

## Localized Insurgencies: A Critical Examination of Bhagwanpur's Role in the Quit India Movement

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### ABSTRACT

From the inception of the Swadeshi movement, the residents of Bhagwanpur have etched their names in history through significant struggles such as extremist armed uprisings, non-cooperation movements, salt satyagraha, and civil disobedience movements. Countless common people from the Medinipur district rallied together in the final phase of India's liberation struggle. These patriotic revolutionaries, who embody the spirit of nationalism, are a source of pride for our district, yet sadly, they have been largely forgotten over time. This collective amnesia can be attributed to past historians' oversights, research gaps, and the tendency to overlook regional histories. The narrative of history writing should not only serve a political agenda but also aspire to shape a more humane trajectory by emphasizing the human aspect beyond mere political facts. This principle holds for regional historiography as well. The inhabitants of Bhagwanpur have a rich legacy of participating in the freedom movement. Through their valiant efforts during the 'Quit India' movement, the people of this Bhagwanpur sub-division have made significant sacrifices and endured hardships. Unfortunately, this history has often been overlooked or left unrecorded for generations. The article primarily focuses on the involvement, organization, challenges, and outcomes of the residents of Bhagwanpur during the August movement. Additionally, it delves into the resilience of the local population in the face of natural calamities such as floods, and cyclones, and their unwavering commitment to the nation's independence movement.

**Keywords:** congress, movements, quit india, struggle

### I. INTRODUCTION

The period from 1939 to 1945 AD holds great significance in the history of India and the world. It was during this time that Germany, under the leadership of Hitler, invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 AD, marking the beginning of World War II. Without consulting the Indian leadership, the British administration declared India a belligerent country. However, during the Ramgarh session of the Congress on March 19-20, 1940, the Indian leadership expressed their opposition to the British war policy. From April 6th to 13th, the Forward Bloc launched a nationwide campaign to observe National Week and initiate a civil disobedience movement. Meanwhile, Acharya Vinoba Bhave commenced the first individual satyagraha on October 27, responding to Gandhiji's call. As a result, 31 former ministers, 320 members of the legislature, 9 members of the working committee, and 278 members of the All India Congress were imprisoned as individual satyagrahis. The revolutionary spirit of Bhagwanpur was ignited for a new struggle. On April 12, 1938, Subhash Chandra Bose, a symbol of bravery and resistance, delivered a powerful speech in the field adjacent to Mugberia Gangadhar High School. On October 25, 1940, the Kanthi sub-division Congress committee, under the presidency of Bhimcharan Patra, called for individual satyagraha.<sup>[1]</sup> Notable individuals from Bhagwanpur who participated in this movement were Bhimcharan Patra, Peetabas Das, and Ms. Dhira Das. Bhimcharan Patra was arrested on December 9. On January 26, 1940 AD, Independence Day was celebrated in various locations such as *Kakra*, *Bhimeshwari*, *Bayenda*, *Jukhia*, and *Bhupatinagar*, as instructed by the Sub-district Congress Committee in Bhagwanpur thānā area.<sup>[2]</sup> However, the struggle faced a temporary halt in July-August of that year due to the devastating floods of the Keleghai and Kansabati rivers. The 'Nihar' newspaper's report from 3rd August 1940 AD highlighted the disastrous impact of the flood in *Bhimeswari* of Bhagwanpur. Due to continuous rain from the 6th *Bhadra* to the 13th *Bhadra*, the roads and crop fields were submerged in water.<sup>[3]</sup> The breaking of the Keleghai River Dam on 13th *Bhadra* led to a rapid flood that destroyed homes and disrupted daily life. The Contai Flood Relief Society was formed on 11th August, with Natendranath Das and Nikunj Bihari Maity as president and secretary to assist those affected. A public meeting on 2nd September in *Saraswatitala* urged wealthy landowners and the government to support the flood relief efforts in *Bhagwanpur* and *Patashpur thānā*, emphasizing the importance of aiding the vulnerable population during this crisis. On September 13th, a public meeting was convened under the leadership of Mr. Surendranath Manna. The main objective of the meeting was to

establish a Flood Relief Society, with Priyanath Panda as the president and Rajinikanth Das as the secretary, to assist those affected by floods. During the meeting, a heartfelt appeal was made to both public and private institutions, as well as prominent individuals, to extend their support in safeguarding the welfare of cattle, thereby alleviating the suffering of the people. As a result of these efforts, the Medinipur Aid Society provided rice, cloth, and necessary relief items to 1077 people out of 282 families in 36 villages of Bhagwanpur 6th Union.<sup>[4]</sup> Additionally, from April 6th to 13th, the district observed National Week, during which a *Charka* competition took place in *Sankhadiha* village under the guidance of Ishwar Chandra Kar. Workers also visited households in various villages, including *Madhavpur*, *Ishwarpur*, and *Machnan*, as well as held meetings on April 10th in villages like *Manikjođ*, *Panchghari*, *Patharberia*, and *Itaberia*. These gatherings aimed to address important issues such as the eradication of untouchability and the current state of the nation. Furthermore, visits were made to *Harijan Palli* (Untouchable Village) in the *Mugberia* and *Bhimeswari* areas. Meanwhile, due to concerns over a potential Japanese attack, the British administration implemented an 'earth scorched policy' in the coastal Bhagwanpur region. Unfortunately, this policy resulted in a transportation crisis as the government seized boats. The government has designated 15 boats to address this issue. Pranakrishna Khamari and Govind Prasad Maity were responsible for delivering goods to the Bhagwanpur area. On July 5, 1941, the Annual General Meeting of the Kanthi Sub-Division Congress Committee took place at Bhupatinagar village, where the Executive Committee was elected. The expenses for this event were covered by Rajinikanth Pradhan, the Zamindar, and his brothers. The elected representatives of the Executive Committee were Nikunj Behari Maity (President), Bhimcharan Patra and Shashi Shekhar Mandal (Vice-Presidents), Rasbihari Pal (Secretary), Kangal Chandra Giri (Joint Secretary), Ishwar Chandra Mal (Treasurer), and Rakhil Chandra Maity (Accountant).<sup>[5]</sup> Furthermore, the Executive Committee took the initiative to establish 5 Branches of the Congress Committee under Bhagwanpur thānā. These branches consisted of Kakra, Bhupatinagar, Bhimeshwari, Bajarpur, and Jukhia Branch Congress Committees of Bhagwanpur. Furthermore, Bhimcharan Patra represented Bhagwanpur at the Calcutta Workers Conference, which was organized by the All-India Congress Committee President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. On December 19, a conference for Kanthi sub-division Congress workers was held at the residence of Congress leader Peetabas Das in *Kakra* village of Bhagwanpur. The conference aimed to improve the financial situation of the people, enhance mass communication, and strengthen the Congress organization.

The initial manifestation of Gandhiji's struggle can be found in the publication '*Harijan*' on the 15th of May. In his desperate fight, Gandhi conveyed to the British administration, "Leave India to God. If that is too much, then leave her to anarchy." Meanwhile, while the Indian National Congress was deliberating on the 'Quit India Movement' during the Bombay Session on the 6th of August, the Kanthi Sub-Divisional Congress Committee also convened a meeting in Kanthi town to discuss the upcoming struggle. The 'Quit India' resolution was adopted in Wardha in early July and received final approval during the Bombay session of the AICC on the 7th and 8th of August. It was during this time that Gandhi passionately appealed, "Every one of you should from this moment onwards consider yourself a free man or woman and act as if you are free...I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom.... we shall do or die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt."<sup>[6]</sup> When the session concluded late at night on the 8th of August, almost all the session leaders, including Gandhi, were arrested before dawn. Gandhi was detained in the Aga Khan Palace in Pune, while others were held in the Ahmednagar Fort. Additionally, the Congress was banned. Gandhi's final instructions were circulated throughout the country on small typewritten papers during his arrest. The text read, "Paralyse the Government. From today, you are free. Be your own leader. Do or die." On the 14th of August, a strike took place in *Bhagwanpur*, *Patashpur*, and *Khejuri* police stations to protest against the arrests. A mourning gathering was held in Contai on the 16th of August to commemorate the death of Mahatma Gandhi's private secretary, Mahadev Desai, who passed away while in captivity. On the 20th of August, a successful *Hartal* was organized across the division to protest the arrest of Congress leaders.<sup>[7]</sup>

The student movement in Bhagwanpur has garnered considerable attention. At the outset, the government authorities took a firm stance to quell the student movement in Bhagwanpur. On September 20th, Sub-Divisional Magistrate Samar Sen went to *Gopinathpur* and apprehended 40 volunteers, proceeding towards Bhagwanpur thānā.<sup>[8]</sup> The news of the arrest of 8 students quickly spread, leading to around ten thousand villagers gathering at *Dhantal* pool and following the volunteers. They presented a demand to the Sub-Divisional Ruler, requesting the release of the volunteers or their arrest. In response, the SDO released 29 volunteers. However, the villagers soon realized the insincere intentions of the SDO and continued to follow the authorities. The situation became tense when the 11 prisoners were not released upon reaching the police station. To maintain control, Congress Secretary Priyanath Panda and Bhupendranath Maity persuaded the volunteers to leave the area. In the next stage, 5 individuals were released while being transported by motor launch, and the remaining 6 were sent to *Kanthi*. This initial group of six people, consisting of Mritunjay Maity, Rabindranath Giri (*Madhakhali*), Gopal Chandra Bagh (*Dhanda*), Surendranath Pradhan (*Talda*), Devendranath Mandal (*Maklasi*), and Sudhir Chandra Pradhan (*Jararnagar*), were the first individuals to receive sentencing during the August movement in Bhagwanpur. Witnessing the bravery and effectiveness of the volunteers, the SDO assigned the responsibility of the police station to Sudhanshu Dasgupta, the executive officer of the Kanthi sub-division area, to suppress any future movements. On September 22nd, the district governor expressed his dissatisfaction with the student movement and instructed the police to use force against a demonstration held by residents in *Mahishyagot* during the *Ramnagar yatra*. Tragically, this resulted in the loss of six lives and left 24 individuals injured. On September 17th,

1942, a case was filed against Jaldhar Maity, Ramanath Maity, Prafulla Mahesh, Khagendranath Maity, Jhareshwar Maity, Surendranath Maity, Sripati Maity, and Srimant Khatua for allegedly stealing clothes from the *Dafadar* and *Chowkidar* of *Radhapur* area in Union No. 7. However, the case was dismissed due to lack of evidence. In the first week of September, a group of students from Kanthi Prabhat Kumar College, including Mritunjay Maity (Kunjapara), Rabindranath Maity (Ishwarpur), Sudhir Chandra Pariya (Khejuri), and others, spread the message of revolution to students at Mugberia Gangadhar High School. Inspired by this message, some students from *Mugberia* joined them. The procession, consisting of approximately 50 students, first visited Henria School and then Kajlagarh School. A few students from each school participated in the procession. Congress leaders like Peetabas Das joined the procession from *Bajkul*, and hundreds of students accompanied them to the *Kalaberia* Roy family for overnight rest. This Roy family, particularly Bireeshwar Roy, had a previous connection with Khudiram Bose. The following day, the procession continued from Bhagwanpur to *Mahammadpur* schools, where they established a camp at *Gopinathpur* with the assistance of 40 student volunteers and Congress leaders. Ashwini Kumar Maity, the Congress leader from *Nimakbar*, took charge of managing the camp. Many students staying at the camp sought refuge at Bhimcharan Bar's house in *Champaigngar*. Baneshwar Maity, a school dropout, also joined the movement at this camp. Sudhir Chandra Bhunia, hailing from Bhagwanpur, actively took part in the district students conference arranged by Bir Navin of *Egra*. He successfully established a connection between the Bhagwanpur movement and the event.

A gathering of leaders and volunteers from Bhagwanpur took place at Bhupatinagar Primary School to ensure the smooth progress of the August Movement and the effective implementation of specific programs. The expenses for this session were graciously covered by Lalitkumar Pradhan, Ardhendu Sekhar Pradhan, and Byomkesh Chandra Pradhan, who are kind-hearted individuals from Bhupatinagar village. The atmosphere at the meeting, attended by approximately four thousand volunteers and passionate countrymen, under the guidance of Ardhendu Sekhar Pradhan, was beyond words. In this meeting, a 'Samar Parishad' was unanimously established, with Priyanath Panda being appointed as the Secretary. Subsequently, during the Samar Parishad meeting held at Bhupendranath Maity's house in *Lohabar* village on September 24, Dhirendranath Das was elected as the chief after learning about the secret date of the Bhagwanpur police station raid. Additionally, an advisory committee was formed, consisting of Hrishikesh Gayen, Priyanath Panda, Murarimohan Shasmal, Barendranath Das, and Ashwini Kumar Maity. Many Samar Parishad volunteers and prominent Bhagwanpur congress members were present at the meeting on September 24th in Lohabar. On that day, meticulous and discreet last-minute preparations were made, alongside planning for the Bhagwanpur police station raid. In response to the request for a fund of 10,000 takas to support the struggle's management, generous individuals stepped forward to support the revolution. Birajacharan Nanda, the zamindar of *Mugberia*, donated 1000 rupees towards the success of this plan. In an emotional tone, Birajacharan Nanda compassionately handed five hundred rupees to the present leaders and stated, "If even a single precious life is lost without proper care, we will not spare you."<sup>[9]</sup> Later, the villagers of Bhupatinagar contributed another five hundred rupees through Byomkesh Pradhan. In addition to fundraising efforts, the Congress actively campaigned both openly and covertly. The distributed leaflets contained slogans advocating for the revival of the freedom struggle and patriotism. The Quit India Movement commenced in the Bhagwanpur area with the encirclement of the police station on 29th September. Nevertheless, this strategy was approved during the gathering organized by the Sub-divisional Congress Committee at Bhupatinagar and Lohabar. '*Thana Abhiyan*' (police station raids) places special emphasis on relief and medical arrangements. Four medical units have been established for the four forces, ensuring an adequate supply of medical resources, stretchers, and more. Notable doctors involved in this effort include Dr. Bipin Behari Gayen, Dr. Bireeshwar Basu, Dr. Surendranath Mal, Dr. Brajendrakumar Maity, Dr. Bimalkumar Pradhan, and Dr. Bishwanath Adak. Additionally, logistics such as food and kerosene have been procured. Apart from police stations and other government offices raids and specific forces have been assigned the task of cutting roads and destroying telegraph lines. The attack on the police station is scheduled for 3:30 in the afternoon.<sup>[10]</sup>

A group of dedicated volunteers, along with enthusiastic individuals, led a procession through various villages in Bhagwanpur police station on Tuesday, 29th September. They blew conch shells and chanted slogans such as '*Ingrej Bharat Charo*', '*Kareng Ye Mareng*', '*Bande Mataram*', and '*Gandhiji Ki Jai*'. The northern forces were under the leadership of Ashwini Kumar Maity and Nagendranath Bera, while Priyanath Panda and Barendranath Das led the western forces. Hrishikesh Gayen commanded the southern force from the Bhimeswari camp, with Murarimohan Shasmal leading the Ubdal camp force alongside Nandagopal Maity and Parameshwar Das. Peetabas Das and Bhupendranath Maity were in charge of the eastern forces. Two courageous women, Giribala Dasi and Puntibala Dasi, bravely stood at the forefront of the women during the police station raid. Although they were not harmed, Puntibala was arrested and sentenced to one and a half years in prison by the court. Giribala managed to evade trial by hiding for an extended period.<sup>[11]</sup> Following the Gopinathpur clash, the British administration took extensive measures to safeguard the Bhagwanpur police station. They fortified the station with reinforced barbed wire fences and strategically positioned police vans to restrict access. This security system was devised by the notorious magistrate Sudhanshu Dasgupta, along with constable Amulya Ghoshal and their armed constables. By 3.15 pm, approximately seven thousand volunteers from the Western Army had arrived at *Shibbazar*. Despite the delay of the Southern Army, a group of enthusiastic young individuals from their ranks joined forces with the Western Army at *Shibbazar*. The energy and

determination of these youth could not be contained. Commander-in-chief Dhirendranath Das attempted to prevent them, but his efforts were in vain. A massive surge of people flooded towards the police station entrance, triggering immediate gunfire. The police station became a scene of bloodshed. Amidst this crisis, relief volunteers tirelessly transported the wounded and deceased to the medical unit, while others provided water to those in need.

On September 29, the history of Bhagwanpur was forever altered by the Martyred like Bibhutibhushan Das, the only son of Barendranath Das, the Congress leader of *Vartana*. The student bravely gave water to the mouth of the young wounded revolutionary. Unexpectedly, he was injured by gunshots from the police and he lost his life one day later at the police station. Krishna Mohan Chakraborty from *Vasudevpur* was shot and fell into a pond where he took his last breath.<sup>[12]</sup> Srinath Chandra Pradhan became the first martyr in the Bhagwanpur firing (*Kulberia*), while his brother Kamdev Pradhan was martyred in the *Mashuria* firing in 1932. Paresh Chandra Jana (*Garabar*) was seriously injured in the firing and passed away at Birbandar Hospital after five days. Dhirendranath Dalpati (*Bayenda*) was shot and succumbed to his injuries 18 days later at the police station. Bhupaticharan Das joined the revolution while teaching at Kuralbar Primary School. Several others, including Shyamacharan Maity, Haripada Maity, Yudhisthira Jana, Tarakanath Jana, Jagannath Patra, Rajnikant Maity, Gnanadacharan Maity, Raghunath Mandal, Bharat Chandra Singh, Bhushan Chandra Samant, and Kedarnath Maity, lost their lives in the fight for freedom. The secret report by the SDO Samar Sen revealed the death of around 30 individuals at Bhagwanpur.<sup>[13]</sup> The government's list indicated a total of 103 martyrs in Medinipur from August to December 1942, with 19 of them being from Bhagwanpur. The September 29 firing left over 100 people injured.<sup>[14]</sup> Despite facing reckless firing that dispersed the revolutionary forces, the volunteers displayed their unwavering fighting spirit by successfully carrying out their assigned duties. Firstly, the Nanda family of Mugberia emerged as pioneers in providing relief and medical services to the injured. In the darkness of the evening, the injured were transported to Congress hospitals and given immediate first aid. One of the centres was established at Haripad Chander's house in Bhagwanpur, where Dr. Bimalkumar Pradhan and his associates Goshtabihari Das, Rajinikanth Pradhan, and Jitendranath Maity operated. Surendranath Mal and Dr. Nishikanta Maity were stationed at Krishnachandra Das's house at Bayoudia, and Shibbazar Center was attended by Dr. Bireeshwar Bose. Bhushan Chandra Jana attended to the treatment of many at a location nearby, along with Sarveshwar Maity. On the other hand, the deceased were promptly taken to their respective areas and cremated either that night or the following morning. The second duty of the volunteer force was to systematically demolish all government offices surrounding the police station, as per the pre-arranged plan. On October 1, they successfully destroyed the Kajlagarh Sub-Registry Office, Post Office, Circle Officer's office, as well as all Post Offices and Sanitary Offices, Jute Offices, Union Boards, including *Uttarbar*, *Dalbar*, *Udbadal*, and *Paushi Dakbanglo* in *Mugberia* and *Barabaria*. They also severed all means of communication, obstructed vehicular traffic by cutting or felling trees, and destroyed telegraph lines.

The Bhagwanpur Samar Parishad persisted in their resistance against the police station despite the intense gunfire on the 29th. Their primary objective was to isolate the Bhagwanpur police station from the outside world. To achieve this, they maintained a vigilant guard all around. As a result of their watchfulness, the Samar Parishad successfully apprehended Egra Postmaster Adharchandra Santara and a peon from *Khasamhal*. These individuals were captured while the revered martyr Bharat Chandra Singh was being cremated with utmost respect on September 30th in *Ashutia* village. Shockingly, they were found to be concealing a letter from Sudhanshu Dasgupta under the soles of their shoes.<sup>[15]</sup> Following their arrest, they were initially held by the Congress police at the Bayenda Congress office and later at the Kalachand Jana cowshed in *Ektarpur* under the supervision of Gunadhar Maity. Eventually, they were released after offering apologies. Volunteers from the *Udbadal* camp strategically positioned themselves below the Udbadal pool, surrounding the bamboo with nails to obstruct the water channel connecting Kanthi to the Bhagwanpur police station. This blockade, coupled with the closure of nearby shops and markets, resulted in a severe food shortage within the police station. In this dire situation, the police officers grew desperate and approached Gnanadacharan Maity of *Kuralbar* on October 2nd, expressing their willingness to surrender.<sup>[16]</sup> However, the following day, a group of soldiers arrived in *Panskura*, marched through *Maina*, crossed Keleghai, and entered the police station, relieving the besieged officers. Two or three days later, a group of policemen, led by Chandicharan Banerjee, embarked on two large barges to reach the police station via water. Along the way, they resorted to burning down the primary school in *Dhaipukuria* to instil fear. Subsequently, the forces from *Udbadal*, *Ururi*, *Barabaria*, *Kulberia*, and *Nandichak* dismantled the bamboo barricade on the pool floor, creating a navigable path for the barges. Once these forces reached the police station, a wave of demonic torture ensued. The Bhimeswari Congress office and the residence of its leader became the initial targets of the police's brutal actions.

Despite the inability to apprehend the leaders, a significant number of houses, approximately fifty, were reduced to ashes within a short period. This destruction was carried out by a large force using fire and petrol, driven by their outrage. The houses of prominent figures such as Dhirendranath Das, Priyanath Panda, and Barendranath Das were among those burnt down. Additionally, indiscriminate looting was rampant. On October 13, numerous individuals from Bhagwanpur were accused and arrested. The list of accused individuals included Bibhuti Das, Dhiren Dalpati, Kangal Jana, and others. Despite these acts of violence and the ongoing legal proceedings, the fearless Samar Parishad operated a parallel administration akin to the national government, without any official declaration. To strategize and address these matters, a session of the Sub-District

Samar Parishad was held on October 15 at the residence of Ishwar Chandra Pramanik in Jararnagar. Purnendushekhara Bhowmik from Khejuri, Upendranath Jana, Gopinath Bera (advocate), Lalitmohan Roy from Patashpur, Kalipad Roy Mahapatra, Dhirendranath Das from Bhagwanpur, Priyanath Panda, Hrishikesh Gayen, Vijay Maity from Contai, and Bhimcharan Patra were present during this session. As the night session concluded, a devastating cyclone struck on the morning of October 16.

On October 16, Dhirendranath Das had a productive interaction with the Bhagwanpur Thana Relief Service. Following the storm, Dhirendra Nath Das and Priyanath Panda travelled to Calcutta incognito to avoid detection by the police. With the assistance of secretary Manoranjan Chowdhury, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha S. N. Banerjee arranged a meeting with Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukhopadhyay. Similar to various police stations in the district, Bhagwanpur also engaged in relief efforts through the support of private voluntary organizations. In addition to providing general relief, the Marwari Relief Society distributed rice, blankets, and other essentials among four hundred impoverished and oppressed Congress workers in Bhagwanpur. Thanks to their assistance, each of these workers received financial aid of one hundred rupees from the relief fund established by Fazlul Haque. Under the leadership of Dhirendranath Das and with the help of Congress leader Manmathanath Das, Devendra Lal Khan, and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy's patronage, a health center was established at *Patashpur*. Dr. Balhari Ghosh served as a doctor at this center for five years. Additionally, the People's Relief Committee established another health center in the southern part of *Madhavpur*. The Punjab Relief Committee provided paddy as a relief to the people of *Bajarpur*.<sup>[17]</sup> Furthermore, during this period, a children's home was established in *Banamalipur* near *Bhimeshwari* under the patronage of Annadaprasad. Other service organizations such as the Bengal Relief Committee, Navabidhan Relief Committee, and Hindu Mahasabha distributed significant relief aid from centres like *Kalaberia*, *Bayenda*, and *Itaberia* in Bhagwanpur. In the aftermath of the cyclone, the British administration took measures to address the unrest in the Bhagwanpur region. It has been reported that a total of 52 incidents of house arson occurred in the Bhagwanpur area.<sup>[18]</sup> These incidents included the destruction of three Congress camps, two schools, one charity hospital, and forty-six private houses. Some of the affected private houses include Dwarikapur Congress Camp, Ektarpur Congress Camp, Bayenda Congress Camp, Gopinathpur High School, Nandichak Primary School, Charity Hospital No. 11, and various others such as Mangobind Jana, Rakhachandra Jana, Murari Mohan Jana (*Khajubari*), Bardakant Ghnati (*Patharberia*), Bipin Behari Gayen (*Bayenda*), Mahendrakumar Bagh (*Paschimbar*), Hrishikesh Simlai (*Gurugram*), Surendranath Das (*Dwarikapur*), Ramchandra Tripathi (*Udbadal*), Barendrakumar Das, Arjun Shishta (*Vartana*), Dhirendranath Das (*Tanguria*), Manindranath Maity (*Gopinathpur*), Atul Maity (*Nunabar*), Giribala/Putibaladasi (*Naskarpur*), Priyanath Panda (*Shimuliya*), and 29 other houses. Additionally, on 29 November individuals such as Bankim Giri, Kunj Khatua, Shailja Ghanti (*Uttarpatharberia*), Vidhubhushan Maity (*Barurveri*), Kangali Jana (*Bhimeshwari*) were arrested, Ishwar Panda (*Bibhisapur*) on December 8, Laxman Bagh (Noonhand), and Sabu Jana were arrested in *Neelkanthapur* on December 12. Furthermore, on November 26 individuals like Dharanidhar Jana, Amulya Pradhan, Srinivas Sahu of *Banamalipur*, Haridas Sahu, Nagendranath Bhunia of *Shimuliya*, Bankimchandra Mandal, Hardayal Mishra, Mahendranath Jana of *Jhinukkhali*, Srinivas Jana, Purnachandra Das (*Janadari*), Gunadhar Bhunia (*Kotlauri*), Vinayakumar Maity (*Rampur*), Mukunda Ari of *Anduliyabar*, Sadhan Chandra Jana of *Chinadari*, Pashupati Shasmal of *Bahadurpur*, Bharat Chandra Ali of *Noonhand*, Dhananjay Samant, Bansri Lal Datta, Gopal Chandra Pal of Hamirpur make up your mind, Srihari Maity (*Radhapur*), Surendranath Jana (*Kalurveri*), Bhupendranath Das (*Bacchipur*), Manindranath Maity (*Mohammedpur*).<sup>[19]</sup>

In the aftermath of the cyclone, the community of Bhagwanpur has unfortunately faced instances of police brutality. These incidents have included arrests under the Indian Defence Act, looting during arrest operations, physical assaults, arson, and mistreatment of women. The local administration has initiated legal action by filing approximately 27 cases in Bhagwanpur, accusing around 200 individuals of various offenses such as attacking the police station, detaining officials, looting cash, engaging in unlawful activities, and theft. On January 1, 1943, Shashi Bhushan Maity from *Kotmukha* was taken into custody, leading to severe beatings of family members Haripad, Shyampada, Govardhan, and Jiban Krishna Maity by law enforcement. The following day, police from *Kajlagarh* camp raided Suryanarayan Bera's residence in *Purbachak*. Subsequently, on January 2, law enforcement officers assaulted numerous individuals in the vicinity of *Jashibar* village. Bimal Jana and Jiban Krishna Matia of *Noonhand* were apprehended on January 3, while Gopinathpur activist Fanibhushan Jana was handed over to police on January 5. In the early hours of January 7, the police conducted raids on the homes of Barendra Kumar Das, Priyanath Panda, and Shrimant Patra. On January 10th, Shyampada Bhunia (*Gornia*) was present at the Jukhiya market to organize the sale of kerosene oil. However, he was apprehended by local *Dafadar* Anant Bera and two *Chowkidars*. Despite their efforts, Shyampada managed to evade capture by fleeing the scene before the police, accompanied by the *Dafadar*, arrived. Subsequently, the authorities initiated a search operation in the local area to locate Shyampada. Unfortunately, incidents of looting occurred in *Jukhia Bazar*, where Bagambar Maity and Kenna Bera shops were targeted. Additionally, Jagannath and Narayan Sheet room cupboards and frames were vandalized. Several individuals, including Devendranath Panda of *Bamunia* village, Shibu Sau, Joy Sheet of *Sitadighi*, Surendranath Bera of *Jukhia*, and Lal Mohan Das, were subjected to physical assault. During the Independence Day flag hoisting ceremony on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1943, Thana Congress and Samar Congress vice-president Peetabas Das were arrested at the Kakra Congress camp in Union No. 9. Meanwhile, flag

hoisting, conch sounding, and 'Prabhat Feri' took place at Congress camps in Union Nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, and 14. In the early hours of the night, the police conducted a raid on the residence of Jaldhar Maity, a prominent activist from Union No. 7, *Madhavpura*. They also searched the house of Mr. Shyamaprasad Shasmal in *Manoharpur*. Furthermore, the police seized the residence of Satish Chandra Giri in *Vasudevberia* village in an attempt to apprehend him. During this process, Vaikuntha Barik confessed to being subjected to police torture. Satish Giri was eventually arrested at the Udbadal Congress camp, and Girish Chandra Jana was also taken into custody.

In the case of the attack on Bhagwanpur police station on September 29 (G.R. Case No. 549/17), a total of 19 individuals were named in the chargesheet, with a multitude accused. 62 of them were apprehended in three separate rounds. Arrest warrants were issued for those who were still fugitives. A total of 103 individuals provided testimony concerning this case.<sup>[20]</sup> Notably, Hrishikesh Gayen, a key absconding accused in 20 different cases, was apprehended on February 15, 1943 AD, while Dhirendranath Das was arrested in Calcutta one year later in February 1944. Furthermore, Bhimcharan Patra, the head of the sub-divisional Samar Parishad and a prominent public figure in the area, was arrested on January 14, 1946. The accused individuals, in this case, include Priyanath Panda from *Shimuliya*, Kangalicharan Jana, Nayanchandra Mishra, Ashutosh Maity from *Noonhand*, Radhashyam Bera, Laxman Bakshi, Vidhubhushan Maity, Bimalkanta Jana, Haripad Sahu from *Banamalipur*, Sri Ramchandra Sahu, Ashwini Kumar Maity (*Nimanmar*), Birendra Kumar Das (Vartan), Dhirendranath Das (*Tanguria*), Gunadhar Bhunia (*Kuralbar*), Puntibala Dasi (*Naskarpur*), Jiban Krishna Maity (Barurvedi), Kashinath Mandal (*Shankarpur*), Radha Gobind Maity (*Kuralbar*). In addition to these 19 individuals, over 100 others were arrested as accused, including Hrishikesh Mishra, Upendranath Jana, Srivas Saw, Avinash Gucchait, Nagendranath Bera, Yudhishtir Jana, Surendranath Ghorai, Upendranath Das, among others. There were more than 30 absconding accused, such as Nityananda Maity, Hrishikesh Gayen, Dhirendranath Das, Bibhutibhushan Das, Dharanidhar Barik, Dwijendranath Manna, and the settlement of the case took place on August 13, 1945 AD. Manmatha Nath Das, a renowned lawyer, along with Sudhamoy Bandopadhyay, one of the advocates of the Midnipur Judge Court, presented the arguments on behalf of the accused. Among the 19 individuals involved in the trial, Puntibala was imprisoned for one day. Others who faced imprisonment included Gyanendranath Das, Barendrakumar Das, Bidhubhushan Maity, Srinivas Sahu, Priyanath Panda, Ashutosh Maity, Dhirendranath Das, Haripad Saw, Kashinaya Mandal, Gunadhar Bhunia, and more. Before September 29, there were incidents of theft of clothes from *Chowkidar* and *Dafadars*. On May 15, 1943, a case was registered against local activists based on a complaint by the *Dafadar* of Union No. 12, *Jukhia*. The accused individuals included Hrishikesh Jana (*Sadullachak*), Rajnikant Das (*Ikshupatrika*), Dushasan Giri (*Nelua*), Fanibhushan Patra (*Ektarpur*), Govind Das (*Jukhia*), Bhuthanath Kar (*Govindachak*), and Dhirendranath Bhunia (*Gornia*). However, the case was eventually dismissed due to the majority of the accused being absconding. In the months following the attack on the Bhagwanpur police station, the Samar Parishad of the Bhagwanpur undertook various programs resembling those of the national government, showcasing the administrative skills of the local people in the region.

Following the capture of Bhagbanpur police station, the Revolutionary Volunteers have caused disruptions to government operations through various means. For instance, on 1st November 1942, the revolutionaries encircled Munshi Badruddin, the Collector of Union No. 4, and seized the cash belonging to the Union Board. Ashutosh Maity, Dharanidhar Manna, and 80 others were accused in this incident. Nevertheless, due to insufficient witnesses, the government decided to drop the case. In early 1943, Pranabesh Duari, Jiban Krishna Samant, Murarimohan Pahari, Anant Kumar Das, Govind Prasad Pahari, Gopal Chandra Pahari, Krishna Prasad Samant, Shashank Shekhar Tripathi, and others were apprehended among the protestors of *Boroj* Union. During that period, Ishwar Chandra Parua (*Kalmichabar*), Bishnuhari Maity (*Vijayanagar*), and others were on the run. All of them were released on 25th August 1943 due to a lack of concrete evidence for the specific charges. On August 14, 1943, the police detained 30 individuals, including Murarimohan Bera, Motilal Maity, Hrishikesh Maity, Gunadhar Samant, and Kangal Das, on suspicion of being acquainted with the leader of Union No. 14, Madhusudan. The case was resolved on 7th March 1944. Adharchandra Adak was accused of embezzling the funds and records of *Tahsildar* Surendranath Mohapatra. The authorities apprehended Adhar Adak while distributing pamphlets in the *Itaberia* market. As per the complaint lodged by Satish Chandra Maity of Union No. 5, arrest warrants were issued against Sasibhushan Jati, Jatindranath Adhikari, Harendranath Samant, Kanu Charan Das, Nityagopal Maity, and others. While Sasibhushan Jati and Kanu Charan Das were arrested, their cases were dismissed on 18 January 1944. Parameshwar Nath (*Ektarpur*) was sentenced to three months in prison. Fanibhushan Maity (*Bayenda*) and three others were identified as suspects. Birendranath Meikap and Paresh Chandra Adak from *Patna* were apprehended and given a 6-month prison sentence after being tried for stealing books from the Collector of Mugberia Union Board during tax collection in *Dumardari*. Fanindranath Das from *Dumardari* was taken into custody by the authorities for capturing images of women being harassed by the police in the *Tepar* with a camera. He was sentenced to 1 year in prison following the trial. On February 15, 1943, the police detained several individuals, including Hrishikesh Gayen from *Mugberia*. Ishwar Chandra Maity (*Haripur*), Ananth Kumar Barai, Gunadhar Pati (Bhupatinagar), and Pashupati Manna (*Sankhadiha*) were charged by Daroga Chandicharan for robbing Hrishikesh Gayen and were given a six-month prison term. *Dafadar* accused Satish Chandra Giri (*Dakshin Patharberia*), Priyanath Sharangi (*Mugberia*), Debendranath Gayen (*Bayenda*), Nandagopal Maity (*Dumardari*), Fanibhushan Maity (*Bayenda*), Vasudev Pradhan

(*Bhupatinagar*), among others, of forcibly taking the clothes of the *Chowkidar* of Mugberia Union Brajahari Kar filed a case. Except for Priyanath Sharangi, the rest of the suspects had been on the run for quite some time. Eventually, Satish Chandra Giri and Nandagopal Maity were apprehended. In 1943, the police lodged a case against Hrishikesh Gayen, Gopal Chandra Gayen (*Bayenda*), and Gunadhar Maity for detaining police news carrier Adharchandra Santara and detaining him in the National Jail. The accused was acquitted by the court after Adharchandra Santra failed to identify Hrishikesh Gayen, who was wearing different clothes during the court proceedings. In the southern part of Bhagwanpur police station, specifically in *Arjunnagar* Union, freedom fighters like Raghunath Paria of Kalmichabar, along with his two sons Ishwar Chandra Paria and Parameshwar Paria, Srishtidhar Das of *Arjunnagar*, Kangal Chandra Bera of *Ratnajor*, and Anantakumar Bera and Bhushan Chandra Majhi of *Bhoslagora*, were subjected to particular persecution. Additionally, individuals such as Jatindranath Nath of *Arjunnagar* village and Trilochan Bar were also affected.

Numerous militants from the Bhagwanpur were apprehended for various reasons. In August 1943, a group of nine dedicated volunteers, led by Govinda Prasad Das (*Jukhia*) from the Kanthi Samar Parishad, were detained by the police near *Ponapole* while on route to participate in the Bombay Satyagraha. Besides Govind Prasad Das, those who were taken into custody included Hrishikesh Jana, Haradhan Maity, Jagannath Ghorai, Narayan Padua, Gyanendranath Mal, Rameshwar Hati, Banamali Mal, Haradhan Mahesh, and others. Subsequently, another volunteer, Jagat Narayan Shasmal from *Angarberia*, was arrested in Calcutta for his involvement in satyagraha and was sentenced to six months of imprisonment. On a separate note, Manibhushan Das, Surendranath Sahu, and Gunadhar Khatua were apprehended while engaging in picketing and distributing bulletins on their way to Kolkata Satyagraha. The Udbadal volunteer camp was targeted by police teams from *Bhagwanpur*, *Khejuri*, and *Patashpur* police stations in October 1943. Despite their efforts, the campers managed to evacuate in time upon receiving a signal message from the guard volunteer. In retaliation, the police resorted to looting and setting fire to the Udbadal Congress camp, the Bardakanta base, as well as the residences and shops of the Kailash Rana. Acts of violence, looting, and arson continued even on their way back. Byomkesh Kamila from *Shatapur* village sustained severe injuries and unfortunately succumbed later. Similar incidents of violence, looting, and house-breaking were reported in villages like *Jukhia Bazar*, *Bamunia*, *Purbachak*, *Jashibar*, *Gopinathpur*, *Bayenda*, and *Shimuliya*. Priyanath Panda's house in *Shimuliya* and Shrimant Patra's residence in *Kishorepur* were repeatedly targeted. Srimanta Patra and Surendranath Maity from *Lohabar* faced significant harassment as 'Special Constables'. Parameshwar Nath from *Ektarpur* was apprehended on 7th September 1943 in *Nandganj Bazar*. Arrest warrants were issued against Gunadhar Maity and Fanibhushan Patra. Fugitive notices were issued on 28 September 1943 against Fanindranath Maity, Gunadhar Pati, and Anantakumar Barui. Hrishikesh Mishra, Nityananda Das, Nishikant Bhanj, Rabindranath Maity (*Shimuliya*), Suryakant Maity (*Kishorepur*), and Peetabas Das were all arrested by the police on 24 January 1946.

History has often seen individuals who betray their people. Bhagwanpur dealt with such traitors through the revolutionary administration. Phanindranath Manna, the contractor for Vartan, was involved in supplying bullets to the police and passing on secrets of the Samar Parishad to them, following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather. When a team led by Devendranath Gayen from Bayenda went to apprehend them on these charges, other brothers intervened to stop the arrest. Consequently, Manna's five brothers were taken into custody.<sup>[21]</sup> Initially, they were held at Rakhachandra Maity's residence in *Vijayanagar* and later transferred to Haradhan Das's assembly hall at the National Prison under the watch of Raghunath Paria in *Kalmichabar*. After over a month, three of the innocent brothers were escorted to the Sundarbans with a promise of confidentiality and set free. The remaining two brothers were detained for an additional two months under the supervision of Pulinbehari Gayen at Indra Dalai's residence in *Panchghari-Bainchberia*. Eventually, they expressed remorse, sought forgiveness, and were released. This incident highlights the lack of effective government administration in many parts of the region.<sup>[22]</sup>

The Samar Parishad of Bhagwanpur has demonstrated remarkable efficiency in the distribution of relief aid to villages affected by the cyclone, as well as in the prevention of epidemics. Additionally, they have earned the respect of the township for their efforts in maintaining peace and order, as well as their skill in arbitrating and resolving local disputes. The local community holds a deep belief that the judgment of the Samar Parishad is the ultimate authority in civil and criminal trials. Furthermore, the intelligence and postal system of the Samar Parishad are highly reliable. It can be said that Bhagwanpur has an innovative administrative system comparable to that of the national government. In 1943, the headquarters of the Sub-Divisional Congress was relocated from Kanthi to Bhagwanpur Thana in Bayenda due to security concerns. Hrishikesh Gayen has been entrusted with the primary responsibility of the Swaraj Panchayat. Balailal Das Mahapatra and Govind Prasad Hait (Public communication), Hemant Kumar Mahapatra (Health), Ashutosh Roy Chowdhury (Justice), Murarimohan Shasmal (Food), and others have assumed leadership roles in various ministries.<sup>[23]</sup> Murarimohan Shasmal, Satish Chandra Giri, Dhirendranath Das, Bhupendranath Maity, and Hrishikesh Gayen have taken charge of Bhagwanpur Swaraj Panchayat. Annadaprasad Chowdhury, on behalf of the provincial Congress, sent funds to Kanthi Samar Parishad. Following Mr. Gayen's instructions, Nandagopal Maity, a prominent worker, or a trusted associate, would ensure the money reached various thana areas. Samar Parishad was active in *Bayenda*, *Potashpur*, *Bhagwanpur*, and the sub-district simultaneously. Purnendushekhhar Bhowmik oversaw the printing of the bulletin under the guidance of Satish Chandra Giri, Nandagopal Maity, and Sukumar

Das's wife, Kumudini Devi. Due to police harassment in Bayenda, *Dumardari* served as the secret headquarters for Samar Parishad. Several activists sought refuge in *Dumardari*, including Bhushan Chandra Shasmal and Shyamacharan Bera of Patashpur. Despite the police offering rewards for the capture of certain leaders, such as Balai Das Mahapatra, Kangal Chand Giri, Shyamacharan Bera, and Hrishikesh Gayen, no one was willing to betray their beloved public leaders for personal gain. Unfortunately, Annadaprasad was arrested in Kalaberia due to a traitorous scheme. Following the events that unfolded, Hrishikesh Gayen was apprehended during a police raid at Bayenda's residence in March 1944, while Balailal, known for his involvement in public political endeavours, was taken into custody in June 1945. Balailal was handed a fifteen-month prison sentence on three separate charges following the trial at the Kanthi court. On 15th February 1943, the then Prime Minister acknowledged in the Bengal Legislature the existence of a parallel government in Midnapur, complete with its military, police forces, and intelligence branches. This parallel administration even had its correctional facilities where individuals were detained, leading to instances where the government's operations were effectively halted.<sup>[24]</sup> This situation was particularly evident in the *Tamluk* and *Kanthi* subdivisions. The Swaraj Panchayat of Kanthi Sub-Division, which operated as part of this parallel government, ceased its activities by September 1944, although the conclusion was not officially declared.<sup>[25]</sup> The panchayat's operations dwindled following the arrest of its leaders.

#### End Note

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