

The Concept of Motherland as Divine Mother in the 1942 Quit India Movement in Midnapore

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Abstract

The present work explores the ideological environment of the 1942 Quit India Movement in Midnapore, revealing the pivotal role of the concept of Motherland as Divine Mother. The aim of this paper is two-fold: first, it deals with the Quit India movement as it developed in Midnapore; secondly, it focuses on the crucial role of the concept of Motherland as Divine Mother which was frequently evoked through *Biblabi*, a Bengali bulletin, published regularly from Tamruk. Drawing their inspiration from this concept, the participants determined to oust the British rulers for freeing their Motherland. This radical group violently confronted the British and ultimately established the *Jatiya Sarkar* in 1942. Thus, within the Gandhian movement, a militant movement emerged, defying the non-violent principles of Mahatma Gandhi.

Keywords: Midnapore, Quit India Movement, Motherland as Divine Mother, Militant Spirit, Non-Violence

Introduction

The 1942 Quit India Movement in Midnapore was a pivotal moment in India's struggle for independence. The soil of Midnapore is a soil of struggle. Midnapore district of colonial Bengal played a significant role in this nationalist campaign. From the available source material, it appears that during the Quit India movement in Midnapore Gandhian doctrine of *satyagraha and non-violent* hardly influenced the people of Midnapore. Imbibing the maxims and militant spirit of the Bengali intelligentsia Rajnarayan Basu, Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, and others they conceived their motherland as Divine Mother. They worshipped Her and were determined to oust the imperialist British rulers by any means to free the Motherland. So they utilised Gandhi's 1942 Quit India movement as a platform and rose to a defiant mood to free the Motherland.

The Quit India Movement in Midnapore and its different phases

The Quit India Movement itself was sparked off by Gandhi's call to action on August 8, 1942, demanding an end to British rule in India.¹ He was the undisputed leader of this movement, and the movement occurred after his name, but he had little control over it.² The imperialist British arrested Gandhi and all other established national and provincial Congress leaders. Following this an immediate and spontaneous violent demonstration took place in almost all parts of the country as a reaction and the upsurge assumed the extent of a civil rebellion. Sumit Sarkar has emphasised that the 1942 Quit India movement passed through three interrelated phases.³

The first phase, lasting from 9th to 14th August, started as an urban revolt, marked by strikes, boycotts and picketing, which were massive and violent but quickly suppressed. In Bengal, the movement started with strikes held in Calcutta between 10 to 17 August. From about the middle of August, the movement entered into its second phase by shifting the focus to the countryside, which saw major peasant rebellion and student violence, marked by the destruction of communication systems, attacks on government buildings or any other visible symbol of colonial authority and finally, the installation of a number local 'National Government', which were usually short-lived. From about the end of September, this movement entered into its third phase which was 'longest but also least formidable' and characterised by terrorist activities by educated youth. Bands of ordinary peasants were also involved in sabotaging of war efforts.

Midnapore emerged as the eye of the storm of this movement on 28th September. Through August it was relatively calm even if there continued political meetings and demonstrations in public places. The Quit India movement in Midnapore passed through three phases between August 1942 and March 1943.⁴ The initial phase which lasted for about a month from 9th August to 27th September was the preparatory stage.⁵ The Congress volunteers began to prepare for the forthcoming movement. Their programme included distribution of leaflets, holding meetings in the villages, delivering fiery speeches and raising funds. So the movement was truly Gandhian in this phase even if there was evidence of spreading messages of militant action by the students⁶.

The movement entered its second phase with orchestrated attacks on Khejuri and

¹ R.C. Majumdar, *History of Modern Bengal: Part- Two 1905-1947*, (Kolkata: Tulshi Prakashani, 2006), 264-265.

² Gyanendra Pandey, "Introduction: The Indian Nation in 1942", in *The Indian Nation in 1942*, ed. Gyanendra Pandey, (Calcuta: K.P. Bagchi & Copmany, 1988), 5.

³ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983), 394.

⁴ Bidyut Chakrabarty, "Defiance and Confrontation: The 1942 Quit India Movement in Midnapur," *Social Scientist* 20, no. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug. 1992): 75-93.

⁵ Hitesranjan Sanyal, "The Quit India Movement in Mednipur District," In Pandey, Gyanendra ed., *The Indian Nation in 1942*, (Calcuta: K.P. Bagchi & Copmany, 1988), 45-46.

⁶ Sanyal, "The Quit India Movement in Mednipur District," 43.

Potaspur *thanas* (police stations) on 28 September 1942. Between 28 September and 30 October, the movement saw the most rigorous and aggressive action such as the destruction of government offices and buildings, railway tracks, and telegraph wires, attacks on *thanas* and many clashes erupted between the mob and the police, which killed many persons, including the thirteen-year-old boy Lakshminarayan Das and a seventy-three-year-old lady Matangini Hajara,⁷. Of the five sub-divisions, Contai and Tamluk became the prominent centres of the movement. The crowd comprised almost completely of students, young men and women, and peasants participated spontaneously. The War Council leaders moved with a target to set up a parallel administration in these areas.⁸ M.M. Basu, the Additional District Magistrate himself reported that ‘the mob was apparently not afraid of firing’ and ‘the attacks took place so suddenly and simultaneously that no preventive action could be taken before hand’.⁹ The district officers’ chronicles of December admitted: ‘Nearly all the local bodies in Contai and Tamluk were under the control of the Congress people’.¹⁰

The movement entered its third phase on 1 November 1942 and lasted till 31 March 1943. In this phase, the Congress volunteers continued anti-British campaigns through the provisional National government. On 26 November 1942, in Contai, the War Council converted itself into a Swaraj Panchayet and brought the *thana*-level national governments under its purview and commanded a militia called *Mukti Bahini* or *Jatiya Bahini* for carrying out the executive and judicial activities in the areas of this sub-division. On 17 December 1942, the *Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar* was inaugurated in Tamluk with Satish Chandra Samanta as the first *Sarbadhinayaka* (Dictator), and his Cabinet was comprised of Ministers who were in charge of the different portfolios such as Defence or War, Finance, Revenue, Home, Police, External affairs, Judiciary, Education, Health, Agriculture, and Publicity.¹¹ It had also a trained volunteer corps *Bidyut Bahini* which was later called *National Militia* with Sushil Dhara as Commander-in-Chief, and a women’s volunteer corps, or *Bhagini Sena* that nursed the wounded and protected village women from police atrocities, and its ‘mouthpiece’, the Bengali bulletin *Biplabi*, played a crucial role in mobilizing people for the movement. Despite severe British repression, the parallel National Governments survived till September 1944 and managed to carry out their administrative activities effectively.

What is remarkable is that the movement witnessed a militant spirit, deliberate use of violent means, and brutal activities. The *Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar*, particularly its corps, the *National Militia* under Sushil Dhara, Commander-in-Chief, had

⁷ Sanyal, “The Quit India Movement in Mednipur District,” 49.

⁸ Sanyal, “The Quit India Movement in Mednipur District,” 45-46.

⁹ India Office Records, R/3/2/36. Report by M.M. Basu, Additional District Magistrate, Midnapur, 2/10/1942; cited in Bidyut Chakrabarty, “Defiance and Confrontation: The 1942 Quit India Movement in Midnapur”, *Social Scientist* 20, no. 7/8 (Jul. - Aug. 1992): 80.

¹⁰ WBSA, Home Poll., File No. 71/42, Kolkata, 16-17.

¹¹ Sanyal, “The Quit India Movement in Mednipur District,” 45-46.

turned to terrorism which inspired the participants of the upsurge to undertake terrorist activities on their initiatives to attain their goal.¹²

In his tour to Mahisadal from 25 to 30 December 1945 Gandhi was informed about the violent activities of the *Jatiya Sarkar* during the Quit India Movement. In response to this, Gandhi referred to the subject thus: ‘What you have done is heroic and glorious. However, you have deviated from the path of non-violence’¹³. The spirit of militancy likely derived its inspiration not from the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence but it seems, from the idea of Motherland as Divine Mother that had gained immense popularity during the Bengal revolutionary movement in the first two decades of the twentieth century and integrally connected with the Bengali psyche. This idea was part and parcel of the militant and violent spirit.¹⁴ The idea sustained the revolutionary movement in Bengal running parallel to the Gandhian national movement. However, the spontaneity and heroic sacrifices of almost all sections of society gave the movement an impetus beyond imagination. Consequently, it assumed the nature of a ‘popular revolt’. It is important to note that the people of Bengal in general and the people of Midnapore in particular had militant and radical traditions. Rajnarayan Bose’s revolutionary activities instilled radical ideas and a militant spirit in the young student community of Midnapore, laying the foundation for a strong resistance against British rule in the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁵ The revolutionary efforts centered around the historic ‘Rakshitbari’ in the town of Tamluk- led by Suren Rakshit, Khudiram Bose, Jadu Gopal Mukhaopadhyay, Purna Chandra Das, Jog Jiban Ghosh, and others- stirred the hearts of the freedom-loving people of the district. The dedication and sacrifices of the revolutionary trio - Jnanendra Nath Bose, Satyendranath Bose, and Hemchandra Das Kanungo—further intensified the people's desire to liberate the motherland from colonial oppression. Their revolutionary fervor reached its peak in Midnapore during the Quit India Movement. They had deep love, unending reverence, and flawless allegiance to the Mother. Even their mother and the Motherland, *Deshmata* seemed to be identical to them. The idea of Motherland as Divine Mother idealized *Deshmata*, Mother India, as an embodiment of the Divinity. They conceived Her as a source of Divine Power and worshipped Her to obtain strength for overcoming any untoward situation. In fact, by imbibing the idea of Motherland as Divine Mother they earned such a potent power that they could easily overcome the fear of death. So they determined to oust the imperialist British rulers by any means for the liberation of the Mother. They took the opportunity of Gandhi’s mass movement but hesitated to accept his doctrine of *satyagraha* and non-violence. So they utilised Gandhi’s 1942 Quit India movement

¹² Sanyal, “The Quit India Movement in Mednipur District,” 61.

¹³ *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 31 December, 1945, 3.

¹⁴ Chitta Sen Paramanik, “Gandhi as A New Mass Leader in Bengal”, *Sambodhi*, Vol. xiv (2022):105.

¹⁵ Das, Shri Basanta Kumar, *Freedom Struggle in Medinipur*, Volume I, Kolkata, 1980,137-138

as a platform and rose to a defiant mood to free the Motherland.

The concept of Motherland as Divine Mother

The concept of Motherland as Divine Mother had a tremendous impact on the national movement in Bengal. It is worth mentioning that this concept gave birth an idea where the country, India was idealised and spiritualised as *Bharat Mata/Bharat Janani* or Divine Mother India, and Indians as Her children, who had to devote their lives for Her liberation from the British. This idea denoted that Divine Mother India took diverse inspiring forms of Mother Goddess to demolish Her enemies; She would save Her children in danger and bless them with infinite strength and selfless courage; She was worshipped as a symbol of power. It was Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay who first conceived *Bharat* or India as Divine Mother in the song *Bande Mataram* (Hail Motherland) which he composed in 1875 and later incorporated in his most celebrated historical novel *Anandamat* first published in serial form in his monthly magazine *Banga Darshan* from 1881 to 1882 and then as a book in 1882.

Remarkably, the mother, as well as birth land had occupied the highest place in the cultural heritage of Bengal/India. Here the land of birth, unlike European countries, was non-metaphorically called motherland and love for the mother was eternal for all Indians. It was the place where the notion of motherhood was accepted as ‘all along a culturally privileged concept’ and where Devi or mother worship occupied an important place in its traditional culture.¹⁶ In the nineteenth century the identification and hymning of India as mother was employed as a powerful literary device by the Bengali intelligentsia to infuse nationalist consciousness among the Bengalis/Indians. Bengal was very strong, particularly in the ritual worship of the mother goddess (Devi, *Sakti*).¹⁷ In Bengal, the worship of the Mother Goddess was prevalent from the early times and got conspicuous popularity in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D.¹⁸ It had been a place of stronghold of puranic and tantric culture where the mother goddess occupied a dominant position. The cult of Shakti had been at the forefront of mother worship. Puranic literature is richly endowed with references to Sakti worship.¹⁹

However, since the concept of the mother with all emotions associated with this concept was effectively prevalent in Bengal and motherhood had always been deified in the Bengali tradition and even the worship of mother goddess became rife in Bengal, and the symbol of mother emerged here as a potent, sacred and powerful symbol for mass contact. Hence, Bankim Chandra appropriated the worship of the Divine Mother and identified his motherland, India as the Divine

¹⁶ Jasodhara Bagchi, “Representing Nationalism: Ideology of motherhood in colonial Bengal”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Oct 20-27, 1990):ws65.

¹⁷ Bagchi, ‘Representing Nationalism: Ideology of motherhood in colonial Bengal’, ws66

¹⁸ E.A. Payne, *The Saktas*, (Calcutta: YMCA Publishing House, 1933), 84

¹⁹ Gaegee Sharmah, *Cult of Mother Goddess in Assam and Bengal: A Comparative Study (Up to 13th Century A.D.)*, Unpublished Thesis, (Gauhati: Gauhati University: 2012), 137.

Mother. This idea was conceptualized in late 19th century Bengal to serve a dual purpose, i.e. to liberate Mother India from the British yoke and to establish Her with reputation and glow and glory at a holy altar.²⁰ This idea generated heightened willpower, mental integrity and strength among the Bengali youths to drive the British from the soil of Bengal as well as India.²¹

It is a truism that this concept exercised tremendous influence over Aurobindo Ghosh and his generation;²² In fact, receiving inspiration from Bankim's vision of the Divine Mother and Nivedita's *Kali the Mother* Aurobindo developed and popularised his concept of the motherland.²³ To him the Motherland, India was Mother Goddess, Divine Mother-*Bhawani Bharati*. 'He regards his country as Mother. It is to him not a physical non-entity, but it is a concrete manifestation of Divinity'²⁴. In a letter written to his wife, Mrinalini on 30 August 1905, Aurobindo explicitly brought to light his idealization of the country as Divine Mother as well as his reverence and adoration to Her.²⁵ In his *Bhawani Mandir*, a pamphlet written in 1905, Aurobindo articulated the idea of the Divinity of the Motherland and portrayed his Motherland-India as Divine Mother-*Bhawani Bharati*, the mother of Strength, pure *Shakti* one of the manifestations of *Durga*.²⁶ It is worth mentioning that Swami Vivekananda popularised this idea through his vivid lectures and valuable teachings and writings. His proclamation- 'Passionate love for one's people and the country as well as the ideal of self-sacrifice for the sake of the Motherland', clarioncalls to worship only one God for the next fifty years and this one God would be Mother India'²⁷ and his poem *Kali the Mother provided* spiritual sustenance to the concept of Motherland as Divine Mother. The Sedition Committee Report mentioned that Vivekananda believed Mother India would strive for her freedom through the power of the Mother of Strength, *Shakti*.²⁸ Sister Nivedita considered India as her Motherland and conceived India as Divine Mother, Mother India, and Indians as her siblings and dedicated herself to freeing

²⁰ Chitta Sen Paramanik, *Representing Nation as Mother in Colonial Bengal (1882-19470)*, Unpublished Thesis, (Santiniketan: Visvabharati University, 2019), 245.

²¹ Paramanik, *Representing Nation as Mother in Colonial Bengal (1882-19470)*, 245.

²² Amalesh Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge: India between 1890 and 1910*, (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1967), 16.

²³ Arpita Sen, *Representations of Ireland in the Political Thinking of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh*, *Studies in History* 23, no. 1 (February, 2007):113.

²⁴ Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Europe Reconsidered: Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 67-68.

²⁵ *Sri Aurobindo's letters to his wife Mrinalini Devi With letters to his Father-in-Law*, Auro e-Books, Ebook Edition, (2014), 11-14.

²⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram, Political Writings and Speeches (1890-1908)*, *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 6 and 7*, (Pondicherry: 2002), 79.

²⁷ Cited in Dalia Ray, *The Bengal Revolutionaries and Freedom Movement*, (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1990), 5.

²⁸ Justice S. A. T Rowlatt (e.d), *Sedition Committee Report, 1918*, (Calcutta, Superintendent Government Printing, First published 1927, Reprinted in 1973 in New Delhi), 17.

the Motherland from foreign bondage.²⁹ She equated Mother India to the goddess Kali and worshipped her with her own life as offerings. She was devoutly crying: 'Kali, my Mother, I am Thy slave'.³⁰ In her book *Kali the Mother* she utilized the imagery of Kali to infuse the spirit of heroism, selfless courage and a great zeal among the youths of the country for the liberation of the Motherland. The Sedition Committee referred to how worshipping Kali, the goddess of divine strength became a necessity for regaining the lost glory of the Motherland.³¹

Identifying the concept of Motherland as Divine Mother through *Biplabi*

The underground paper that played an instrumental role in such political mobilization is explained by Robert Kearney as "not only drawing previously inert people into political action but also maintaining or increasing intensities or frequencies of political involvement among persons who have already commenced political activities"³² happened to be *Biplabi* (The Revolutionary). A Bengali bulletin that appeared in the Tamuk sub-division between September 24, 1942, and August 27, 1944, under the supervision of Sri Prahlad Kumar Pramanik appointed as Minister-in-Charge for Publicity, *Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar*, was very popular. *Biplabi*'s contribution acted miraculously in mobilizing the people at the high water mark in this movement by the appropriation and propagation of the idea of the Motherland as Divine Mother through its columns. To generate a selfless devotion from the countrymen for the salvation of the Mother, *Biplabi* propagated the idea of Motherland as Divine Mother through its columns in ways such as evoking songs/ poems that championed the cause of the Mother, encouraging martyrdom, eulogizing the deaths to be sacrificed at the sacred and holy altar of the Mother and galvanizing the incidences that occurred during the Quit India Movement in Midnapore with the idea of the Mother. However, *Biplabi* repeatedly appropriated those songs/poems that championed the cause of the Mother in most of its issues either in the beginning or in the end for the propagation of this idea Motherland as Divine Mother. For this purpose, *Biplabi* quoted the poem of Tagore at the beginning of its first issue:

"Udayer pathe shuni kar bani
Bhay nai ore, bhay nai,
Nihsheshe pran je karibe dan
Kshay nai ore kshay nai."³³

(At the awakening we hear the message,

²⁹ Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated: A Biography of Nivedita*, (New York: The John Day Company, 1953), 255.

³⁰ Reymond, *The Dedicated: A Biography of Nivedita*, 190.

³¹ Rowlatt (e.d), *Sedition Committee Report*, 19.

³² Robert N. Kearney, "Introduction: Political Mobilization in South Asia" in *Aspects of Political Mobilization in South Asia*, Foreign and Comparative Studies, South Asian Series, ed. Robert I. Crane, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse, no. I (1976): 1.

³³ *Biplabi*, Issue No.1, (24 September, 1942): 1.

Fear not! Fear not!
If you sacrifice your life
You will be immortal)³⁴

Biplabi deliberately fostered the idea of Motherland as Divine Mother by exhorting and eulogising the deaths of the participants to the noble service for the salvation of the Mother. The sacrifice of those who fell to bullets on 29 September 1942 was appreciated and eulogized as devotion to the salvation of the Mother in the columns of *Biplabi*:

‘The arrival of autumn reminds us that the Mother-she who killed the demon, the Asura, she who takes the lion as her mount, she who always gives bliss is coming. The global cry is of death, the earth is shaking. On 12 Aswin (29 September), thousands of her sons in Tamluk gave their lives as a puja sacrifice. They became exalted heroes. Men and women, old and young, chanted 'Bande Mataram'. They succeeded in destroying Satan's den.’³⁵

The idea of Motherland as Divine Mother would demand ultimate sacrifices of the countrymen to free Herself from bondage. *Biplabi*, therefore, constantly referred to martyrdom to encourage Bengali youths to sacrifice themselves to free the Mother. It wrote following the deaths of the participants on 29 September 1942 thus:

‘Heroes found death... Cowards fled, preferring a slave’s life; The heroes [of Tamluk] however are immortals, great persons whose names are on everyone’s lips... Heroes were born to die... Then the Tamluk will regain its long lost freedom. On that day, the heroes of Tamluk will celebrate victory with the offering of fresh blood to the Mother... The poor Mother will be queen!’³⁶

Biplabi also referred to the martyrdom by eulogizing the sacrifice of Hemu Kalini, a student of class 10 to encourage the students of Tamluk to sacrifice their lives for the salvation of the Mother thus: “In the freedom struggle for the motherland a twenty-year-old student of class 10 of Sakur, Hemu Kalini, sacrificed his life on the hangman's scaffold of the robber administration. Students of Tamluk! Listen to the eagerness with which they are calling you—the one who immolated himself at the altar of the Mother and the brave boys of Tamluk who joyfully accepted death by baring their chests to bullets.”³⁷

In another issue, *Biplabi* encouraged martyrdom to exhort the Bengali women to devote themselves to the service of the Mother by eulogizing the sacrifice of Matangini Hazra on 29 September, A 73-year-old heroic woman who sacrificed

³⁴ English translation is borrowed from Bidyut Chakrabarty, (trans. & ed.), *Biplabi: a journal of the 1942 open rebellion*, (Kolkata: K. P. Bagchi & Company, 2002), 25.

³⁵ *Biplabi*, Issue No 4, 2 October 1942, Bidyut Chakrabarty, 32.

³⁶ *Biplabi*, Issue No 4, 2 October 1942, Bidyut Chakrabarty, (trans. & ed.), 32.

³⁷ *Biplabi*, 25 February, 1943 Issue No. 30, 121-122.

her life at the altar of the Mother chanting '*Bandemataram*', thus:

'This heroic woman's love for her country, devotion to the cause of freedom, self-sacrifice and zeal to keep the flag flying deserved our praise. Her heroic death inspires our movement to attain the goal of freedom.'³⁸

Biplabi also encouraged self-sacrifice for the cause of Mother in one of its issues thus:

'You shall die and your young blood
Will make the land fertile, will nourish
the seeds of freedom;
That is why the poets, epoch after epoch,
Sing in praise of the death of heroes.'³⁹

It is important to note that the idea of Mother signified that the Mother would appear very soon to bless Her children with an immortal power by which they would be able to restore Her honour by destroying Her traitors and demons. *Biplabi*, therefore, propagated the idea of the Mother to encourage the countrymen to devote themselves to the cause of the Mother in this way:

'Traitor beware! The memory of [recent] martyrs, sons of the land who are now sacrificing their lives at the sacred and holy altar of freedom, as well as our past and future martyrs, will remain refulgent forever. But a day will come, in not too distant future when those men who have been content to lick the foreigners' boots and kill or aid in killing our brave, non-violent soldiers... will have to beg for their lives on bended knees. But... Their sufferings will end only in their deathbeds, prepared by the mortal fury of the young. With the burning up of the British Government, the bodies of these traitors will also turn to ashes on the funeral pyre... A rebellious India, bearing the tornado of revolution, is well advanced on the bloody path of victory! The soldiers are marching forward! The devil beware!'⁴⁰

Despite adverse situation resulting from a devastating cyclone and a tidal wave that struck on 16th October 1942 and wreaked havoc all over Midnapore, *Biplabi* utilised the idea of the Mother to exhort the countrymen to devote themselves to the service of the Mother by appreciating this natural disaster as the destructive dance of the Mother in the form of *Mahisasuramardhini* for the creation of a new nation that would free Her from the British yoke. It thus wrote:

'Mother *Mahisasuramardhini* descended to earth as devastation personified... Her sons observed the puja by offering blood ... The *naibedya* (altar offerings) offered at the puja this year were *nay crores* (tens of millions) of young lives. Crores of her children were prepared to lay down their lives at her feet. She has manifested herself in the form of devastation... From the ruins of this devastation, there will

³⁸*Biplabi*, Issue No. 4, 2 October, 1942, 33.

³⁹*Biplabi*, Issue No. 64, 29 September, 1943, 280.

⁴⁰*Biplabi*, Issue No. 8., 12 October, 1942, 41-42.

emerge a new nation that will liberate India after annihilating the British'⁴¹

Biplabi considered the 1943-44 Bengal famine as the deliberate creation of the British. The famine made Midnapore the worst affected district and brought extreme misery to Bengal. But *Biplabi* sustained the devotion of the countrymen to the service of the Mother by stirring them with the idea of the Mother that provided them with a potent strength to overcome such an adverse situation. In this regard, *Biplabi* wrote:

'Inhabitants of Midnapore ...Nearly half of the population has died of famine this year; ...If all of you die, who then will enjoy the benefits of your land, your property and your ancestral homestead? ... Beware! Some few will survive and be spared death... Since death is unavoidable, why this hesitation? Stand up erect and try to live like a human being in utter disregard of the enemy's devilry. Unite and take courage. Utter the words 'Bande Mataram,' and you shall gather courage in your breast.'⁴²

Thus, *Biplabi* succeeded in infusing a new zeal of selfless devotion and the spirit of militancy among the countrymen for the salvation of the Mother from the British yoke by propagating the idea of Motherland as Divine Mother through its inspiring columns in lucid language during the Quit India Movement. The people, therefore, irrespective of caste, creed, class, and gender were mobilized in the Quit India Movement in Midnapore and devoted themselves to freeing the Motherland by turning violent despite their declared faith in the doctrine of non-violence, referring to the Mahatma as "our one and only leader" and that there could be no question of 'working beyond the limits of his directives'⁴³.

Conclusion

The 1942 Quit India Movement in Midnapore witnessed a complex and multifaceted narrative that intertwined Gandhian doctrine of non-violence with a more radical, militant, and revolutionary undercurrent. Central to the rise of this militant spirit was the conceptualization of the Motherland as the Divine Mother. The idea of India as a sacred, powerful, and divine entity inspired intense feelings of devotion, sacrifice, and militancy among the people of Midnapore. This conceptualisation was not merely symbolic; it acted as a powerful force that motivated the participants to take up arms and engage in violent acts against colonial rulers, despite the overarching Gandhian doctrine of non-violence. The emergence of the Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar and its armed wings, such as the *Mukti Bahini*, signified the deep contradiction within the Quit India Movement. The underground Bengali bulletin *Biplabi* played an instrumental role in channeling

⁴¹*Biplabi*, Issue No. 9, 26 October 1942, 44-45

⁴²*Biplabi*, Issue No. 62, September 11, 1943; Chakrabarty, "Defiance and Confrontation, 269-272.

⁴³*Biplabi*, 27 August, 1944. Final Issue, quoted in Greenough, Paul R. "Political Mobilization and the Underground Literature of the Quit India Movement, 1942-44." *Modern Asian Studies* 17, no. 3 (1983): 382.

these emotions, constantly reinforcing the idea of the Motherland as a divine entity demanding liberation at all costs, including martyrdom. Through its powerful language and imagery, *Biplabi* galvanized the masses to see their struggle as a religious duty—one where death and sacrifice for the Motherland were not only justified but also glorified. This ideological environment, in which the Motherland was revered as a goddess, revealed the deeper currents of radical nationalism. The *Biplabi*'s use of imagery invoking divine wrath and invoking the heroic sacrifices of martyrs painted the movement as a sacred battle—a war between the forces of good and the evil colonial rulers. It also emphasized that even the catastrophic events like the Bengal Famine and natural disasters were manifestations of the Mother's divine power, signaling the imminent triumph of her children.

The argument emerging from this analysis is that the radical, militant currents within the Quit India Movement in Midnapore were not merely a reaction to British repression but were deeply rooted in the spiritual and cultural identification of the people with their Motherland. The symbolism of the Mother as a divine, powerful, and invincible figure, as seen in the works of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Aurobindo, Vivekananda, and others, provided the psychological and ideological fuel for the rebellion. This radical nationalism, which rejected non-violence in favor of direct action and sacrifice, created a parallel independence movement within the larger context of the Quit India struggle. The movement in Midnapore thus exemplifies the diverse ways in which the Indian independence struggle was expressed—through both the non-violent path laid out by Gandhi and the more militant, revolutionary path inspired by the divine concept of the Motherland. This duality within the movement highlighted the diverse forms of resistance and the varying interpretations of India's liberation struggle, showcasing the complex, multi-dimensional nature of India's fight for independence.

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