



Political Assassination Of The Colonial Officials By The Bengal Revolutionaries From 1906- 1935.

Author: Tarani Das

Designation: PhD Research Scholar, Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University.

Department: History Department.

Abstract:- During the Colonial rule, Bengal province emerged as a hub of anti-British revolutionary activities with educated Bengalis, who were driven by a fierce desire for liberation and inspired by the ideals of nationalism. After the publication of the Anandamath in 1882, it played a special role in awakening the spirit of patriotism and self-sacrifice among the educated youths of the Bengal province. In 1905, a strong anti-British nationalist spirit was seen in the educated society against the partition of Bengal. During this period, the local newspaper also criticized the tyrannical policies of British rule and propagated the message of national unity among the common people. 'Amrita Bazaar Patrika', 'Jugantar', and 'Sandha' played a crucial role in increasing the desire for liberation among the people. An article in Sandha called "Kali May Ki Boma" encouraged the revolutionaries to join the violent movement. The revolutionary movements of foreign countries like Russia, Ireland, and America became a source of inspiration for the revolutionaries of Bengal province. This anti-British sentiment of the educated people gradually turned into a violent movement. They started planning to assassinate officials who were working in the Bengal province to instill fear in the minds of the British government. During this time the revolutionaries of Anushilan Samiti and Jugantor Dal, Brati Samiti, and other secret societies learned weapons training and bomb-making techniques and planned to attack British officials. Later, the violent movement reached its climax through the revolutionaries of the Bengal Volunteers party.

Keywords:- Assassination, Liberation, Motherland, Hub, Clandestine activity.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a nationalist spirit developed among the middle classes of Bengal province. The methods of violent movements of revolutionaries in foreign countries helped them to set their goals, and they adopted strategies such as the formation of secret societies to liberate their motherland from colonial domination. The ideas of liberty and equality, which were spread from the French Revolution, influenced them. They also influenced the idea of "religious war," which was described in the 'Gita'. After the publication of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's novel *Anandamath* in 1882, the idea of patriotism became stronger among them. They tried to get rid of the tyrannical rule of the British government. These revolutionaries, who believed in violent movements, believed that the motherland could never be freed from the tyrant through peaceful movement and discussion. They believed that only through a strong resistance movement would their dream become a reality. As part of the resistance against this tyranny of the foreign powers, the assassination of British officials was planned. They wanted to destabilize the administrative structure of British rule by assassinating officials holding important government posts. They thought that if the common people of Bengal province, influenced by their thinking, started a violent movement against the government, the government would be forced to leave the motherland and return to their homeland. Originally, various clubs, gymnasiums, and arenas of the province later turned into secret organizations. Although there were ideological differences between these organizations, the main goal was the same: overthrowing British rule through armed resistance. Originally from 1906, revolutionaries started planning to assassinate British officials through violent agitation.

In 1906, on May 6, an attempt was made by Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Bhupendra Nath Dutta, and Hemchandra Das Kanungo to kill Sir Bomfield Fuller, who was then the Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal. First, there was an attempt to kill Fuller in Shillong with the help of a bomb. After that, assassination attempts were made in Gauhati, Rangpur, and Barisal. But all their efforts ultimately failed. In November 1907, a meeting was arranged by the revolutionaries in the Maniktola Garden to kill Andrew Frazer, who was the governor of Bengal at that time. The revolutionaries made their first attempt at Chandannagar. According to the plans, they threw a bomb near the Chandannagar train line and a few days later at Mankundu railway station. However, both attempts by the revolutionaries were not successful. Another attempt to assassinate Sir Kingsford was made with a bomb made by Hemchandra Das Kanungo, which was shaped like a book. The bomb was made by filling an empty tin of Cadbury cocoa with one pound of picric acid and three detonators. Revolutionary Paresh Mallick wrapped this bomb in brown paper and brought it to Kingsford's house in a hollowed-out piece of Herbert Broom's *Commentaries on the Common Law*. But Kingsford put the unopened parcel on his shelf for a later inspection. By March 1908, the government moved him to Muzaffarpur, Bihar, and elevated him to the rank of District Judge out of concern for the judge's safety, and he took the book bomb, his library, and his furniture with him.

Another attempt was made by the revolutionaries of the Anushilan Samiti. They selected Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose. Hemchandra Das Kanungo provided the bomb for this attempt, which was composed of a detonator, six ounces of dynamite, and one black powder fuse. Then they sent Prafulla Chaki, with a new boy named Khudiram Bose, to Muzaffarpur. In Muzaffarpur, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose adopted the names of Dinesh Chandra Roy and Haren Sarkar, respectively, and hid themselves in a safe house, which was run by Kishori Mohan Bandyopadhyay. On April 29,

1908, Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki arrived to investigate the surrounding areas. They pretended to be schoolboys and walked around the Muzaffarpur park, which is across from the British Club and is often visited by Kingsford. Unfortunately, one of the police constables observed them. One fateful day, Kingsford and his spouse were playing bridge in the carriage with the British barrister Pringle Kennedy's wife and daughter. Around 8.30 PM, they decided to go home. The carriage, which was carried by Mrs. Kennedy and his family, was the same one in which Kingsford and his spouse were playing. The bombs were thrown into the carriage by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki as they sprinted towards it as their carriage arrived at the European Club's eastern gate. The bomb thrown was made of explosive mass inside a tin shell, and its destructive power was deadly. Mrs. and Miss Kennedy suffered severe injuries, and the carriage was smashed. After that, Miss Kennedy passed away in an hour, and Mrs. Kennedy passed away from her wounds on May 2.

After these heroic activities of the revolutionaries, the British government feared and imposed a strict policy in the wake of successive explosions in the province of Bengal. 1908: The Explosive Substances Act was passed by the government. This Act made the illegal use of all types of explosives and the manufacture of explosives a serious offense and prescribed severe punishment for the accused. The British government began arresting suspected revolutionaries through this act to strictly control and suppress revolutionary activities. On September 5, 1910, police searched Lalit Chowdhury's house in Munshiganj Sub-division of Dacca District and found eleven powerful fresh bombs and bomb-making formulas. Lalit Chowdhury and two other revolutionaries connected with this incident were arrested under Section 4(b) of the Explosive Substance Act VI of 1908. At the end of the trial, Lalit Chowdhury was sentenced to ten years in exile, and two other revolutionaries were released for the lack of evidence against them. Still, the British government failed to stop the political assassination and activities of the secret societies of the Bengal province. On March 2, 1911, prominent revolutionary leaders of Chandannagar, Srish Ghosh, Suresh Chandra Dutta, and Jyotish Chandra Ghosh, made plans to assassinate Denham in Dalhousie Square. Denham worked as an employee in the British Intelligence Service, and for him, many revolutionaries were arrested and physically tortured in prison. Unfortunately, they threw a bomb at a businessman named Mr. Cowley instead of Denham. Mr. Cowley survived because the bomb they dropped did not explode.

On 23 December 1912, another plan was executed to assassinate Lord Charles Hardinge, who was the Viceroy of India. When Lord Hardinge took part in a procession at the laying of the new capital at Delhi, then Rasbehari Bose and Basanta Biswas wanted to send a strong message against British rule by assassinating him. For this purpose, Rasbehari Bose and Basanta Biswas bombed Lord Hardinge's convoy on 23 December 1912. This bomb was made by Manindra Nath Naik at the request of the revolutionary Rasbihari Bose. Although Lord Hardinge was seriously injured his one bodyguard died on the spot. In 1913 another decision was taken by Rasbihari Bose, Amritlal Sarkar, Jogindranath Chakraborty, and Taraprasanna Bal to assassinate Mr. Gordon, who was S.D.O. of Moulvibazar under Srimanta district of Assam. On March 27, 1913, a powerful bomb was thrown at Mr. Gordon near the Moulvi-Bazar road. Unfortunately, Mr. Gordon survived as the bomb exploded just short of its intended target. Jogindranath Chakraborty was nearby when the bomb was thrown, and he died on the spot. On the other hand, Taraprasanna Bal and Amritlal Sarkar managed to escape from

there despite being seriously injured. After identifying Jogindranath Chakraborty's pocket, the police found some documents, a list of the revolutionaries who were associated with these plans, and the location of the secret hideout of Rajabazar, where all the activities were executed by the revolutionaries. Mr. Gordon, on the other hand, was later transferred by the government to Lahore for security reasons.

On November 25, 1914, the revolutionaries of the Anushilan Samiti, under the leadership of Satish Pakrashi, made another plan to assassinate Basanta Chatterjee, who was the then Deputy Superintendent of the Intelligence Department of Calcutta. At first, they collected a powerful bomb, which was brought from Chandannagar to Calcutta through Prafulla Biswas. As per the earlier plan, they hurled bombs at Basanta Chatterjee's house near Muslim Para Lane. But Basanta Chatterjee escaped from the house minutes before the bomb was thrown. By the explosion of the bomb, one guard man and one head constable were killed, and the other two constables and a relative of Basanta Chatterjee were injured. On 25th August 1930, prominent members of the Jugantor dal, Anuja Sen, Dinesh Majumdar, and Narayan Roy, threw a bomb at Sir Charles Taggart, who was the then Police Commissioner of Calcutta. This T.N.T. bomb was made of aluminum cells, and it had a strong explosion power, which was made by Dr. Narayan Roy, who was also accused in the Dalhousie Square case. This time too, the bomb exploded before Anuja Sen could throw it, and Charles Tegart survived again. Unfortunately, the bomb exploded near Anuja Sen, and he was dead on the spot by the explosion of the bomb. Injured Dinesh Mazumdar was badly injured by the explosion and was arrested by the police.

On August 29, 1930, the revolutionaries of the Bengal Volunteers decided to assassinate the Inspector General of Police, Lowman. They learned from confidential sources that on August 29, Lowman would visit a sick colleague at Milford Hospital. Then, as planned, on August 29, 1930, Binay Bose, dressed in plain clothes, dodged the security guard and came very close to Lowman and shot him. Police Superintendent Hodson, who was with Lowman, was seriously injured. Their next aim was to kill the tyrant Inspector General Colonel NS Simpson, who was working in the Prison Department. Simpson was notorious among revolutionaries for torturing the political leaders and revolutionaries who were kept in prison. For that reason, the revolutionaries were made to assassinate him. At first, they arranged a secret meeting and decided to attack the Writers' Building in Calcutta to strike fear among the other officials of the British government who were working in Bengal by killing tyranny Colonel Simpson. Then on December 8, 1930, Binay Ghosh, Badal Gupta, and Dinesh Gupta, dressed as government employees, entered the Writers' Building and shot and killed Simpson.

In April 1931, revolutionaries of the Bengal Volunteers branch of Midnapore planned to assassinate the District Governor of Midnapore, James Peddie. The reason behind this was that he started some repressive measures to stop all revolutionary movements in Medinipur after joining as District Magistrate. Moreover, during the defiance of the Salt Act, the agitators were arrested by the police and later brutally tortured by James Peddie. To avenge his inhuman torture, members of the Bengal Volunteers under the leadership of Hemchandra Ghosh decided to kill James Peddy. Bimal Dasgupta and Jyotijivan Ghosh were given the charge for this assassination. On April 7, 1931, Peddie was shot dead by these two revolutionaries when he came to see the exhibition at Medinipur Collegiate School. Luckily, both the revolutionaries managed to escape after being killed. On July 27, 1931, another assassination plan was made to kill Mr. Ralph Garlick. Mr. Ralph Garlick was the head of the special tribunal. Many revolutionaries were sentenced to life

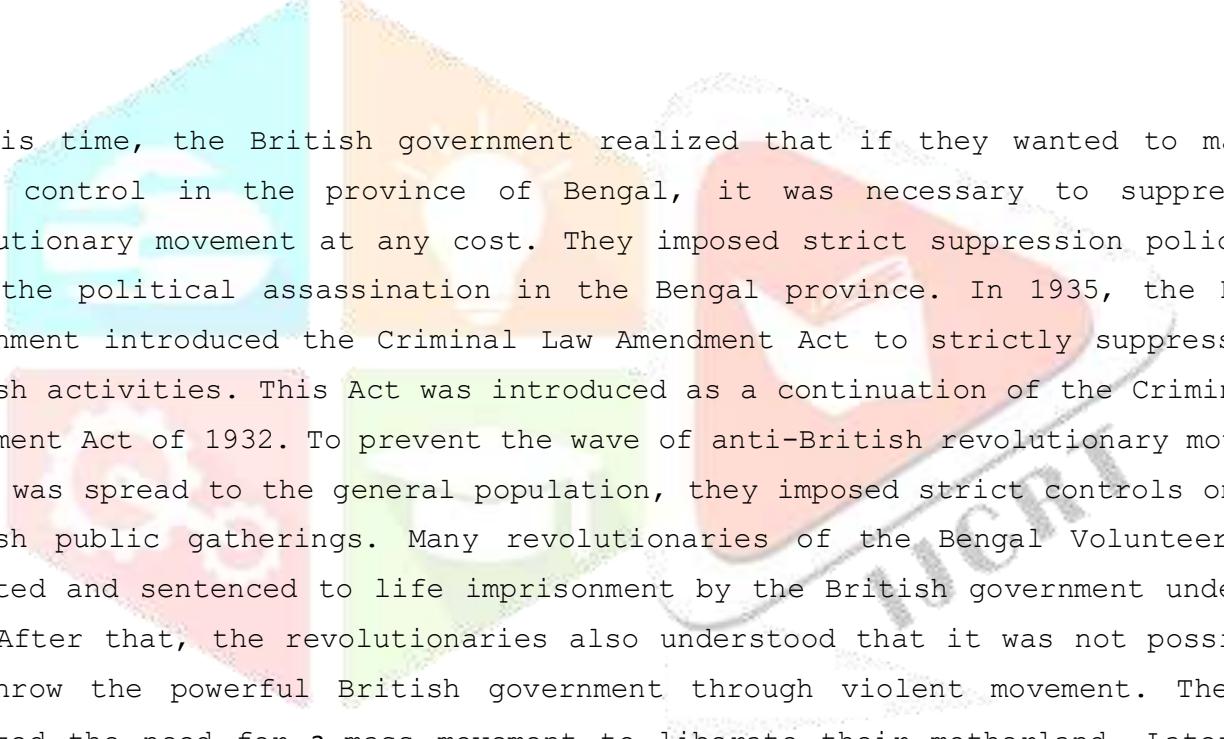
imprisonment and death sentences for trials under his leadership. Dinesh Gupta, the hero of the Writers' Building attack, was sentenced to death following his trial by a special tribunal. He was also responsible for the execution of revolutionary Ramakrishna Biswas. For these reasons, the revolutionaries decided to kill him. Kanailal Bhattacharya was selected for this brave action. As planned, Garlick was assassinated by a .38 bore Colt Jupiter revolver on 27 July 1931 in the George Court, Alipore. Another police sergeant was killed by his gunfire. He then poured the potassium cyanide he had with him into his mouth.

On 14th December 1931, Mr. Stevens, who was then the District Magistrate of Comilla, was shot dead by Suniti Chowdhury and Shanti Ghosh. He was accused of raping women and mentally torturing revolutionaries. On his orders, many innocent common people of the Comilla region were arrested and later physically tortured in jail. For this, the revolutionaries made plans to assassinate him. Shanti Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhury were given charge of killing Mr. Stevens. They were trained under the leadership of Birendra Bhattacharya and Satish Roy for this daring act. Later, both of them made proper plans and waited for instructions from the High Command. Then on the morning of December 14, 1931, Shanti Ghosh and Suniti Chowdhury came near Stevens' house by a horse cart. Then, they went to the gate of the house and handed over an interview card to the guards. When Stevens came out of his Rome, Suniti Chowdhury shot him. Her bullet hit Steven's head, and soon he died on the spot.

After the death of James Peddie, Robert Douglas was appointed as the next District Magistrate of Medinipur by the British Government. His tyrannical policies surpassed the brutality of the previous magistrate, James Peddie. Under his leadership, two revolutionaries who were imprisoned in Hijli Jail were shot dead. For this reason, members of the Bengal Volunteers made plans to kill him. Pradyot Kumar Bhattacharya and Prabhanshu Shekhar Pal were entrusted with this task. They were provided with two Welby guns .38 bore by Supati Roy. Later, they gather information from their secret agents about the daily activities of Robert Douglas. On April 30, they came to know their other secret agent, Magistrate Douglas, would be present as the chairman of the Medinipur District Board meeting. They reached there in due time, and on April 30, 1932, Prabhanshu Shekhar Pal shot and killed Robert Douglas from point range. After a few days, Bimal Dasgupta was given another responsibility of killing Mr. E. Villiers, who was the chief editor of the Statesman newspaper. On July 29, 1931, Bimal Dasgupta entered the office of the European Association near Clive Street. Then he shot and killed Mr. E. Villiers in his office. Unfortunately, he was arrested by the police before he could take the cyanide out of his pocket.

On July 29, 1932, Mr. Elison, who was working as an Additional Superintendent of Police, was killed in Comilla town. During his tenure as Commissioner of Police in Jessore, he did a lot of atrocities on the common people. Bijay Ghosh, who was one of the political leaders of Jessore, was arrested and tortured in jail by his orders. After coming to Comilla, he issued various restrictions on the youth's participation in the anti-British revolutionary movement. On suspicion of involvement in anti-British revolutionary activities, Chandrakanta Chatterjee was arrested on his orders and physically tortured in jail. For his tyrannical policies, Surya Sen decided to kill him. Shaileshwar Roy was given the charge of this assassination. Then he shot and killed Mr. Ellison from point range on the way to Comilla.

After the assassination of James Pedi and Robert Douglas, other British officers refused to take over the duties of the District Magistrate of Midnapore. In this situation, the British government appointed Bernard E. J. Burge as the District Magistrate of Medinipur with a high salary. He was particularly notorious for his suppression policies. Revolutionaries thought that assassinating him was a symbolic victory for the freedom struggle. For his tyrannical attitude, members of the Bengal Volunteers, Ramakrishna Roy, Mrigendra Dutta, Prabhanshu Sekhar Pal, Anath Bandhu Panja, Braja Kishore Chakraborty, Kamakhya Charan Ghosh, Sukumar Sengupta, Purnananda Sanyal, Bijay Krishna Ghosh, Manindra Nath Chowdhury, Shailesh Chandra Ghosh, and others, made another plan to kill him. They already had news that on September 2, 1933, Bernard E. J. Burge would come to Medinipore College grounds. So they prepare themselves accordingly. Finally, Anathbandhu Panja and Mrigenanath Dutta entered the field under the guise of practice, then shot and killed E. J. Burge from point range. The police guards then fired back at them, resulting in the instant death of Anathbandhu Panja, and Mrigen Dutta also died later. The rest of the revolutionaries managed to escape but were later arrested by the police through investigation.



At this time, the British government realized that if they wanted to maintain their control in the province of Bengal, it was necessary to suppress the revolutionary movement at any cost. They imposed strict suppression policies to stop the political assassination in the Bengal province. In 1935, the British government introduced the Criminal Law Amendment Act to strictly suppress anti-British activities. This Act was introduced as a continuation of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1932. To prevent the wave of anti-British revolutionary movement, which was spread to the general population, they imposed strict controls on anti-British public gatherings. Many revolutionaries of the Bengal Volunteers were arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment by the British government under this Act. After that, the revolutionaries also understood that it was not possible to overthrow the powerful British government through violent movement. They also realized the need for a mass movement to liberate their motherland. Later, they joined various left-wing political parties to make common people politically aware. Some who believed in Gandhiji's non-cooperation policy joined the movement. Gradually, the political assassination of colonial officials decreased in Bengal province.

Bibliography

Home Political Confidential File:-

1. Attempt on the Life of Charles Tegart, Murder of Mr. Lowman, Inspector-General, and Prosecution of Dinesh Majumdar, Home Political File, National Archives of India, New Delhi, File No 497/30.
2. Assassination of CGB Stevens, ICS, District Magistrate, Tippera, On 14 December, 1931, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta, Intelligence Bureau, File No 850/31.

English Books

1. Fay, Peter Ward, (1995) The Forgotten Army: India's Armed Struggle for Independence, The University of Michigan Press, United States of America.
2. Guha, Arun Chandra, (1971) First Spark Of Revolution: The early phase of India's struggle for independence 1900-1920, Orient Longman, New Delhi.
3. Ghosh, Durba, (2017) Gentlemanly Terrorists: Political Violence and the Colonial State in India 1919–1947, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom.
4. Heehs, Peter, (2008) Foreign Influences on Bengali Revolutionary Terrorism 1902–1908, Cambridge University Press, London.
5. Samanta, Amiya Kumar, edit, (1995) Terrorism in Bengal: General trend of the terrorist movement in Bengal from 1907-1939, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta.
6. Samanta, Amiya Kumar, (1995) Terrorism In Bengal Origin, Growth And Activities Of The Organisations Like Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar Party, Dacca Shri Sangha And Other Such Organisations, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta.

Bengali Books

1. Chakraborty, Tarinishankar, (1942) Biplobi Bangla 1757- 1912, Mitaloy Publication, Calcutta.
2. Choudhury, Chinmay, (1958) Swadhinata Andolone Sashastra Biplobi Nari, Dey's Publishing House, Calcutta.
3. Das, Basantakumar, (1980) Swadhinata Sangrame Medinipur Vol- I, D.G Press and publicity syndicate, Calcutta.
4. Ghosh, Sankar, (edit), (1911) First Rebels: Strictly Confidential note on the growth of the revolutionary movement in Bengal, Home Political Department, First Edition, Calcutta.
5. Roy, Motilal, (1957) Amar Dekha Biplob O Biplobi, Probortok Publishers, Calcutta.