CHAPTER VI
RELEASE FROM JAIL

One evening my release order was received. Next morning on the 1st September, 1920, I was released and went straight to Calcutra to join the Special Session of the Congress which was held from the 4th of September under the Presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai.

In Calcutta I stayed in the Y. M. C. A. Hostel in Beniapukur Road. Some released political prisoners were sheltered here temporarily under the charge of Nalini Kishore Guha. I joined the Congress as a Pandal volunteer.

This was a very important session of the Congress. Due to the Rowlatt Act and the disappointment because of the Montague-Chelmsford Report and the Government of India Act of 1919, there was a great discontent in the country. The Special Session was called to decide what stand the country was to take. There was the proposal of responsive co-operation by Tilak and non-violent non-co-operation by Gandhi. These two proposals were to be placed before the special session. But unfortunately about a month before the session Tilak died. And so Gandhiji’s proposal was the one to be discussed in this session. When Gandhiji stood up, there was a pin-drop silence in the big assembly. There was no microphone in those days and Gandhiji’s voice was not very loud. Yet, due to the eagerness of the audience all were listening
to him so attentively and silently that in a gathering of about twenty thousand people. Standing at the farthest corner I could hear every word he spoke.

Gandhi promised that if the people followed his advice, he would get them Swaraj within one year. I could see that the audience was captivated by his promise of Swaraj in one year. After the Congress Session I went home. I was about to enter the room when my mother prevented me from doing so. I thought my grandmother might not be alive. So I was to observe something before entering the house. My mother led me to a Tulsi plant for worship. How could she know that I had no faith in such things? However, I obeyed her and then saw my grandmother hale and hearty. Village elders came and requested me to wear a sacred thread. I told them clearly that I had lost my faith in that.

Village ladies were happy that my mother was now relieved of the pangs of separation from her son. My mother did not participate in any village festival during my imprisonment. Only once she went to lunch with other ladies of the village at the request of the head of a family. But while eating she suddenly started shedding tears as she remembered me. Other ladies also were touched by this and it was a sad scene.

After a few days I went to Dacca to meet Pratul Gangu!i. We had met in Calcutta during the Congress Session and he requested me to come to Dacca. There we discussed the organisation of the
party, particularly at Comilla. He had already visited Comilla and gave me some general idea about state of affairs there. I was going to Comilla and he advised me to stay there till his arrival and then accompany him to Chittagong. Reaching Comilla from Dacca I found that Pratulda had given me the correct information about the position inside the party at Comilla. He came to Comilla within a week or so. He met the Party members at Comilla, gave them necessary instructions and then left for Chittagong. Pratul Ganguli activised the Chittagong workers and gave Girija Chaudhury the charge of Chittagong. Here he had long talks with Surjya Sen, the martyred leader of the legendary Chittagong Armoury Raid Case, in 1930.

Pratulda then left for Dacca and I went to Daulatkhana to meet my father, uncle and others. Here I was depressed to see that my father’s business was in a miserable plight. My elder brother had gone away with some money. My father was passing his days with one assistant who was realising arrears from persons, but was not depositing properly the amount collected. He could not suggest anything for my future. My uncle said that I might go ahead with the business but he was not willing to place some money at my disposal, although he had at least a few thousand. My uncle was in Government service.
ATTEND NAGPUR SESSION OF CONGRESS

So I came to Calcutta. The plenary session of the Congress was going to be held at Nagpur. I attended it as a Bengal delegate. Bengal’s stand was to oppose Gandhiji in his scheme of non-violent non-cooperation as this was once tried in Bengal after the Bengal Partition of 1905. Charkha, Khaddar, National education, boycott of British goods and use of Swadeshi goods were already tried in Bengal and had failed. Gandhiji wanted to do the same on an all-India scale.

Bengal Congress passed a resolution to oppose it. Then the leaders left for Nagpur. Next day about 200 delegates, started for Nagpur by the Nagpur-Bombay mail. I carried 10,000 copies of the printed resolution. But as soon as we arrived at Nagpur, we came to know that C. R. Das had accepted the major part of Gandhiji’s programme. So the copies of the resolution were only used by us as fuel for making tea, etc.

We, a batch of three, Rabi Sen, Prabodh Das Gupta and myself, visited Allahabad, Banaras and Patna on our way back to Calcutta. At Patna we stayed at the Sadaquat Ashram started by Barristar Majrul Haq. The old leader embraced us very cordially saying, “You are madmen of the first rank and we are of the second.” We stayed there for three days and were much pleased to meet the inmates. Baba Khaleel recited his own poems to us, which were very popular throughout northern India.
Our difficulty in the Ashram was that we did not know Hindi. There were two Bengali youths in the Ashram. They very gladly worked as our interpreters. All were very enthusiastic, because all were inspired to create a new India. Majrul Haq helped the absconding Bengal revolutionaries who were in Bihar. It may be mentioned here that Acharya J. B. Kripalani, as a Professor in Bihar, rendered monetary help to the absconding revolutionaries. I heard this from Kshetra Sinha, who was in charge of our Bihar Party.

We saw the Anand Bhavan and other things at Allahabad. But at Allahabad we did not know any revolutionary. At Banaras we had two such persons and they received us very cordially. We visited many important places at Banaras and we also went to the residence of Naren Banerjee, who was convicted in the Gauhati Case and was serving his sentence of 10 years R. I. in Rajshahi Jail when we were there. We met his mother and gave her consolation after having paid our respects.

We heard at Nagpur what Gandhiji wanted to be done in order to obtain Swaraj in a year. C. R. Das had already given out to his personal friends even at Nagpur that he would give up his lucrative legal practice and devote himself entirely to the country’s cause. He did so, as everybody knows.

COMILLA AGAIN

From Calcutta I went to Comilla. Before me there was a problem. On the one side there was the gigantic movement to be launched for the
country's freedom and on the other was the miserable economic condition of my family. Every member of the big family was looking to me for relief. What would happen to my father, mother, grand-mother and others, who were so dear to me? If I took up the responsibility of the house-hold affairs, the task was so big that I would be merged into it, no time and opportunity would be left for me to serve the country to which I had pledged myself and for which I had suffered so much. This mental conflict gave me a great deal of pain. A relative also was trying for a job for me. At Comilla I received the news from him that he was not quite sure, but yet I should go to his place. This gave me a little relief from the mental anxieties and I made up my mind to devote myself to the great national freedom movement of the country.

Political awakening of the Muslims was very remarkable at this time. Near our house was the Munsif's house, a well-to-do middle class Muslim family lived in it. Three brothers of the family were in high government service. The fourth brother, although he was also a brilliant student, became crippled and gave up studies before he became a graduate. We used to go for bathing purposes to their pond. This gentleman, the Maijha Mia, as we called him, used to sit in front of the house in a deck chair. He supervised the studies of boys in that house and also looked after the household affairs.

Since the Comilla Hindu-Muslim riot, he was a
bit communal in outlook. He suspected some of our secret party members and even talked about them disparagingly. He did not suspect me, at least that was what I understood from his talk. But one afternoon when I was riding a horse on the road beside his house he called me waving his hand. As my horse neared him he admonished me not to be intimate with the Mazumdar family, as he saw that the horse was owned by Basanta Mazumdar of the Kashipur zamindar family, who were known, for their anti-British feelings. All this happened before I went to the jail. But after my release from jail when I arrived at Comilla, this gentleman welcomed me open heartedly. He called us national heroes, all of us who had returned from jail. He regretted that the Hindus were so much advanced and the Muslims lagged behind in the movement of national freedom. His enthusiasm for the appreciation of revolutionaries went so far that one day a police officer came and warned him not to do so.

I was intimate with a Vaidya family of the Sonarang compound. Two sons of theirs were also revolutionaries and Bipin Behari De, mentioned elsewhere was also living in that family. But I did not visit them on my first arrival after my release. When I came to Comilla the second time my revolutionary friend of the family was also there. So I went with him to his house. The family members complained that I did not see them when I came to Comilla on the first occasion. I told them that I did not come as some of the members of the
family were Government servants and as my visit might have jeopardised their positions. Their reply was that they took me as a member of their family.

At that time there was no Congress office at Comilla but there was something like a Peoples' Association. Under the leadership of Ashrafuddin Chaudhury the Khilafat Committee with its office at Charta, very near our residence was functioning at Comilla. Ashrafuddin was two years' senior to me in the Victoria School.

On behalf of this committee Ashrafuddin Sahib arranged a reception to the three released State Prisoners, Atindra Mohan Roy, Sisir Kumar Dutta Gupta and myself. A big meeting was held at 'Maheshprangan' under the chairmanship of Akhil Chandra Dutta. The principal speakers were Basanta Mazumdar, Prakash Das and Ashrafuddin.

Soon there was a by-election to a Council seat. The Constituency was a Muslim one. Nawab Faruqi who was a loyal zamindar, was a candidate. Ashrafuddin did not like him to go unchallenged. So he decided to put up a Muslim against him on behalf of the Khilafat Committee. It was in the Zamindary of the Nawab which was under Court of Wards and on behalf of the Court of Wards, he himself was the manager. I was given the charge of two polling booths, Barkanta and Daudkandi. With the local revolutionary friend, Ananga Sarkar, and others I reached round sun-set the
Barkanta Bazar. We heard that long before our arrival the Superintendent of Police came to the bazar with policemen and threatened the people that if anybody said anything against Farqui’s candidature, he would be prosecuted. We gathered some men and declared in a challenging way that we had gone there to put up a tailor against the Nawab on behalf of the Khilafat Committee and we challenged the police to arrest us if they had power to do so. We then invited some of the influential persons of different villages to meet at a certain place in the night. They appeared to be mostly in favour of us but they regretted that there was very little time left. Next morning was the polling. So they had no time to take an organised stand.

During the polling the Nawab told me that as this was his zamindari of which he was also the manager, we could not expect any vote. But in spite of all that twenty eight votes were recorded in our favour.

Next day was the polling at Daudkandi it was under my uncles’ zamindari and he had given me a letter for the Naib. Therefore we secured more votes. So the Nawab’s candidature did not go unchallenged.

After the Nagpur Congress, Gandhiji gave a call to the students to take part in the ‘Movement.’ He stated: “Education may wait but Swaraj cannot.” There was a storm among the students of the country. The Victoria College was not far
off from our compound. One Saturday after the college hours, a group of students assembled in our Sonarang compound, to decide how to respond to Gandhiji's call. They called a meeting and requested me to preside. As it was a serious matter, I told them to go ahead themselves. So they decided to join the movement leaving the college. My cousin, Paresh Chatterjee, took a leading part in it. The exact date of leaving the college was decided in another meeting. And a big number of students plunged themselves into the freedom movement.

BARISAL CONFERENCE

The Bengal Provincial Political Conference was to be held at Barisal. A large number of persons from Comilla and other parts of Bengal assembled there. All were full of enthusiasm and the conference was a grand success. The country adopted Gandhiji's programme and the Conference also did the same. All realised that a non-violent fight was ahead of us. The programme was the subject of discussion inside the Conference as well as outside. Our revolutionary friends from different districts had also assembled; we had also discussions amongst ourselves and decided that we would also join the movement. We returned to Comilla with this decision.

DESHBANDHU C. R. DAS AT COMILLA

Deshbandhu C. R. Das had already given up legal practice after his return from Nagpur
Congress and plunged himself whole-heartedly in the movement. He was touring in Bengal and his tour programme included East Bengal and Assam as well. All preparations were made to give him a grand reception at Comilla. Myself and a friend of mine were given charge of it by the local Congress Committee. The office bearers of the local Congress Committee were the following: President, Akhil Dutta; Secretary, Ashrafuddin Chowdhury; Assistant Secretary, Atin Roy; and office Secretary, Surendra Chakravarty. Before the arrival of Das, a large number of students gave up their studies. C.R. Das came and stayed with Akhil Datta. A meeting of lawyers was held at Mathur Deva’s residence. Das appealed to them to suspend their practice for three months. My uncle Bishweshwar Chatterjee, was the first person to stand up and offer to suspend his practice for three months. Many more lawyers followed him. But all eyes were on Akhil Dutta, leader of the Bar and Congress President. He was hesitant; next day was the public meeting at ‘Maheshprangan’. Eventually shortly before the meeting Akhil Datta agreed to suspend his practice for three months.

After the departure of C.R. Das, there was another big meeting to chalk out the programme of action to be followed. My uncle, Bishweshwar Chatterjee, was unanimously elected to preside over the meeting despite his reluctance to do so. After the meeting, the lawyers, students and other workers sat together and decided a detailed
programme. One non-cooperative lawyer was given the charge of an area controlled by one thana (police station). One important worker was deputed to assist him and a batch of about a dozen non-cooperative students and others were also asked to work with him. I was placed as an assistant of a lawyer in charge of Sarail thana in Brahmanbaria Sub-division, with ten non-cooperating students mostly of B. A. class. There were some others connected with the revolutionary movement with us. My uncle took charge of Daudkandi thana which was in his own zamindari. He along with a batch of non-cooperating students and others and a singer of patriotic and inspiring songs went there and started the work of political upliftment. He tried his best to create an environment in the masses so that they could grasp clearly the non-violent non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji.

We made village Kalikachha our headquarter. This was a very famous village in the district of Tippera. The well-known revolutionary pioneer, Ullashkar Dutta, came from this village. His father, Dwijadas Dutta, was also a well-known person because of his erudition and strong moral character. Dr. Mahendra Nandi of this village was not only a famous doctor but also carried on with chemical research work on various things, maintaining an expensive laboratory and workers for several decades. This was a prosperous and big village. A maternal uncle of our revolutionary
associate, Pulin Gupta, had a brick-built house in that village and our friend offered it for our accommodation. His uncle as the head of the police of Tripura State, was living in Agartala. His son who was living in the village helped us a good deal.

The incharge of our group was Haladhar Babu, a lawyer of Comilla. There was also one Maulvi, educated in Deoband, with us. We had divided ourselves into batches and then started work simultaneously in different areas. I took two party workers and the Maulvi with me and started activities in our area.

We established ourselves in a house of a village. There was enough accommodation in the house as a number of inmates had died due to cholera. Our object was to gear up public opinion for non-cooperation. Every morning we used to go to a village. There we collected important men of the village and told them the real situation in the country and our duties regarding it and then persuaded them to become four-anna members of the Congress. After it we formed a village panchayat in that village and explained to them that they should try to settle all disputes in the panchayat and refrain from going to law courts of the British. In the afternoon we held a meeting in the same village and in the evening went back to our centre. This was our daily routine.

A very important member of our secret revolutionary party, who was incharge of Brahmanbaria
Sub-division died due to a fatal accident. While he was heating old cartridges to make them dry, one exploded and killed him. He was Lal Mohan Saha, son of Lari Saha of village Uroail. His father had a shop in the market of the village. We made a sub-centre in that shop. The local youths were much influenced by him. That is why the young men extended their helping hands towards us as they knew that we were doing some sacred work there. Some time we held public meetings in which all the members of the group used to participate. On a few occasions these meetings were held at Kalikachha also.

Though I came from a village, I never studied the life of villagers so thoroughly before. I noticed in the villages signs of extreme poverty. There were families who did not have even proper utensils. They used only earthen utensils. They were not properly fed, dressed and sheltered. Even four-annas for the membership of the Congress was a strain on their meagre incomes. These scenes always pained me. I always thought whether our movement would be able to bring about any real change in the condition of the suffering people. I had the previous experience of the Swadeshi movement after the Bengal Partition. This new movement also might be ended abruptly one day without producing any fruitful results. This idea always pressed me even in the midst of all my activities, though it never affected any work.

As everybody knows, neither Swaraj could
be attained in a year, nor the movement continue for long. The high hopes entertained by the villagers as well as by the workers were also not fulfilled. The economic plight of villagers remained where they were. The only thing we gained was the spread of political consciousness among the people. But even that, I wonder, was not very deep and strong.

Among the non-cooperative students of our group, one was Gopal Chakravarty, a scholarship holder from Noakhali. He used to deliver very fiery speeches. This was in 1921 and next I saw him in 1938 when I went to Comilla after a lapse of fifteen years. I was presiding over a meeting in the Town Hall and Jai Prakash Narain was delivering a lecture on Socialism. I marked in the meeting that Gopal Chakravarty was taking notes of the speech. After enquiry I came to know that he was a C. I. D. Inspector at that time. Two days after this, I was served with an order of externment from Bengal and in this connection went to the Police Superintendent's office. As soon as I got down from the carriage, Chakravarty came forward and asked, "What do you want?" Certainly he must have thought that I would not recognise him after a lapse of fifteen years but when I asked him, "How are you Gopal Babu?", he was astonished and ashamed. He then took me to the waiting room and arranged the interview with the S. P.

Another person in the non-cooperating students'
group was B. K. Mukherjee. He joined the Railways Service at Jamalpore but was dismissed. He started work in the Railway labour unions. Ultimately he became the General Secretary of E. I. R. Union and later became an M.L.A. at Lucknow and thereafter became a Member of the Rajya Sabha.

Two non-cooperative students, Prabhat Chakravarti and Dinesh Chakravarty, were sheltered in my uncle’s house. Prabhat gradually became a revolutionary. He carried on Congress work vigorously but Dinesh continued his studies in the National School and later in the General School and College and attained much success in life as a highly placed employee in an Insurance Company. Prabhat became very prominent as a revolutionary. Prabhat and I had something to do even after the non-cooperation movement was over. Let me narrate it here.

After I started my political work in U. P., once I went to Bengal. The year was 1924. When I went to Comilla the police there were too much vigilant to trace me out as I had disappeared from Banaras in the same year. I somehow managed to reach my place in the night but early in the morning I was informed by our partymen that the clerk of my uncle who was formerly helping in our secret work had turned to be a Police informer. So I had to pass the whole day in another house. Late in the night I came to my uncle’s place, took my meals there and after midnight left
for the Railway station with Prabhat Chakravarti. It was raining heavily. I waited outside the station while Prabhat bought two tickets and boarded a compartment. I stood all alone on the other side of the compartment and boarded it when the train was just about to move. So I escaped from Comilla untraced. From Chandpur also, I did not take the regular steamer route. I went to Rajabari by one steamer and from there to Goalundo by another steamer. From Rajabari I sent back Prabhat to my village with a letter. This letter was the only source of information that my family got about me. Prabhat was thus introduced to my family members as a very trusted member of our secret party. I was arrested and jailed not long after this and Prabhat thus secured a very safe shelter for more than two years in my village home with an assumed name as my cousin. While in jail I was always getting the news of Prabhat's welfare through my sister's letters. Sometimes the letters were in Prabhat's handwriting.

Prabhat escaped from internment camp and when rearrested was involved in the Inter-Provincial Conspiracy Case and was transported to the Andaman Jail along with Sita Nath De and Purnananda Das-Gupta, after having been sentenced for life. He is now in the Communist Party.

A WORD ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCHOOL

The Congress leaders wanted to open one National School at Comilla. They fervently request-
ed my uncle to persuade the proprietor of Ishwar Pathshala, Mahesh Bhattacharya, to convert it as a National School. Bhattacharya did not agree with the proposal but promised to donate a big sum of money if a new school was opened. And it was done. A prominent teacher who left Ishwar Pathshala, was made the Headmaster of the National School. But this School did not last long. The Hedmaster had also to rejoin the former school as a newly appointed teacher.

My cousin Paresh Chatterjee joined the National College in Calcutta. He was a very favourite student of Subhas Chandra Bose who was the Principal of the College. Years after this when Bose came to Comilla as the President of the Indian National Congress, he lunched with my uncle.

The degree awarded by the National College was not recognised by the Government and thus the students of the National College were often in great difficulties. I know at least of three brilliant students who faced great difficulty in starting their careers after their graduation from the College. One of my co-villagers had to pass B. A. and B. L. from the University of Calcutta after his graduation from National College before he could start practice as a lawyer. Another brilliant graduate had to become a shop assistant and the third one who was also a brilliant graduate, had to start a stationery shop.

The National School started one weaving class with a science graduate weaver as its teacher. He is now a ‘Kaviraj’ at Banaras. Our Anushilan
leader Pulin Gupta started a factory for the manufacture of Charkha and looms. I purchased two charkhas from here and brought them to my village but the thread produced had no market. So like the former ‘Swadeshi’ movement this time as well the movement was of temporary duration. The Charkha and Khaddar even today are not profitable concerns although they give employment to a huge number of workers because they are subsidized by the Government.

COOLIE EXODUS FROM TEA GARDENS OF ASSAM

As the result of C. R. Das tour a new life was instilled into the people of Assam. Youths and other workers became very active. The biggest and most profitable industry of Assam was tea. European planters were making huge profit from tea gardening at the expense of the labourers who were treated almost as slaves. These indentured labourers were recruited from the backward places of Madhya Pradesh, Eastern U.P. and Bihar. These poor people were given high hopes by the recruiting agents who brought them as prisoners to the tea gardens of Assam. Here in the tea estates their lives were completely cut off from the rest of the world. A coolie could never leave the estate and he could not handle any cash. Their essential needs were supplied by the shops on the basis of contract on the production of slips issued by estate officers.
And these need were always fixed at the subhuman level.

As a result of the non-cooperation movement the political workers penetrated into the tea estates of Assam. The proprietors, managers and the high executives of the tea estates were Europeans. The political workers had to go there at great risk because the European staff there used to be very much alert; but yet the political propaganda reached the coolies in wide scale. They became a bit self-conscious and the result was that a large number of coolies was suddenly dismissed from service. They left the garden and took trains to go back to their respective places. They could easily board the train and come up to Chandpur, the railway terminus, because the railway staff was very sympathetic to the movement. They allowed the coolies to travel without tickets. Everybody was aware of the miserable conditions of the Indian coolies under the European owners and managers of the tea gardens. So coolies in thousands arrived at Chandpur but from there they were not allowed to proceed further by the police. Chandpur was too small a place for accommodating such a huge number of men and on the wake of their arrival Cholera broke out there in an epidemic form. J. M. Sen Gupta came from Chittagong and Akhil Dutta from Comilla. The Assam-Bengal railway employees were on strike. It was a very big problem both for the people and the Government. C. R. Das also came from Calcutta and so did Sir Henry
Wheeler, executive member of the Bengal Government. The heroic part in this affair was played by J. M. Sen Gupta. Large amount of money was required for the expenses and Sen Gupta mortgaged his own house at Chittagong and brought a huge amount to meet the expenses required in helping the coolies.

At last a compromise was reached; the strike was given up and the coolies returned to their gardens with a distinct change in their life.

During the coolie exodus, the Gurkha military units were brought to Chandpur from Dacca. All the coolies were kept behind a cordon of the Gurkhas. Outsiders were not allowed to mix with them, because all along the Government effort was to send back the coolies to the tea estates. But for one man there was no barrier. This was Atindra Mohan Roy, the famous revolutionary of Comilla. These Gurkhas were on duty in Dacca Jail where Roy was detained. So they knew him and they allowed him to go inside the cordon freely.

I have already stated that the Assam-Bengal Railway staff was very sympathetic to the movement and they were always ready to help the coolies in all possible ways and in fact the railway strike was interlinked with the coolie exodus. Of course, the officers of higher ranks were hesitant. That was not the case with the general staff. Once we wanted the Assam Mail to stop at Comilla at 1-30 A. M. and not to proceed further. Before the arrival of the Mail, we approached the Station
Master to stop the train there. The general strike was going to take place and we knew that some of our men would stop the train after it left Comilla. But on further thought we decided to stop the train at Comilla so that passengers in the train were not put into unnecessary inconvenience. If the train was stopped at a way-side station, the passengers would not have found any place to stay in after getting down from the train. Comilla was a big place and it could conveniently accommodate the passengers who would be forced to alight there. That is why we approached the Station Master of Comilla. The Station Master did not agree with us. But when the train came, we approached the driver and the guard. They agreed and refused to drive the train any further. We arranged alternative accommodation for all the passengers and tried to provide them with all possible facilities.

The strike was so effective and complete that all the courts of Comilla remained closed for twenty-one days. We maintained the communication links between different places with the help of bicycles squads, organised by Congress organisation. During the days of strike supply of kerosene oil from the local stockists who had a big stock, was difficult task, but Amulya Mukherjee and Manindra Chakravarti managed the whole affair in such a manner that the people did not face any difficulty at all.

But the condition at Chandpur became worst. The coolies in thousands were kept there under the
custody of Gurkhas. The authorities were not taking any effective steps to solve the problems. Those who came from outside to extend their helping hands towards the coolies were also kept aloof and put in trouble. After seeing tyranny the staff of the steamer companies could not remain unmoved. Thus a steamer strike also took place. Steamers stopped plying from Chandpur to Goalando, Chandpur to Narainganj, Chandpur to Barisal and to Assam.

So Sir Henry Wheeler was compelled to discuss the problems with C. R. Das. It was decided that the coolies would be allowed to go to their homes or gardens at Government's expenses. The Government did take the proper course but the situation had already turned seriously against them. People saw the inhuman treatment meted out to the coolies and the natural reaction to it was that there was nothing but hatred towards the Government. So in the struggle the Government was the loser.

People also learnt through these actions that alien Government do things only when they are compelled to do so due to great public pressure. This encouraged the people for a righteous fight against the Government.

It will not be out of place to mention here that it is a pity that the whole incident received a very unfair treatment in the hands of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya in his book 'The History of the Indian National Congress.' Dr. Sitaramayya has only two sentences to write on the whole affair. He writes
on page 370 in his book: "Another mighty undertaking was the strike in Chittagong. Chittagong is a port in East Bengal and the labour strike, organised by Sen Gupta, cost the Congress over a lack of rupees." He gives the same treatment to even C. R. Das's efforts. For on page 475 of his book he writes on Das: C. R. Das: "Here was Das who had organised in Bengal the Chittagong strike of 1921."

It is an undeniable fact that the coolie exodus and the railway steamer strike occupied a major place in the political movement of the country that year. But I completely fail to understand the motive of the Congress historian in neglecting these and distorting and under-estimating their effects. He devotes thirty-four pages in his book to narrate the general movement in the country in 1921. Out of it two complete pages are given to narrate the Mopla rising in Malabar. I agree that arrests in big numbers were not made and the police did not open fire at Chittagong or Chandpur. But arrests in large number and firing are not the only criterion to judge the merits and importance of a movement. The authorities as a matter of policy after their experience of partition of Bengal and the consequent national revolutionary movement did not take these aggressive steps, in Bengal as they knew that suppression would beget more trouble for them.

After the strike was over and the coolies had returned to the tea estates or to their respective
homes, there seems to be a general slackening everywhere. The lawyers started their practice in courts and most of the students returned to their schools, and colleges. And we resolved to continue our activities through the Congress organisation. The Congress activities were carried on vigorously. Our friend Atindra Roy did not allow it to be slackened. The main work of the Congress was carried on by him. Ashrafuddin Sahib, the General Secretary, spent most of his time in his village and sometimes came down to issue some general instructions. Atin Roy spent all the time in the Congress Office at Maheshprangan. President of the Organisation, Akhil Dutta, was living nearby and it was very easy to contact him. Among other leaders, Basanta Majumdar, Kamini Dutta, Ananga Ghosh, Prakash Das and Dhirendra Dutta took active interest. Amongst our revolutionary friends besides Atin Roy, myself, Pulin Gupta, Suren Chakravarti, Prafulla Chakravarti, Jiten Bhattacharya, Amulya Mukherjee, Manindra Chakravarti, and others took active part.

BHARAT SEVAK SANGHA IN 1921

During the railway and steamer strikes I had an urgent call from Calcutta from our party leaders. Travelling was a problem during the strikes as no means of conveyance was easily available. Only one train, the Assam Mail, was running regularly to carry the mails. Mainly the loyal Anglo-Indians were working in it. I managed to travel by that
train up to Chandpur from where I went to Goaland by boat in two days. In Calcutta there was a meeting to discuss the proposal to start a social service organisation named Bharat Sevak Sangha. This organisation proved to be very helpful for the Anushilan Samiti to get itself re-established in every district. Pulin Das headed the organisation and Naren Sen and others were his responsible colleagues. I was given the charge of Tripura district with headquarters at Comilla and I established branches at Chandpur and Brahamanbaria. From our headquarters at Calcutta we started a weekly paper ‘Shankha’ and also a printing press named ‘The Calcutta Printing Works.’ We received some donations from different individuals for this purpose. And the Anushilan Samiti got a new life and again became very active in every district. Pulin Das took up his work with all sincerity but others took it up as a means of reorganising the Anushilan Samiti and actually within this period the Samiti was really re-established in all districts.

**MAHALLA COMMITTEES IN 1922**

When the movement got slackened, we resolved to continue some sort of activities. Though we were working in the Congress which had an open programme, as members of the secret party we had to take special precautions against the police. We thought that if we were to work among the youth, the suspicion of police on us should be avoided through every possible means. The movement had
kindled a political consciousness among people. We wanted that to be retained in the youth. It is association with great things that begets a mental state conducive to logical thinking and analysis. It compels one to think and to act upon what is thought out. In this way inertia and inactivity vanishes and action, unity and consequently invincible strength generates in the individual as well as in the society. We tried to do away with the stagnation in our life. Some creative programmes were chalked out. The Mohalla (area) Committees were formed in which discussion on character building, educational problems and other subjects of social moral and intellectual upliftment took place. Except in one Mohalla Committee, no political discussions took place. Myself and Atin Roy were behind this move; we did not openly participate although we took much interest and attended all the meetings.

But it was due to the untiring efforts of Amulya Mukherjee, Manindra Chakravarti and Jogesh Chakravartti that these committees achieved wonderful success. We aimed at the harmonious development of the personality of the youth. For mental development the study of good literature and discussion of intellectual topics of high standard were encouraged in youths. Emphasis on health was laid as health was the stepping stone of all success in life. If a model personality, mental and physical, is built it makes out its successful way in the world. When the parents saw it, they
appreciated the aims of the committees and very soon the committees became very popular in the city.

On certain Sundays the committees held a joint meeting. On such occasions debates, essay reading and recitation of poems took place. I also regularly attended the general Sunday get-togethers as well as the big meetings. I always took a keen interest in these activities. At this time the work of the Congress was also going on very satisfactorily.

We all knew that non-cooperation movement was not going to produce any desired result. But as it was launched on a mass scale, the revolutionaries and real patriots could not resist themselves and joined it whole-heartedly. They played a major part in the movement in Bengal. But the movement, as did the movement of 1905 after the Partition of Bengal, abruptly ended. We foresaw it very clearly that freedom was not going to be granted through charity. The movement could ensure for the country some concessions and privileges only. But for complete freedom armed rising was necessary which would completely tear off the alien Government machinery and force them to quit. Compromise on it was not possible as any compromise on fundamentals always begets degeneration.

The interests of the oppressor and the oppressed are always diagonally opposite. That is why the revolutionaries never preferred a middleway. They
thought it worth its while to live in glory or die with honour. The gradual way to constitutional independence sounded to them stupid and a self-conceited fallacy. Nothing lies in between complete freedom and total slavery. One who cannot die for life, does not live in reality. The revolutionaries loved the freedom of the motherland and they happily offered their lives on its alter. Even during the First World War 'Liberty', the leaflet of Anushilan Samiti declared: "Our object is not to gain a few privileges but to create a nation of men fit for independence." Any departure from this stand was impossible for the revolutionaries. They adamantly adhered to it till the last. They could use the Congress movement for their ultimate purpose. As their lives were completely devoted to the service of the community and country, they served them through the Congress programmes during the non-cooperation movement but they were never detracted from their firm convictions.

**MOHALLA COMMITTEE, CONGRESS AND BHARAT SEVAK SANGHA**

In the district three different but inter-connected activities were going on. The Mohalla Committees were functioning in a very satisfactory way under the charge of Amulya Mukherjee and Manindra Chakravarty. The Congress organisation work was looked after by Atindra Mohan Roy and Surendra Kumar Chakravarti. As I have already
stated, myself was in-charge of Bharat Sevak Sangh in the district. The spirit behind all these activities was one and the same, i.e. the spirit of dedication and service, so there was no strict clear-cut divisions between the functions of these three organisations. We were doing work in the Congress organisation, in the Mohalla committee and in the Bharat Sevak Sangha as well. In Bharat Sevak Sangha we took up the work of helping patients by supplying medicines and doing nursing. My revolutionary friends engaged themselves in social service. Though we got a very meagre amount as a grant for the Sangh and we were already passing through hardpressed days, our spirit was high and our determination was firm.

We tried our best to utilize all our activities to enhance the cause of revolution. Naren Sen, who was the second man in command next to Pulin Behari Das in our secret revolutionary party, was also the Secretary of Dacca Congress Committee. And the Assistant Secretary was also our man. In this way the Dacca Congress was also in our hands. The Bharat Sevak Sangha published a leaflet ‘Hak Katha’ in Calcutta. That paper, in thousands, was sent to me as I was the organiser of the Sangha at Comilla. In this paper the Non-cooperation movement was criticised. As we were running the Congress in East Bengal, we never wanted to encourage the criticism of the Movement and thus the leaflets were not distributed but destroyed. To cite an example would not be besides the point. A
missionary came to Dacca to inspect the work of the Bharat Sevak Sangha. Naren Sen showed him the work undertaken by the Sangh there and also four night schools which were not run by the Sangha, though the Sangha used to give them some help. An impression on the missionary was created that these schools were also run by the Sangha. He was very much pleased and submitted a very good report, appreciating our work in Dacca. As a result of this report, the amount of grant was increased. We never took these matters seriously as our main object was to strengthen our secret revolutionary party. The official Congress party leaders seldom suspected our motives. Many of them thought that we had eschewed the path of violence and were sincere believers in the Congress creed of non-violent non-cooperation. But we took the Congress work only as a camouflage for the achievement of our end.

HOUSE OF LABOURERS

It has already been stated that Dr. Mahendra Nandi maintained a laboratory at Kalikachha. He invented a handlever match machine. His nephew Kamaniya Sinha (his sister’s son) opened the Pioneer Match Factory at Comilla and Prafulla Chakravarti, our revolutionary friend and an inhabitant of the village Kalikachha, became its manager. The main purpose behind the opening of this factory was to help our movement. Swadeshi Movement created a market for the indigenous
products. The factory which was completely Swadeshi by nature earned profit and also became a subject of peoples, respect. The manager of the factory Prafulla Chakravarti was a secret Anushilanite and had suffered imprisonment also. He worked throughout the day in the factory and in the night when all the work was over, I and few other friends used to meet together. Prafulla Chakravarti wanted me to start some industry. We all thought that industry is the key to a nations’ progress. The prosperity of the poor masses could be brought about only through industrialization—that was what we thought. Industrialization would increase production and stop the financial exploitation of poor Indians by the Europeans. All these were undoubted facts but I was hesitant to draw up a path for starting a production centre. Money was the primary requisite to start that. Apart from money, experience and mechanical know-how, were also basically necessary. But Prafulla Chakravarti’s pressure was increasing day by day and he and others had immense confidence in my abilities. They thought that if I became involved in their plan, it would be carried out successfully, irrespective of all these difficulties. I would take up the matter very seriously and with all sincerity. At last the idea struck me one night and I agreed and resolved to draw up such a plan.

Nothing is impossible in the world is the dictum in which the revolutionaries always believe. I took up this work with the same spirit. To me it
appeared as a part of our party work. To start with money was our immediate need. I left Comilla for Calcutta to arrange few things for the prospective industry taking only Rs. 30/- with me. Some money was spent in the journey and the remainder I put into the box of a revolutionary in Calcutta. In my absence the box was broken and the money was stolen. When I came to know this, I was very much perplexed as no money was left with me even for going back to Comilla. I thought it advisable to take the help of our secret party leader. I went to Ramesh Acharya, the leader of Barisal Conspiracy Case, and a very important leader of our secret party. I narrated the story to him. He gave me two hundred and fifty rupees. Taking the money from him I did some necessary purchases for the industrial project and came back to Comilla. Before leaving Comilla, I had written a few letters to my relatives and friends for some financial help to start the project. When I arrived at Comila, I found that Rs. 900/- sent by my relatives and friends had already reached. My revolutionary friends also took keen interest in it. Naren Sen contributed Rs. 300/-. 

We were busy to tap the various resources and had very big plans for the future. A Match factory was to be started first and then textile factory and iron works. After these three industries were well established, we planned to start an automobile industry, and even ship building and aeroplane production. Comilla was not a suitable place for such
big industries and we thought we should prospect in Chittagong for the purpose. Prafulla Chakravarty and Jitendra Bhattacharjee went to Chittagong to find out some suitable location for the industry but I did not agree due to practical difficulties. At Comilla everybody knew us and any kind of help could easily be summoned; but Chittagong was a new place and to start a new industry there even on a small scale was a very difficult task. So it was decided that the venue of the industry would be Comilla.

With high hopes and huge schemes in mind, we started the House of Labourers in February 1922 in an humble way. By the side of the National School Building, we ourselves constructed the factory. I took timber on credit from my uncle’s timber company. The structure was erected by us and tin sheds were put. We made a bamboo curtain and fixed it on all sides. In this way a factory was constructed. The opening ceremony was performed with the staff of two carpenters, two iron smiths, myself, two brothers of Prafulla Chakrvarti, Prabodh and Pramode Chakravarti.

The first work we undertook was the production of a rotary match machine. Dr. Abinash Bhattacharjee, who was in Germany during the First World War, opened a Chemical laboratory at Konnagar in Hooghli District. He also had taken part in revolutionary activities during his stay in Europe. His elder brother was the district engineer at Comilla. Abinash Bhattacharjee told us that an old
German rotary match machine, which was brought by some Marwari firm during the Swadeshi movement but could not be used, was lying at Konnagar. Myself, Prabodh and Pramode went to Konnagar and studied thoroughly the making of the machine. Prabodh, a very good student of mathematics, was trying his level best to get well versed in engineering. But Pramode had real mechanical aptitude. We came back and copied the rotary machine in the House of Labourers. It was a successful effort and the new rotary machine started functioning wonderfully.

As a result, the Pioneer Match Factory of Comilla went into liquidation as its hand-lever machines could not compete with our rotary match machines. The Proprietor of the Pioneer Match Factory got very annoyed with me, but I was helpless. Our machine produced twenty gross of matches per day. We fitted the first machine in our factory and advertised the sale of other machines. Prospective buyers came and saw our machine at work and placed orders. Our daily production of matches was purchased by a firm. We received our first order from the district jail Comilla to supply twelve Salvation Army Pattern of Handlooms, within twelve days. We supplied the order in time and to the best satisfaction of the jail authorities. This created a goodwill for us in the city. People were surprised how a factory in its initial stage could supply things in such a short time. We employed extra carpenters for the work and I personally went
to Dacca to bring the teak. From dawn to dusk work continued and the necessary arrangements for meals, etc. were made in the factory itself.

With the closure of the Pioneer Match Factory, Prafulla Chakravarti along with a few technicians also joined us in our work. Jitendra Bhattacharjee joined us after his examinations. Atindra Roy showed a very keen interest in our work and Amulya Mukherjee and Manindra Chakravarti and others also came very often to the factory and took interest in what was going on there. So from the very beginning it took the form of an institution. It was not only a centre of production but also a place with inspired patriotic young men to collect and take up the work in a missionary spirit with national perspective. Some Muslims also joined us enthusiastically.

With the expansion of work and increase in the number of men working, more finances were our imperative need. This was a very difficult problem. We always thought of the possible financial resources. One day one of my friends, who was running a Vivekananda Ashram, asked me to accompany him to Mukunda Das, the great dramatist and actor who stopped at Comilla on his way to Sylhet and Chittagong. My friend wanted to request him to donate some money for his Ashram. I, though reluctantly, accompanied him. During our talk Mukunda Das enquired about me. When he was told about the House of Labourers, he showed keen interest in it and put so many questions to me.
I told him that our work was expanding but we were short of finances. He enquired how much money was immediately needed for the work. I told him that we needed Rs. 2,000/- immediately. He proposed that on his way back from Chittagong, he would give a performance at Comilla and the money, thus collected, which he expected to be two thousand rupees, would be placed at our disposal as an interest free loan. He asked me to reserve Maheshprangan for his performance.

To get the consent of Mahesh Bhattacharjee for the proposed performance in Maheshprangan I called on him. I told him about the programme and asked for his permission for the performance to be staged in the Maheshpragan. He enquired how much money we needed and up to what extent the performance would be able to meet our needs. I replied that two thousand rupees were immediately needed and we expected the same amount to be collected through the performance. He did not like the idea that only for two thousand rupees we were seeking an obligation from Mukunda Das. He said that he would extend an interest free loan of two thousand rupees to us. I naturally became very happy to see his sympathetic attitude as our attachment with Bhattacharjee, a very big businessman and a renowned philanthropist of Comilla, would increase our goodwill, financial security and provide incentive to our newly established work. Meanwhile my uncle, after seeing our dedication in the work and being fully convinced that our work
was on the right, direction, spoke a word to Mahesh Bhattacharjee in our favour. Janaki Nath Sarkar was the headmaster of Ishwar Pathshala. He was also an ex-member of secret Anushilan Samiti. He was enjoying full confidence of Mahesh Babu and was looking after his household affairs. He always had a very soft corner for us. He also spoke to Mahesh Babu. Mahesh Bhattacharjee advised me that to carry Rs. 2,000/- with me in Calcutta was risky and that I could open an account with the cashier of his firm and do the necessary purchases by issuing a slip to the concerns to get the amount cashed from Bhattacharya & Co. So I travelled to Calcutta with a letter from Mahesh Babu addressed to the Manager of his Calcutta head office. I was surprised to see the goodwill of his firm in the market as every one readily gave us articles agreeing that the costs would be collected from Bhattacharjee & Co. I did the necessary purchases and came back to Comilla.

After seeing the pace of progress of the factory, Bhattacharjee advised us that it could no longer be accommodated in the small shed, we had erected ourselves beside the National School Building, and offered us a plot of land, free of any charges, near his residence where we ourselves constructed a big factory building using iron bars and tin sheds. Bhattacharjee also offered one big room in his residence for housing our office. In those initial stages, such a rapid and methodical expansion of our work was an extremely difficult task, but it was
only due to his helping hands that everything could become possible. After shifting to the new factory building, the pace of our work speeded up. An All India Industrial Exhibition was to be held in Calcutta at that time. We decided to exhibit our rotary match machine there. We exhibited it there but got orders only for four machines, though it attracted the attention of owners of big factories. They started production of the same kind of match machines through casting in which much less cost was involved and sold them at much cheaper rates. This competition with the comparatively better and cheaper machines affected our business and ultimately we gave up the production of match machines.

Meanwhile we got an order for setting and fitting machines from a tea estate. Our technicians did this job very efficiently and we charged considerably less amount of money from the owners of the estate. For the same work they used to seek services of European firms in Calcutta, and very heavy charges were always demanded for that. The tea estate people were very pleased with us and issued a very fine recommendatory letter in our favour. Consequently, a new avenue was opened for us and the number of orders increased day by day.

From the very beginning the House of Labourers earned the reputation of a nationalist institution in which the revolutionaries and non-cooperating students of the town were working. The house had
red uniforms for its workers. In every public meeting, processions and national functions the workers in their uniforms used to participate. In social service activities, nursing of patients and helping the cremation of dead bodies, the workers of the house always rendered their full help. In this way the team of red uniformed young men became a symbol of self-service and efficiency in the city. They enjoyed respect and affection from all the patriotic people of the city. Our procedure of recruiting the workers was that one had to learn the technical work for six months, on one's own expense. After six months, we managed to give board and lodging to the trainee and watched carefully his capacity to work and his mechanical aptitude. According to the ability of individual trained worker, the salary was decided, and he was considered to be an employee of the House. It will not be out of place to mention here that Mahesh Bhattacharjee was kind enough to grant a few apprentices free board and lodging in his Ramtara Chhatravasa, a free students, home for 80 students.

Owing to our faith in socialism, we ran the factory on socialistic lines. All those who believed in socialistic thinking there, were considered as members of the Brother-hood which was the main executive body. They were not entitled to any salary and were getting only an allowance. The amount of allowance was only fifteen rupees per month. Those who were not in this brother-hood,
were considered as regular employees of the House and they were getting salaries according to their qualifications. The surplus money went into the Reserve Fund for further development of the Industry.

One day a C.I.D. Inspector called on the office of the factory and wanted to see the muster roll to note down the names of the workers. I refused and challenged his authority. He threatened me and said that someday he might come with the warrants of District Magistrate and collect all the papers there. I said that he was free to take any legal step; but I was not prepared to show him anything. When I reported this matter to my uncle and Mahesh Bhattacharjee, they said that there could be nothing wrong if I showed the muster roll to the inspector. But I thought that C. I. D. interference would increase in the House due to my presence there. I also resolved that freedom of the country was the first and important necessity. I met Naren Sen and Pratul Ganguli, two important leaders of Anushilan Samiti and asked them to allot some full time revolutionary work for me.

It would be interesting to cite one instance here. One day I and Jitendra Nath Bhattacharjee happened to go to the Technical School. There, accidentally, we met the police superintendent, Mr. Hodson, who also had come there. He knew Jitendra Bhattacharjee by his face but did not know me personally though he had heard so much about me. During the course of conversation with Bhattr-
charjee he wanted to know who I was as I was standing just beside. When he heard my name he looked surprised but resumed his conversation. I assured Mr. Hodson that though we were revolutionaries and political suspects in the eyes of the police, there was absolutely no political motive behind the House. I told him that we were patriots and whatever work we would take up in life, there would definitely be patriotic fervor in it but I could very well assure that behind the House of Labourers, there was no revolutionary conspiracy brewing or any political motive involved. Few days after, the S. P. came personally to the factory and wished to see it. I was not present at that time, others who were present obliged him and took him round the factory.

One evening the ‘Peshkar’ of the District Magistrate told me in private that one show-cause notice, as to why the Indian Factory Act should not be enforced on the House of Labourers, would be served on us. He told me how to reply to that notice. The notice was served and I gave the reply.

As a result of my request to the leaders of the Anushilan Samiti, Pratul Ganguli, wanted me to go to Assam where, as he told me, the party work was not running satisfactorily. It was in the later part of 1921. He gave me a few addresses also. I visited Silchar, Sylhet, Karimganj and Sunamganj. During my tour I met Nihar Ranjan Ray, now a Professor in Calcutta University and an M. P., in Sylhet who was closely connected with the Jana-
shakti weekly paper. He introduced me to the Editor of the Janashakti. In Silchar, the most important worker of our party was a shop assistant. He also introduced a few persons to me. In Sunamganj Sub-division, I met an important worker of our party, Dharani Goswami, who was doing farming and working among peasants. He was later arrested in Meerut Conspiracy Case and joined the Communist Party.

After this tour, I was instructed to go to Bombay. Pratul Ganguli apprised me of the situation and the method of work there. He gave me copies of the 'Socialist', a paper run by Dange and told me that the main field of my activities should be among the labourers. But this programme did not ultimately materialise and I had to wait for some new assignment.

One representative of the party was urgently needed to be sent to U. P. Pratul Ganguli was in search of some suitable man who could be entrusted with this responsibility. His assistant Ashit Bhattacharjee suggested my name. Ganguli very happily agreed to the suggestion. Incidentally, I also went to Dacca for purchasing teak wood for the House of Labourers. When I saw Pratul Ganguli there, he happily remarked that it was very good that I was there at that time. He asked me whether I would like to go to U. P. I gave an affirmative reply. So our discussion on the detailed programme started. He told me about the situation in U.P. I personally liked to go to U.P. more than to Bombay.
Bengal and the Punjab were the two hot beds of revolutionary activities. Between these two provinces lay U. P. and Bihar. I knew about the activities of Rash Behari Bose in U. P. and the Banaras Conspiracy Case, the Mainpuri Conspiracy Case, etc. There as I thought a methodical revolutionary work with accentuated speed was required to be started. I thought if we could activate our party units in U. P. it would be a great help to the revolutionary activities in Northern India. Our units in U. P. would be able to serve as links between Bengal and the turbulent Punjab.

I left the House of Labourers leaving the House in the hands of three Chakravarti brothers, and Jitendra Bhattacharjee. It was a pity that Atin Roy was already arrested by the police and sent to jail. Had he been free, the House of Labourers could be left in very efficient hands. Owing to the absence of proper leadership Jitendra Bhattacharjee found himself alone on one side and the three brothers on the other. Meanwhile they developed differences with Mahesh Bhattacharjee also. When we were there, we always honoured the advices of Mahesh Babu and tried our best to learn something from his experience and foresight in business. Our successors took his advice in a different light and protested against the interference of Mahesh Babu. Mahesh Bhattacharjee had given the House 22 thousand and 6 hundred rupees in all. After some differences with him they wanted to
return the amount taking loan from a Bank on twelve per cent interest. About the House of Labourers late Mr. Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharjee wrote in his autobiography that he wanted to invest up to one lakh of rupees in it. But due to differences he could save himself.

Really the change in the attitude of the Chakravarti brothers caused the ruination of the Institution. Bhattacharjee advised them that if they repaid such a high amount all at once, it would affect the business of the House badly. He suggested that the amount could easily be paid in many small instalments. The House was made a limited company. By this time the House of Labourers had gained so much popularity that men like Sir P. C. Roy, and Ramananda Chatterjee, Editor of "The Modern Review" came to see the House, were very much impressed and in Calcutta they wrote articles in the monthlies praising the House of Labourers and its working on idealistic principles. When it was declared as a Limited Company, offers for buying shares came from far and near. Money was sent by money orders by a number of persons to purchase shares and branches were opened. The House of Labourers soon became the Managing Agents of three important big concerns—the Comilla Electric Supply Co. Ltd. which was supplying electricity to the Railway Station and the city, the Steel Construction Co. Ltd. and the Peerless Tea Estate Ltd. The business flourished but due to heavy loans taken from the bank, the
House was going under the grip of the bank day by day. As long as there was flourishing business, the House was paying the interest to the bank. But during the 1929-30 economic depression, the House's business was affected. The Bank had its own designs for it since very long. The business decreased and a fall in the income was noticeable. In those bad days, one day in the general meeting in which Prabodh Chakravarti explained the situation before the members, Naren Dutta, the banker pleaded that the House was passing through a critical financial duress and the bank which had extended loans got possession of the House. The Chakravartis started their own contract business and entered in litigation with the Bank. Jitendra Bhattacharjee took over as the Manager on behalf of the Bank.

We had started the House of Labourers as an ideal nationalist institution. We had created a feeling of brotherhood and comradeship. Dignity of labour was our motto and all of us did all sort of work from brooming the floors to carrying heavy loads personally. No one felt shy in doing any work. When we left the place, the successors decided to run it, with all bureaucratic pomp and modern business house paraphernalia. They forgot that this house was a symbol of patriotism, selfless and dedicated service for the community and the country. Overambitious schemes and the rise of over-night bureaucrats played havoc here also with all its disastrous consequences, resulting in dissolu-
tion of the temple of labour, self-sacrifice and national dignity we erected.

**ABHOY ASHRAM AT COMILLA**

When the Non-Cooperation Movement was started on a large scale, the British Government got very much perplexed as it was fearful of a general upsurge of the ever suppressed Indian masses. All the leaders, C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru and others were arrested but the authorities did not dare to arrest Gandhiji when the movement was at its climax. He was arrested after he called off the movement because of the Chourichoura incident. The movement was no longer there; but problem of exploring new avenues for social and nationalist activities faced all those who joined the movement, resigning from high positions in Government and other services. Two prominent non-cooperators of Bengal came to Comilla in the later part of 1922. They were Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, who was a former member of the Anushilan Samiti, and Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerjee who had connection with one Jugantar group in his student life. Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, a D. Sc. in Chemistry was appointed as Deputy Alloy-Master in the Calcutta mint, a post which he relinquished because of the movement. Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerjee was a Civil Surgeon and he resigned and joined the movement. After the movement slackened, they came to Comilla to start an Ashram for the propagation and encouragement of 'Char-
rkha' and 'Khadi'. For some time they discussed the matter with the important local leaders. Akhil Chandra Dutta and Kamini Kumar Dutta, the two leading lawyers of Comilla started taking interest in the plan. Forty thousand rupees were collected for the opening of an Ashram. A big tank, which was situated on the outskirts of the city was chosen as the venue for it. They took it on lease and started Abhoy Ashram there. 'Charkha' and 'Khaddar' promotion were kept in view; the Ashram also took up social service. A medical clinic and a school were started by the Ashram.

In this way almost simultaneously two ideal nationalist institutions grew up at Comilla—the House of Labourers and the Abhoy Ashram. Though ours was an industrial production centre and the Abhoy Ashram was a socio-economic-political centre on Gandhian lines, the political motive behind the both was one and the same,—service to the community and the country, all round progress and freedom for all.

Allow me to digress a little. Once it so happened that I and Ashrasuddin Chaudhury Sahib boarded a steamer from Chandpur for Goalando on our way to Calcutta. Ashrasuddin Sahib was then the General Secretary of the Comilla District Congress Committee. Later when Subhas Chandra Bose had strong differences with the Congress High Command, he became the General Secretary of the B. P' C.C. The Bengal Congress was staunchly behind Bose. In that condition Ashra-
fuddin Sahib as Secretary of B.P.C.C. steadfastly supported him. When the Congress formed an ad hoc committee in Bengal, Ashrafuddin Sahib became the Bengal Secretary of the Forward Block.

To resume my narrative, we sat together in the steamer. We also talked about the House of Labourers and the Abhoy Ashram among other things. Ashrafuddin Sahib said that the lawyers of Comilla collected so much money for the Abhoy Ashram which was comparatively of lesser importance. The House of Labourers which had a creative programme and which was doing more important work should have been helped.
CHAPTER VII

DEPARTURE FROM COMILLA FOR U.P.

It was July 1923. After my talks with Pratul Ganguli in Dacca, I came back to Comilla. It was sad that the time had come again to leave the town where I had spent ten years—the best part of my youth. The place where I was going would be an unknown one for me. Those feelings were natural. When I told Atin Roy about my programme, he was very much annoyed. He even stopped talking to me. He did not like the idea of my leaving the House of Labourers after starting it. I did not tell anything to Jitendra Bhattacharjee because he had come to the House of Labourers only due to my pressure. Prafulla Chakravarti and Prabodh Chakravarti also disapproved the idea but when I told them that I was going for a nobler cause, they agreed with me. I was very much disturbed at that time. The night when I was to leave, Atin Roy talked to me. We talked about everything in detail. In the Register of the House, my name was the first. For a very long time I was simply marked absent.

Concerning my relatives, with whom I was residing, my uncle went to Dacca to appear in some law case and my aunt had gone to her village. My cousin, Paresh Chandra Chatterjee, was the only responsible family member present. He was a mem-
ber of the Anushilan Samiti. I told him everything and left with him a letter for my uncle. It was just a matter of chance that my uncle went to Dacca at that time, otherwise it would have been a very difficult task to talk to him about my departure. He was full of affection for me and his personality always impressed me. I know that he would not object to my leaving the house. He was always too reticent to express his feelings and was a great devotee of individual freedom; so much so, that even if his heart broke, he would not have stopped me from following my own chosen path. But to part with such a man would not have been easy for me.

I can never forget that cloudy day when I had to start for Banaras. I went home to see my family. Practically that was my last adieu to my family. I had crossed the Rubicon and there was no going back. I asked my sister to pack all my woollen clothes and shoes in a box. My sister did so. I took my meals and when the time of my departure came, she asked me why was I taking all the woollen clothes with me in the month of July. She guessed that I was going to some distant place. She reported the matter to my mother. My mother was by nature a silent and patient lady. But as she heard my sister, tears rolled down her checks. My sister, also started weeping. I knew that I was going to leave them without any one on whom they could depend. My father was very old. My elder brother was not in a position to support the family. The
entire family was looking toward me. I also knew that I was going for an unknown journey. What assurance could I give to the rolling tears? My conscience felt a sense of guilt and injustice which was being done to those who had brought me to this earth. I was caught in this emotional vortex. The 'Mallah', boatman, was calling from outside that if I had to catch the steamer, I should not delay any more. I could not miss the steamer and the train to Banaras, as a man would come to receive me at Banaras station at the appointed time. So I hardened my voice and told my sister that weeping at the time of departure was a sign of evil portents and that this they should not do. I left the house and went to the boat. From the boat I could see both my mother and sister standing in drizzling rain and looking at me as long as the boat was visible. It was a gloomy day and inside my heart was also a gloom. The gloom of weather cleared away but the gloom inside continues to haunt me even now.

SITUATION IN U. P. BEFORE MY ARRIVAL IN THE MIDDLE OF 1923

The 'Swarajya' a weekly Urdu paper, started at Allahabad in 1907 by Mr. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, was in one sense a pioneer organ in preaching revolutionism in U. P. This extremist paper openly supported the revolutionary activities in the Punjab, Maharashtra and Bengal. Four editors of this paper were sent to the Andamans
under heavy sentences for writing articles espousing the cause of the revolutionaries.

Though not connected with Bengal, Mr. Sachindra Nath Sanyal had started an Anushilan Samiti at Banaras in 1909. The name was subsequently changed, as the Anushilan Samiti was banned by the Government. In 1913 Sanyal went to Calcutta and came in touch with Mr. Pratul Chandra Ganguli of Dacca Anushilan and was also introduced to Mr. Rashbehari Bose of Chander Nagore. Bose was carrying on revolutionary work in north India and Sanyal became his lieutenant in U. P. with his headquarters at Banaras. Rashbehari Bose was an employee in the Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun. Sanyal, Girija Babu and other were clapped into jail and given heavy sentences in Benaras Conspiracy case. Sanyal was sent to the Andamans and Girija Babu died in Agra Central Prison.

An exceptionally enthusiastic youth from the Chambal Valley area in the border of Etawah and Agra districts, named Pandit Gendalal Dixit, was inspired with the ideas of revolutionism and he started secret revolutionary activities very earnestly. He travelled to distant Bombay, also got inspiration from Calcutta in pursuit of his objective and eventually succeeded in gathering a band of youths around him and gave them revolutionary training. As a teacher at Auraiya in Etawah district he got the opportunity of recruiting youths.

When the organisation took some shape, the
need arose for money and he had to adopt the same old method of forcible collection of money. The inevitable consequence was arrest and a conspiracy case,—the Mainpuri Conspiracy Case of 1918. Gendalalji was the leader of the conspiracy. But he managed to escape from the jail with the approver. Many were sentenced, but were let off after compromise with the authorities. Gendalalji had a very hard life as an absconder. He collected a gang of criminals with the hope that they would turn patriots. But in this he was not very successful. He was betrayed, fought bravely with the police and was captured with severe wounds and thrown into Gwalior Fort. He, however, managed to come out, but died in Delhi on 21st December 1920 of T.B. in great distress.

Wide scale revolutionary activity again started in U.P. in 1923 and it took a sharp turn after I joined Sanyal early in 1924. I took the charge of U.P. and Sachin Sanyal went over to Calcutta.

AT BANARAS (U.P.) AND KANPUR.

Bengal had a close relation with Banaras. The Bengali population constitutes a considerable part of the city’s population and the locality ‘Bangalitola’ is just a miniature Bengal inside the city of Banaras. Before the First World War, Shashi Mazumdar who belonged to a zamindar family of Comilla, and younger brother of Basanta Kumar Mazumdar, worked in Banaras. He was a member of our secret party. Kedareshwar Sen and Tarani Shom, two
important Anushilan members, were sent to Banaras by the Samiti and they joined the Banaras Hindu University as students. At the time of the Non-Cooperation movement of 1921, Upendra Dhar, who was also an Anushilanite, joined the movement. Upendra Dhar and Vichitra Narayan Sharma (later a Cabinet Minister in U.P. and now holding a very high position in Gandhi Ashram affairs) were fourth year students in Banaras Hindu University when the movement started. They left the University and joined the Gandhi Ashram there. Vichitra Narayan Sharma used to live in the Ashram and Upendra Dhar spent the whole day in the Khaddar Bhandar of the Ashram.

I knew that U. P. required a methodical plan for revolutionary activities. The facts about the Banaras Conspiracy Case of 1915 and Mainpuri Conspiracy Case of 1918 were known to me. While coming back from the Nagpur Congress in 1920, I stopped at Banaras and met Prabodhendu Roy, whose name and address also came in the Rowlatt Report. I was happy that such an opportunity was offered to me.

When Anushilan Samiti decided to work with the Rash Behari Bose group, Nagendra Nath Datta of Sylhet, who was known as Giraja Babu in the party, was sent to Northern India by the Anushilan Samiti to work with him. He worked with Rash Behari Bose and Sachindra Nath Sanyal. In the Banaras Consparacy Case along with Sachindra Nath, Girija Babu was also arrested and sentenced
in 1915. He died in Agra Jail early in 1918 during the tenure of his imprisonment. I had contacts with him at Comilla as he was a leader of our Samiti.

When I arrived at Banaras, I was received at the station by Satish Sinha, the incharge of our party there. He made arrangements for my stay in a room of Ganesh Mahal where he himself was staying. I was very intimate with him and his elder brother Khetra Sinha. They belonged to Chandpur and were very important members of our Samiti. I took charge from Satish Sinha and he went back to Bengal. He gave me some addresses and other things.

I think it would not be out of place here to mention another important fact. In Godholia, a place in Banaras, Swami Satyananda Puri, a ‘Sanyasi’ who was a revolutionary and who played a big part afterwards with Rash Behari Bose in the formation of the Indian National Army, had opened an ‘asharm’ named Kalyan Ashram. Though he had left Banaras by the time, I arrived there, there was another ‘brahmachari’ staying in that Ashram. This ‘Ashram’ was the centre of revolutionary activities before my arrival.

The Brahmachari’s real name was Sachin Chakravarti. In 1925 he was sentenced to 5 years R. I. along with Prabodh Das Gupta in a currency note forgery case, which they were doing for the Samiti in a place in the district of Dacca.

He introduced me to all the persons he came in
contact with during his stay at Banaras.

Another young man, Sachin Bakshi, became a full-time worker for the Samiti. His family had a big house in Pataleshwar mohalla and his father was the proprietor of Sikrol Ice Factory, not far off from the Banaras Cantonment station. So he had no family worries and devoted all his time for the secret revolutionary work. Another member of the Samiti, Manmatha Gupta was a student of Gandhi Vidyapith and even at that time he evinced literary talents. He was recruited to the Party through his younger brother Manmohan Gupta. Still another member of our Samiti, Pranabesh Chatterjee was a student of Vidyapith. He recruited Chandra Shekhar Azad to the Party.

Sudarshan Ganguli and Jitendra Bhattacharjee, two school students and Prabodhendu Roy were also very active in revolutionary work. So the beginning was quite encouraging. In the Hindu University two students were sent by the Samiti, one was Maitra of Rajshahi, student of Engineering, and the other was Modak of Mymensing District, a student of the Intermediate class. Maitra later gave up engineering and passed M.A. and L.L.B. Modak joined the engineering college after doing his Intermediate,

Early in 1922, Shyam Chakravarti of Chandpur came to Banaras for a change. He was an active Anushilanite at Chandpur. Then came Kshetra Sinha and Satish Sinha stayed. I relieved him in July, 1923.
My arrival at Banaras was with a firm determination and solid purpose. The others came only for a short time, they did some work and went back to their places. My case was different as I came to stay there and merge myself completely in revolutionary activities. I found a favourable atmosphere. A number of enthusiasts, whose names I have mentioned above, were also keen to gear up revolutionary activities. So I along with them accentuated the pace of our work. I was young and energetic at that time. My companions were also very young. We never grudged footing down long distances and roaming about the city, meeting different people, persuading them and tapping all the possible resources for the encouragement and enhancement of revolutionary activities.

Before my coming to Benaras I requested Pratul Ganguli to give me an introductory letter for Sachin Sanyal, even though I was well acquainted with him in Calcutta. Pratul Ganguli told me that a letter was not needed as Sachin Sanyal, after coming back from the Andamans, told him that he would not participate in revolutionary activities any more. But when I arrived at Banaras, I came to know from Satish Sinha that Sachin Sanyal had started taking interest in revolutionary work again. I decided that I would meet him at Allahabad. But let me narrate certain things that happened in Banaras.

The Gandhi Ashram shop at Dasaswamedh was centre where different types of people used to gather
Upendra Dhar, a member of the secret anushilan Samiti, was the incharge of this shop. Daily in the morning, he and Vichitra Narayan Sharma used to carry the Khadi clothing etc. in a ‘Thela’ (hand cart) from the Gandhi Ashram. Besides this small shop was the Star Company. It was run by the Lahiri family. I also made that shop my centre for getting acquainted with the people and the way of life in U.P. Upendra Dhar was always ready to help me. He introduced me to Vichitra Narayan Sharma who offered me accommodation in the Gandhi Ashram as it was a central place where I could meet so many people without any risk of being suspected by the C.I.D. men. As I had to carry on secret work, I did not think it advisable to stay in the Ashram. It was through the Gandhi Ashram shop that I came in contact with Rajendra Nath Lahiri, a young and very sincere energetic student. He was recruited to the secret party by one of my predecessors, Shyam Chakravarti, but I did not know why he dropped him from the party. When he left Banaras, he asked Satish Sinha not to include Rajendra Lahiri in the Party. Satish Sinha did not ask the reason for it. When Satish Sinha was leaving he told me something regarding the inclusion of Rajendra Nath Lahiri. Rajendra Nath Lahiri, as I found, was very keen to know about the revolutionary activities. He came in touch with Sachin Sanyal also. He also went to Dr. Surendra Mukerjee, who was a known revolutionary, and was detained during the war period and was doing homeopathic
practice in Banaras at that time and told him that he was interested in revolutionary activities. He promised Rajendra Lahiri to introduce him to Sachin Sanyal when he came to Banaras, and he did so. When I met and Rajendra Nath Lahiri came to know me, I found him very eager and inquisitive to know more and more about the revolutionary movement. We used to talk for hours together about the subject. Rajendra Lahiri very keenly wanted to know more about various aspects of Revolutionary Movements in India and abroad.

These conversation and the overwhelming patriotic trait of his personality, made us very intimate. I was surprised that he was excluded from the party by my predecessors. I was watching the development of the young man but I never wanted to attract him towards ourselves as he had already come in contact with Sanyal Babu.

After a considerable consolidation of the organisational work in Banaras, I decided and went to Allahabad to meet Sanyal. I went to Allahabad and called on him. We already knew each other. During our talks I told him that I had been sent to Banaras by the Anushilan Samiti as its representative. I thought and the party men also advised me that I should definitely meet and take his advice when I was so near. We had long discussions about the affairs in U.P. Sanyal Babu suggested that I should sever my connections with the Anushilan and work with him in U.P. I expressed my regrets as it was not even imaginable for me to drift from
Anushilan Samiti which deputed me there as its representative. On my polite refusal to his suggestion, he wanted me to ask some other responsible member of the party in Calcutta to come and have talks with him. When I told him that I did not know any one's address in Calcutta and that if he liked I could write to Pratul Ganguli in Dacca, he did not seem to be pleased with the proposal. He said that he had addresses of Ramesh Chaudhuri, the incharge of our party in Calcutta and asked me to write to him. I wrote a letter to Ramesh Chaudhuri in Calcutta. Sanyal Babu discussed so many other subjects also. Soon after I came back to Banaras.

After sometime in the same year 1923, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya called an open session of the first Hindu Mahasabha at Banaras. It was organised on a very large scale and representatives from all over India came to Banaras to participate. It was during this session that Ramesh Chaudhuri and Nalini Kishore Guha came to Banaras from Calcutta. Nalini Kishore Guha, who was an editor of a daily paper, participated as a press representative in the conference. Ramesh Chaudhuri came along with him. He had given information about his arrival to Sachin Sanyal. Sanyal Babu also visited Banaras at the same time. Ramesh Chaudhuri and Sachin Sanyal met but no fruitful decision came out of the talks.

Ramesh Chaudhuri brought a letter from Abani Mukherjee, a well known revolutionary, for Shiva
Prasad Gupta, a well known philanthropist-patriot of Banaras. Both had very intimate relations when abroad. In the letter Abani had requested him to render some financial help to the secret party; but Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta declined to give any help and said that he was now only interested in non-violent activities. Ramesh Chaudhuri and I had gone to see Babu Shiva Prasad at his residence with that letter.

A young party worker who was living in the Ashram of the Swamiji in Godholia wanted to go back to Bengal. I had no money at that time to meet his journey expenses. When Nalini Kishore Guha came to Banaras, I requested him to take the young party worker back to Calcutta bearing his journey expenses. Nalini Kishore Guha readily agreed and the young man accompanied him.

I hope it will not be out of place to pay tribute to Swami Satyananda Puri, the founder of the Ashram in Godholia, who lived and died for the service of the country. He was Prafulla Sen of Faridpur, from East Bengal and was a brilliant student. He was an important member of the Anushilan Samiti and later he turned a 'Sanyasi' but even then he was a staunch patriot. Even as a 'Sanyasi' he was helping the secret party work and so his Banaras Ashram was under the vigilance of the C.I.D. From Banaras he went to Ranchi and later left India and established himself at Bangkok, the capital of Siam. He lived in there for several decades. His eminence in that country grew very high
and he was adorned and worshipped there as a great spiritual saint. His humanitarian outlook impressed the people there and even the King of Siam became his great admirer and devotee. During the Second World War, Rash Behari Bose the veteran Indian revolutionary came from Japan to Saigon for a few days and stayed with Swamiji, who helped him a good deal in the formation of Indian National Army. However, when Swamiji and Sardar Pritam Singh were flying to Japan for meetings, the plane fell down into the sea resulting in the death of a great patriot, spiritualist and saint.

My revered uncle, Bishweswar Chatterjee, who had always been a source of inspiration to me was shocked very much after my departure from Comilla. He loved me like his own son. During the Puja vacation, my uncle along with his son, Paresh Chatterjee, come to Banaras with the intention of taking me back home. Letters had already been exchanged between us. At Banaras they stayed with a relative. Having come to know about his arrival, I went to the place where he was staying and very respectfully touched his feet. He was much enraged due to my leaving a comfortable life at Comilla. He asked me whether I had ever thought of my family, old father, mother, younger brother and sister. On whom would they depend if I lived in such a way? I kept silent. His objections were really very genuine. I had no answer to offer. He asked me to be wise enough to go
back to Calcutta. There I and my cousin, Paresh Chattejee, would study the trend of the markets and then set up a business. He said that he would give twenty-five thousand rupees for that. If it was not possible for me in any case to go back to Calcutta, I was advised to start some business in Banaras itself and for the same he offered five thousand rupees but on one condition that I would give a word of honour to him to leave all connections with the secret revolutionary party. It is obvious that it was not possible for me to do so.

All through his stay at Banaras, I was with them. But when the time of departure came, he gave me money for buying three inter-class tickets. I purchased only two tickets and returned the rest of the money. He again was enraged. I accompanied them from Banaras Cantonment station to Kashi station and got down there, bidding them good-bye, silently touching his feet.

Coming back to Sanyal and his activities, it would be interesting to reveal a fact here. Long after my meeting with Sachindra Nath Sanyal, I came to know the thoughts Sanyal Babu entertained about me and our party members. It happened like this.

Amulya Lahiri, a seasoned Anushilanite, who came from Pabna district of North Bengal, was well known to me. He was a cousin of Rajendra Lahiri who also belonged to the same district. Amulya Lahiri due to some reasons of health wanted a change in climate and decided to go to Chunar
for some days. While on his way to Chunar, he stopped at Banaras and stayed with Rajendra Lahiri for some time till all the arrangements for his stay at Chunar were made. As we knew each other, our frequent meetings were natural. Once I went to Rajendra Lahiri's house along with Amulya but at that time Rajendra was not there. Rajendra Lahiri who was in contact with Sachindra Nath Sanyal started to persuade Amulya for the revolutionary activities without any knowledge of Amulya's background as an old member of the Anushilan Samiti. Amulya, very much amused, told me not to meet him publicly as that would take away the fun. To hide our friendship from Rajendra Lahiri, Amulya called on my place at night and told me the contents of the talks that took place about me and our party between him and Rajendra. Rajendra told him that Sachin Sanyal said that Anushilan Party had sent to Banaras a very important member. Sanyal Babu told him that Anushilan is an organisation of the revolutionaries of East Bengal only. They were stern and stubborn and wanted to dominate everywhere they went. It was very hard to follow the strict party discipline and very strong organisational fellowship of the Anushilan Samiti. He gave Rajendra Lahiri the impression that it would be very difficult for him to adapt himself to the matrix of Anushilan; but he could very easily apply his own initiative and work freely on the advices given by Sanyal Babu. He said so many other things.
He created this impression on Rajendra Lahiri only to keep him on his side.

In Banaras our recruiting work was going on satisfactorily. The main objects of our work was to instill a strong sense of patriotism among the recruits. Literature that could help in that kind of mental build-up was given to them. Discussions were arranged and debates frequently took place on the formation of a clear cut conception about the situation in the country and on the duty of young Indians. To establish contact with as many persons as possible and to inspire them to the service of the community and the country was part of our routine work. I remember one bright young recruit specially. He was Rabindra Nath Kar. He was an important recruit at Banaras. He had taken training in auxiliary force. He was a very good shot. His end was very unfortunate as he died of tuberculosis.

Financial insecurity always surrounded the secret revolutionaries. They could not tap any financial resource on a big scale due to strict police vigilance. I also worked under extreme financial duress in Banaras. I had no other alternative but to earn some money by taking private tuitions. I managed one tuition for teaching English to Pranabesh Chatterjee. I was getting Rs. 13/- per month.

My next teaching experience was as an honorary teacher in a school of Banaras. The headmaster of this school was a Law student in the Calcutta
University. He joined the non-cooperation movement from there in 1921. He came to Banaras in a vacation. There was a small school with one teacher and a very meagre number of students. He foresaw a very good opportunity. He met the teacher of the school and after some time managed to become its headmaster. One day, one of our common friends, introduced me to him. When we came a bit more close to each other, he insisted that I should also take a keen interest in teaching as well as in the affairs of the school. My other friends also said the same to me. I started going daily to the school and teaching the students; but I refused to accept any remuneration. My interest grew in the school and I devoted more of my time in teaching the best students there. Throughout my stay in jail, I had been studying various subjects. I got the opportunity of utilising what I had learned. Apart from taking regular classes, I encouraged the poor students to keep their head high despite poverty. Consequently, the number of students grew very speedily and the parents showed a very keen interest in the school affairs. It was a well established school by the time I left it. Long after this one of my friends told me that the same school had grown into a big educational institution in a new site of its own. The Rama-krishna Mission and other organisations helped it to grow.

During my stay in Banaras, I maintained my relations with the District Congress Committee
also. I was not living in Banaras with an assumed name. I thought it advisable to join the Congress and establish my contacts with the Congress Committee there. I became a four-anna member. Sampurnanandji was the General Secretary of the District Congress Committee at that time. I attended the Provincial Conference of the Congress held in that year. The election for central legislature also took place while I was at Banaras. The late Motilal Nehru was the candidate for it. I did canvassing for him in the Bengalitola. C. R. Das sent Basanta Kumar Majumdar, a leader of Comilla, for canvassing among the Bengali population in favour of Motilal Nehru. We met and mutual exchange of views and elaborate talks took place.

After the arrest of Gandhiji in 1922, the country faced a political chaos as no programme was clearly visible to those who joined non-cooperation. To decide the further step to be taken, a special session of the All India Congress was called in Delhi in 1923. Most of the important members of our party also came to Delhi to attend the session. I also went to participate in it as a delegate from Dacca and Banaras. When I reached Delhi, we decided that my delegation from Banaras be cancelled. Three groups of persons participated in it. One group was composed of staunch Gandhites and was trying to keep itself engaged in the propagation of 'Khadi' and Charkha', etc. only. Another group was the group of 'secret' revolutionaries who extended their work throughout the length and breadth
of the country after the Non-Cooperation Movement. The third group was constituted by prominent lawyers who placed the resolution for Council entry before the Session and got it passed. After this they formed Swaraj Party inside the Congress and contested elections for entering into the Provincial and Central legislatures. The members of our party who came from Bengal also attended it. After this session some of us toured U.P. We went to Hardwar and after visiting Mathura, Brindaban and Agra we arrived at Banaras and all of my associates stayed at my place. From Banaras Pratul Ganguli and Naren Sen boarded a train for Calcutta while Purnananda Das Gupta, Atindra Mohan Roy, and Dhirendra Ganguli, the late Curator, Victoria Memorial Museum, Calcutta, who died in 1933 remained in Banaras for some days. Dr. Dhiren Ganguli was the younger brother of Pratul Ganguli. On the next morning we read in the newspapers that arrests had commenced in Bengal. We sent one person by the next train to stop Naren Sen and Pratul Ganguli at Patna. From Calcutta also somebody was sent for this purpose. They were contacted at Burdwan station and thus they escaped arrest and went underground.

I must narrate another incident. While we visited Agra, we saw the Taj in the day time. In the evening we decided to go to Taj again and see it in the moonlight. On our way to the Taj, Naren Sen sat down on a bench in the park adjoining the Taj premises and told others to go and see while
he would remain sitting there. I also did not go and sat beside him. We talked on so many subjects but the most remarkable thing that he foretold that time, I still remember very well. He said that our association of so many persons together would not last long. He had a wonderful capacity of foresight and he clearly saw the impending arrests and repressions. Not only on this occasion but also on so many other occasions he studied the course of happenings and formed conclusions about the future which later came to be true. His mind had that capacity to anticipate things after due consideration of the past and the present. Within a very few days after our talk in the park, arrests of revolutionaries started in Bengal, and Sen and Ganguli also would have been arrested in Calcutta had not their journey been shortened at Burdwan. Atin Roy was arrested on his arrival at Comilla and thrown behind the bars.

The other conference I attended in Banaras was the conference of the Khilafat Movement. Though I did not follow much of Urdu language at that time, I gathered the impression that the Khilafat Movement lacked the touch of genuine patriotism which the same movement I saw at Comilla in 1920 possessed. Those who understood the contents of the speeches fully were even less happy towards the attitude which the conference adopted.

It would be interesting here to reveal a few sensational facts. After my meeting with Sanyal Babu at Allahabad, we happened to meet often and
talk about our work. It was at this time that a cruel episode happened at Kanpur. The police of Kanpur tyrannised the labourers there and as far as I remember firing and death also took place, and consequently a great agitation was afoot in the city against the place. Sanyal Babu one day talked to me in this connection when he came to Banaras. He proposed that the S. P. should be murdered. The next proposal he placed was for the murder of Rai Bahadur Jitendra Nath Mukherjee, the then Dy. S. P., C. I. D. in Banaras. I agreed on the proposals and told him that he should arrange for the murder of the S. P. at Kanpur and that after it was executed, I would deal with Jitendra Nath Mukherjee at Banaras. We had built up a strong organisation in Banaras and it was not very difficult for us to execute this plan. I had revolvers and men who would shoot him. But the murder of the S. P. at Kanpur, Sanyal had to arrange and naturally he was depending on his recruits for it.

Due to the failure of the plan at Kanpur, our plan at Banaras was not executed, though we were fully prepared. Even earlier than this plan, Sanyal Babu authored a more adventurous plan. He was interested in the murder of the then Viceroy of India, the Earl of Reading. For the same purpose he sent Chheda Lal Mishra, who came from Hardoi district and was working at Farrukkabad district, to Simla to watch the movements of the Governor General there. But Chedda Lal Mishra
did not succeed in this plan as an iron organisation with men of staunch faith and unshakable conviction were needed, to execute it. An amateur like Chedda Lal Mishra could only watch the movement of the Viceroy but could not give any precise information. For the execution of this plan, Sanyal Babu went to Calcutta and met C.R. Das there. He placed his plan before him and asked for some financial help for its completion. C.R. Das gave him some money for his purpose. But the matter did not proceed any further. He was not a fit man to execute such a plan in which only seasoned and expert men could succeed.

After a satisfactory consolidation of our organisational set up in Banaras, I could afford to divert my attention to some other districts of U.P. I received instructions from Pratul Ganguli in Dacca who gave me a few addresses in U.P. While I was taking charge from Satish Sinha at Banaras, he also handed over to me a few addresses of persons in the different towns of U.P. So I chalked out a tour programme. I toured a few towns and cities of U.P. During my tour I realised that there was an imperative need for a unit of our party at Lucknow as it was the headquarter of the Provin- cial Government. I arrived at Lucknow and met Chaudhuri Khaliquzaman, the then Chairman of the Municipal Board Lucknow, for whom I had an introductory letter from Pratul Ganguli. I appraised him of my aims. He agreed with me that I should set up one unit at Lucknow and
promised that he would extend his helping hand by trying to look after some financial needs of the recruits at Lucknow. In Lucknow I met a few other persons also. All of them showed a sympathetic attitude. From there I came back to Banaras and thought that Sachindra Nath Bakshi, who was the best man in our Banaras organisation, would be the fittest person to be deputed to Lucknow. I introduced him to Chudhuri Sahib and a few other persons. He stayed at Lucknow to start the work there.

As I have stated earlier that I was not known as a revolutionary in Banaras and so without any interreference from the C.I.D. my work was going on smoothly. But this secrecy could not be maintained for a long time due to the betrayal of Kartik Brahmachari, who was neither our Party recruit nor living in Godholia Ashram but used to visit the Ashram very frequently. Swami Satyananda was a very great man and this Kartik Brahmachari without any affiliation with the secret party work, used to go to Swamiji. It was natural that the purpose of my stay at Banaras was not hidden from him. The C.I.D. officials suspected this Brahmachari and interrogated him. He in a state of nervousness exposed to the C.I.D. that though he was not involved in any such type of activities, he knew one person who had specially come to Banaras for such a purpose. The C.I.D. people must have forced him to reveal the name of the person. He might have told them my name
and promised to identify me some day before the police. One day it happened that I and Modak, who was a student of Intermediate class in the University, were going to the Godholia side from my place at Ganesh Mahal. The Brahmachari met us on the way and proceeded with us towards Godholia. All of us walked to the centre where many streets met. There was the house in which the C.I.D. Inspector, Jatin Sen was living. When we reached the front of the Inspector's house, the Brahmachari asked me to come into the house. Now I was placed in a very awkward position. To run away from there was more dangerous. It might have affirmed their suspicion more. I signalled to Modak to go away and I with the Brahmachari entered the house. He introduced me to the C.I.D. Inspector, Jitendra Sen. He came from Mymensingh district in East Bengal. I told him that I had come to Banaras only for a change of climate as I was not keeping good health. But everything was known to him. I was known to him as I was not staying in Banaras with any assumed name. Since that time the C.I.D. people were always after me like a shadow. I had already changed the room where I stayed after my arrival. Now I was putting up in an old house of a relative of mine at Pataleshwar. One day when I was coming back from shopping, I saw Rai Bahadur Mukherjee, the C. I. D. Dy. S. P., standing on one side of the house and gazing very intently toward it as if he was doing some minute study of the
architecture of the house. I decided that it was high time for me to leave Banaras. Otherwise my contact with other recruits would expose them before the police.

As the C. I. D. vigilance grew daily and I was thinking of getting an opportunity to leave Banaras, a very important development took place in our party. I have already stated that I met Sanyal at Allahabad and he expressed his views that it would be more convenient for him if I worked with him without any affiliation with Anushilan. When we could not compromise on it, Ramesh Chaudhuri was requested to visit Banaras for elaborate talks with Sanyal Babu. The talks took place but no decision came out. In the second round of talks, Sanyal while in Calcutta, talked to Pratul Ganguli but he did not agree with Sanyal’s views and the talks again failed. Then the third time Sanyal Babu contacted Trailokya Chakravarti, a veteran Anushilan leader, known for his liberal views, and equally respected by other parties also. Trailokya Chakravarti was teaching in the National School in Calcutta at that time. Trailokya Babu agreed with Sanyal and an amalgamation was the result. Sanyal Babu virtually joined the Anushilan; but, as Anushilan was very popular in Bengal only, for working outside of Bengal, even as a unit of Anushilan, some other party name was required. So the formation of another party as an offshoot of the Anushilan took place in the village Bholachang of Brahmanbaria Sub-division in Tippera district, East
Bengal. In the presence of Pratul Ganguli, Narendra Mohan Sen, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, whom Amulya Mukherjee escorted from Mymensing, the Hindustan Republican Association was formed. After this amalgamation Sachindra Nath Sanyal came back to Banaras and gave me the news of these developments. He brought one letter from Trailokya Babu for me wherein he suggested that I should go to Calcutta, where he (Trailokya Babu) would give me two revolvers.

Meanwhile, Prabodh Das-Gupta, who was with me in Rajshahi Jail and who was an intimate friend of mine and an important member of the Anushilan, came to Banaras as his mother was living there. He brought one letter from Trailokya Babu for me. It was a detailed letter. Afterwards I went to Calcutta for detailed talks with Trailokya Babu. In our conversation he took up every point with its various aspects. He gave me the two revolvers also. Sanyal had asked for two revolvers and Maharaj (Trailokya Chakravarti) promised to give two more revolvers for U. P. I came back to Banaras with the revolvers. I gave these revolvers to Sanyal Babu. At that time he had only one revolver with him. How he got that revolver had also a story behind it. Actually what happened was that one foreigner came to Banaras and stayed in a Hotel. He had a revolver with him. One of the waiters stole the revolver and sold it to Dr. Surendra Mukherjee at fifty rupees. Mukherjee gave that revolver to Sachindra Nath Sanyal. That
was the only revolver Sanyal had. This revolver was later seized by the police and was exhibited in the Kakori Conspiracy Case. It was a six chambered Webley 55 bore revolver.

It may be mentioned here that when Ramesh Chaudhuri approached Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta for financial help with a letter from Abani Mukherjee, he replied that he was not interested in encouraging violence but shortly after this Dr. Jadu Gopal Mukherjee of Calcutta, who belonged to the Calcutta Jugantar Party, accompanied by Sachindra Sanyal, approached Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta. Guptaji gave him twelve hundred rupees out of which six hundred rupees were taken by Sanyal Babu himself. Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta’s refusal to give money to Ramesh Chaudhuri was only due to the fact that he did not approach Guptaji with proper and convincing credentials. How could he judge the authenticity of the letter of Abani Mukherje, which Chaudhuri brought for him, especially when he had no earlier acquaintance with Guptaji. Dr. Jadu Gopal Mukherjee went with Sanyal Babu, who was well-known to Guptaji.

Sanyal Babu was a man with family liabilities. He had to look after the financial demands of his family. There was of course no source of regular income. He therefore thought it advisable to shift to Calcutta with his family. There he hired a house in South Calcutta and started living incognito. There also, as he gave us to understand, he was not financially well off and he had to work
hard to make both ends meet. But in spite of these practical difficulties, he had to continue his activities and maintain his leadership as well. It was during this time that some very promising young members of the Anushilan Samiti came to know him. And he, of course, tried earnestly to lead them in his own way. Jatin Das was the most remarkable among them. He became a martyr afterwards.

After the formation of H. R. A. when Sanyal Babu came back, it was decided between us that I would shift to Kanpur and set myself up there.

Mr. Sanyal kept it a close secret that he was regularly getting rupees 150/- per month from Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta of Banaras. This was continued even in jail though there he told me that he was getting only Rs. 10/- per month from Guptaji for books. He once casually mentioned to me that Deshbandhu C. R. Das offered him Rs. 10,000/- for killing the Viceroy. This he told me shortly after the amalgamation.

"Fame", as Milton said "is the last infirmity of a noble mind". Possibly one can appropriately substitute the word "fame" by "leadership". Absolute perfection in human character is only a hypothesis. And one is judged by the maximum number of virtues one possesses. Sanyal Babu’s infirmities may be neglected and even forgiven. He fought throughout his life against the British and had many virtues and if sometimes he was impatient or spoke a few words against other party
leaders, who were actually the pillars of the secret party, it should not be taken seriously.

In Banaras my identity was already exposed to the police. At Kanpur I could devote my time to my mission without attracting the notice of the police. So before leaving for Kanpur I gave the charge of the city unit to Rajendra Nath Lahiri and Modak was deputed as incharge of the University unit. At the time of my departure I had to take every precaution against the C. I. D. So I adopted the same method when I left Banaras as I did at the time of my departure from Comilla. Probodh Das-Gupta went to the station with my luggage. He purchased my ticket and occupied a seat in a compartment. I was waiting on the other side of the train where there was no light. When the train started Das Gupta got down and I entered the compartment and took the seat. It was already decided that I would stay in the mess of Suresh Bhattacharjee. After my arrival at Kanpur, I straightaway went there.

The Patkapur mess of Suresh Bhattacharya where I stayed needs a word here. The Anglo-Bengali School was being run at Kanpur under the patronage of Dr. S. N. Sen a well known medical practitioner. Suresh Bhattacharya was its Hindi teacher. There were five teachers, including the headmaster, in the school.

All of them were taking their meals in the mess; but only Suresh Bhattacharya and another teacher who came from Banaras were living in the mess.
All the teachers knew that Suresh Babu was an extraneous revolutionary and they were sympathetic to him as well as towards the revolutionary activities. So when I stayed there, there was no need to hide the purpose. Of course I lived there with an assumed name P. C. Roy. But popularly I was known as Roy Sahib. The police also had no ground to suspect me as my stay in that mess where two Bengali teachers were living and three other Bengali teachers came daily to take their meals, did not appear to be strange. The headmaster and the other four teachers of the School knew who I was and why I had come there. Suresh Bhattacharjee was also looking after the 'Vartaman', a daily local paper, as its paid editor. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi secured him this job. Bhattacharjee also enjoyed the confidence of Dr. Sen, the patron of the institution. This confidence was amply demonstrated when Dr. Sen came forward as a defence witness of Suresh Bhattacharjee in the Kakori Conspiracy Case and gave a fine statement in the court in Bhattacharjee's favour.

Soon I hired a double storeyed house situated near the mess but in the interior of the street. I stayed there only for a month. The difficulty in keeping this house was that except myself there was nobody to occupy the house. The financial difficulty in meeting the rent was the second obstacle. Moreover, I thought that my staying alone in a double storeyed house without any ostensible source of income might have created some suspicions. So