

running away. Ashgar Ali told my father: "You hear that, Dada; if you want to save your son ask him to confess everything". My father quietly answered: "Look here, Ashgar, I am an old lawyer; do you want to bamboozle me so easily; both the fellows are police people, and they are simply stating what you have taught them to say". Ashgar Ali remonstrated: "I call you Dada, how can you think that I will play such a foul stratagem on you".

On his return home my father lay down speechless

on the bed for half an hour, and then whispered to me what had transpired in the Thana, and ended by saying "It seems, the game is up".

Two days later, my father was again summoned to the Thana. That day both Ashgar Ali and Intelligence Branch officers who had gone down from Calcutta requested father to tell Jati to state to the Police whatever he knew about the affair. When, however, he was taken to the Hajat my father told Jati: "Don't say anything that will put into danger sons of other gentlemen of the town. If you do, I won't be able to show my face to people". The Police fellows were furious at my father, and demanded to know from him why he spoke those words to Jati. My father replied: "Do you want to dictate even what a father should tell his son".

Two and a half months later Jati Jiban was released on bail after furnishing two sureties of rupees ten thousand each. The case dragged on and after six months Jati Jiban was discharged along with a few others for want of evidence. In the meantime Bimal Das Gupta had also returned to Midnapur. But by then strong suspicion of the Police had fastened on him in connexion with the murder of Mr. Peddie. As I have already said his house had been searched several times, and was almost under constant Police watch. The Police spies got scent of Bimal's arrival at home, and soon the Police came, and in spite of the denial of Bimal's relations, insisted that Bimal was inside, and were bent on searching the house. Bimal was then taken out of the house by the back-door by his elder

brother, Sri Binoy Bhushan Das Gupta to the Midnapur Public Library building. Binoy Das Gupta was the Librarian of the Midnapur Public Library. He kept Bimal concealed behind the huge almirahs of the Library after re-arranging them for the purpose.

Bimal's brothers then sought the help of late Sri Bhupendra Nath Bose, (better known as Kedon Babu), next brother of Sahid Satyendra Nath Bose, for arranging the safe conduct of Bimal back to Calcutta. Kedon Babu kept a dairy, and was a milk vendor by occupation. He persuaded a Bihari milkman—Raghua Goala—to shoulder the risk. But Raghua said he could escort Bimal to safety only if Bimal were disguised as a woman of his community. So Bimal was garbed in a coarse "Sari," and decked with heavy silver ornaments usually worn by Bihari women. Throughout the train journey from Midnapur to Calcutta Raghua played exceedingly well the role of a tipsy inamorato of a handsome young woman. Thanks to Raghua, Bimal was back again in Calcutta.

The Police went on arresting one young man after another from all parts of Bengal, and brought them down to Midnapur for identification as Bimal Das Gupta. The fiasco of such arrests often provided lurid fun. Shri Hira Lal Das Gupta, Headmaster of the Midnapur Collegiate School, and a relation of Bimal Das Gupta was removed from his post, and ordered to leave the district.

On the 29th October, 1931, at about 11-30 A.M., on the topfloor of Gillander House at 80 Clive Street (now Netaji Subhas Road) occurred a most daring incident.

The President of the European Association, Mr. E. Villiers was having a discussion with Mr. Lockhart, (who later became himself the President of the European Association, and figured prominently in connexion with the notorious "Lockhart letters," exchanged between him and Shri Tushar Kanti Ghosh) and two other European friends. A Mahomedan young man sent a slip for an interview with Mr. Villiers as he wanted a job. The young man entered the room with a Fez cap on his head. But he sprang like a tiger on the table whipping out a revolver. Mr. Villiers slid under the table, and the three other European gentlemen seized and overpowered the youth. When he was made over to the Police it was discovered that the daring youth was none other than the wanted Bimal Das Gupta of Midnapur.

As soon as the news of Bimal Das Gupta's arrest became known, Jati Jiban absconded from home a second time. What rare good luck the Police did not sense his disappearance! Jati returned home after a week.

Bimal Das Gupta was tried for the attempted murder of Mr. E. Villiers, and was sentenced to ten years transportation.

After his conviction in the Villiers shooting case, Bimal Das Gupta was brought before a Bench of the Calcutta High Court to stand his trial for the murder of Mr. Peddie. One after another four or five witnesses were put on the box. They were all supposed to have been eye-witnesses of the murder of Mr. Peddie by Bimal Kumar Das Gupta on the evening of 7th April, 1931. But some deposed before the High Court that

they had not even heard of the murder of a Sahib in Midnapur; some could not remember to have ever seen Bimal Das Gupta before; some could not say who the man in the accused's dock was; some said they were far away from the scene of the murder. After the case had proceeded for about an hour in this fashion, the Advocate-General, Sir N. N. Sarkar in terrible huff asked for adjournment of the case till after lunch. Immediately after lunch Sir N. N. Sarkar withdrew the prosecution, Shri Bimal Das Gupta was discharged for want of evidence. Seldom one comes across such a debacle of the prosecution in so important a charge. A telegram conveying the good news was received in Midnapur towards the evening, and great was popular jubilation over the acquittal of Bimal Das Gupta in the Peddie Murder Case.

V

Murder of Mr. Robert Douglas, I.C.S. District Magistrate of Midnapur

Mr. Robert Douglas, I.C.S. succeeded Mr. James Peddie as the District Magistrate of Midnapur. Civil Disobedience was resumed in the district, and the Government took recourse again to repressive measures. But repression was never so ferocious under Douglas as under Peddie. Robert Douglas was a quiet sort of fellow given to books and bottles. Every fortnight he would send a slip to me asking for two or three dozens of books on History, Economics and Literature from the College Library. He seldom went to the Collectorate office, and would hardly stir out of his bungalow, and even in his bungalow he spent most of his time not in the building itself, but in a tent pitched in the middle of the spacious compound. He was always guarded by armed attendants. He seemed to be obsessed with a presentiment that Midnapur would be his grave, and he wrote explicitly to that effect to his brother, who was the Principal of the Rajmundry College in the South.

After the murder of Mr. Peddie punitive tax was levied on the inhabitants of the town, and Pathan armed constables were posted at all important points. The Intelligence Branch at Midnapur was reinforced, and strict watch was kept on the houses of suspects, and movements of young men.

Douglas was right; Midnapur was destined to be his grave. On the night of the 16th September, 1931

occurred the brutal shooting on detenus in the Hijli Detention camp by the side of the Railway town of Kharagpur, and about eight miles from the town of Midnapur. Detenus Santosh Kumar Mitra, and Tarakeswar Dastidar were killed in the firing by the Detention camp guards, and a score of other detenus were seriously injured. Mr. Douglas, as the District Magistrate of Midnapur conducted the inquiry into the firing from the 17th to the 21st September and submitted his report in which he absolved the camp guards who opened fire, and put all the blame on the shoulders of the detenus. This action on his part sealed the fate of Mr. Douglas.

Afternoon of the 30th of April, 1932, about 6 P.M.; Mr. Douglas was presiding over a meeting of the District Board of Midnapur in the premises of the Board. Suddenly shots rang out in the meeting; two young men were standing on either side of Mr. Douglas' chair, and firing on him. Hit by five bullets, Mr. Douglas was mortally wounded, and breathed his last that evening in the Sadar Hospital.

The two dauntless young revolutionaries had eluded not only the armed guards of Mr. Douglas himself, but also of Mr. George I.C.S., Sub-divisional officer of Tamluk, and other such officers who had come to attend the Board meeting. They boldly effected their entry into the Hall, and reached right upto Mr. Douglas' chair. Only indomitable courage, and willingness to sacrifice their lives at the altar of the motherland could account for such miraculous success. The two assailants ran out by the north-eastern gate of the District Board

premises followed by the armed guards. Bullets fired by the guards whizzed past the two young men.

Who were these two daring heroes? They were Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharya, and Provangsu Sekhar



Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharya

Paul. Shri Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharya was a student of the Second Year Class of the Midnapur College. He was the youngest son of Shri Bhabataran Bhattacharya, and Srijukta Pankajini Devi. Bhabataran Babu practised as a Revenue Agent in the town of Midnapur. The family belonged originally to village Gokulnagar, in the Ghatal Sub-division of the district.

Shri Provangsu Sekhar Paul was a very strong, stout and hefty young lad. He was the eldest son of Dr. Ashutosh Paul, and Srijukta Lakshimoni Devi. His grandfather, Rai Bahadur Prasanna Kumar Paul

was an Executive Engineer under the Bihar and Orissa Government. This family also came from village Khanjapur in the Ghatal Sub-division.

After proceeding together for about two hundred yards, the two parted company. Provangsu ran towards the north-east. He had refilled his revolver while running, and fired back on his pursuers. The pursuit stopped, and Provangsu reached his home safely after making a wide detour.

Prodyot was running towards the south-east. He also pointed his revolver at those who were chasing him. But his weapon was out of order, and not a shot came out of it. Mr. George, I.C.S., the Sub-divisional officer of Tamluk noticed this, and he began to run after Prodyot, and asked the guards, and several other members of the Board to follow him. Poor helpless Prodyot was apprehended about five hundred yards away from the District Board Compound. He was mercilessly assaulted on the spot by the armed guards, and then dragged to the Thana. Prodyot's revolver failed to work during the whole incident. All the bullets which hit Mr. Douglas were fired from the revolver of Provangsu. Among the articles found with Prodyot at the time of his arrest was a small slip of paper on which was written "a slight revenge for the Hijli atrocities".

When it became certain that Police had not been able to detect Provangsu, he was sent to Calcutta next day by the afternoon train accompanied by one of his sisters. Three or four days after he was arrested in Calcutta, and taken to the Intelligence Branch Head-

quarters in Elysium Row (now Lord Sinha Road) for interrogation. He was, however, let off. About a week after he was again arrested, and taken down to



Provangsu Kumar Paul

Midnapur for an identification parade. As nobody could identify him as one of the assailants he was let off this time also. After the murder of Mr. Burge, Provangsu was made a detenu from 1933 to 1938.

Before we come to the trial and execution of Prodyot Kumar, we have to refer to a ghastly offshoot of the Douglas Murder affair—the brutal assault by the Police on Phanindra Kumar Das in the Thana Hajat for extorting a confession regarding revolutionary activities in Midnapur—an assault which almost killed him. Phanindra Kumar Das was an active and prominent member of the revolutionary group in

Midnapur. He had been arrested after the murder of Mr. Peddie, and was at the time interned in his home at Paharipur in the town of Midnapur. Phanindra Kumar Das was a student of the Midnapur Hindu School (not in existence now) of which his father, Shri Jatindra Nath Das was the Assistant Headmaster.

On the evening of 3rd May, 1932 Phanindra was brought to the Kotwali Thana, and kept in a room just in front of the room in which Prodyot was confined. Phanindra was asked to confess to certain things which Prodyot, it was falsely alleged, had stated; otherwise there would be terrible torture on him. The Police plan was carefully prepared and premeditated. One Rahat Bux Chowdhury a brute of a Police Sub-Inspector then in charge of Narayangarh Police station, who had gained notoriety for his beastly ways for extorting confession from ordinary criminals, had been brought down to Midnapur for the purpose. On Phanindra Kumar's saying that he knew nothing about the matters referred to, hell was let loose on him. Rahat Bux and four constables started hitting Phanindra Kumar with batons; big pins and rods were inserted into the different parts of his body. Several times Phanindra fainted, and he was revived through iced water, and then the torture was renewed. After this ghoulish operation had continued for over two hours, Phanindra Kumar went cold and collapsed. Fearing that Phanindra might die, Mr. Evans, the Superintendent of Police himself rushed in his car to fetch the Civil Surgeon, Mr. J. G. Drummond, who had gone to see his friend, the Manager of the Midnapur Zemindary Company at

Godapiasal, seven miles to the north of the town. The Civil Surgeon, who arrived at the Thana at about midnight, after preliminary treatment, removed Phanindra Kumar to the Sadar Hospital. At the Hospital Phanindra vomited blood more than once. His dying declaration had to be taken, and he was kept alive through administration of Oxygen. Thanks to the extraordinary physical assets of Phanindra Kumar he survived.

On the 21st May, 1932, when Phanindra was produced before the trying magistrate he filed a written complaint of assault against the Police. Deputy Magistrate, Wali-ul-Islam was entrusted with the preliminary inquiry into the complaint. Mr. Islam reported that no Prima Facie case had been made out against the Police. Phanindra Kumar's case was most ably argued by Counsel, Shri J. C. Gupta, who went down from Calcutta for the purpose. Phanindra appealed to the District and Sessions Judge of Midnapur. But the Appeal was rejected. Against that order Phanindra moved the Honourable High Court of Calcutta. The High Court ordered a retrial. At this stage the Police made an offer to Phanindra's father that if the assault case be not pressed further, Phanindra would not be included among the accused in the Douglas Murder Case, but would only be detained under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act. On the advice of lawyers this offer was accepted and the charge against the Police was dropped.

Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharya was the only accused in the Douglas Murder case. The case was heard from

the 5th to the 15th June, 1932, judgment being delivered on the latter date, before a Special Tribunal consisting of Shri K. C. Nag, I.C.S., Shri Jnanankur De, I.C.S., and Shri Bhujangadhar Mustafi. Prodyot was defended by Counsels, Shri Nisith Chandra Sen, Shri Birendra Nath Sasmal, ad Shri Jogesh Chandra Gupta—all three from Calcutta, and a number of local lawyers.

Shri Jnanankur De in his dissenting judgment gave verdict for life sentence against the accused, but the other two, who constituted the majority, awarded the capital sentence.

The Appeal to the Calcutta High Court against the judgment of the Special Tribunal was heard in August, 1932. The Hight Court declined to alter the sentence.

When, on the evening of the 30th April, 1932, I heard that Mr. Douglas had been shot, and Prodyot Kumar arrested I instantly recalled that only a few days ago my mother had prepared with her own hand Polao, meat, sweets and other delicacies and fed Prodyot, Jati Jiban, and one or two others of Jati's friends. Prodyot's family and our family were very thick and friendly with each other. Prodyot had been coming to our house frequently since he was a little child. I distinctly remember when Prodyot was a boy of five or six he would often ask for lozenges from me. He was a most lovely chubby boy. He was also my student in the Midnapur College.

I told mother she must be prepared for house-search by the Police, and arrest of Jati Jiban within a few hours. Sure enough the Police party arrived at about 10 P.M. in the night, searched our house, and arrested,

and took away to the Thana Jati Jiban Ghosh. In May, 1932 Jati Jiban was discharged from the Douglas Murder Case, but was arrested, along with about twenty other young men of the town, under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act. Till the end of 1938 Jati Jiban continued to be under detention.

At dawn on the 12th of January, 1933, bravely and cheerfully the immortal martyr Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharya mounted the gallows in the Midnapur Central Jail. Although Prodyot was like my younger brother, and he was my student, I close this chapter with a salute to his hallowed memory.

VI

Murder of Mr. B. E. J. Burge, I.C.S. District Magistrate of Midnapur

Mr. B. E. J. Burge, I.C.S., who became the District Magistrate after the murder of Mr. Robert Douglas, was not new to Midnapur. Indeed, it may be said that Midnapur saw both the beginning and the end of his official career in India. He was in Midnapur, first, as Joint Magistrate in the early twenties of the century. Then, he was again in Midnapur as the Additional District Magistrate. Football was his favourite sports. I have seen him come and play football on the College ground almost daily when he was Joint Magistrate. To the last day of his life he continued to take part in football games. Mr. Burge himself was not for harsh measures against the people, but in the British bureaucratic set-up an individual was simply a cog in the machine. The Superintendent of Police, Mr. Evans believed in teaching a lesson to the recalcitrant people of Midnapur, and egged Mr. Burge on to some cruel repressive steps, especially in Keshpur Thana where no-tax campaign was continuing unabated.

In the town itself things took on a nasty look. After the murder of Mr. Douglas, a Garhwali regiment under British officers was stationed in the western outskirts of the town on the Race-course maidan. The town was filled with Police spies, watchers, and Intelligence Branch people. Midnapur was a beleaguer-

ed city. The strength of the armed body-guards of the District Magistrate was trebled.

The Governor of Bengal, Sir John Anderson held a Durbar in Midnapur. In his address the Governor said: "Anarchist forces in Midnapur seem to have thrown out a challenge to us that they won't allow a British Magistrate to survive. The Government takes up that challenge. An army battalion has been posted in the town, and any further anarchist activity in Midnapur will be met by strong military action." Mr. Burge, who was sitting on the right of Sir John in a bright blazer coat, listened approvingly to the Governor's speech.

The band of revolutionary youths of Midnapur was never large in number; but they were a group of picked, determined, and brave souls. Sir John's brag and bluster evoked a firm resolve in their hearts to strike another blow at British power. The situation in the town of Midnapur had by now grown terribly tense. The British authorities were now waiting on tip-toe in a most vindictive and vengeful mood to spring on the revolutionary elements of the town. Suddenly, like a crash of doom, the news burst over the town on the afternoon of the 2nd September, 1933 that the third British Magistrate of Midnapur had just been shot dead on the Police grounds. Three successive magistrates killed in three successive years. Mr. Burge had gone to participate on behalf of the Town Club in that day's football match against the Mahomedan Sporting. As soon as he alighted from his car on the play-field two young boys rushed up to him, and opened fire from

their revolvers at point blank range. Mr. Burge fell down dead. The body-guards started showering a hail of bullets on the two youths. One of them, Shri Anath



Anath Bandhu Panja

Bandhu Panja was killed on the spot. The other, Mrigendra Kumar Dutt, though pierced by several bullets, survived till next morning when he expired in the Sadar Hospital.

Mrigendra Kumar Dutt was a first cousin (mother's sister's son) of Phanindra Nath Das, and lived in the same house under the care and guardianship of Phanindra's father, Shri Jatindra Nath Das. Mrigen was a strong-built young man, and was in the Second Year Class of the Midnapur College. Anath Bandhu Panja was a student of the Midnapur Collegiate School. He was a widow's son, and he had no other

relation in the world except a younger brother. He came from village Jalbindu, Police Station Sabang in the district of Midnapur.

Thus, perished that day three persons—a British bureaucrat, and two noble youths of Midnapur, as if in a grim death-pact. Yes, those three dead symbolised the entire national struggle of India against British imperialism. Forty-five millions of Britishers from far away wanted to rule through their agents for the benefit of their own race four hundred and fifty millions of Indians through the centuries. The finest portion of Indian manhood revolted against this continuing monstrosity; thousands resisted this foreign rule in non-violent ways; a few of the bravest hearts in India plunged into the fight with the battle-cry “life for life”.

Locked in that grim and deadly combat Anath Bandhu Panja and Mrigendra Kumar Dutt gave their lives in the flower of youth. Let us shed a few drops of hot tears to their deathless memory, and remember once again in deep reverence and gratitude that India’s Independence has been won through the martyrdom of such heroes as Mrigendra Kumar Dutt and Anath Bandhu Panja. May we hope and trust they shall live enshrined in the hearts of their people. They gave their lives so that we may live in joy and freedom for ever.

Instantly after Mr. Burge’s murder, the authorities unleashed an orgy of violence on the townspeople. The town was placed under military control. Innocent pedestrians were assaulted on the roads; those riding on bikes, including high Indian officials, were flung down

and mercilessly belaboured. People in panic began to run to their homes.



Mrigendra Kumar Dutt

Within three hours of the murder our home was searched and my fifth brother, Nirmal Jiban Ghosh (nicknamed "Paira"—pigeon) was arrested. Dozens of other houses in the town were searched simultaneously, and about a score of young men arrested.

At dawn of the 6th September, 1933 at about 4 A.M. my mother woke me up from sleep. She had also awakened father. She told us in whispers that our house had been surrounded by short men wearing round black caps, and a large number of such people were moving about in the street in a silent and stealthy way. She had seen them from the verandah on the first floor abutting on the street. I had a peep from the same

place and saw that Garhwali soldiers had cordoned off our neighbourhood.

Hardly twenty minutes had passed when we were startled by the deafening noise of doors in our and several adjoining houses being broken open simultaneously. Our house, the next two houses on the south, and the two houses facing ours on the other side of the road were being raided by the military at the same time. A restaurant, two blocks away to the north, was another victim. The crash and thud of things being smashed up in half a dozen houses was terrifying. After some time the cry of wailing as my class-mate, in the house opposite, Shri Birendra Nath Bose, better known as Bhutu, was being brutally assaulted by the Garhwalis, mingled in the air and added poignancy to the scene. My classmate's crime was that he had asked the Garhwalis not to do damage to their house as it belonged to a Government servant. His father was an employee of the Civil Courts. He was rendered unconscious through beating and then thrown into the drain to die. After the Garhwalis left his mother and sister lifted him back to his home, and it was only through month's of medical treatment, and nursing that he could move about again.

Nobody slept downstairs in our house. The Garhwalis had their own way breaking up everything on the ground-floor. Then we heard knocks by but-ends of rifles on the door leading from the stair to the first-floor. We opened the door. Half a dozen Garhwalis with rifles and bayonets in heavy boots filed in. At a corner in the closed verandah in front of the

rooms my mother collected all my younger brothers and sisters and stood guard herself. My father and I stood apart. When the Garhwalis came near to her my mother addressed these words to them: "You have mothers at home. I am a mother, like your own mothers. I cannot see my children beaten up before my eyes. You will have first to beat me before I let my children be assaulted by you. As to my eldest son, if you must chastise him, first, take him away out of my sight, and then do your job".

At this the Garhwalis stood motionless for a minute or two; then, the Havildar among them told mother, "We will never touch your body. You are also our mother. We will not also touch your "betis" (daughters). As to your sons we will spare them also unless we are ordered by the Sahib (their British officer) expressly to chastise them". Luckily, the British officer remained all the time outside our house on the street. He never entered into the premises. As to me, twice or thrice a soldier brought his bayonet within inches of my forehead or neck and then withdrew it. They simply intended to terrorise me. Everybody in our house escaped physical harm. But every article in our house, even the smallest utensils and even the ovens in the kitchen, everything from floor to ceiling was smashed to smithereens. My grand-father's portrait was pulled down from the wall and broken up. Tables, chairs, almirahs, cots were turned to matchwood. Books were pulled out from racks and torn to pieces. Pillows, quilts, cups, saucers, tea-pots, stoves, harmonium, brass utensils nothing escaped the thorough

military efficiency of destruction. Some of the furniture in the front room were just hurled out into the street. A plain dress Police officer was standing in the front room when the Garhwalis left our house. My father and I came down. My father asked the Police officer "What is this! Since my youth I have been accustomed to Police searches of my house. Never before have I seen a thing like this". The Police officer replied that this was house-search with the aid of the military. Under that innocuous phraseology was carried out a savage and brutal military raid of twenty-five houses in the town intended solely to destroy the houses, and maim the limbs of members of families of political suspects.

Mr. J. C. Gupta, Bar-at-Law, who was in Midnapur on a professional call, visited our house, and several other houses raided by the military, and issued a statement in the 'Advance' on the atrocious incident.

As the morning advanced a paroxysm of panic seized the town, and a universal exodus began. On foot, on cycles, in carts and by train the inhabitants began to leave the town. The whole population seemed to be on the move. The police, and military wanted to stop the exodus on the plea that it would seriously hamper the investigation into the murder of Mr. Burge. Shri S. Bose, I.C.S., the officiating District Magistrate, backed by the other Bengali officers, refused to interfere; they contended that it was the action of the police and the military on the previous night that had caused in the minds of the people such a serious misgiving about their safety and security as

to prompt them to leave their hearth and homes *en masse*.

By noon hundreds of houses on either side, and in front of our house were deserted by the inhabitants. My parents and I had hurried consultation, and I insisted it would not be safe for our family to stay on, and that father must take the family by the afternoon train to our maternal uncle's place. My mother would not agree to leave me behind alone. So I went to the Principal's quarters to tender resignation of my post of Lecturer in the College. The Principal told me in confidence that I was very much in the bad books of the authorities. They were hesitating to arrest me only because I was a lecturer of the college. If I resigned, and wanted to leave the town they would certainly arrest me at the railway station. I told mother all this, and the whole family, except myself started for Calcutta by the Gomoh Passenger.

Sporadic house searches and arrests continued day by day. Route marches by the military through the streets to overawe the people were a regular feature. All the schools in the town, and the college were searched in the afternoon. The history of Phanindra Nath Das in connexion with the Douglas Murder case investigation was repeated. One of the arrested young men, Kamakshya Ghosh was brutally assaulted in the Thana Hajat by the Additional Superintendent of Police, Mr. Norton Jones, and compelled to make a statement as tutored by the Police. Kamakshya later in court made an allegation against the police for savage torture on him. Even Captain Linton, the Civil

Surgeon supported Kamakshya's story. The High Court judgment in the Appeal case was later constrained to observe:

"It cannot be disputed that the treatment which Kamakshya received was in the highest degree reprehensible."

When the College closed for the Puja holidays towards the end of September I joined my family in my maternal uncle's place. There two orders signed by the District Magistrate of Midnapur, Mr. P. J. Griffith, I.C.S. were served on me and my fourth brother, Naba Jiban Ghosh (nickname Shalik). The citation in the order said:

"As you have been deeply involved in terrorist activities having as their object the murder of District Magistrates and other subversive acts, you are hereby ordered to leave the limits of the district of Midnapur within forty-eight hours, and not to re-enter the same until further orders."

About a fortnight later another order signed by Mr. Griffith as the President of the Governing Body of the Midnapur College was served on me. This order said:

"As you are under an Order of Externment from the district, and as such you cannot lawfully rejoin your post, your services as a Lecturer of the College are dispensed with."

In December, 1933 a Special Tribunal was constituted under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1925 composed of Mr. H. G. Waight, I.C.S., Shri T. N. Basu, and Shri S. P. Ghosh to try the

following who were charged with conspiracy to murder (Section 120B of the Indian Penal Code, read with Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code) :—

1. Nirmal Jiban Ghosh
2. Kamakshya Charan Ghosh
3. Brojo Kishore Chakravarti
4. Ram Krishna Roy
5. Sanatan Roy
6. Nanda Dulal Singh
7. Sukumar Sen Gupta
8. Bijoy Krishna Ghosh
9. Purnananda Sanyal
10. Manindra Nath Chowdhury
11. Saroj Ranjan Das Kanungo
12. Santi Gopal Sen
13. Sailesh Chandra Ghosh

At the commencement of the trial Sailesh Chandra Ghosh was granted King's pardon, and turned Approver. Sailesh Chandra Ghosh was a short slim youngster in his early teens. He was the youngest son of one Pravat Ghosh, who originally belonged to Dacca, but had come to Midnapur as a clerk in the Collectorate, and had settled down in Midnapur. He was, if at all, a very junior recruit to the revolutionary group, and had little first-hand knowledge of the more serious affairs of the revolutionaries. As he lived in the house adjoining ours he often associated with my brother, Nirmal Jiban. Shri Nisith Chandra Sen, Bar-at-Law, who defended the accused in the protracted trial before the Special Tribunal at great personal discomfort and financial loss, rightly characterised the evidence given

by the Approver as "solely the result of tutoring on the part of the police."

Here I must take the opportunity of pointing out that Dr. Hemendra Nath Das Gupta in his second volume of "Bharater Biplab Kahini," has strayed into a grievous error. He writes that one of the sons of Shri Jamini Jiban Ghosh confessed, and turned approver. None of my brothers, no son of Shri Jamini Jiban Ghosh did ever confess, far less turn approver. The approver in the Burge Murder Conspiracy Case was a "Ghosh"—Sailesh Chandra Ghosh—but he was none of our relations.

Santi Gopal Sen was absconding at the time of the trial. He was arrested subsequently, put on trial before a separate Tribunal, and was sentenced to transportation for life.

The specific charge against the accused was that between the 2nd of March, 1931 and the 2nd of September, 1933 at Rajar dighi, Abash, Gope, Kedan Babu's house, Sukumar Sen Gupta's house, Gole-Kua Chak, Old Jail, College ground, and Police ground, and in other places in and around the town of Midnapur, and Kharagpur within the district of Midnapur, Calcutta and other places in Bengal they along with Anath Panja, Mrigendra Dutt, Bimal Das Gupta, Jati Jiban Ghosh, Parimal Roy, Phani Das, Provangsu Paul, Prodyot Bhattacharjee and others, were parties to a criminal conspiracy, the object of which was to commit murder of District Magistrates and other high Government officials of the district of Midnapur, and in pursuance of the said conspiracy Mr. Burge the late

Magistrate of that District was murdered on the 2nd September, 1933.

The Prosecution brought forward a very large number of witnesses to bolster up the case they had carefully got up. So far Nirmal Jiban was concerned the most damaging evidence was that of a very close friend of mine, then a Junior Advocate, Sri Amulya Krishna Dutt. He was the son of a Rai Bahadur. He deposed that Nirmal Jiban had gone to him on the morning of the day of the murder to inquire of him if Mr. Burge would play for the Town Club in that day's match.

The Special Tribunal delivered its judgment on the



Brojo Kishore Chakravarti

10th February, 1934. Brojo Kishore Chakravarti, Ram Krishna Roy, and Nirmal Jiban Ghosh were

sentenced to death. Kamakshya Ghosh, Sanatan Roy, Nanda Dulal Singh and Sukumar Sen Gupta were sentenced to transportation for life. Bijoy Krishna Ghosh, Purnananda Sanyal, Manindra Nath Choudhuri, and Saroj Ranjan Das Kanungo were acquitted.

Regarding the three on whom the capital sentence was passed the judgment observed: "Brojo Kishore Chakravarti, Nirmal Jiban Ghosh, and Ram Krishna Roy had already joined the party before the murder of Mr. Douglas. After the murder of Mr. Douglas, Brojo Kishore became the leader of the party and he throughout took a directing part in arranging the murder of Mr. Burge. Both Nirmal and Ram Krishna were active in pursuing the object of the conspiracy, and that they both took a leading part in all the activities of the conspirators. Nirmal was one of the most enthusiastic and active members of the conspiracy."

Brojo Kishore Chakravarti was the son of Pandit Bhuban Mohan Kavyatirtha. He was a student of the Second Year Class of the Midnapur College. Ram Krishna Roy was the son of Shri Kenaram Roy, a lawyer of the town. He was a school student. Kamakshya Ghosh was a Second Year student of the College, and the son of Shri Jadu Nath Ghosh, a Head-clerk of the Midnapur Civil Courts. Sukumar Sen Gupta was the nephew of Shri Nripendra Nath Sen Gupta, Head Accountant of the Midnapur District Board. Nanda Dulal Singh was a student of the Midnapur College, and son of Shri Monmohan Singh, a local lawyer. Sanatan Roy was the son of Shri Kishori Pati Roy, elder brother of the more well-known

Shri Satcowri Pati Roy of the famous Jara family of Ghatal, Midnapur.

As soon as the judgment was delivered, my father applied for a copy of it, and all alone he came to Calcutta that evening from Midnapur. When my father communicated the judgment to us the grief of my old grandmother (mother's mother) and of my mother was heart-rending.

Appeals were filed before the High Court by all the persons convicted. So far as the relations of the three sentenced to the gallows were concerned, they were anxious only to get the capital sentence reduced to a life term. I concentrated all my efforts towards that end. All my attempts were of no avail, still I am recounting them here. I learnt from Barristers and Advocates of the High Court that the lawyer who had the greatest prestige with the Judges was Shri H. D. Bose, Bar-at-Law. He was not in politics, and did not take up political cases. I went straight to Shri H. D. Bose without any introduction. He at first thought I was a needy student who had gone to him for some financial assistance. He was very much surprised when I asked him to take up the defence of Nirmal Jiban and others in the Appeals, and save the lives of the three young men. I also said that we could not pay him his fees. Shri Bose asked me "Are you not a relation of Jog Jiban Ghosh of the Midnapur Bomb Conspiracy Case?" I replied, "Yes, I am his nephew; I am the eldest son of his brother, Jamini Jiban Ghosh." Shri H. D. Bose then himself volunteered the information that he was a friend of both my mother's father, late

Khagendra Nidhan Palit, and of my father's father, late Upendra Nath Ghosh. After talking to me a few minutes more Shri Bose said to me "Grandson, you need not bother at all for my fees. That is of no consideration. I feel for the three unfortunate young men. But the thing is that I have been devoting myself exclusively to civil cases for many years, and have done no criminal cases. You give me two or three days' time to make up my mind on the matter." Shri H. D. Bose's junior, Shri Baren Basu, Bar-at-Law was warmly sympathetic towards us and persuaded his senior to agree to defend Nirmal Jiban Ghosh, and others in the Appeals.

Late Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherjee became the Acting Chief Justice of Bengal while the appeals were pending before the High Court. I felt if Sir Manmatha presided over the Appeal Bench the lives of my brother, Braja Kishore, and Ram Krishna could, perhaps, be saved. Who is to approach Sir Manmatha, and make this request to him? Some suggested Sir Ashutosh's son, Shri Rama Prasad Mukherjee, then a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, would be the best man. Without any introduction, then a total stranger to him, I went straight to Shri Rama Prasad Mukherjee's residence one evening. He was sitting surrounded by people. After some time he turned towards me, and asked me what I wanted. I said I had to say something highly confidential to him, and it must be absolutely in private. At first he was reluctant to accede to my rather impudent request. Then, when I said that I must be allowed to speak to him absolutely aside, or I will have

to go away, he took me into an inner room. I requested him to persuade Sir Manmatha to hear the Burge



Ram Krishna Roy

Murder Case Appeals. I said, "we somehow think that Sir Manmatha may not agree to confirm the death sentences." Shri Rama Prasad Mukherjee said that he also thought so. He said that I had done the right thing in not speaking before others, and that he would speak to Sir Manmatha. He asked me to come after a week. When I went Shri Rama Prasad Mukherjee informed me that Sir Manmatha looked into the matter, and found that the permanent Chief Justice, Mr. Buckland, before he left on leave, had constituted an all-British Bench for hearing the Burge Murder Case Appeals. Sir Manmatha, however, at once constituted the Appeal Bench for the Hili Station Raid case in

which four young men had been sentenced to be hanged by a Special Tribunal. Sir Manmatha himself would be on that Bench. Incidentally all the four death sentences in that case were commuted to a life sentence by the High Court.

My third attempt was to make an appeal to the Advocate-General, Sir A. K. Roy not to press for the death sentence. A lady belonging to a well-known family in Calcutta, who was our distant relation, generously agreed to talk to Mr. and Mrs. A. K. Roy. Mrs. A. K. Roy was moved and spoke to Sir A. K. Roy on behalf of the three hapless youths. Nothing came of this venture also.

The Appeals were heard for no less than eleven days in August, 1934, before a Bench composed of Justice Costello, Justice Bartley, and Justice Henderson. Shri H. D. Bose, Shri Baren Basu, Bar-at-Law, and Advocate Shri Sarat Chandra Jana appeared for Nirmal Jiban. Among those who appeared for the others were Shri N. K. Basu, Shri Santosh Kumar Basu, Shri Nisith Chandra Sen, Bar-at-Law and others. I ought to record here that all the lawyers who defended those sentenced by the Special Tribunal charged no fees, or only nominal fees. Whatever little money had to be paid to them was borne entirely by Kumar Debendra Lal Khan of Narajole.

The Appeal Bench of the High Court delivered judgment on the 30th August, 1934. The appeals were rejected and the sentences passed by the Special Tribunal were confirmed. My mother, and grandmother wept

and wailed incessantly for days on end; they ate almost nothing, and could hardly stir out of their beds, so stricken with grief were they. Tall, handsome, strong, full of fire and vitality our beloved "Paira" (Nirmal



Nirmal Jiban Ghosh

Jiban) was doomed to be snatched away from us by an inexorable fiat. Our hearts bled. We could imagine the same sorrow and tragedy darkened the homes of his fellow victims.

Jati Jiban was taken from the Berhampur Detention Camp to the Midnapur Central Jail for a last interview with Nirmal Jiban. I received one morning in September a scarlet envelope marked "Express". Inside was an order signed by the District Magistrate, Mr. P. J. Griffith, I.C.S. The communication said that the order of externment from the district of Midnapur

passed against me will stand suspended for forty-eight hours to enable me to have a last interview with my brother Nirmal Jiban Ghosh who was under sentence of death. That I must arrive at Midnapur, hold the interview, and leave the limits of the district within the period of the said forty-eight hours. I proceeded to Midnapur by the next train, and on reaching there I went to the Courts to meet my father. From there I and my father went to the Midnapur Central Jail. Under heavy armed guard we were taken to the cell of Nirmal Jiban. My father began to shed tears on seeing him. In course of the few words exchanged between us, Nirmal told me. "I was born in a poor family, but the love and indulgence I received from my parents, and from you were such as even a King's son might envy." The last words I spoke to Nirmal Jiban were: "Brother, if die you must, die like a hero."

And verily as heroes they mounted the gallows—brave and noble Broja Kishore Chakravarti, and Ram Krishna Roy at dawn of the 25th October, 1934, and Nirmal Jiban Ghosh at dawn of the 26th October, 1934. Their ashes scattered by the winds lie a little away from the western wall of the Midnapur Central Jail.

Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his countrymen.

I am not aware if the relations of Broja Kishore, and Ram Krishna were intimated about the time and date of the execution. No information was given to us. My father was at the time in Calcutta. It was, if I remember aright, the morning of the 28th October, 1934; the hawker had delivered the "Ananda Bazar

Patrika" only a few minutes ago. My mother suddenly burst out into loud wailing. We rushed to her. She put her finger on a news item and showed it to us. Tucked away in a corner on an unimportant page were a few lines giving the news of the three executions. Such were the rigours of Press Censorship at the time with regard to the revolutionaries of Bengal and their activities. Still, we are grateful to the "Ananda Bazar Patrika", because that was the only paper that dared publish the news.

Thus, almost unnoticed, passed away three of the most patriotic sons of Bengal. They that had loftily resolved to tread the dangerous path that led inevitably to death in the spring of life with all its dreams, all its charms, all its allurements. Those were the darkest days of Bengal's agony. Our voices were throttled. Civil liberties were suppressed. British repression went to brutal lengths. The terror-stricken people were afraid even to mention the names of martyrs.

But now the nation breathes the air of freedom. We are independent, principally because heroes like Broja Kishore, Ram Krishna, Nirmal Jiban and a few others gave their young lives as ransoms for liberty. The noblest and the best amongst us sacrificed their lives so that we may live to see and enjoy the blessings of a liberated land. The blessings of liberty may not yet be evident, but the shame and stigma of political slavery has certainly been obliterated from our foreheads. After many centuries we sit as a member in the World's Parliament of Free Nations. Has not the time come to pay our tribute of homage to the glorious

memory of those who wrought for our emancipation, who fought for our emancipation and who gladly greeted the gallows for our emancipation! Did our great poet, Rabindra Nath sing in vain—

He who sacrifices life itself
Shall never never fade away.

VII

Alleged Suicide of Naba Jiban Ghosh

My fourth brother, Naba Jiban Ghosh (nicknamed Shalik) was extermened from the district of Midnapur in November, 1933. Soon after the Special Tribunal passed the capital sentence on Nirmal Jiban, Naba Jiban was arrested in Calcutta under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, and made a detenu. He was kept for sometime in the Berhampur Detention Camp, where Jati Jiban was also staying. Towards the middle of 1936 Naba Jiban was transferred from Berhampur to be detained in the Thana premises of Gopalganj, in the district of Faridpur.

It was 11 P.M. of the night of 23rd September, 1936. Everybody else in the house had gone to sleep. I was reading a book lying on my bed. A man came on bicycle and shouted below my window "Is this the house of Naba Jiban Ghosh?" I said "Yes." The man then shouted back with callous nonchalance. "Detenu Naba Jiban Ghosh committed suicide last night at Gopalganj." "What! what do you say," crying out these words I ran downstairs. My parents, who woke up at the shouting of the man, also followed me downstairs. A plain dress Police Sub-inspector had been sent to give us the information. When the police man repeated his words my father, stunned with the shock, mumbled: "So my son Naba Jiban has at last been set free from detention." My mother broke out into terrible and uncontrollable wailing. My head was reeling, and I could no longer

bear the sight of my hapless parents. I rushed out of the house, and began to rove about aimlessly in the streets.



Naba Jiban Ghosh

After some time I collected myself up, and phoned up Shri J. C. Gupta, Bar-at-Law from a friend's house. It was near to midnight. The phone was first answered by Mrs. Gupta. Gently quietly she said, "Mr. Gupta is now fast asleep after a hard day's work; must I wake him up now? Is the matter very urgent?" I told her, "Madame, I am Binoy Jiban; you know one of my brothers was hanged in the Burge Murder Conspiracy Case. Just now a police officer comes and says that another brother, Naba Jiban has committed suicide in the Gopalganj thana compound. That is why I want to speak to Mr. J. C. Gupta immediately." Mrs. Gupta

said "what awful news is this! what disasters are befalling your family! I am going to wake up Mr. Gupta."

Shri J. C. Gupta instructed me as to what to do. He knew I was very friendly with the Editor of the "Advance", Dr. Dhirendra Nath Sen, Ph.D. He told me to go straight to Dr. Sen, who belonged to Gopalganj, and tell him that Mr. Gupta would like him to take all necessary steps in this connexion. Mr. Gupta advised me to send wires in my father's name to the District Magistrate of Faridpur, the Superintendent of Police, the Sub-divisional officer, and the thana officer not to dispose of the body till my father arrived.

At midnight I knocked on the doors of Dr. D. N. Sen. He was still awake, and with his books. He listened to me, and then phoned up the Advance office to send a cycle peon. He wrote out a series of telegrams, including some to his friends and relations in Gopalganj whom he requested to attend to us and help us. Dr. Sen also gave me detailed instructions as to how to proceed to Gopalganj. Dawn was breaking when I returned home from Dr. Sen's place.

I and my father started for Gopalganj on the 24th September by the 10 A.M. train. From Khulna Ghat we proceeded by steamer. On arrival at Gopalganj we were warmly and sympathetically received by a number of young men. The thana officer told us that on the morning of the 23rd September they discovered that Naba Jiban was hanging dead from a rafter of his room. He had tied one end of his cloth round his neck. To convince us that it was really a case of suicide the Thana officer told us that Naba Jiban had left two last

letters before committing suicide—one addressed to the Government, and another addressed to my father. The letters were with the Sub-divisional officer. When my father saw the Sub-divisional officer in his bungalow he refused to hand over father's letter to him. My father pleaded that he might be, at least, allowed to read once only the last letter of his dead son. This request was also refused point blank by the S.D.O. From inquiries I made of neighbours it transpired that there were occasional clashes between the thana people and Naba Jiban, and in some instances altercations led to thana people assaulting Naba Jiban. All these circumstances deepened the mystery surrounding Naba Jiban's alleged suicide.

I had to perform the last rites of Naba Jiban. Post-mortem had been done on his body on the morning of the 23rd. When the cover was removed from the body, I was literally flung down on the ground by the shock of the sight. I at once told the friends who had accompanied us to prevent my father from having a look at Naba Jiban's body. That would kill him outright. My father wept, and insisted that he must have a last look at Shalik. I said: "There is nothing of your Shalik left. The sight will give you such a shock that you will fall down unconscious. We cannot allow you to see it." Kind friends took father away. We then cremated all that remained of Naba Jiban. There on the banks of the Dhaleswari in far away Gopalganj sleeps for ever Naba Jiban Ghosh of Midnapur.

On reaching Calcutta I communicated to Dr. Dhirendra Nath Sen all I had gathered in Gopalganj

relating to the circumstances of the alleged suicide of Naba Jiban. I also told Dr. Sen that the letters received by us from Naba Jiban only a few days before the incident betrayed no sign of a state of mind eager for death by suicide. On September 27 appeared the first of a series of Editorials of the Advance written by Dr. D. N. Sen demanding inquiry into the mysterious circumstances shrouding the alleged suicide of Naba Jiban. A little while before Naba Jiban's death another detenu interned at Manickganj had been found dead in a neighbouring "bil" (marshy water—logged area). In course of the Editorial the pertinent question was asked: "If there was a letter why have not its contents been disclosed? What was in that letter?" The Editorial also suggested that it was necessary to verify that the alleged letter was in the handwriting of the deceased.

I also recounted everything to Kumar D. L. Khan of Narajole and Shri Tulsi Charan Goswami. The Central Assembly was then in session at Simla, and both the Kumar, and Shri Goswami felt that the affair should be agitated before the Assembly. Kumar D. L. Khan paid the expenses of my journey and I proceeded to Simla. At the time all the members of the Central Assembly elected from Bengal belonged to the Nationalist Party, formed on the issue of the Communal Award, and the non-possumus attitude of the Congress towards it. I sent a wire to Shri Amarendra Nath Chattopadhyay, M.L.A. of Uttarpara apprising him that I was going to Simla.

At Simla I first met the Bengal M.L.A.s in the Assembly room of Shri Akhil Chandra Dutt, who was

then the Deputy President of the Central Assembly. Two non-Bengali M. L. A.s were also there—Shri M. S. Aney of Madhya Pradesh, and a Sikh gentleman, whose name, if I remember aright was Sardar Sant Singh. I urged on them to move an Adjournment Motion in the Assembly demanding an inquiry into the circumstances causing the death of Naba Jiban Ghosh. After some discussion Pandit Lakhshmi Kanta Maitra agreed to do so, but they were diffident about it unless the Congress party, who formed the majority of the Assembly, also took up the matter. Sometime ago Shri Mohan Lal Saxena M.L.A. of Uttar Pradesh had come to Calcutta to collect data about the detenus of Bengal. We had then come together closely, and become friends. I said Shri Mohan Lal Saxena might be requested to come. Shri Saxena, who was then a prominent member of the Congress Assembly party, was called in, and he agreed at my request to persuade his party also to move in the matter.

In the Lobby I met Shri S. Satyamurthi of Madras, who was then the Deputy Leader of the Congress Assembly party. I spoke to him also. He said he was leaving for Madras that evening. However, he took me to the Private Secretary of Shri Bhulabhai Desai, Leader of the Congress party, and requested the Private Secretary to arrange for an interview between me and Shri Bhulabhai on the following day.

Next morning I went to Hotel Cecil. Shri Bhulabhai Desai was staying in a corner suite on the second floor of that Hotel. Shri Desai received me warmly and cordially. I requested him to move for an adjourn-

ment of the Assembly over the issue. I also told him that some seemed to think that the matter was not sufficiently important for an adjournment of the House. Shri Desai said: "The matter is as important as any being discussed in the Assembly. I will move an Adjournment Motion to-day". When I was leaving Shri Bhulabhai Desai told me "Tell your parents that though personally unknown to each other we fight and suffer for the same cause, and convey my sincere sympathies to them".

When the Adjournment Motion was moved, Sir N. N. Sarkar, Leader of the House got up and said that the eldest brother of Naba Jiban (meaning me) had informed him that he would be satisfied if an inquiry was held regarding the affair, and Sir N. N. Sarkar assured the House that on his return to ~~Calcutta~~ he would arrange for the inquiry. What led Sir N. N. Sarkar to refer to me I cannot say. So far as I am concerned, I had never met him, nor informed him anything. Nothing was heard afterwards about the inquiry promised by Sir N. N. Sarkar.

A few days after my return to Calcutta from Simla a report appeared in the Press that another detenu, Shri Santosh Chandra Ganguli had committed suicide in the Deoli Detention Camp on the 17th October, 1936. Shri Santosh Ganguli was a student of the M.Sc. Class of the Dacca University at the time of his arrest. The alleged suicide of two detenus in quick succession created a stir in the public mind and the Press. At a crowded meeting under the Presidentship of Shri B. C. Chatterjee, Bar-at-Law held in the Albert Hall—the celebrated

venue of public meetings in those days—I demanded that the two letters purported to have been written by Naba Jiban Ghosh before his alleged suicide be released to the Press by the Government.

Poet Rabindra Nath was then the President of the All India Civil Liberties Union. I addressed a Memorandum to him in which I recounted the series of calamities inflicted on my hapless family by the British authorities during the last few years. I referred to the recent cases of suicides by detenus. I submitted that thousands of the finest youth of Bengal were rotting in detention for over seven or eight years without any trial, or any definite duration set to their incarceration; and finally, I beseeched him as the President of the All India Civil Liberties Union to interpose his powerful personality and influence towards securing the release of the detenus.

My difficulty in this venture was how to make sure that the Memorandum reached the hands of the Poet. As good luck would have it, the late Tulsi Charan Goswami was so much impressed and overwhelmed by a perusal of the Memorandum that he, and Kumar D. L. Khan readily agreed to convey the memorial to Rabindra Nath.

On the 22nd November, 1936 the great poet issued a statement to the Press. He referred to the recent cases of alleged suicide by detenus Naba Jiban Ghosh, and Santosh Ganguli, and appealed for a public and impartial inquiry into the whole question bearing on these two cases, and the policy of detention of which Naba Jiban Ghosh, and Santosh Chandra Ganguli were the victims.

Rabindra Nath said that the lives of detenus "have been ruined, their families broken up and the shadow of unending suffering has lain heavily over the province and over India". The Poet also remarked that the system of detention "crushes the body and kills the spirit".

When the President of the Indian National Congress, Pandit Jawaherlal Nehru came to Calcutta for a brief stay in 1, Woodburn Park—the residence of late Sarat Chandra Bose—I discussed the question of detenus, and the cases of suicide with him also. I also gave him a copy of my Memorial to Rabindra Nath. Pandit Nehru directed me to send a copy of it to Shri Krishna Menon in London. He said: "Krishna Menon is our man there. He will agitate and create opinion in England in favour of the release of the detenus".

The Faizpur Session of the Indian National Congress adopted an official resolution on the Detenus in course of which it said:

"The Congress has learnt with alarm and concern that three detenus in Bengal have committed suicide within the last four weeks. The Congress considers that the fact that such acts of suicide have taken place is a significant indication that the conditions in which they are kept are intolerable and scandalous. The Congress demands a public enquiry into the causes which led to the said acts of suicide as well as into the conditions in which the detenus are being kept. The Congress sends its condolences to the bereaved families of the three detenus".

Early in 1937 an urgent summons came to me one morning from Kumar D. L. Khan saying that the

Private Secretary of poet Rabindra Nath, Shri Anil Kumar Chanda (afterwards a Deputy Minister of the Union Government) wanted to see me immediately. As soon as I reached D. L. Khan's place I was whisked off to Birla House in Ballygunj to talk to late C. F. Andrews, who was staying there.

Mr. Andrews told me that Gurudev had been deeply moved and perturbed over my Memorandum. He was often asking how was it that such sufferings and afflictions were being inflicted on a single family. The poet was restless and felt that something must be done immediately to secure the release of the detenus. Gurudev decided that Mr. C. F. Andrews should proceed to England to discuss the matter with Members of the British Parliament, and those who were friendly to India, and the admirers of the poet there, and try to create an opinion in favour of the release of the detenus of Bengal. Before Andrews left Santi-Niketan Gurudev had told him again and again "You must meet in Calcutta, on your way to England, the eldest brother of Naba Jiban Ghosh, and discuss this question fully with him". Of course, Gurudev wanted that special emphasis should be put on securing the early release of Subhas (Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose). That is why Mr. Andrews wanted so much to meet me, and talk to me.

Mr. Andrews asked me what should be his approach to the problem in England. These men were being detained through long years without any trial. So he would demand that either they should now be put on their trial, or they should be released. That seemed a very fair and just proposal.

I agreed that what he said was the accepted way of approach to the problem of the detenus. But at that late stage—when thousands of detenus had already been behind prison bars for seven or eight years at a stretch—I would like to take a slightly different line of approach. The detenus were clapped into concentration camps merely on suspicion, or on evidence against them which was inadequate for convicting them in a court of law. Now, suppose each of them had been arrested, with a revolver in hand while shooting at, though not killing, an Englishman, they would have been awarded, under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code a sentence of maximum seven years for attempt at murder (ignoring an Ordinance issued after the Lebong attempt on the life of the Governor, Sir John Anderson which made even an attempt on life a capital offence). Most of the detenus had already completed seven years of durance vile. Therefore, I argued, the question of putting them on trial could no longer arise; our demand should be that the detenus should be released forthwith unconditionally.

After listening to me with perfectly calm patience, and remaining silent for a few minutes with eyes closed, Mr. Andrews assured me that he would ponder deeply over what I have said, and if after discussion with a few friends in England he found that my line of approach to the question seemed alright then he would press for it.

C. F. Andrews' parting words to me were: "We must do something about it. You do not know how very much agitated and grieved Gurudev is over the cruel fate of these unfortunate detenus".

VIII

Midnapur After The Murders

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, after his release from detention in 1937, asked me to prepare a brief statement regarding the distressful situation prevailing in the district of Midnapur during the past several years. A few hours before he left for Dalhousie for a change, I handed over to him a hurriedly compiled brief and incomplete statement. From Dalhousie Netaji Bose asked me to send several copies of the statement to Mahatma Gandhi, and several other copies to the Congress President, Pandit Jawaherlal Nehru. About a week after, he again wrote to me to send, at least, twelve copies of the statement to Shri Krishna Menon in London.

A typed copy of that statement somehow remains with me still. I am reproducing below that statement in full. However inadequate and incomplete, it gives a rough picture of the district of Midnapur after the murder of three successive British District Magistrates in three consecutive years. I have only added now a few notes regarding the subsequent careers of some of the persons mentioned.

The Situation in the District of Midnapur

Since September, 1933 the following repressive measures, adopted under the Bengal Suppression of Terrorist Outrages Act, the Bengal Criminal Law

Amendment Act, the Public Security Act, and other such enactments, are in force in the district.

1. Many tried, non-violent Congress leaders and workers of the district, old and distinguished lawyers, College Professors, School Teachers, together with many students and young men have been extermened from the district. Some of them who were employed in Government institutions, or in institutions controlled by the Government have been dismissed from their jobs. Government does not favour their employment elsewhere. The names of only a few of the externees, just now available, with notes against the names of a few, are given below:—

Lawyers

1. Sreejut Manmatha Nath Das (He was the leading Criminal lawyer of the district commanding the most extensive practice. He is now left to make most desperate attempts in picking up practice anew in a new place at a considerably advanced age).

2. Sreejut Jawaharlal Adhikary (Another senior lawyer).

3. Sreejut Jyotish Chandra Gupta (a young rising lawyer), and (elder brother of martyr Dinesh Gupta).

4. Sreejut Charu Chandra Das (since dead), (Three of his sons are still detenus).

Professors

1. Sreejut Tarakdas Ghosh, M.Sc. (He was the Senior Professor of Chemistry in the Midnapur College, aged about 53 years, having served in 17 Colleges including several Government institutions. After a long period of total unemployment, he is a mere clerk on

Rs. 70 per month in the Registrar's Department, Calcutta University).

2. Sreejut Thaka Pada Biswas, M.Sc. (He was the ex-Principal, Midnapur College, and Professor of Physics. He is totally unemployed).

3. Sreejut Binoy Jiban Ghosh, M.A. (He was Professor of History, Midnapur College. He is now employed in the Calcutta Corporation holding a low job). (Afterwards Secretary to the Corporation of Calcutta).

Teachers

1. Sreejut Narayan Chandra Mukerjee M.A., B.T. (He was the Headmaster of the Midnapur Collegiate School. He is now serving as a junior teacher in a Calcutta School).

2. Sreejut Jatindra Nath Das (father of Phanindra Nath Das).

3. Shrimati Charusila Devi.

4. Shrimati Satadalbasini Das (She was the Headmistress of the Midnapur Girls School).

5. Sreejut Pramatha Nath Banerjee (afterwards Member Loka Sabha).

6. Sreejut Aghore Chandra Das.

7. Sreejut Bhuteswar Pain.

8. Sreejut Bijoy Kumar Maity.

(All these teachers are now unemployed).

9. Sreejut Sailajananda Sen (Ex-District Board employee).

About a hundred young men of the district have been kept in detention without trial for five or six years.

The names of some only, just now available, are given below:—

1. Prafulla Kumar Tripathy.
2. Phanindra Nath Kundu.
3. Phanindra Nath Das.
4. Jati Jiban Ghosh. (The eldest brother of this detenu, Binoy Jiban Ghosh who was a Professor of the Midnapur College was extered from the district and dismissed from his job; the fourth brother, Naba Jiban Ghosh was alleged to have committed suicide in September, 1936 while in detention. The fifth brother, Nirmal Jiban Ghosh was executed in October, 1934 in connexion with the Burdge Murder Conspiracy Case).
5. Narendra Nath Das.
6. Birendra Nath Das.
7. Sailendra Nath Das. (They are three bothers. Their father late Charu Chandra Das, Mukteer was extered from the district. He died in Calcutta about two years back without proper treatment. The condition of their widowed mother may better be imagined than described).
8. Sarbari Prasad Bhattacharjee. (He is the brother of Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharjee who was executed in connexion with the Douglas Murder Case. He is very sick and probably suffering from serious mental derangement).
9. Parimal Chandra Roy (afterwards a Ph.D. of Oxford, and an important official of the U. N. O.).
10. Nirmal Chandra Roy (They are two brothers. Their widow mother died in their absence in detention), (afterwards a Professor in a Calcutta College).

11. Sachindra Nath Maity.
12. Khagendra Nath Maity (They are two brothers. Their father, late Srijut Upendra Nath Maity, leader of the Midnapur Bar, and Chairman of the Midnapur Municipality died in their absence in detention).
13. Bijoy Kumar Ghosh.
14. Ajoy Kumar Ghosh (They are two brothers).
15. Kshiti Prasanna Sen Gupta (afterwards Professor in a Calcutta College).
16. Sushil Kumar Roy (A young lawyer arrested after his acquittal in the Garbeta Conspiracy Case).
17. Binode Bihari Sen.
18. Santipriya Ghosh.
19. Manindra Nath Choudhury.
20. Bimal Kumar Adhikary.
21. Sanatan Bera.
22. Amarendra Nath Sen Gupta.
23. Ajoy Kumar Das.
24. Sushanta Kumar Maity.
25. Sarat Chandra Maity.
26. Tara Pada Chakravarti.
27. Asoke Kumar Roy.
28. Jyotish Chandra Bera.
29. Sailendra Nath Kundu.
30. Bhabesh Chandra Bose.
31. Deependra Paul.
32. Gopal Chandra Meru.
33. Nirmalendu Chowdhury.
34. Dhananjoy Kar.
35. Ram Ranjan Majumdar.

36. Radha Raman Chakravarti.
37. Sasadhar Mandal.
38. Nalini Kanta Chakravarti.
39. Khirode Ghosh.
40. Ganga Charan Saha.
41. Nirmal Chandra Bhanja.
42. Radha Govinda Bhanja.
43. Vivekananda Bose.
44. Amar Chatterjee.

3. Many inhabitants of the district have been interned either in villages, or in their homes. Various restrictions have been imposed upon others seriously interfering with their normal avocations of life. No allowances are granted to them. The names of only a few of them are noted below:—

1. Basanta Kumar Das (Teacher) (afterwards a member of the Loka Sabha).
2. Shrimati Gitarani Paul (Worker).
3. Kirtibas Giri (Worker).
4. Natendra Nath Das (lawyer) (afterwards a member of the West Bengal Assembly).
5. Bhima Charan Patra (Teacher).
6. Iswar Kar (Teacher).
7. Pitabas Das (Teacher).
8. Hrishikesh Gayen (Student).
9. Mahitosh Singh (Shop-keeper).
10. Rakhal Chandra Maity (Teacher).
11. Nagendra Nath Chowdhury (Student).
12. Nobin Chandra Mahapatra (Worker).
13. Purna Chandra Chakrabarty (Worker).
14. Achyut Kumar Maity (Worker).

15. Janendra Nath Bose (He is an old man of about 65. He was the Private Secretary of Kumar Debendra Lal Khan of Narajole. He is suffering seriously from consumption and other troubles. He is not allowed to call any private practitioner for medical treatment, as he has been allowed to talk only with his wife and sons and daughters. He is compelled to attend Thana once a week inspite of his age and very ill health. Repeated requests to bring him down to Calcutta for proper treatment have been turned down by the authorities).

16. Rabindra Nath Khan (Worker).
17. Phanindra Nath Khan (suffering from Tuberculosis).
18. Debendra Nath Mudli (Worker).
19. Nagendra Nath Sur (Worker).
20. Kanai Lal Kundu (Student).
21. Harihar Singh (Worker).
22. Sailendra Nath Mitra.
23. Rajani Kumar Pramanick (lawyer) (afterwards Deputy Minister, West Bengal Government).
24. Bhabatosh Das (Worker).
25. Satish Chandra Samanta (Worker) (afterwards a member of Loka Sabha).
26. Kumar Chandra Jana (Worker) (afterwards member West Bengal Assembly).
27. Rashbihari Jana (Worker).
28. Khudiram Dakua (Worker).
29. Dharendra Nath Roy (Student).
30. Lakshmi Kanta Maity (Student).
31. Biswa Ranjan Adhikary (Worker).

32. Haripada Das (Student).

33. Rashbihari Das.

34. Kartick Bhuiyan.

4. The ban imposed in 1932 on the 99 Congress Committees and national organisations in the district has not yet been lifted.

5. Curfew orders compelling young men between the ages of 15 and 30 to remain indoors from sunset to sunrise have been in force during the last three years and a half in the following Municipal areas:—

(a) the limits of the Municipality of Midnapur town,

(b) the Contai Town Union area,

(c) the Ghatal town Municipal area,

(d) the Kharagpur Station Committee area.

6. The keeping of Identity cards by all persons between the ages of 14 and 30. The order on householders to report all arrivals to, and departure from their houses of outsiders.

7. No student is allowed to read in a School which is outside a three mile radius round his house without Government permission.

8. Prohibition of cycling by "Bhadralog" young men.

9. Route marches by soldiers with frequent house-searches throughout the district.

10. The District Board has been taken over by the Government since 1930, and the District Magistrate has been the official Chairman of the District Board. Even after the inauguration of the new reforms attempts are

being made to continue the term of office of the official Chairman against public opposition.

11. The authorities are trying to establish Union Boards in the district against the declared wishes of the people.

12. Congress volunteers, workers, and Congress-minded people are being arrested, their houses are being searched, and they are being harassed in various ways due to their share and part in making the Congress candidates triumphantly successful in the elections to the new legislature. A few instances of repression, as the aftermath of the elections, is noted below:—

(a) The Licenses of two Sikh drivers of Kharagpur were cancelled, and they were harassed for three months because they plied their taxis, on hire, for Kumar D. L. Khan—a Congress candidate.

(b) Cases under the various repressive laws have been started against the following persons, who had worked on behalf of the Congress candidates in the district:—

- (1) Satish Chandra Samanta.
- (2) Basanta Kumar Das.
- (3) Rakhal Chandra Maity.
- (4) Bihary Lall Paira.
- (5) Debendra Nath Roy Choudhury.
- (6) Ashutosh Bera.

(c) Gun licences of several gentlemen, including the Zemindar of Lalgarh, have been cancelled due to their supporting the Congress candidates.

IX

Friends and Relations in Adversity

When sudden and awful adversity descends on a family, as it did on ours after the murder of Mr. Burge, it reveals as in a lightning flash the true character of friends and relations. I won't talk here, first, of our political friends and associates. They must be judged apart from the others; they were our comrades in the same struggle, and we were sailing in the same boat. Of some of them I will speak later, and about some others I have already written.

I will speak, first, of our ordinary non-political friends and relations. I should say at the outset that all were not tarred with the same brush, and there was an even admixture of light and shade taking the picture as a whole. I will try to mention by name some, at least, of those who were kind to us in those days, while not disclosing the identities of those, who out of an instinct of self-preservation, disowned and deserted us in our darkest hours. I will only cite a few samples of the behaviour of the latter category as these provide interesting studies of the human character.

I start with Midnapur town, and then come to the friends and relations in Calcutta. As soon as the military left our house on the dawn of the 6th of September, 1933, I went to my classmate in the house opposite to ours to see how he was doing after the brutal assault on him by the Garhwalis. He, and his mother and sister were friendly to me as ever.

Next, I went to see whom I can describe as my most intimate friend of many years, and he told me that our friendship must be considered as ended, as his mixing with me after what happened last night would be too dangerous for him.

In the afternoon I went to play Bridge, as I used to do almost daily, to the house of a medical practitioner with whom I was very friendly. I used to call him "Doc", and he used to call me "Prof". Seeing me approach, he came out of his house, and sorrowfully told me that I should not visit his place any more. I said I understood the situation all right, and he need not be sorry.

Before my parents left Midnapur on the afternoon of the 6th of September, 1933, my father had seen some very near relations of his, and he told me that he had arranged with them that till his return to Midnapur I was to take my evening meal, and sleep in the night in the house of those relatives. When I went in the evening to their place, I was told that I could take my meal there, but could not sleep in the night as in that case the military might raid their house also. In sorrow and anger I said I preferred to take my food also in my own house, and left. I had asked our Oriya cook not to come in the evening as no meal need be prepared for me. I went without food, and passed the night totally alone in the house. The police and the military patrolled the dark and deserted streets all through the night; hundreds of houses all round were empty and silent as death. I could not sleep the whole night, and the Garhwali soldiers entered the ground-

floor of our house through the broken doors twice, but went away without trying to come upstairs where I was.

While such treatment came from very near relations, sympathetic succour was offered from another quarter. Professor Hari Charan Mukherjee was the Lecturer of English in the Midnapur College at the time. Afterwards he became also the Principal; I had been his student in the Midnapur College, and had become also his colleague. In course of conversation in the College he asked me "Now that everybody else of your family has gone away where are you sleeping in the night". When I told him I was staying at night in my house, he said it was most dangerous to do so; "You might be severely assaulted by these rough Garhwali soldiers in the night, and no one would know"; he insisted that I must sleep in his house. I reminded him of the terrible risk he ran. But he replied that as a human being he must do what he considered his duty by a colleague and pupil, come what may. I passed one night in the house of Prof. Hari Charan Mukherjee.

Another near relation of ours in Midnapur told my father that during the period the disturbances continued they should behave as perfect strangers; "otherwise harm may befall you, and harm may befall us", he said. That was the suave euphemistic way in which it used to be put to us by all those who wanted to shirk us. I often replied to them, "Look here, so far as we are concerned the very worst has happened, and is happening to us; but, of course, I agree no harm should come to you through us. I can assure you that it is never our

intention to harm any of our countrymen except ourselves".

Now about experiences in Calcutta. My first stay for a few hours in a cheap Hotel in Calcutta convinced me that, thanks to the vigilance of the Police, the doors of Hotels and Boarding Houses in the city were virtually shut against me. In the morning I came to Calcutta from my maternal uncle's place in a Hooghly village, and put up in a cheap Hotel in Mirzapur Street (now Surya Sen Street). After taking a cup of tea in the Hotel room I went to see Mr. J. C. Gupta, Bar-at-Law for talks regarding the Burge Murder Case. I returned at about 1 P.M. When I reached the Hotel I found my suit-case and bedding dumped at a corner of the entrance to the hotel. The Manager told me, "Please do not enter the Hotel; you need not pay any charges; kindly go away taking your things; we cannot keep you in the Hotel". "What's the matter", I asked. The Manager informed me that about an hour after I left, Police people came and made inquiries about me. I said, "let me take my bath and food, and then I will leave". The Manager said, "No, Sir, please go away at once". I pleaded, "at least allow me to take my bath; I am feeling miserable after being under the mid-day sun". But the Manager had been so much panic-stricken that he refused me even this small mercy, and I had to leave immediately.

I had to fall back on friends and relations. Late Abanindra Nath Bose, a grandson of poet Mono Mohan Bose, and son of Priya Nath Bose of the famous Bose's Circus—though only a distant relation of ours—

received me with open arms, and his doors were always open to me. Abanindra Nath Bose was a good painter and had a Publicity Studio. He and his wife treated me with great care and affection.

After a few months we rented a house in Calcutta, and our family, except father, came over to reside in Calcutta. My mother fell ill, and I went to a doctor-relation of ours, who owned a Clinic, for examination of her blood. I also requested him to come and examine mother medically at his convenience. He said he would certainly come in a day or two to examine mother. When next day I went for the report of the blood-examination, my relation requested me never to come again to his Clinic, and he said it would not be possible for him to go to see mother. A few hours after my departure from the Clinic on the previous day a car-load of Police officers had come, and inspected the place, and interrogated everybody present.

Another doctor-relation, late Satyendra Nath Mustafi of Shambazar, who was also a distant relation, was in constant attendance on my ailing mother. Not only did he attend to all cases of sickness in our family but he extended his help in all sorts of difficulties which then beset my unfortunate family. Alas! he died young.

Dr. Narendra Krishna Sinha Ph.D. (now Professor of Modern History in the Calcutta University) was my immediate predecessor as Lecturer of History in the Midnapur College. After my externment from Midnapur, and dismissal from Lecturership, I met him in Calcutta. He was so sympathetic towards me that he volunteered to relinquish his own lucrative private

tuition in my favour saying in real Sir Philip Sydney manner, "Thy necessity is greater than mine". He told the guardian of his private pupil—an Intermediate student—that I was also a First Class M.A. in General History, that I was his successor as Lecturer of History in the Midnapur College; that I would be as good a tutor as he himself, and that only my difficulties had prompted him to forego the tuition in my favour. The gentleman only replied that he had no intention of buying trouble for his family by engaging me as a tutor; "shall he dig a canal to bring a crocodile in". As a last attempt at persuasion Dr. Sinha said it would not be possible for him to continue as tutor to his ward if the gentleman turned down this proposal. The gentleman retorted: "If I scatter rice shall there be dearth of crows"?

But I was appointed as private tutor to a grandson of late Professor K. P. Basu—the author of the widely read Algebra—and there the whole family treated me with warm sympathy.

The maelstrom through which the family was passing led to the neglect of the education of my two youngest brothers. We thought of putting them into a school. Their names were Biswa Jiban Ghosh, and Samar Jiban Ghosh. Naturally in the application for admission my father's name was given as that of the guardian, and Midnapur was given as his address. Several schools refused to take in the two boys lest the wrath and attention of the Government and the Police be drawn to the school and its other students. My father saw Shri Kiron Chandra Bose, son of Principal

Khudiram Bose of the Central College. Shri Kiron Bose was an old friend of father. Shri Bose advised father to change the names of the two boys dropping "Jiban" from the names, and to mention as their guardian my maternal uncle. If that were done he could admit them into the Central Collegiate School. That is how my two youngest brothers came to have their present names—Dipen Ghosh, and Samir Ghosh.

Here is a funny incident. A very old, and very dear friend from Midnapur—an eminent Sanskrit scholar—was a Lecturer in Bethune College at the time. He was in the Bengal Educational Service. One afternoon I was coming from Shambazar to Chowringhee in a bus. When the bus stopped at the northern end of Hedua tank (Azad Hind Bag) two girl students apparently from the Bethune College got into the bus, and sat down on the bench opposite. My Lecturer-friend got into the bus immediately after the girl students, and his eyes fell on me. He was so flabbergasted at seeing me that he dropped into the opposite seat, already occupied by the girl students, right on their lap. The students knew their Lecturer, and burst out into laughter. Realising what he had done, my friend shot like a bolt to the other end of the bus. As soon as the bus stopped at the southern end of Hedua he got down. He was afraid that if I accosted him that might cost him his job.

But, amongst all our relations, it was my maternal uncle, late Amulya Nidhan Palit, who stood by us through thick and thin, firm as a rock. He risked his neck in escorting Jati Jiban from Calcutta to Midnapur

after the murder of Mr. Peddie. He came to our rescue in all our calamities and dangers. Alas! he died at the early age of fifty-two.

Among Counsels of the Calcutta High Court, who stood by us, mention has been made of Shri J. C. Gupta, Shri N. C. Sen, Shri B. N. Sasmal, and Shri H. D. Bose. Indeed, Deshapran Birendra Nath Sasmal and my father were friends through life. Shri J. C. Gupta stood by our family in all our vicissitudes. For me personally Shri J. C. Gupta always have had a warm corner in his heart, and his solicitude for me has been perennial. It was through the sincere efforts of Shri J. C. Gupta, and the veteran Congress leader of Midnapur, Shri Ram Sundar Singh that the Assessor, Shri Priya Lal Trivedi, and the Chief Executive Officer, Shri J. C. Mukherjee gave me my first appointment in the Corporation of Calcutta.

Dr. Dharendra Nath Sen, Ph.D., Editor successively of the Advance, the Hindusthan Standard, and the Amrita Bazar Patrika, was a most loving friend. What he did for us at the time of Naba Jiban's alleged suicide I have recounted. At one time I used to go almost every evening to Dr. Dharendra Nath Sen in the Advance office knowing that there I would meet a man who never failed to welcome me with the warmth of genuine friendship.

Both Shri Rama Prasad Mukhopadhyay, and late Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukhopadhyay were always very kind to me. In fact, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukhopadhyay appointed me as a teacher in the Mitra Institution,

Bhowanipur. As I did not find the job congenial I left after a month.

Thanks to Kumar D. L. Khan late Shri Tulsi Charan Goswami came to treat me with considerable love and affection. He liked me a lot.

But, the friend, among all friends, was Kumar Debendra Lal Khan of Narajole. His father, Raja Narendra Lal Khan was a friend of my grandfather, Upendra Nath Ghosh. My uncle, Jog Jiban had lived in the same Jail Hajat with Raja Narendra Lal. I had been in close contact with Kumar D. L. Khan at Midnapur. When I came to Calcutta I, at first, avoided him as I felt my association with him might jeopardise him. But when I phoned him up one day, he insisted that I should go to his place immediately. Since then we met almost everyday. Kumar Debendra Lal Khan gave generously of his fortune to all organisations, parties, and political workers who were engaged in fighting the British, and he himself was ever in the thick of that fight. God had not given him much brains, but he had a heart of gold. Perhaps, it was better so. More brains might have lessened the qualities of his heart. He appointed me as his Private Secretary, when late Jnanendra Nath Bose, eldest brother of martyr Satyendra Nath, and his permanent Private Secretary was interned in Midnapur. He also made me the private tutor of his only son. He treated me as his constant friend and adviser, and almost as a brother. He helped me in everything; he introduced me to everybody. If it should happen that my cordial relation with the family of Debendra Lal Khan would be poisoned

and vitiated by the satanic machinations of some powerful miscreants my regard for his memory will not be the less for it.

I was introduced to late Sarat Chandra Bose by Kumar D. L. Khan. Sarat Babu had a very affectionate and generous heart, and he treated me with unbounded love, and, perhaps, undeserved indulgence. That he allowed me—then a poor Assessing Inspector of the Corporation of Calcutta drawing rupees sixty a month—to be his close assistant and associate in political matters speaks volumes about the magnanimity of the man. For getting me into a decent job in the Corporation he put forth such a tremendous lot of effort and exertion as another man would seldom do for providing his own son. When I was arrested under the Defence of India Rules, the Corporation agreed, principally due to his efforts, to grant me leave with full pay. I found in late Sarat Chandra Bose a man of high principles, high morals, and high intellect—altogether a magnificent man of unblemished character. To needy students, to the helpless sick, to stranded political sufferers he gave freely out of what he earned by the sweat of his brow. He was the noblest soul among all public figures I have had the honour of being associated with.

Adversity is a powerful X-Ray that helps to see clearly through your friends and relations.

X

Second World War and Detention

In 1938 Jati Jiban was released from detention, and the order of Externment from the district of Midnapur passed on me in November, 1933 was withdrawn. In July, next year I married Shrimati Amiya Bose, daughter of Shri Ramani Kanta Bose of Sikdar-bagan, Calcutta. On September 1, 1939 the Second World War broke out. To every Indian patriot and political worker it was obvious that the time and opportunity had come for a show-down fight with British Imperialism. Mahatmaji gave his fiat, first, in favour of individual Civil Disobedience.

Netaji Subhas Chandra left India, and the fact of his disappearance was declared to the world on the 26th January, 1941. A few days after, in the first week of February, our house was searched, and both Jati Jiban and myself were taken to the Intelligence Branch in Elysium Row. After being detained from dawn to dusk, we were let off. But as we were leaving for home, the Police people in Elysium Row frankly told us "You may go home to-day, but know it for certain that very soon you will be arrested again, and detained for the duration of the war."

At dawn on the 19th May, 1941 the Police came again, and searched our house, and took away both Jati Jiban and myself. Both of us, as well as the members of our family, except my father who was then in

Midnapur, realised that this time we were going to be separated for long years. At the time of parting all



Binoy Jiban Ghosh

the blood in my wife's face seemed to be drained out; my mother, who was weeping bitterly, said to me, "Son, in all our trials and tribulations you had been with us; as long as you were there we felt a strength in our heart; now you too are being taken away from us; but I am not thinking chiefly of my own loss and grief; I have turned into stone through repeated bereavements and calamities; I am most pained at the fate of my young daughter-in-law; two years have not elapsed since you married her. So far as I am concerned I don't think I will be in this world when you return." What could I say to my mother! I said, "Mother, all these years you have been living in the midst of a

veritable whirlwind of disasters. Why are you breaking down now; be the same brave mother that you have ever been."

A number of other young men were arrested all over Calcutta on the same day. All of us were collected together from different thanas in the city and taken in the same police van to the Presidency Jail. On the first day, and part of the next day each of us was kept in a different cell. It was a long narrow room with high walls and high gratings at both ends. The result was that the sun's rays penetrated the entire cell during the whole of the day time. On a hot May day it was hell. There seemed to be no roof over our head, and the sun seemed to be shining direct over us. However, next day we were produced before the Chief Presidency Magistrate, and made, in the technical language of the Jail, Security Prisoners. We then moved to the "Ath-Khata"—the Detenus Ward in the Presidency Jail.

After being in the Presidency Jail for about a month, we were taken to the Hijli Special Jail. While at Hijli, our family, which had been shifted back to Midnapur from Calcutta, had very good facilities for coming to interview us. A number of important events happened during our stay in the Hijli Special Jail. Hitler declared war on Soviet Russia on the 22nd June, 1941. Shortly afterwards our Communist fellow-prisoners declared that Russia's being in the war had changed the character of the war. The war had now become the People's War even for India, and so they wanted to help the British Government in waging the war. Sometime after all the Communist detenus were

released from the Hijli Special Jail. On the 7th Dec., 1941 Japan entered the war with the sensational raid on Pearl Harbour. At home poet Rabindranath passed away, and Shri Sarat Chandra Bose was arrested shortly after Japan joined the war.

Early in 1942 we were transferred to the Rajshahi Central Jail. Although Rajshahi was far away from Midnapur, my parents and my wife went there once to interview us. During our stay in Rajshahi the historic August Movement, or, Quit India struggle started. Political workers of Rajshahi, and of North Bengal began to flock into the jail and swell our number.

In January, 1943, some among the political prisoners, including myself and Jati Jiban, were removed to the Buxa Special Jail—an old hill-fort converted into a jail—at the foot of the Himalayas on the Bhutan border. During our stay of three years in the Buxa Special Jail none could go to interview us. Letters were our only means of contact with our families. Indeed, the whole idea of the British authorities in removing us to such a remote and out of the way place as Buxa Duar was to isolate us completely. While we were in Buxa my youngest sister, Arati died of typhoid in Midnapur.

Simply as a sort of diversion I thought of appearing at the Preliminary Law Examination in June, 1944. Quite a few much younger detenus also sat with me for the same examination. When the examination was being held Moulavi Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chowdhury of Comilla, who was an old friend and among my jail-mates at Buxa, one evening drew me aside, and said

“Binoy, brother why did you decide at this advanced age to sit for the Examination with those youngsters; if you fail to pass the Examination we also will look small before them.” I assured “Ashraf Sahib, you need not be so much upset; I will get through the Examination.” When the results were out it was found that I had stood First Class First. In June, 1945 I appeared in the Intermediate Law Examination, and in that also I came out First Class First. Before I could take my Final Law Examination I was let out of jail.

But the most important event—important for us and the whole world—that occurred while we were in the Buxa Special Jail was the collapse of the Axis Powers.

On the 5th of December, 1945 I was released from the Buxa Special Jail. Jati Jiban was, however, taken from Buxa to the Dum Dum Special Jail early in 1946, and was released from there in May of that year, that is after full five years of incarceration. He had been a detenu before for seven years from 1932 to 1938; so that, in all, twelve of his youthful years were spent in jail.

We were free men again. But peace was not our lot. Within a few months—on August 16, 1946—started the horrible holocaust, the Great Calcutta Killing. Both Jati Jiban and myself were living in Calcutta after our release, and we—like all other citizens of Calcutta—had to pass through anxious and hectic days.

On August 15, 1947 India achieved her political

independence after centuries of bondage under foreigners. For my mother it was a day of mournful pride and glory. Her sons—who seemed all the time getting merciless beating from the British power in India—had won at last. But two of them—Nirmal Jiban and Naba Jiban—were not there to see, and share in the joy and victory of the 15th August, 1947. There was a look of happy triumph in her one eye, and tears in the other. Two years after she came as a bride into our family, our house was searched for the first time, and her brother-in-law, Jog Jiban was arrested; then came the turn of her sons. All her life she had to pass through a grim and gruesome ordeal. But her tears, and all the terrible sufferings of the family had not gone in vain. India was, at last, free.

A few months after, towards the close of December, 1947 my mother fell seriously ill at Midnapur I rushed down to her bed-side. She began to sink gradually, and on the 16th of January, 1948 passed away my brave mother, my indomitable mother, my woefully and awfully stricken and suffering mother, Shrimati Pravas Ranjini Ghosh.

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