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Revolutionary freedom Struggles and the Communist Movement in Midnapore: The Historical Approach

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Abstract:

With the appreciation of revolutionary freedom struggles, the Midnapore district of West Bengal has a noteworthy Communist movement that aimed to set up an independent India. This paper aims to trace down the revolutionary movements carried by the leaders, the effective Tebhaga movement and the significant Kuth Rebellion in terms of social, economic and cultural transformation. It also brings about the origin and development of the communism in Midnapore, major activities as well as highlights of the Communist Party and important leaders of the region. Through this historical analysis of the movements the paper seeks to contribute towards the understanding and significance of the said movements in today's society and politics.

Keywords

Midnapore, Revolutionary Freedom Struggles, Communist Movement, Tebhaga Movement, Kuth Rebellion, Indian Independence, Socio-economic Impact, Cultural Influence, Peasant Uprisings, Communist Party of India.

Introduction:

The district of Medinipur, historically known as Undivided Medinipur, has a rich legacy of participation in India's freedom struggle. Located in the southwestern part of West Bengal, this region was a hotbed of revolutionary activities and peasant movements. The fervent spirit of nationalism and the relentless quest for justice among the people of Medinipur significantly contributed to the broader Indian independence movement. The general historical narrative and the political struggles revolving around the missionary of communism in Midnapore has deep link with other revolutionary movements known in the political map of West Bengal India. Located in the southern part of West Bengal, Midnapore is famous for the freedom fighters of India wherein people of this place organized many times against the British rule for attaining freedom. The rise of leftism in Bengal and later its metamorphosis into a state ruled by a heavily influenced communism party was thus affected during the late 1960s political changes. A number of events such as the Congress party loss in the 1967 and 1969 general elections, United Front government which was particularly identified as being controlled by the CPI. This change was as a result of many Social Forces such as democratic centralism and the predominance of the CPI-M in the state's politics. Thus different forms of struggles in Midnapore have had the impact of Naxalite movement, influenced by the peasant struggles of the late 1960's.

The Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-24) :

The Non-Cooperation Movement, launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920, aimed at achieving self-governance and full independence from British rule. The people of Medinipur actively participated in this movement by boycotting British goods, institutions, and services. The district saw widespread participation in the movement, with local leaders mobilizing the masses to defy colonial laws and policies.

Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34) : The Civil Disobedience Movement, initiated by Gandhi in 1930, further intensified the struggle for independence. In Medinipur, the movement took on a unique character with the involvement of local peasants and tribals. The district became known for its refusal to pay taxes, a form of resistance that crippled the colonial administration. This movement witnessed numerous instances of police brutality, with the local populace enduring severe repression with remarkable fortitude.

Peasant Movements and Tax Resistance :

Medinipur's peasantry played a crucial role in the freedom struggle through various agrarian movements. The district's peasants organized themselves against oppressive taxes and unfair land policies imposed by the British. Notable among these was the refusal to pay the 'chowkidari tax', a levy on local security services. The peasants' resistance led to significant clashes with colonial authorities, resulting in confiscation of property and livestock. Despite such hardships, the people of Medinipur remained steadfast in their defiance. Struggle to emancipate British subjugation along with struggle against British zamindari company for emancipation of British exploitation, Sanjavanga movement of Dharendra pargana in Kharagpur police station, Anishuni in Nandigram, Sutahata, Mahishadal, Maina police stations, movement to stop collection of abwabs and reduce interest on Korja paddy and Tamluk, Panshkura, Daspur against zamindari system. , Keshpur and Chandrakona, etc., the peasant struggle organized in police stations continued for many years. In 1942, the peasant society of this district spread the fire of rebellion in the whole district in the "Quit India" movement called by the Congress. Then came the cyclone of 1942, the untimely death of millions of people in floods, epidemics and famines, against that too loans, reliefs and bailouts. Farmers did not lag behind in the struggle.

Significant Incidents and Local Heroes:

Several key incidents and local heroes emerged from Medinipur during the freedom struggle. The murder of three tyrant magistrates by local revolutionaries is a testament to the district's militant resistance. Figures like Biplabi Rashbehari Basu, Matangini Hazra, and Khudiram Bose became symbols of Medinipur's indomitable spirit. Their sacrifices and acts of valor inspired many to join the freedom movement.

Armored Movement:

The organization had to work on foot across the district. As a result, there was an opportunity to become intimately acquainted with every house in every village. So the movements were very united and lively. The concerned people were closely associated with the party workers. As early as 1938, a massive movement was launched against the extreme plight of Sanja farmers in Dharinda and Dhenkia Bazar Parganas of Kharagpur Police Station. Com: Tarapada Chakraborty was in the leadership. He lived in the Kharagpur party office and in 1939 there was a settlement in that movement. Farmers do not have to pay the remaining rice. 2 years Sanja will pay the price of paddy in 2 years installments and they will get all their land back. An ara of dressed paddy will weigh 4 manas everywhere. The farmers take this as a victory in their struggle, albeit a partial victory. This victory raised the dignity of the farmers' meeting. After this, the party and Krishak Sabha became known among the farmers in the Sanja movement in Keshpur. In 1939 a massive struggle started in Tamluk subdivision. In Nandigram, Sutahata, Mahishadal Police Station. According to the amendment of the Bengal Tenancy Act in 1938, the zamindar prohibited the killing of waste paddy belonging to various types of cultivators such as Tohuri, Mahuri, Karali, Machatud etc. But the landlords did not obey this law. Moreover, at that time the share was 9 percent of the owner and 7 percent of the cultivator. During the illegal era of the party, Bhupal Panda secretly (LI G) organized a massive movement against this exploitation of the zamindari. Mahishadal District Magistrate Shri B.R. Sen called a resolution meeting on the matter. In the presence of Com: Saroj Roy, it was decided that the crop would be divided by half and all bad abwabs would be stopped. At that time, a district-wide campaign was launched to implement the Agricultural Registration Act, the Debt Arbitration Board. In 1940, Khajna Banda movement against the increased rent of 36 Mauzas in Gathra Mauza was victorious despite many atrocities. In 1962, the protracted agitation was settled by a meeting led by Com: Vishwanath Mukherjee with then Land Revenue Minister Shyamdas Bhattacharya. The rest of the fees are exempted. The land is also returned. In 1941, jute cultivation movement, Jalkar movement also won in Tamluk subdivision. The first district

conference of Krishak Sabha was held on 1st March 1939 at Munibgarh village of Kharagpur police station. Later in 1940, in the second annual conference at Temathani, Dashpur, Com. Deven Das was elected as the secretary.

Labor movement:

At this time, the Congress formed the workers' association in Kharagpur and started a movement for dear allowances of the workers. In 1940, provincial labor leaders Com Dharambir, Mohammed Ismail, Purnendu Dutta and others came to Kharagpur. The movement of railway workers intensified under the leadership of the communists. As a result, the workers had no confidence in the unions that existed there. As a result of this movement, "the Congress Workers' Association grew in strength from 5 to 6 thousand."

Student Movement:

In September 1939, the organization committee of Medinipur district student federation was formed and Anant Maji was made the secretary. In the movement to demand the formation of student union in Medinipur College, the principal accepted the demand of union election. District Student Federation President Induvhushan Dasgupta was elected General Secretary of the College Union Trailokyanathbe In 1940, the first district conference was held with the civil servants of Midnipur District Students Federation. Ananta Maji was elected General Secretary.

Anti-Japan movement:

World War II started in September 1939. Ignoring the opinion of Indians, the British government declared India as a belligerent country. Against this backdrop came Gandhiji's call for personal satyagraha. In this the selected employees are tested. They will move towards Delhi to campaign from their headquarters. The propaganda would be "This war is not ours, not a penny, not a man in it." "Early in 1942, the first large anti-fascist rally was held in the district at Putputia in Tamluk. The speaker was Mr. Bankim Mukherjee. The meeting analyzed the public war. A historic rally and meeting was held in Tamluk town in 1942. "At that time, Adinath Das of Chittagong was working in our district. It was through his efforts that meeting and procession was organized. That meeting was held on the occasion of the arrival of the Crips Mission in India."

Civil War:

During the "Quit India" struggle in 1942, the Communist Party campaigned with slogans of people's war. At that time "all the newspapers and the Communist Party from the Congress made a great propaganda that they were traitors." In other districts, the communist workers endured torture for this, but in Medinipur, the common people did not think that the communists were traitors. Because they were by the side of all the problems of the people. At that time there was public recognition of the contribution of the Communists in the establishment of the "Copper Plated Government of the United States of Great India" on 17th December 1942. This government was dissolved on 1st September 1944 on the orders of Gandhiji. Weekly "National Front", "Ganashakti", "Party Bulletin", "Janajudha and People's War" etc. were widely circulated and sold at that time under the leadership of the Zilla Party.

Tevaga Episode:

The heroic struggle of Soviet Russia to defeat fascism at this time in the mass of public relations increased the morale of the peasant laborers manifold. As a result, the organization of farmers' associations at the village level became stronger. The peasants of this country are enslaved by the feudal lords who supported the British imperial power. True freedom will not come unless serfdom ends. So they are building the struggle to establish the rights of farmers. On the other hand, the Congress is opposing the peasant movement on behalf of the landlords. On the one hand, the Agra-Vahini Communist Party of the liberation struggle of billions of ordinary peasants. And on the other hand Congress is responsible for protecting the exploitation-rule tyranny of the rich few. Therefore, the independence movement led by this Congress is a movement to establish a rich Raj in this country instead of the British. In the final period of the freedom movement in 1945-46, the Tevaga movement became stronger for the sake of farmers. A massive struggle was organized under the leadership of state, district and local leaders such as Bhupal Panda, Anant Maji, Bimala Maji, Bankim Giri, Saratchandra Das, Vyhartidev Agasti in Manuchak, Kendemari, Mohammadpur area of Nandigram police station. In February 1947, at the Panchkhuri Provincial Farmers' Conference held

in Keshpur, President Com. Krishnavinod Roy announced the victory of the Nandigram Tevaga struggle. When independence was declared on August 15, 1947, the peasants marched and protested with the slogan "Ae Azadi Jhuta Hai." Because this independence belonged to the rich and not to the common man. On November 21, the farmers of Medinipur participated in the Calcutta Farmers Jamaat. The people of Medinipur took part in the intense mass movement. At this time, the communists jumped into the movement to save the land. In spite of that, the leaders continued the movement in secret. 22 In February, the police opened fire on the farmers' association in Nandigram. Hundreds of people were arrested and sent to jail. The district ruler accepted the demands of the communist leader Saratchandra Das in the district And gains importance. (1) Political Prisoner Liberation Movement, (2) Save Education Movement (3) Food Movement" 1 Needless to say, the Communist Party of the district played a leading role in these movements. The demands were also recognized in 1953. Indefinite strike of secondary teachers in 1954 against annexation of Bengal Bihar in 1959 Communists of Medinipur took special role in 1962. Due to party differences, the Communist Party split in 1964. In the historical food movement in 1966 in Medinipur district, Communists led a massive mass struggle across the district. The Bengal Congress Party was formed in the breakup of the Congress under the leadership of Tamluk Congress leaders Ajay Mukherjee, Satish Samant, Sushil Dhara due to the massive mass movement. In the 1967 elections, the Bengali Congress, CPI, CPM (two communist parties) and other left-wing parties formed the United Front government. From that time the single Congress rule ended. Medinipur district is currently divided into East and West Medinipur. Midnipur district-wide mass movement of the Communist Party is gradually at the top.

Kuth - In 1949, Ramdurlav Das of Chowka village in Ghatal single-handedly organized 750 farmers' sabhas. This unprecedented feat in Medinipur district earned him a red flag in recognition of his efforts at a farmers' conference held in Bangral village. Mansoor Habibullah attended this conference. Comrade Sukumar Sengupta of Ghatal played a pivotal role in building the party and leading the mass movement for an extended period. Based on his experience, he documented that the vast fields in the southern part of Ghatal, particularly south of Charkolar Nakhe Ela Chatal and the surrounding villages, were under the zamindari of the chief. Rent collection in this area followed a unique custom: the zamindar's gomsta would annually inspect each farmer's land and estimate the potential rice yield. The farmer was then required to pay half the estimated value of the rice to the zamindar as rent. This estimate, known as 'kuth', was often exaggerated by the gomsta, causing significant distress to the farmers. The fields frequently produced poor crops, exacerbating the farmers' plight as they struggled to meet the rent demands. Consequently, many farmers fell behind on their rent, leading to arrears. The gomsta's tax collection methods were notoriously oppressive, and the farmers faced immense hardship. In 1952, farmers began organizing and mobilizing against this exploitation. In numerous villages, including Ghisra, Elochak, Nimpata, Dubrajkundu, Jayanagar, Anandpur, Bangral, Mugral, Maharajpur, Vangadah, and Garkandi, there was a collective demand that the gomsta should not determine the 'kuth' alone; it should be done in conjunction with representatives of the Farmers' Council. They demanded an end to the gomsta's oppression. The farmers, under the leadership of their assembly, presented their demands to the zamindars through marches. The landlords ultimately conceded to the farmers' demands, resulting in a significant victory for the movement. The rent was reduced from 30/40 to 6/8. Moreover, a 20-year rent waiver was introduced, sparking renewed enthusiasm among the farmers. The zamindar agreed to the farmers' assembly determining the 'kuth' and collecting the rent. As a result, on Paush Sankranti, groups of farmers began settling their rent at the zamindar's Kachari house, a scenario previously unimaginable for the landlord. Instead of the usual 800/900 taka, the landlord now received 8/9 thousand taka. The gomsta had not paid any rent previously. This success greatly enhanced the prestige of the Farmers' Assembly and invigorated the peasant movement.

Conclusion:

The contributions of undivided Medinipur to India's freedom struggle and peasant movements are a testament to the district's unyielding spirit and dedication to the cause of independence. Medinipur's unique forms of resistance and its people's ability to endure severe repression highlight their resilience and determination. From organizing widespread farmers' sabhas and challenging oppressive rent collection

practices to demanding fair treatment and rights, the actions of Medinipur's farmers exemplify the district's commitment to justice and equity.

The legacy of Medinipur's participation in the freedom struggle is marked by significant victories, such as the reduction of oppressive rents and the successful negotiation of fair yield estimates through the Farmers' Assembly. These achievements not only alleviated the immediate hardships faced by farmers but also established a model of collective action and negotiation that inspired other movements. Medinipur's role in the freedom struggle and peasant movements remains a significant chapter in India's fight for independence. The district's history of resistance and resilience continues to inspire generations, reminding us of the enduring power of collective action and the importance of standing up against injustice.

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