

Rajanikanta Pramanik and Pre-Independence Bengal Provincial Politics (1942-1947)- A critical Analysis

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1306000509>

Received: 04 July 2026; Accepted: 10 July 2026; Published: 21 July 2026

ABSTRACT

India achieved independence at midnight on Friday, 15th August 1947. On that day, British colonial rule transferred power into the hands of the Indian people. In April 1930, the Salt Satyagraha movement was taken place by Rajanikanta Pramanik (01.02.1898 - 24.11.1968) on Kalai Telipukur Maidan (ground). To preserve that historic memory, and in honor of this village's illustrious maidan direct disciple of Sri Sri Ma Sarada, an unmarried, resolute, action-oriented and heroic worker, ascetic in temperament, founder of Tamluk Ramakrishna Math Mission and Sevashram, dedicated to service and education, builder of numerous institutions, often called the "Little Vidyasagar of Medinipur" we gather in reverence. Rajanikanta Pramanik (1898 - 1968) was a renowned freedom fighter who spent much of his life in prison. A devotee of non-violence inspired by Gandhian ideals, a distinguished lawyer, a promoter of Hindu-Muslim harmony, a practitioner of ashram life and high political ethics, one of the chief organizers and directors of the National Congress in Medinipur, and one of the architects and commanders of the Tamralipta National Government. An able administrator, he was elected a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1946 (in pre-independent India). In independent India, he served as a Parliamentary Secretary in West Bengal (1946–1967, undefeated). In 1952, he became Deputy Minister for Flood-Relief and Food Supply in the cabinet of Bidhan Chandra Roy. He was elected President of the *Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan* and was a distinguished social worker, embodying countless milestones of devoted service. Yet a truly inquisitive and comprehensive history of this personality has not been written.

Keywords: Gandhian ideals, Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar, Populistic ideas, Krishak Sabha, Mobilization

INTRODUCTION

The rise of communism in the Tamluk sub-division following the 1942 Quit India Movement represents a pivotal shift in Bengal's political landscape. While Tamluk was famously the site of the *Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar* (National Government), the eventual fatigue of Gandhian mass mobilization and the devastating Bengal Famine of 1943 created a vacuum for more radical ideologies. The Communist Party of India (CPI) gained traction by pivoting from underground resistance to grassroots social advocacy, specifically addressing the systemic inequality of the zamindari system and food scarcity. By organizing the peasantry through the *Kisan Sabha*, the communists transformed the region's nationalist fervor into a structured class struggle. This period laid the essential groundwork for the *Tebhaga* Movement and established Tamluk as a resilient stronghold for the Left in post-independence West Bengal.

Populism, Class Ideology and Communist Politics in Tamluk Sub-division:

In the meantime the local politics of Tamluk sub-division became problematic on the question of rights of peasants and share-coppers. The peasants' questions of the sub-division became prominent since the days of Non-Cooperation Movement and No Tax Movement. Their condition was not very much sound, which again greatly deteriorated owing to cyclone of 16th October, 1942 and subsequent famine. In the wake of such a situation populist ideas appeared in the local politics of the sub-division. Both the congress and newly formed

communist were the protagonists of this type of populism. They tried to champion the cause of the peasants. But the class ideology of the Congress and the Communists were of course different. The Congress activists it is generally held, were to great extent had a sympathetic leanings towards the landlords or *Joddars* or towards the haves of the society while the Communists generally had a sympathetic leanings towards interests of the peasants or towards 'they have not's' of the society.

During the late thirties of the twentieth century the Communist Politics was taking a concrete shape in the district of Midnapur. At this time some revolutionists who were arrested on different grounds in jails, camps and in Andaman Cellular Jail became interested in the Socialist and Marxist ideas as well as they were imbued with the ideas of Russian Revolution. They formed Communist Consolidation inside the jail. One such Communist Consolidation was formed on 26th April, 1935 at Andaman Cellular Jail¹. During 1937-38 most of the revolutionists of Bengal were released from Andaman Cellular Jail. This revolutionist took initiative in organizing Communist Party at different parts of Bengal. Communist Party was also formed in the district of Midnapur. In accordance with the direction of the then Provincial Committee of Communist Party a District Organizing Committee of Communist Party was formed on 25th October, 1938 at Kharagpur town. It was the first organization of Communist Party at the district of Midnapur and comrade Saroj Roy was elected secretary of the organization. Afterwards on 9th June, 1940 a district committee of party members of Communist Party was formed at Kharagpur at the residence of a benign member of the party².

At that time some party cells were formed at some villages. Of course mass movements were organized initially before the formation of Communist Party at Midnapur district under the leadership of comrades like Saroj Roy and others. Now it should be pointed out that Communist Party was declared illegal at that time. However, as per decision of the illegal Provincial Communist Party the members of the party began to work within the forum of Congress. For example Mohini Mondal was to work at Ghatal Congress, Saroj Roy was to work at Khragpur, Deben Das was to work at Khragpur Thana congress and Bhupal Panda was to work at Nandigram Thana congress. At the same time arrangements were made to organize *Krishak Sabha* at different places³.

It was at this time Bhupal Panda (1907-1992) organized the peasants against exploitation *Zamindars* and *Joddars*. A number of meetings were organized at Takapuragram and Krishnagar and north-eastern portion of Nandigram. Comrade Bhupal Panda and Dr. Gobinda Bhowmik and some others leaders delivered speeches against *Baje Abwabs*. They also emphasized that the peasants should give the zamindars not more than half of the products. This sort of declaration encouraged the peasants to continue their movements. On the other hand the British Government in support of the *Zamindars* and *Joddars* began to stop the peasants' movements with the help of British police. Subsequently it was on December, 1945, 250 peasants' leaders including Bhupal Panda, Kanai Bhowmik, and Ramesh Samanta were arrested at Tamluk and they were transferred to Central Jail in Medinipur. Meanwhile, the date of election of Provincial Assembly had been declared and the date was fixed on January, 1946.

The Elections of 1946 and Its Local Dimensions:

On January, 1946 the Tamluk constituency comprised entirely of Tamluk sub-division i.e. the total *Thana* areas of Tamluk, Mahisadal, Sutahata, Nandigram, Moyna and Panskura. The voters were limited in number. Only the regular tax payers or those having matriculation certificates were entitled to cast votes. The parties who contested the election were mainly two. The first one was the Congress Party which professed the idea of welfare state while the second one was the Communist Party which upheld an ideology of radicalism i.e. total uprooting of all sorts of exploitation. However, Rajanikanta Pramanik was the unanimous candidate of Congress for Tamluk constituency. His name was proposed by Ramesh Chandar Kar and seconded by Radhakrishna Bari who passed matriculation examination in 1941 and hence he was a voter. On the other hand Bhupal Chandra Panda was unanimous candidate of the Communist party for the Tamluk constituency. On the day of scrutinisation Rajanikanta Pramanik along with Radhakrishna Bari and Ramesh Chandra Kar visited the sub-divisional office. At that time only two nomination papers one by Rajanikanta Pramanik and the other by Bhupal Chandra Panda were found correct. But the controversy arose when both of them claimed the symbol of farmer with a plough on the shoulder. The S.D.O. urged them to settle the matter amicably as to who

would take the symbol. Bhupal Chandra Panda who was an ex-Congress activists and he requested his senior ex-co-activists, Rajanikanta Pramanik to decide the matter. Rajanikanta Pramanik told Bhupal Chandra Panda that as the latter was still a young man and he could chose another symbol and he retained that symbol for himself and Bhupal Chandra Panda acceded to the decision. The Communist Party was then undivided and they selected the sickle and the ears of paddy as their symbol which is still used by C.P.I. Though the election was fiercely contested, Rajanikanta Pramanik won the election by a huge margin⁴. Subsequent to the election Rajanikanta Pramanik played an important role in the proceedings of the Assembly. The role of Mr. Rajanikanta Pramanik will be found in the proceedings of the Assembly given below. The assembly of course met on different dates noted against the proceedings.

- (i) ***The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Calcutta, On Tuesday, The 13th August, 1946, at 3-30p.m. Mr. Speakers, (Mr. Nurul Amin), 7Ministers, 221 Members. Demand For Grants: 7-Land Revenue***

Mr. Rajanikanta Pramanik:

“Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the demand of Rs. 76,58,000 for expenditure under the head- “7-Land Revenue” be reduced by Rs. 100. I move this cut motion with the view to raise a discussion about the necessity for remission of rents and loans to the cyclone or flood-affected people of Midnapur, Chhittagong and other districts of Bengal in suitable classes of cases to be settled in a committee of the collector and the members of the legislature of the district concerned.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the terrible cyclone of October, 1942, wrought indescribable havoc in Midnapur, from the effects of which the district has not yet recovered. The subsequent years also, Sir, have all been years of infinite distress and miseries. The land has suffered from floods and draught in different places, and from chronic famine in all places. The ill-fed and unfed human skeletons have looked in vain to the Government for sufficient relief. The Government, as usual, goes mercily in their narrow groove, while the people of the cyclone and flood-affected areas of Midnapur, Chittagong and other places die by thousands. Sir, it is the clear duty of the Government to arrange adequate relief works on a comprehensive scale in Midnapur and other places. In Midnapur, the Government has been forced to carry on some relief work operations which are quite inadequate to meet the situation. But the Government is following a policy which negatives the contemplated benefit under the relief scheme. The Government is realizing the different loans granted to the people with utmost severity. The loans, Sir, were taken by the people, when they were starving and were on the verge of death. That period of serious economic crisis is not yet over, on the other hand, it has deepened in some respects. Therefore, by following a policy of realizing the different loans from the people at this time, the Government is only driving the people to ultimate ruin and despair. This relentless realization of Government loans in the afflicted areas must be stopped if people are to be saved from destruction. Sir, I do not say that loan realization should be stopped in suitable cases,- in cases, where any realization of loan will mean intensified distress and ruin, - and where, therefore, loans should be remitted. I have no objection, Sir, loans being realized in suitable classes of cases. Similar to loans, rents must be remitted in acute cases of distress and should be realized only in suitable classes of cases. This policy of remission and realization of loans and rents only in suitable classes of cases should be strictly followed by the Government, and I suggest that in the afflicted districts, a committee should be formed of thee collector and the members of the legislature of the district concerned. This committee will decide suitable classes of cases where loans and rents may be remitted. Only by following this judicious policy of remission in fit cases, can the Government help the people. The Government, however, with their old bureaucratic outlook depend on their unsympathetic officers in the matter of loans and rents. They never care to look to the rear needs of the people. That is why they deserve condemnation. Sir, with these words I commend my motion for the acceptance of the House.”

- (ii) ***The Assembly met again in the Assembly House, Calcutta, The 14th August, 1946, at 3-30p.m Mr. Speakers, (Mr. Nurul Amin), 57-Miscellaneous: Demands for Grants***

Mr. Rajanikanta Pramanik:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the cut motion of the honourable member Mr. Iswar Chandra Mal. The Midnapur District Board under the evils of official control amounting to tyranny has proved to be most inefficient and

corrupt local body. Sir, about 14 years ago, the Midnapur District Board was formed of non-representative elements and the District Board has not been allowed to be reconstituted, according to law, by popular elements. In 1939 there were elections to the Local Boards which however were formed as late as 1940. In 1941 District Board members were elected by the members of the Local Boards, but the Government mischievously abstained from publishing the names of the members in the Calcutta Gazette and thus prevented the formation of the District Board of Midnapur. Sir, the Midnapur District Board as previously captured and run by the Congress had been the eye-sore of the Government of Bengal, because the Midnapur District Board, with its high ideals of public service, largely infused by late Deshapran Birendranath Sasmal, has worked incessantly for the welfare of the people, which is the very opposite to the ideal of the Government of this unhappy land. The Government has therefore looked enviously upon the Midnapur District Board as long as it has been worked by the Congress people and has attempted to thwart its activities in many ways. It is for this reason, Sir, that popular representatives of the District Board elected in 1941 have not been allowed to form the District Board up till now and popular Government henchmen have been placed in charge of the District Board of Midnapur, so that they may fall in line with the Government in their policy of suppression, tyranny and maladministration. The inevitable result of this policy of the Government has been that the District Board has failed to serve the interests of the people. The District Board of Midnapur, Sir, is conspicuous by its inefficiency and rottenness. The present form of the District Board of Midnapur is not of any use in any way whatsoever, and should at once be thrown to the scrap-heap. Sir, the present groups of people in charge of the District Board affairs do not feel any incentive for doing anything for the people and are naturally given to shameful indolence. Throughout the District, are scattered innumerable instances of the incompetence and inefficiency of these worthless people? The roads have not been repaired for long years, and therefore, are in numerous places more a nuisance than a help to the people. At many places, the level of the roads has gone below that of paddy fields and in this rainy season, one wonders, if ever there was any road in those places. The bridges have not been attended to for a long time, and so, one has to wallow through mud and water instead of crossing over the bridges which are in tattered condition. Even the motor driven metalled roads are now in such a bad state that motor journey is not only a long- drawn business, but also dangers. People have been paying road cess and they have a right to know what comes of their hard-earned money. It appears that the only use to which their money is put is in respect of the Midnapur District Board Office, and that also in a very inefficient and rotten manner, and the money is mainly vanishing in doubtful channels through the agency of a group of persons who never had the support of the people behind them, and who depend for their existence in the District Board on their loyalty to the tyrannical Government and on their disloyalty and disservice to the people. Sir, the District Board of Midnapur should be allowed to be formed of the peoples' representatives, and by allowing persons who have forfeited the confidence of the people of Midnapur to carry on the District Board of Midnapur. The Government has also lost our confidence. With these words, Sir, I support the motion of Mr. Iswar Chandra Mal.

(iii) *The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Calcutta, The 25th September, 1946, at 2p.m Hon'ble Mr. Nurul Amin in Chair, 8 Hon'ble Ministers and 198 members 63- Extraordinary charges in India*

Mr. Rajanikanta Pramanik:

Sir, I beg to move that the demand of Rs. 9,75,77000 for expenditure under the head "63- Extraordinary charges in India" be reduced by Rs. 100/-. The reason for moving the motion is to raise a discussion about the inefficiency, bribery, nepotism, corruption and failure of the Civil Supply Department and the misery caused by it to the people of Bengal and the disability of and need for its abolition.

Sir, the Civil Supplies Department has done all harm and not good to the people. Its records are one of notorious instances of corruption, bribery, dishonesty and all sorts of conceivable vices. Its inefficiency is too glaring to need mention. It has failed to do one single act of service to the people and it has failed to serve the people in any manner whatsoever. On the contrary it has injured the interests of the public in all possible ways. Sir, its inefficiency has undermined the efficiency, if any, of other departments. It has set too bad an example to the people. Sir, its corrupt nature is a menace to public morality. The story of scandals associated with the working of this department is too well known to need mention. Sir, no popular Government will ever suffer the

existence of a department like this. The first and the foremost duty of this Government, if they ever cared for public interest, would have been to abolish this Department. But, broad public interests never weigh with the type of Government we suffer from. That is why the Government encourages this department and never thinks of even reforming it, far from abolishing it, which is the popular demand. Sir this department is a dread to the people. They feel acutely the existence of this department because it causes them inconvenience in diverse ways. If any department is run with the motto of disservice to the people, it is this department. Sir, the sooner it is abolished, the better. Its abolition will bring a reduction of the total expenditure by six cores of rupees. The people to that extent will be exempted from the taxation. This is the universal demand of the province. Even members belonging to the Ministerial party have censured the department in strong terms. This is sufficient proof of the real character of the department which should be abolished at once to satisfy a popular demand.

Sir, with these words I commended my move for the acceptance of the House. However, from 1946 the *Tebhaga* Movement or the movement for one third products of the land assumed a massive character. But the Congress leader was sympathizing with the landlords began to distance themselves from this movement, whereas the Communist led it to success⁵.

From 16th August, 1946 Calcutta saw a Communal Riot in the name of 'Direct Action'. The riot was waged on an unprecedented scale, the like of which the city had never seen. At that time Bengal was under Muslim League ministry. The Government had declared a public holiday. On that day the Muslim came in procession with the slogan "*We will win Pakistan by force*" (*Larke Lenge Pakistan*). Addressing the assembly Chief Minister Suhrawardy assured immunity for them from police or military. On their way back the processionists started killing Hindus, whomsoever they could catch hold upon, looting and setting fire Hindu properties, and a veritable hell was let loose on the streets of Calcutta. Killing, maiming, looting, arson, rape and molestation of women went on in an unprecedented scale. Sm. Indumati Bhattacharya, the great mother Shyamadas Bhattacharya, ex-minister of West Bengal was an eye-witness the events of 16th August, 1946. In her autobiography she wrote these words 16th August, 1946 was the Direct Action Day called by the Muslim League for waging an all out struggle for their cause. I was then staying Shyam's residence in Mohan Bagan Lane. Nobody had any idea of what would happen this day of direct action; we did not know who the fight was against and what form this fight would take. But most people were aware that some kind of violent action would take place in Calcutta. My husband had been in Jorapukur and he came to Kolkata to witness the direct action. On the morning of 16th August my husband went out for a walk and after returning from Hati Bagan said, "I saw at the junction of Hati Bagan and Grey Street a group of Muslims gathered on the road chanting, "*Allah Ho Akbar*". They were also swinging large sticks. There were a lot of people standing on footpaths on both sides as spectators. They were all Hindus and witnessed this in silence and without agitation. All shops and businesses were closed, trams and buses were not plying and the police were not present anywhere. As the day progressed, I witnessed one procession of Muslims after another heading south along Circular Road. From the first floor of our Mohanbagan residence we could easily see the Circular Road ahead of us. At about 11am while my husband was standing on the veranda of the ground floor along with 2or 3 other people watching the processions in Circular Road, they suddenly saw three or four people come running from Circular Road along Mohan Bagan Lane. Each of them had a dagger in his hand. My husband and the others thought those men running with daggers in their hands towards them certainly did not want to kill them. They remained standing in their place as before, and never thought of taking shelter inside the house. Those holding daggers rushed inside the *Mohan Bagan basti* (Slum); a little later they dragged out three or four Muslims from the *basti* and dragged them towards Circular Road. I heard that they did not want to join the procession of the (Muslim) League, so they were forcibly dragged out. In front of our house most of the slum residents were Hindus, there were very few Muslims. Hindu and Muslim residents were living together in harmony. On that day even after witnessing the murders league procession the vast majority of the people felt that the Direct Action programme of the Muslim League was a matter for the Muslims and Hindus had nothing to do with it. From the afternoon news started coming in about murders and injuries. Opposites the junction of Mohan Bagan Lane and Circular Road, there was a Mosque and in front of that building a dead body could be seen. Amidst the loud shouts including the slogans, Allah-ho-Akbar, a fearful situation engulfed the place.

Everybody was left in no doubt that terrible violent actions were taking place. As evening descended people living in the slum in front of our house came and took shelter in the houses in front of the slum. The rented flat

we were living in was in a three storied house. In that building all stairs, verandas and the rooftop were all filled with slum dwellers seeking shelter. The situation in houses all around us was the same. Amongst the fugitives there were many Muslims. There was no preparation to defend ourselves in the event we were attacked. In some houses there were one or two bamboo sticks or iron rods; in some a few broken bricks. Everyone stayed awake throughout the night. Late in the night we could hear shouts of *Bandemataram* coming from the direction of Cornwallis Street. Fugitives from the slums returned to their homes in the morning. The Muslims returned to their slums. A little later Shyam went out to get some milk for his two small daughters. After a lot of effort he was able to obtain some milk from a sweet shop. I heard from Shyam that many shops were looted in Cornwallis Street, the roads were littered with discarded objects and many dead bodies were lying in the street near Hati Bagan Bazar. There were no police around. After that the whole of Calcutta was engulfed in horrible murderous activities for many days. After being attacked suddenly in the initial stage the Hindus organized them and took revenge by engaging in barbarism in equal measures. We heard of hellish activities that took place at that time. After ten days we returned to Jorapukur while Shyam stayed back in Calcutta. There was communal tension in villages in Medinipur as well. Hindus were agitated with hatred against the Muslims community. Congress workers toured villages, held meetings and persuaded people not to indulge in any communal violence. However, during the time of Direct Action Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister himself sat down in the Control Room at Lal Bazar police headquarters, and did not allow the officers to control the riot. Hindus suffered greatly on 16th and 17th August. Then they started organizing themselves and started to hit back.

In such a situation Chief Minister, Suhrawardy requested the Governor to call in the military. Governor Burrows reported to Wavell that he showed “*an exasperating preoccupation with the sufferings by members of his own community*”⁶. Burrows described the riot as “program between two rival armies of the Calcutta underworld” and he had to bring in eight battalions of military and a full battalion of armoured car to bring the riot under control. In course of the five days from 16th August to 20th August, more than 5000 people had lost their lives, about 15,000 injured; some of them very seriously and about a lakh of people became homeless⁷. Clandestine use of arms, and stray cases of stabbing, however, went on in lanes and bye-lanes of Calcutta and it took months for the city to return to its normal way of life.

Seven week after the Great Calcutta Killings communal violence erupted in the two south-eastern districts of Bengal-Noakhali and Tippera⁸. The Muslim hooligans started large-scale looting, destruction of properties, arson, raids on Hindu houses, rapes and molestations of women and forcible conversion of the Hindus. The Government of Suhrawardy preferred to remain a silent spectator. In sharp contrast with Calcutta, there were much less cases of murder or injuries, though properties worth cores of rupees were looted or destroyed.

At last to restore confidence in the minds of suffering Hindu inhabitants Gandhiji came to Noakhali. It was at this time when the sub-division of Tamruk figured again in the nationalist history of the country. Like different parts of the country many volunteers from Tamruk and Midnapur came to Gandhi to join the mission of Gandhi at Naokhali. Among the volunteers mention may be made of Nirajan Maity, Krishnapada Bera, Bankimchandra Maity and Radhakrishna Bari of Tamruk sub-division. A group of volunteers from Sutahata also, including, Balaichandra Kar, Abinash Samanta, Laxmikanta Das, Pabir Pal and Dhiren Hazra, went to Tippera under leadership of Kumarchandra Jana and started living in camps set up by Abhoy Ashram of Comilla in the disturbed areas. From 20th November, 1946, Gandhiji started on his historic march from village to village in Naokhali and tried to restore confidence in the minds of the Hindus and to bring in a change of heart amongst the Muslims. Now it should be pointed out that so far as the sub-division of Tamruk is concerned no effects of the violence of Communal Riots was found at any of its parts. At least there is found no reference of any such occasion in contemporary records relating to Tamruk sub-division.

Transfer of Power-Achieving Freedom - ‘Nation’ in Local Perspective:

Meanwhile, in the post-war election in Great Britain a new Government had been formed with Mr. Clement Attlee as Prime Minister. The new Government made an earnest effort to end the political deadlock in India. On 19th February, 1946 the British Prime Minister announced that three members of his Cabinet would visit India “to promote, in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion, the early realization of full self-government in

India⁹.” On 15th March again he said in British Parliament that “his colleagues were going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavours to help her to attain freedom as speedily and as fully as possible.

Now the national political scene came to be dominated by the Cabinet Mission proposals¹⁰. The Cabinet Mission-consisting of the Secretary of State for India Sir Pethick Lawrence, the President of the Board of Trade Sir Stafford Cripps and First Lord Admiralty A.V. Alexander-was sent by the British Cabinet to India in March, 1946 to discuss the framing of a constitution for India. It published its constitutional plan on 16th May, 1946. Firstly, an Interim Government at the Centre comprising major political parties was recommended. Secondly, a three-tier constitution was suggested. Provinces were to be grouped into Hindu majority and Muslim majority provinces which would stand at the base and form the primary tier of the federation, at the top of which would be the All-India Union. Thirdly, an elected Constituent Assembly would determine the actual distribution of powers between the three tiers. The Mission arrived in India on 24th March, 1946 and for three months, from March to June; they held discussions with Indian leaders, amongst themselves and with the British Government. They held series of conferences with the Muslim League and the Congress but could not come to an agreed solution. Then the Mission issued a statement on 16th May, 1946, giving a broad outline of their idea about the future government of India. But the Congress and the League failed to come to a unanimous decision about the future Government of India.

But both the Congress and the Muslim League accepted the recommendation of the Cabinet Mission to set up a constituent assembly. Meanwhile, the action of the Muslim League in the form of direct action mentioned above caused great anomalies in the national politics. In the midst of the impasse the process for electing members of the constituent assembly started. The members of the Provincial Legislatures were empowered to elect members of the Constituent Assembly. The National Congress had tried to elect people of standing in different field of activities, irrespective of their political leaning, so as to frame the future constitution of India in truly democratic and idealistic lines. Two well known Congress leaders of Midnapur district Satish Chandra Samanta of Tamluk and Basantakumar Das of Contai were elected to Constituent Assembly. But members of the Muslim League did not join the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly met on 9th December, 1946 without the League members, and Rajendra Prasad was elected president and Harendranath Mukherjee as its Vice-president. On 20th February, 1947, Prime Minister Mr. Attlee announced a momentous declaration in British Parliament. He said: “...*His Majesty’s Government wishes to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take necessary steps to affect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948.*” Mr. Attlee also announced that Viscount Mountbatten to succeed Lord Wavell as Viceroy of India and he would join in March, 1947 and “*will be entrusted with the task of transferring to Indian hands the responsibility for the Government of British India in a manner that will best ensure the future happiness and prosperity of India*”¹¹.”

The momentous decision of the British Government, fixing a definite time limit for them to leave India, was received with great satisfaction all over India except in the ranks of Muslim League. They were aggrieved that their demand for Pakistan had not been conceded and once again they started their ‘Direct Action’ programme. Riots broke out at many parts of the country. Everywhere it seemed that the country was as if a state of war between the two communities, violence even spread to Delhi and Bombay.

In the meantime Lord Mountbatten assumed the office of Viceroy and Governor-General of India on 24th March, 1947. He immediately started meeting people, representative of different political parties, the princes and other eminent personalities. In course of his talks with party leaders he was convinced that there was absolutely no prospect of an agreed solution on the basis of Cabinet Mission Plan and there was no escape but to accept partition of India on communal basis. On 3rd June he announced in a broadcast his famous declaration laying down “*the method by which the power will be transferred from British to Indian hands*”, considering the situation prevailing at that time, it seemed, that Mountbatten Plan or declaration was perhaps the best practical solution of Indian problem. On 4th June Mountbatten said in a press conference that transfer of power would be affected much earlier than June, 1948, as previously declared, and probably by 15th of August next. The Working Committee of the Congress approved the Plan on 3rd June which was ratified by All India Congress Committee on 15th June next. All India Muslim League also approved the plan on 10th June. Thus the way for division of the country was paved on communal basis. On 4th July, 1947 the British Parliament passed the

Indian Independence Bill without any dissent on 15th August 1947 was finally fixed for transfer of power to Indian hands. With the passing of Indian Independence Bill the birth of two separate dominions India and Pakistan was heralded. They formed part of the British Commonwealth and the future was left to be decided by the Constituent Assemblies of both the dominions.

After independence according to partition scheme actualized by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the Chairman of Boundary Commission, West Bengal became a separate province under Indian union and a 'Shadow Cabinet', set up under Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghose, took over its administration. One of the foremost task before the Cabinet was to release the political prisoners, still serving their term in different jails. Accordingly four long term prisoners of Tamluk, still then in jail-Sri Ajoy Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, Susil Kumar Dhara, Gopi Nandan Goswami, and Naraendranath Jana were released from Midnapur Central Jail on 20th July, 1947¹². Sri Kalipada Mukherjee, Home Minister in Dr. Ghose's Cabinet, himself came to Midnapur with the release order and congratulated the released prisoners at the jail gate. The people of the entire Midnapur town came over on the streets to greet the released prisoners with garlands, bouquets, sandal paste, and with shouting slogans and blowing of conches relayed from house to house. A big procession paraded the streets with the released prisoners. They were detained in the town on that day. Next day they came down from train at Panskura station in the early morning. At the station compound and at different places all over the road to Tamluk, grand receptions were arranged for them. At Tamluk town too, the whole town came out on the streets to welcome the released prisoners. A big procession paraded the streets and a meeting was held in the afternoon. The released prisoners were given hero's welcome. Next day the same sort of crowds, same sorts of arches and gates and garlands and sandal pastes, blowing of conches and shouting slogans greeted them. Susil Kumar Dhara in his biographical study *Prabaha*, Vol-I, pointed out that they were overwhelmed with the ovation and reception they had received everywhere, which they would never forget in their life¹³. It was also mentioned in Vol.-III of *Prabah* that the people of Tamluk received the released leaders under the leadership of Rajanida (Rajanikanta Pramanik) who wrote an addressing letter (*Abhinandan Patra*) on that occasion. Now it may be presumed that felicitation of the said released leaders continued till 15th August the day of Independence¹⁴.

In the meantime communal disturbances went on increasing as the day of Independence or the transfer of power came nearer. But it should be mentioned here that due to presence of Mr. M.K. Gandhi on the streets of Calcutta, living in the riot-torn slums at Beliaghata the position of Bengal was not serious. There is no denying of the fact that it was due to presence of Mr. M.K. Gandhi in Calcutta that no large-scale disturbance had occurred in Bengal. Highly impressed, Lord Mountbatten had paid his respectful homage to him in the following words: "*In Punjab we have fifty five thousand soldiers and large-scale rioting in our hands, in Bengal our forces consist of only one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving soldier, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Man Boundary Force*"¹⁵?"

At last came 15th August, 1947 the appointed day for transfer of power. The Indian leaders had requested Mountbatten to continue as Governor General of India. After some initial hesitations, Mountbatten accepted the request of the Indian leaders to become Governor General of India. On 15th August morning Lord Mountbatten was sworn in as Governor General of India and the new Cabinet headed by Pandit Nehru was sworn in by the Governor General. On that day, at midnight, as the clock stroke twelve announcing the coming of a new day, Lord Mountbatten, as last Viceroy of India, handed over power to Indian hands. There was rejoicing and celebrations everywhere. The people of Tamluk as well as the leaders of the Congress like millions of people all over the country remained awake throughout the night and were thrilled by Nehru's inspired midnight speech-India's '*tryst with destiny*'. In fact, it was a day of fulfillment-fulfillment of a dream cherished for generations. In the midst of this all-pervading darkness the leaders and the people of Tamluk with their counter parts of the whole India greeted the morning sun on 15th August, 1947 in free India; and with their hearts full of joy and with tears rolling down their eyes perhaps they prayed to the Almighty: Oh Lord, "Lead us from unreal to the real (Truth), from darkness to light, and from death to immortality"¹⁶."

Amidst such prayer the joy of the nation electrified the whole country. In the wake of such startling moment the leaders and the people of Tamluk sub-division took the occasion as a boon in disguise. They began to cherish the idea of forming their locality as an ideal one which would form a worthy integral part of the newly born Indian Republic. After the Independence local leaders like Susil Kumar Dhara took charge of many big

developments project¹⁷. Among these works mention may be made of building a *Matrisadan* (a maternity home) at Mahisadal revitalization of cottage industry like making of *Machlanda* (a delicate art of weaving fine mats with colourful intricate design with very fine stands of reeds) and the amelioration of the wretched condition of women folk and the like. The local leaders of Tamluk had the experience of performing public welfare works during the days of *Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar*. So the achievements of freedom of the country served to them as a booster dose to their morales. The people of the locality, on the other hand, began to co-operate with these leaders whole-heartedly in performing the constructive and welfare works. So, in view of local perspectives the freedom of the nation ushered in the local affairs of the country a new era of rejuvenation and revitalization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Rajanikanta Pramanik remains a remarkable example of a patriot who united nationalism, spirituality, and social service in his life. Born in 1898 in Tamluk, he devoted himself to the ideals of truth, non-violence, and selfless service inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. As a disciple of Sarada Devi, he also carried forward the spiritual message of compassion and dedication to humanity associated with Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. His participation in the freedom struggle and his efforts in establishing the Ramakrishna Mission in Tamluk show how deeply he believed that the liberation of the nation must go hand in hand with the moral and spiritual upliftment of society. Rajanikanta Pramanik's life stands as a quiet yet powerful reminder that true patriotism is expressed not only through political struggle but also through service, faith, and dedication to the welfare of others. Though he passed away in 1968, his ideals continue to inspire people of his region and beyond, making him a respected figure in the local history of West Bengal and the broader story of India's freedom movement.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The manuscript was prepared on the basis of archives data and questionnaire with freedom fighter Mr. Radhakrishna Bari. There is no ethical issue.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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