

Literary Activities of Jalpaiguri District and its Contribution in Nation Making

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The most of the revolution in the world has been outbreak due the exposition of tyranny of the class and making conscious the general mass through literature. A decade ago there was a sea-change in the study of historical research and curriculum. The historical and social science today are giving emphasis upon the literature and literary sources for the construction and rewriting the history of a particular region and time. It is in this historical background that the reconstruction of the literary activities of the colonial town, Jalpaiguri has been attempted for study. It is to be noted that not only in the post independent period but also from the 20th century Jalpaiguri, was gradually becoming an important literary or cultural centre of North Bengal. Let us examine the forces behind the emergence of Jalpaiguri as an important place of literature and cultural activities.

The discussion of the literary activities of Jalpaiguri will be limited unless we present the socio-economic profile of Jalpaiguri. Though Jalpaiguri was the youngest district of that time but within one decade it has become the headquarter of the Rajsahi district but earlier the headquarter of division was located at Bahrapur. With the transfer of divisional headquarter from Bahrapur to Jalpaiguri a new life was injected to jalpaiguri and its people's life and society. Apart from this, the European tea planters came in Jalpaiguri. In fact the literary activities of Jalpaiguri were started in the first decade of the 20th century. Before that we found strong example of literary activities but not in a systematic and consolidated approach. Taraknath Gangopadhaya a medical officer of West Bengal Govt. had posted to jalpaiguri. He wrote a novel entitled '*Swarnalata*' unfortunately we know little about Taraknath Bondhopadhaya. It is also stated that a literary Journal '*Vikshuk*' from Jalpaiguri in 1897 and in the 1st year of 20th century, a monthly periodical that '*Trisrota*' too published from Jalpaiguri. The editor of Journal was Sashi kumar Niogi and Bhaugangdhar Roy Choudary. But within three years the publication of this Journal was stopped.

The real beginnings of literary activities were started in the third decade of the 20th century. In fact Swadeshi, Boycott, Swaraj movement had gradually influenced the literary movement of Mofussil Bengal and Jalapiguri was not an exception. The revival of important periodical as '*Janamat*' has its own place in the growth of literature that was published in 1924 under the leadership of eminent educated lower Jotish Chandra Sanyal. He was M.A.B.L a highly educated and respected person who had devoted his own life in the publication of this Journal. With the passage of time, the journal it became an important organ of anti-British and national movement. '*Trisrota*' was published under able editorship of Suresh Ch. Paul was also an M.A.B.L. These two newspapers had become the platform of literary activities. It is to be noted that the Journal (*Patrika*) had succeeded in creating a group of writers because at that time there was no daily news paper. So Journal in a true sense became a platform for the promising writer's, intellectuals whose pen encompasses the untold stories of the whole of North Bengal. In the 40th particularly foundation of the Ananda Chandra College a new arena open up in literary campus of Jalpaiguri. A good number of young Prof. with their literary test comes to Ananda Chandra College (Jalpaiguri) as lecturer. For example Narayan Gangopadhaya, A prominent writer was a lecturer of Ananda Chandra College, subsequently he become a lecturer of Calcutta University, emerged as a literary icon in literary canvas of Bengal. Apart from this in the post Independent period, we find many writers, novelists, poets in Jalpaiguri that results the birth of literary awaking. In this connection it is to be noted that Bengali Tea Planters had invited the many novelist story writer in Jalpaiguri town and tea garden. Thus we can say that 20th century was the Golden Age of literary activities of Jalpaiguri.

Growth of the Literary Activities in Jalpaiguri District:

The role of the news paper is important behind the changes of mental scenario of the human being. For example we can remember the name of 'Bengal gazette' which was published in 1780 A.D by James A. Hicky from Kolkata. In this way, the first Bengali monthly paper *Digdarshan* was published in 1818 by J.C. Marshman from Kolkata. After a long period, Jalpaiguri District of Northern Bengal came under the arena of Indian cartography through the publication of some Journals. As a result, the common people were able to be familiar with the evolution of their socio-economic-cultural and political structure. Hence, we would like to present a pen-picture of how much Jalpaiguri district has contributed in this field and also an attempt has been made to unveil certain factors that have moulded Jalpaiguri to be a populous core of various research Journals, weekly magazines, write ups etc.

The rise of the district of Jalpaiguri as Sadar, socio-historical and geographical factors has contributed a lot. One of the most backward regions in the sense of educational progress was Uttarbanga or Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh. Most of Himalayan regions are surrounded by dense, forest, roads and the areas where the people unusually led their life though not suitable. Their everyday life including sense of dressing was ordinary. They were not conscious about the changing nature of the society where they lived. So in this situation it was quite impossible to modernize any district & headquarter of Rajshahi division. But this area got a profound shape as a result of the simultaneous inspiration of the Englishman. Although during that time there was a scarcity of economic resources but they were obviously liberal minded. People of some areas thought that, it is very necessary to have some changes in their static life because they realised that if they want to escape from poverty, it is more important to modify them from within.

The role of the newspaper is important behind the changes of intellectual, social, political, cultural and economic scenario of the mass people. Like other parts of India Jalpaiguri district under the state of West Bengal was also come very close to the publication of various newspaper, journal, weekly magazine, write-ups etc. mostly in Bengali as the *lingua- franca* of the inhabitants of Jalpaiguri was Bengali. As a result the common people were able to familiar with the evolution of their socio-cultural and political structure and awareness. Approximately 300 various newspapers and magazine were published in Jalpaiguri during 20th Century, among these some important papers played a crucial role in the rise of the consciousness of literary activities among the people of Jalpaiguri till the independence and post independent India. These are – '*Trisota*', '*Janamat*', '*Barendra*', '*Bhikhuk*', '*Bangla Samayok Patra*', '*Mukti Bani*', '*Nishan*', '*Desbandhu*', '*Himalaya*' and after independent following papers were published namely '*Nabagata*', '*Husiar*', '*Barta*', '*Awahban*', '*Uttarapath*', '*Ashok*', '*Shimantik*', '*Jalpaiguri*', '*Dabi*', '*Kanchanjangha*' etc. Most of the journals and newspaper were edited and published by highlighting the political, social and cultural scenario, and the aim was to spread the awareness among the mass people. As a result, the inhabitants of the districts come forward towards education, politics, and culture. They took the extraordinary initiative for the establishment of various educational institution, social organization and cultural organization. Not only the highly educated Hindu people were aware but also the marginalized groups were also been aware. Apart from politics editors and writers used to publish various articles on social issues like 'education', 'women education', 'secularism' etc. Before Independence, large numbers of school including many girl's schools was founded in this district without the help of British Government. Accordingly, after independence the people of the district had their hope towards Government and encouraged the ruling authority to do the best which was required for the benevolence of the society.

Let us now proceed with some important (major and minor) Press and publications of Jalpaiguri and their role in the contemporary socio-cultural and political movements.

When we are to make our study about the publications of Jalpaiguri, first of all it can be said that at the beginning of study, which starts from the year 1900, don't find any press publication from this district. But from the government records and administrative reports we get so many information about socio-cultural and political activities in this district. From the early decade of the twentieth century especially from 1905 (the year of the partition of Bengal) we get the references of the political agitation in the district. At that time there was only one publication in the district and that was '*Trisrota*' (a monthly newspaper). With the sincere co-operation of Sri Bhujangadhar Roy Choudhury, Sri Sashi Kumar Neogi renowned advocates of Jalpaiguri edited and published this news paper (*Trisrota*) from Jalpaiguri in the year 1900 but unfortunately it was for very short duration. Due to the sudden death of Sashi Kumar Neogi the publication of *Trisrota* was temporarily stopped. So, as there was no press publication or print media in the district. News of the political agitation in the district was not reflected in any of the print medias.

According to government records it is known that a good number of newspapers began to be published in the Jalpaiguri district from the 1920's. The publication of '*Trisrota*' restarted its publication again in the year 1925 as a Bengali weeklyⁱ. At that time its editor was Suresh Chandra Paul. This time the government Registration No. of this paper was REG NO.C 1380. Another Bengali weekly named '*Janamat*' was published from the district headquarters in the year 1924. Its editor was Jyotish Chandra Sanyal, M.A.LL.B, a reputed advocate and social worker of Jalpaiguri. Within a few years another Bengali weekly named '*Muktibani*' began its publication in 1928. Its editors were Khagendra Nath Dasgupta, a congress leader of the district. Mr. Bhabarajan Ganguli another social worker of the district was very much attached with its publication. A fortnightly named '*Deshbandhu*' was published from the district headquarter for a year only and its editor was Pritinidhan Royⁱⁱ. Jyotish Chandra Sanyal published '*Janamat*' along with this he edited and published English weekly named '*Barendra*' in the year 1925. This paper got at some credit for its contribution in the field of cultural activities.

After independence, a weekly named '*Barat*' began its publication in the year 1952. Its editor was Rabindra Nath Sikdar. Some Trade union organizations and Institutions also published some Journals and periodicals as a mouthpiece of their own. For example it may be mentioned that the Jalpaiguri 'Cha Karmachari Samiti' began publication of its weekly named '*Ahwan*ⁱⁱⁱ'. It was edited by Bhabarajan Ganguli. '*Nisan*' was another Bengali weekly published from Jalpaiguri which continued its publication for few years. Its editor was Kazi Abdul Khalek. A juvenile organization published a weekly named '*Danpitheder Samachar*'. It was published in the year 1958 with the editorship of Dr. Sarojit Bagchi. Another paper published from the district headquarter was '*Amader katha*' (weekly). We have references about some other papers like '*Uttarpath*' 1956, a monthly and '*Nirepaksha*', a weekly which was published from Jalpaiguri district headquarter. Other than district headquarters, some other papers were also published in course of times. It is found that from Alipurduar a few number of papers/ journals, were published from time to time and they were '*Duarbasi*', '*Uttarbangla*', '*Himalaya*' and '*Dabi*^{iv}' etc. Apart from these publications, some other journals were also published from the district of Jalpaiguri in the post Independence period but details are scanty.

As a result of publication it was found in the subsequent period that a core group of social and cultural and political activities emerged in Jalpaiguri. In this context the Arya Natya Samaj, a cultural-dramatic organization must be given some reference for its cultural activities. Not only this in 1911 two more dramatic organizations viz., Harendra Hall and Dramatic Club were established in Maynaguri in Jalpaiguri district. In 1924 another dramatic cum cultural organization named '*Bandhab Natya Samaj*' was established. The press published from Jalpaiguri was always closely linked with all these cultural organizations. So, it is found that the newspapers and the periodicals which had a close contact with some literate and cultured people of Jalpaiguri, with their sincere initiative and to some extent had achieved something to generate an urban cultural atmosphere in the district.

The present discussion intends to talk about the papers published from the district of Jalpaiguri and to trace their role in the freedom struggle of our country. When we study the different aspects of the publication from Jalpaiguri we find that Jalpaiguri is the only district in North Bengal, which had a strong

national political background. In connection to the freedom movement, we see that the publication have focused the revolutionary activities of the area. Jalpaiguri had a glorious revolutionary character and it has already been reflected on the regional vernacular press published from Jalpaiguri. In our present study we will mention some important publication of the district, some important political issues and the role of the press.

According to Brajendra Nath Bandhopadhaya, the first news paper published from Jalpaigury was '*Vikshuk*'.^v But recently some other view are found regarding the publication of '*Vikshuk*', Muntasir Mamun, a renowned scholar of Bangladesh has also differed from this view and he has pointed out that '*Vikshuk*' was published from Rangpur under the editor ship of Sarada Kanta Maitra^{vi}.

Considering the above statement with regard to the publications from Jalpaiguri, It can definitely be said that the early newspaper from Jalpaiguri was '*Trisrota*'. It was a monthly publication and its editor was Sashi Kumar Neogi and Bhujangadhar Ray Choudhary the first issue of '*Trisrota*' was published in the year 1307 B.S. But for some time due to some unavoidable circumstances, mainly for its patriotic/ nationalist character the publication was temporarily stopped. Moreover the attitude of the British government did not allow this publication. As a result its publication remained stopped. Other than '*Trisrota*' there is no reference of any other paper published from Jalpaiguri in the early phase. But it is said that Zamindar Khan Bhadur Rahim Box of Jalpaiguri took the initiative to published one paper named as '*Sushakarmihir*' from Dacca (Modern Bangladesh)

The publications from jalpaiguri played an important role in mobilizing the public opinion in favour of the national movement. In this connection the publication like '*Janamat*', '*Trisrota*', '*Muktibani*' and '*Barendra*' must be mentioned, in the initial stage, both '*Janamat*' and '*Trisrota*' started its publication as monthly Journal. But later due to their popularity both the papers were published from Jalpaiguri as weekly Journal. More especially it can be said that '*Janamat*' become a weekly paper from 14th January 1924^{vii}. In the next year i.e. 1925 '*Trisrota*' became weekly, regarding the publication of '*Janamat*', Dr Charuchandra Sanyal mentioned that, for the cause of 'Swarajya Party' '*Janamat*' was published by Mr. Jotish Chandra Sanyal in the year 1924 (January) and '*Barendra*' an English paper in 1925^{viii}. From this stand it is quite evident that these two papers were originated from national felling and focused primarily on the idea of nationalism. The editor of both the papers '*Janamat*' and '*Barendra*' Mr. Jotish Chandra Sanyal had a strong academic background. He was M.A.B.L and a dedicated political worker. Not only this, he was the secretary of the Indian National Congress, Jalpaiguri district branch, quite naturally, his political ideology and activities were reflected on the both the papers. As the British government was not pleased with him, '*Barendra*' could not survive for long. But in spite of all this oppositions Jotish Ch, Sanyal with his best effort continued his fight against the British government through '*Janamat*'.

Another paper published from Jalpaiguri was '*Forward*' and it was also a committed supporter of the national movement. From the very beginning of its publication, it got a national background, when Desbandhu C.R Das visited Jalpaiguri in the month of May, 1924; Mr. Jotish Ch. Sanyal invited him to have dinner at his residence. Deshbandhu C.R Das had an intention to start a branch of his 'Swaraj party' in the district to propagate the political activities. At the same time Mr. Jotish Ch. Sanyal as political worker was equally interested with the purpose. Subsequently, Desbandhu C.R Das made a detailed discussion with Mr. Jotish Ch. Sanyal regarding the publication of '*Forward*', as the organ of the Swaraj Party considering all this view and getting inspired by Desbandhu C.R Das, Mr. Sanyal finally decided to publish a paper as mouthpiece of his political mission^{ix}.

During this period another paper published from Jalpaiguri was '*Muktibani*'. It started its publication from 1928, and its editor was Khagendra Nath Dasgupta. The editor of '*Muktibani*' was a young energetic an active worker of Jalpaiguri Dist Congress. Regarding the publication of '*Muktibani*', Mr. Dasgupta wrote that, this paper is published mainly to give inspiration to the people about Indian nationalism during the period of our struggle for freedom^x. Regarding the role of '*Muktibani*', it can be mentioned that the editor of this paper always gave inspiration of the Indian National Movement, quite

naturally it (*Muktibani*) was not in the good book of the British government, As a result we see that the British Government warned and banned its publication for the time being and its editor Mr. Khagendra Nath Dasgupta was imprisoned for one year^{xi}.

Another paper with swadesh spirit was published by Rabindra Mohan Ray from Jalpaiguri in the year 1929^{xii}. Its duration was very short. One more contemporary paper published from Jalpaiguri was '*Nishan*'. This publication had a different political character. While the nature of district politics got a turned and a branch of the '*Muslim League*' has been started. By this time this publication got same interest with the activities of the Muslim League. As a result, in the subsequent period it became the organ of the district Muslim League. The editor of this paper was Md. Abdul Khalek. This paper survived for a long time.

The last important paper published from the district of Jalpaiguri during the pre-independent period was '*Deshbandhu*'. It was a bi-monthly Journal. Its editor was lawyer Pritinidhan Ray. He also had a committed political background. Like Jotish Ch. Sanyal, the editor of '*Janamat*' Pritinidhan Ray was also the secretary of the Jalpaiguri Dist. Congress committee. It is understood from different issue of '*Deshbandhu*' that the purpose of the publication was to make aware the common people about the national movement and the activities of the Indian National Congress^{xiii}.

However, the mentioned publications of the district which have initiated from the district headquarter brought a drastic change in the mentality of the people. Apart from these, we have the reference of some other papers, which were published, from other places within the jurisdiction of the Jalpaiguri district during this period it is found that a few other papers were also published from Alipurduar, a sub-divisional town of Jalpaiguri. Among them the most important paper was '*Himalaya*' edited by Bijoy Gopal Ghosh in the year 1926. In addition to this Bijay Babu published one English paper named as '*Bengali Times*'. It can further be mentioned that in the year 1928 another paper '*Duarbasi*' was published from Alipurduar under the editorship of Bijay Gopal Ghosh^{xiv}. Due to the lack of evidences, nothing can be said in detail about other papers published from Alipurduar. Never the less, not only dist headquarter infused the national feeling among common men but even peripheral area also been contributed al lot the mass through literary activities.

In 1949 we have found a newspaper in the name of '*Hushier*' which was published by the Jotedars organization of Jalpaiguri. During this time period we have found a very popular newspaper '*Barata*' which was published by Sri Rabindra Nath Sikhdar In 1951 another paper was published from Jalpaiguri with the name of '*Ahwaban*' edited by Sri Bhabaranjan Ganguli. Initially it was a weekly magazine but later it was became fortnightly news paper. Through this news paper problem of the Tea industry Tea Labourers and many other Industrial problem of Jalpaiguri had been published but unfortunately this newspaper could not be able to survive for long time.

In 1956 a monthly newspaper '*Uttarpath*' was published by Dr. Rebat Mohan Lahiri. The aim of this news paper was to highlight the problems and demand of Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe, this paper was also stopped within one year. On the other hand in that contemporary period of 'Jalpaiguri' a newspaper was so popular the name of '*Ashoka*', which was published in 1957^{xv}. It was a Hindi newspaper. In the same year another newspaper had been published named '*Chitra*'. From the first decade of the 2nd half of 20th century the newspapers and magazines that have been published could not survive for a long time are, '*Ikhkhan*', '*Samudrik Budbud*', '*Agra*', '*Pagla Ghora*', '*Krushed*', '*Juddha Ankur*', '*Hing-Ting--Chhot*', '*Bikatosa*', '*Deshkal*', '*Uddhid*', '*Uttardesh*', '*Uttar Sarani*', '*Saurashikha*', '*Sahajog*', '*Uttardarpan*'.

Once upon a time Jalpaiguri was a most popular and glorified place through the activities of contemporary newspaper later the post gloomy was fascinated through the time. Apart from Jalpaiguri some newspaper also published from occasionally such as '*Pabak*', '*Haturi*', '*Uttar Saikot*', '*Sambhodhi*' '*Pohati*', '*Altaraf*', '*Amanisambhab*', '*Patila Surya*'. On the other hand the some local town kept the

motion of the contribution of the newspaper and some magazines, namely 'Shalbani', 'Sabdo', 'Sambad Bichitra', 'Budhadeb', 'Saudha', 'Lal Nakshtra', In 1968 'Simantik' magazine was published from Jalpaiguri edited by Debashis Ghosh, Next year on 1st July 1969 a magazine was published in the name of 'Jalpaiguri' which was edited by Kalyan Sikder. This magazine was highly influence by the Marxist theory and for that reason it may have accepted by the majority of common people of the villages. It is very interesting that the first daily newspaper had been published in Jalpaiguri by Birendra Prasad Basu. In the name of 'Sandhyabarta', but unfortunately within a year the newspaper publication had stopped^{xvi}.

The 20th century became very prosperous in the field of literature and mass media for the jalpaiguri. These activities played very positive role in moulding the nationalist feeling among the people and become the part of freedom struggle. The contribution of literature is to shape the idea and to make the people conscious about the socio-cultural and political activities of the nation in general and region in particular. The present paper is an attempt to notice the literary activities of the jalpaiguri and their encouraging part in nation building as well as nominating the area in national canvas. The above informative article may not be sufficient to assess the role of literary activities of the said region and its needs further research to sketch out the actual role in nation making.

Notes and References

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