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## **Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement: A Historical Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

*The 18th century Bengal had experienced the changes in the socio-economic and political conditions of the period. The political history of Burdwan district also went through a process of change as that of the other district of Bengal. It was one of the developed districts of Bengal in terms of socio-economic and cultural conditions. As far as demographic conditions of Burdwan is concerned, Hindus comprised more than 80% of the total population and Muslims comprised of near about 19% of the total population of the district during the early half of the 18th century. The Hindus and Muslims reacted to the changes that were brought by the enactment of permanent settlement, Lakhiraj Land Settlement and after the proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1857. Similarly, Sakti Samiti and Joydev Sevak Sampradhi were established to take a vow to abjure foreign goods, tobacco and liquor during Anti-partition Movement. The Muslims of the district were not far behind towards their participation in the Struggle for Independence. The present research work is initiated to trace the contribution of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan district in various stages of Indian Freedom Movement.*

**Keywords:** Bengal, Burdwan District, British Authority. Colonial Period, Indian Freedom Movement, Patriotic Leaders.

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### **Introduction:**

Indian Freedom Movement was a united movement that gathered people of all classes and different political ideologies to end the Colonial Rule. People from different regions and religious communities of India devoted and sacrificed their lives to save their motherland from the British Colonial Rule. Bengal, the most important part of eastern region of India, had an important role in the growth and development of Nationalism in India. Bengal was "politically the most active part of India during Colonial period."<sup>1</sup> Bengal was one of the regions of India where Muslims had the largest concentration and they played tremendous role in Indian Freedom Movement. Burdwan, one of the districts of Bengal, was important during the many stages of Indian Freedom Movement. As far as Burdwan district is concerned, it was one of the developed districts of Bengal in terms of socio-economic and cultural conditions during the period of study. 'Annals of Rural Bengal' by W. W. Hunter states that "Burdwan was the most productive region of Bengal during Colonial period."<sup>2</sup> The present research work with the topic entitled, "Role of

*Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement...* Kabirul Haque Khan  
Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement: A Historical Analysis" is a micro study of the Indian Freedom Movement in the context of Burdwan district.

### **Justification of the Study:**

There are many reasons for taking into consideration the present research topic entitled "Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement: A Historical Analysis"

1. To make an assessment of the contribution of the Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement.
2. To excavate the Demographic and Psychographic factors that is responsible for the growth of Nationalised politics among the people of the district.
3. The period and the subject matter undertaken do cover some of the facts which have not been taken by any of the researches to carry out the present research work.
4. The present research work is an attempt to analyse the participation of the people of the district in Indian Freedom Movement especially in Anti-Partition Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

The people of Burdwan district belonged to different ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups who belonged to various caste and religious communities. Hindus were comprised of the majority of the district and Muslims were the second most populated religious community during colonial period. There were harmonious relations among the people of the district under British Colonial Rule. The people of Bengal had played a significant role in Indian Freedom Movement in general and Burdwan District in particular. But no such a work is written on the role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan district in Indian Freedom Movement.

### **Review of Literature:**

The literature review to carry out the review of a large number of Primary and Secondary sources which deals with Indian Freedom Movement and the contribution of the people of Burdwan district. 'The Bengal District Gazetteers, Burdwan' written by J.C.K. Peterson is one of the important materials that provide light on the socio-economic condition of the district during the period of study. Some of the prominent leaders of the district like-Syed Shahedullah, Binoy Choudhury, Abul Kasem, Abul Hayat, Monsur Habibullah and Abul Hashim have written on the subject under taken for study. 'Bardhaman Jelai Communist Andoloner Atit Prasanga', written by Syed Shahedullah highlights the basic aspect of the Peasant Movement in the District. Abul Hashim also deals with the post Bengal partition politics in his book, 'In Retrospection'. Some contemporary works have been done and edited by Dr. Gopikanta Konar in his book 'Bardhaman Samagra', where the article written by Romakanta Chakraborty under the title, 'Bardhaman Zelar Swadhinata Andolon', explore the general condition of National Movement in the district. Similarly, article written by Shudhirchandra Dan, Fakir Chandra Roy, Balaideb Sharma, Syed Shahedullah, Durgadas Nandi, Ashok Bandhyapadhyaya, Harihar Bhattacharya, Shushi Malkhandi, Shaktipada Ghosh provides impetus about different aspect of National Movement in the district. An article written by Bhujen Palit with the topic entitle 'Kalnar Krishok Andolon' provides an idea of National Movement in Kalna Sub-Division. As far

*Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement...* Kabirul Haque Khan as the National Movement at Katwa Sub-Division is concerned the book written by Bankim Chandra Ghosh with the title 'Swadhinata Andolone Katwa Mahakuma (1876-1952)' provides ample information about National Movement in Katwa Sub-Division. Some of the articles have been published in local periodicals and journals about the Freedom Movement in Burdwan district.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The main objective of the research work is to revisit the Indian Freedom Movement and the role of the people of Burdwan District in it. The work is also an attempt to analyse the contribution of the unsung patriotic leaders of the district in different stages of Indian Freedom Movement especially in Anti Partition Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement in the district.

### **Methodology of the Study:**

The research work is primarily based on Doctrinal Methodology. The doctrinal method also involves the survey of existing relevant literatures which are based on Primary, Secondary and Tertiary sources. The existing relevant literature of this study is explored and defined by exacting task of this particular research work for a deep imminent and clear perspective. The present research has also taken into account Historical Method, Historical Analytical Method and. Comparative Method to collect record and interpret the facts. Several Revenue Proceedings, Census Reports, I. B. Reports, Judicial Reports, Police Reports of the period of Study have been consulted to carry out this research work.

The Historical Method refers to various past events, Movements, Processes and Institutions chronologically for the purpose of finding the causes of the events and exploring the impact on socio, economic and political scenarios of Burdwan district during the period of study.

Historical Analytical Method is taken into consideration in order to understand the social unit particularly in a group of People within Burdwan district. It is also an attempt to explore the various stages of the Indian Freedom Movement in Burdwan district and quantities of variables that can be studied in different approaches in history which is to be in depth and comprehensive.

Comparative Method refers the contribution of people of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement and response of them in it with the other districts of Bengal. The Method helps to understand the distinctive characteristics of the National Movement in Burdwan district and also its relevance in nationalized politics.

### **Discussion of the Study:**

Burdwan district lies mainly between the Ajoy, the Bhagirathi and the Damodar rivers. It is bounded on the east by Nadia district, on the west by Manbhum (presently a large section of it is located in Jharkhand), on the north by Santhal pargana, Birbhum and Murshidabad districts, and on the south by Hooghly and Bankura districts.<sup>3</sup> The word 'Burdwan' is derived from Sanskrit word Bardhamana or 'bridh' which means 'the increasing or Prosperous'.<sup>4</sup> During 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Abul Fazl mentions in his book 'Ain-i Akbari' that there were four Sarkars of 'Rarh Banga'<sup>5</sup>. These were Sharifabad, Salimabad and Mandaran and Jahanabad which included One twenty (120) 'Parganas'.<sup>6</sup> Sharifabad covered the most of the parts of the district Burdwan, Salimabad covered the most of the parts of Hooghly district and Mandaran currently comprised most of the parts of the Asansol Sub-division

*Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement... Kabirul Haque Khan* and its adjoining areas. Jahanabad was known as Arambagh which is now situated in Hooghly district.<sup>7</sup> During Mughal period; 'Burdwan Chakla' was included in 'Sharifabad', a part of Bengal Suba. The famous poet Ghanaram Chakrabarty said that "the land of Burdwan is the Centre of all". Mukundaram Chakraborty mentioned in his book 'Chandimangal Kabya' that Jamalpur of Burdwan district was named as 'Selimabad' by Mansingh.<sup>8</sup> Eminent scholar and sociologist Khondekar Fazli Rubbi has written in his book 'Tasdikun Nahad' that the Sharif Muslims had settled in that region and the area is also recorded as the Sharifabad. He also said that Sarkar Sharifabad became the political as well as the cultural center of the Sharif Muslims since the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar.<sup>9</sup>

By an agreement Mir Qasim gave Burdwan district to the English East India Company on 27 September, 1760 that contained an area of 5147 square miles and which was the most productive region of Bengal Suba.<sup>10</sup> Burdwan was known as Burdwan 'Chakla'<sup>11</sup> Burdwan was one of the first districts of Bengal which was captured by the British authority.<sup>12</sup> Burdwan Division was the second largest division of Bengal which was consisted of five districts e.g., Burdwan, Bisnupur (Bankura), Midnapore, Birbhum and Panchet (Purulia).<sup>13</sup> With the change in political conditions, the Muslims of Bengal in general, and Burdwan district, in particular, started getting degenerated on the socio-economic front. It was written by W.W. Hunter in his book "The Indian Mussalmans" that the Muslims were the most affected community in terms of change in political conditions in India and also in Bengal.<sup>14</sup> The permanent settlement brought changes in the fortunes of Ryots of the district. The exploitation of the Zamindars and torture inflicted upon them by the riots has been explained in a book called "Bengal Peasant Life" written by Reverend Lal Bihari Dey. Burdwan Municipality was established in 1865.<sup>15</sup> It was the first Municipality in the district. The first Municipality Board of Burdwan consisted of nine (9) nominated and six (6) ex-officio members with the total of 15 members. Munsif Johad Rahim from Muslim community was one of the first nominated members of the Board.<sup>16</sup> In 1869, four Municipalities e.g., Raniganj, Asansol, Kalna and Katwa were established in the district. The elected members from the Muslim Community of the district in the Municipality Board took part actively in Indian Freedom Movements.<sup>17</sup>

As far as the demographic condition of Burdwan district is concerned, Hindus comprised 82.5% of the total population; Muslims comprised 17.1% of the population and the remaining people are from aboriginal tribes who comprised .4 % of the total population of the district as per the first Census report of 1872.<sup>18</sup> Near about 6.71% of the Muslims lived in the eight (08) major towns of the district.<sup>19</sup> The Muslims of the district can be classified into three major conventional categories - Ashraf, Atrah and Arzal which were identified on the basis of socio-economic status and their origin. The majority of the Muslims of the district were Sunnis.<sup>20</sup> In 1872, Burdwan district was comprised of six (6) Sub divisions and twenty-two (22) thanas. Six Sub divisions were Burdwan Sadar, Katwa, Kalna, Jahanabad, Budbud and Raniganj.<sup>21</sup> The people from the Muslim Community formed near about 19% of the total population in the district from 1872 to 1941.<sup>22</sup>

With the establishment of the 'Indian Association' (1876) by Surendranath Banerjee, the nationalist ideas spread among the people of Burdwan district. It was Moulavi Muhammad Yeasin and Moulavi Abul Kasem who were greatly influenced by the ideas of Surendranath Banerjee. Three branches of 'Indian Association' were established in Burdwan district. These were - "Bardhaman Indian Association", "Kalna Indian

*Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement... Kabirul Haque Khan Association*" and "Purbasthali Hitokari Sabha".<sup>23</sup> The branches of Indian Association were established in the district under the leadership of Maulavi Muhammad Yeasin of the district.<sup>24</sup> Moulavi Muhammad Yeasin and Moulavi Abul Kasem had a close relation with Surendranath Banerjee.<sup>25</sup> In 1899 and 1904, Sessions of the Indian National Conferences were held in Burdwan town.<sup>26</sup> Abdul Qayum joined the Medinipur Provincial Congress conference in 1901 as a representative from Burdwan district. Maulavi Muhammad Yeasin created a new blend of National consciousness among the people in the district during the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Anti-Imperialist Movement spread rapidly after the 'Partition of Bengal' in Burdwan district. There were three important elements of anti-partition Movement-Boycott, Swadeshi and National Education. The Swadeshi Movement created a new tradition in India's Freedom Movement. The main driving force of the Swadeshi Movement was farmers, national bourgeoisies, middle class people and intellectual Community. Abul Kasem from the Muslim community spread the idea of Swadeshi among the people of the district. A large number of people from Burdwan district participated in the anti-partition Movement under the leadership of Abul Kasem. Swadeshi meetings were held at various places in the district. A National School was opened at Kalna in 1908 as a symbol of protest against the Partition of Bengal. Swadwshi Vandars (Stock Store) were also established at Kalna, Bagnapara and Belerhat for the sale of indigenous textile in the district.<sup>27</sup> 'Sakti Samiti' and 'Joydev Sevak Sampradhi' were established to take a vow to abjure foreign goods, tobacco and liquor during the Anti-partition Movement. Moulavi Abul Kasem was a member of the Standing Committee of the Indian National Congress.<sup>28</sup> The periodical with the title 'The Mussalman' was published by Mujibar Rahaman in 1906. Abul kasem was the first editor of this periodical. In 1906, Abul Kasem founded 'Burdwan Mohameddan Association' as the counter organization of the 'Muslim League'.<sup>29</sup> He was the founding secretary of the organization. Abul Kasem was the great congress leader and also the main organizer of the Swadeshi Movement at Memari.<sup>30</sup> The Anti-Partition Movement gathered its momentum in places at Katwa, Kalna, Singgarkon, Baidyapur, Akalposh, Deyarat, Dhattrigram, and Anukhal where people protested against such evil decision. Swadesh Bhandar was created at Kalna.<sup>31</sup> The Anti-partition supporters established a political organization namely 'The Bengal Mohammedan Association's 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1906'.<sup>32</sup> The General Secretary of the Association was Abul Kasem.<sup>33</sup> Bengal Mohammedan Association promoted the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Abul Kasem was born in Kashiyara under the Mongolkot Police Station of the district. His father's name was Abdul Majid. He was a higher official under the British Government. His great grandfather, Abdul Jabbar was a Chief Presidency Magistrate of Kolkata. He received the title of 'Nawab' and 'C.I.E.' from the British Government.<sup>34</sup> Though Abdul Jabbar was a government official but he was a nationalist leader and had a great love for the country. His grandfather Golam Ashgar was a sub-divisional officer and he received the title 'Khan Bahadur' from the British Government.<sup>35</sup> Abul Kasem got a B.A. degree from Presidency College and engaged himself in politics directly. During the time of the partition of Bengal, Mr. Abul Kasem spread nationalistic ideas among the student of the Burdwan district and consolidated the people against the atrocities. Abul Kasem was a member of the legislative Assembly from 1916 till his death in 1936. He was also a member

*Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement...* Kabirul Haque Khan of All India Khilafat Committee. During this period, he was instrumental in the promotion of the ideas of the Khilafat Movement in the district and represented the Khilafat delegates that went to England Abul Kasem was one of them.<sup>36</sup> Even during the period of Diarchy, he was selected as a member of the Bengal Legislative Council.

The political situation which was developed after 1906 created an atmosphere that resulted in the publication of the English Weekly known as "The Mussalman" and Abul Kasem was the first editor. It was 1<sup>st</sup> published from 176/3 Boubazar Street, Kolkata and the first editorial column expressed: 'Indian Muslims, politically and economically are Indian first, Mohammedan afterward and morally... Mohammedan first and Indian afterward'.<sup>37</sup> In one of the articles published "Mohammadi" expressed in an editorial column that 'Abul Kasem is one of the pioneers who has contributed to the development of nationalistic ideas among Bengali Muslims. Abul Hayat left the Government job and joined the Khilafat Movement. He was an active worker and member of Burdwan District Congress Committee.<sup>38</sup> Kazi Nazrul Islam composed several songs which have inspired the people to go against the British. In one of the poems, the rebel poet wrote 'Kamal tune kamal kiya Bhai'.

In 1921, Burdwan Congress Committee was founded at Khosbagan Primary School in the district. Moulavi Muhammad Yeasin was the first Secretary and Jadabendranath Panja was the President of the committee. Muhammad Yeasin took a special effort to strengthen the 'Charka' campaign during Non-Cooperation Movement.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the Congress Committee was established at Katwa, Kalna, and Asansol.<sup>40</sup> Moulavi Muhammed Yeasin also spread the ideas of the use of Khadi and Charka and strengthened the Non-Cooperation Movement in the district.<sup>41</sup> Abdulla Rasul was an active member of the Provincial Congress Committee and the Provincial Khilafat Committee of the district. He was also imprisoned during Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922. Hamshira Khatun played a huge role in bringing the women of the district in the Non-Cooperation Movement.<sup>42</sup>

After the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Swarajya party emerged under the leadership of Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru in 1923. Student Movement spread rapidly in the district under the leadership of Moulavi Abul Kasem. He was elected as the representative of the Bengal Legislative Assembly from Burdwan district as an independent candidate. A hartal was observed throughout the district on 18 March, 1923 A.D. During 1925-1926, the people of the district Burdwan had shown great solidarity on Hindu-Muslim unity that provided a great momentum to Civil Disobedience Movement. In 1927, the 'Nikhil Banga Sommelon' was held in Calcutta under the chairmanship of Moulavi Majibur Rahaman. He was a nationalist leader from Burdwan district. Syed Sahedulla of Burdwan was closely associated with this organization.

In 1928, a new group of people emerged in Burdwan district against the Simon Commission on 3rd February. Abdus Sattar was in the forefront of this group. His entrance examination was to take place in March; he left his studies and took part in the movement in the Baidyapur region of Kalna sub-division in the district. All the shops and schools in this area were picketed by the students under the leadership of Abdus Sattar.<sup>43</sup> Syed Sahedullah, Abdullah Rasul and other Muslim leaders took active part in this movement. The students formed 'Youth and Students Organization' in order to raise nationalized politics among the people in the district. Abdus Sattar was the pioneering leader of 'Youth

*Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement...* Kabirul Haque Khan and Students Organization' of the district.<sup>44</sup> He led the Civil Disobedience Movement in the district.<sup>45</sup> Abul Hayat was an active member of the 'Bengal Provincial Congress Committee'. In 1934, Abdus Sattar was the Secretary of Burdwan District Congress Committee. Mohammad Azam (Son of Muhammad Yeasin), led the youths and student in the district and many other people also participated with them during Civil Disobedience Movement.<sup>46</sup> During the 1930s, Civil Disobedience Movement spread all across the district led by great leaders like -Abdus Sattar at Kalna, Kochi Mian at Burdwan Sadar, Muhammmad Yeasin at Asansol and communist leader Syed Shahidullah at Burdwan proper.<sup>47</sup> The leader from the Muslim community observed 'Swaraj Day' and Abdus Sattar and Syed Sahedullah invited the people of the district to participate in the National Movement.<sup>48</sup> The prominent activists were Abul Hayat of Kasemnagar, Saikh Baharuddin of Katwa town, Ramjan Ali (Bhadu Saikh) of Katwa town, Ichha Haq of Natunhat, Mofajjal Hossain of Khalipur, Muhammed Obaidul Gani of Bamundi, Jalil Mian of Berugram.

The Kisan Samiti was established in 1931 at Burdwan which also influenced the national Movement in the district.<sup>49</sup> Burdwan District Communist Party was established on 5th October in 1935 as the branch of Indian Communist Party. Syed Sahedullah was its first secretary of the district. The peasant movement at Burdwan gained momentum with the initiation of 'The Damodar Canal Movement'.<sup>50</sup> The pleasers of the Burdwan town along with lawyers started the 'Burdwan Zila Ryot Association' with the active support of Abdus Sattar.<sup>51</sup> The 'Canal Kar Protikar Samiti' was formed in the year 1937 with due help from the great communist leader Abdullah Rasul.<sup>52</sup> The members of the congress and communist party were involved in the movement. The lunch program a Satyagrah was initiated which resulted in the lowering of revenue to 2 rupees 9anna annually.<sup>53</sup>

The Three major factors which had an important bearing on the course of communist movement since pre-Independence days were in Damodar Canal Tax Movement (1936-39); Bengal Paper Mill Strike (1938); and the Food Movement during the Famine of 1943. Four organizations - the Burdwan District Ryots Association (BDRA); the Canal Kar Pratikar Samity (CKPS), the National Congress in the district and the Burdwan District Krishak Samiti (BDKS) were the leading elements in the movement. Under the dynamic leadership of Syed Sahedullah, the communist leaders organized a protest and rally against the unexpected Canal Tax at Burdwan district in 1937 and 1939. <sup>54</sup>

The year 1939, witnessed the beginning of World War II and brought a new dimension in the politics of India. <sup>55</sup> The Working Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1939 demanded, "India must be declared an Independent Nation."<sup>56</sup> After a lot of discussions, the Congress Working Committee organised a conference at Wardha on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1942, where Quit India Resolution was passed which is known as "August Resolution". The Quit India Movement also known as August Revelation which was a Movement launched at Bombay Session of All India Congress Committee by Mahatma Gandhiji on 8<sup>th</sup> August in 1942, demanding to end of the British Rule in India.

The people of Burdwan District responded to the call of Gandhiji and took part in different programmes and actions of the Quit India Movement which had deep impact in different parts of the district.<sup>57</sup> The District Congress Committee led the Movement after the arrest of the district leaders. <sup>58</sup> The impact of the Quit India Movement in different both rural and urban areas at Burdwan Sadar and Asansol Sub- divisions of the district also experienced great intensity. The district witnessed the initiation of the

movement through a Mass procession on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1942. The movement spread all across the district through different forms of protests which included organization of meetings, demonstrations, carrying out processions and observing hartals, picketing before liquor shops, non-payment of taxes, removal of railway lines and destroying of Government offices etc.<sup>59</sup> In the course of time, the British tried to raid everywhere especially on all affected places of the district. <sup>60</sup> It is important to note that, collective taxes were levied, posting of Armed forces, prohibition on the meetings and processions etc. affected the progress of the Movement.<sup>61</sup>

Burdwan District Congress Committee (BDCC) initiated to the Quit India Movement in different parts of the district and took the leading step to launch the Movement. The Burdwan District Committee, Congress Socialist Party (CSP), Labour Party (LP), the Forward Bloc (FB), the Socialist Party (RSP) etc. excepting that of the Communist Party of India (CPI) also took part in the Movement and showed support in different programmes and activities of the Congress Party.<sup>62</sup> Noor Newaz of Burdwan district was a leader of the movement.<sup>63</sup> The Quit India Movement also gathered momentum in Burdwan district where a large number of people of the district took active part in different activities and programmes of Qui India Movement.<sup>64</sup>

The Quit India Movement was started in the district under the active and dynamic leadership of Abdus Sattar during the middle of August, 1942. A meeting was held on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1942 at the Bangsogopal Town Hall and the meeting was presided over by Abdus Sattar. A 'Hartal' led by him was observed for the first time in Burdwan district on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1942.<sup>65</sup> Sattar was arrested the next day on the charges of holding an illegal public meeting.<sup>66</sup> On August 17, 1942, a protest rally was held in Burdwan. On the same day in 1942, under the leadership of Abdus Sattar and others, the Burdwan court premises were besieged for a long time.<sup>67</sup> On the same day in 1942, Kalna court and railway station were set on fire.<sup>68</sup> This resulted in the government imposing a wholesale fine of Rs 30,000.<sup>69</sup> Shaikh Shajahan, a student from the Muslim community, cut the telephone wire at Kalna railway station.<sup>70</sup> On the next day on August 18, 1942, Abdus Sattar organized a similar 'hartal' at the George Institute in Baidyapur and started a march towards Badla School and on reaching their delivered a speech to motivate the students as well as the youths to participate in the Quit India movement and eventually he was arrested by the British police.<sup>71</sup> The students from both the Hindu and Muslim Communities attacked the Jamalpur police station and looted the guns on 19 August 1942 by the inspiration of Abdus Sattar.<sup>72</sup> He was one of the prominent leaders who led the Quit India Movement in different parts of the district. Many strikes were observed in Burdwan town on 13, 16, 17 and 18 August 1942.<sup>73</sup>

Such leaflets found in Burdwan town which described the destructions of Government institutions, encounter between Indian people and British troops and British bombing (25/26<sup>th</sup> August 1942). <sup>74</sup> The Movement was organized in the district under the active leadership of Abdus Sattar. <sup>75</sup> On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1942 he issued leaflets to the students to commit them for the independence of India. Students from both of the communities picketed in front of Raj College, Medical School and Town School.<sup>76</sup> About 20 volunteers and students conducted raids on liquor shops in between August 30 to 31, 1942 AD..Khalilur Rahaman and Abdus Sattar from Muslim community and others led the Quit India Movement at Baidiapur region.<sup>77</sup> Musa Mian of Karojgram led the Quit India

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Movement in Katwa Sub-division. Sheikh Kalu, Muhammad Ali and Abdul Bari from the Muslim community led the Quit India movement in Asansol subdivision of the district.<sup>78</sup>

The Burdwan District Board organized a protest meeting in Burdwan town against the action of the British Authority on 29<sup>th</sup> August in 1942.<sup>79</sup> Post offices of Jamalpur, Khandhghosh, Sadipur, Bedugram were set on fire.<sup>80</sup> The people of Baidyapur called a strike on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1942 under the leadership of Abdus Sattar.<sup>81</sup> People set the various post offices on fire along with official documents at Kalna and Kashiara on 13<sup>th</sup> September, Jamalpur on 19<sup>th</sup> September, Uchalon and Mondalgram on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, and in Bhandarhati and Palason on 29<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>82</sup> Many activists from both the Hindu and Muslim Communities destroyed the Bamunia Damodar Canal office on September 20, 1942, in the district.<sup>83</sup> As a matter of fact, the British Authority closed the Burdwan district Congress Office as well as many local Congress Offices from 6<sup>th</sup> September to 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1942.<sup>84</sup> The people of the district set fire to various places in the district such as Kusumgram Dakbungalow on 21<sup>st</sup> October, Berugram Post Office on 25<sup>th</sup> November, Raina Post Office on 29<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>85</sup>

The British Authority arrested the patriotic leaders from Burdwan district in the month of September in 1942 and detained them in Burdwan jail. Abdus Sattar and Shaikh Kalu from the Muslim community on 16<sup>th</sup> September in 1942, Musa Mian of Karajgram on 17<sup>th</sup> September in 1942 and Rahamatullah Shaikh on 25<sup>th</sup> September in 1942 were arrested.<sup>86</sup>

A "Food Conference" was held in Katwa Sub-division under the leadership of Musha Mian from karajgram and inspired the common people to participate in the Quit India Movement against the British.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, a "Food Conference" was held under the active leadership Abul Hasnat of Kusumgram along with the others.<sup>88</sup> Several Communist leaders participated in the Quit India Movement as social workers and formed the "Flood Relief Committee" to control the Damodar River floods of 1943.<sup>89</sup> Syed Shahedullah and Mansoor Habibullah were prominent communist leaders of Burdwan district.<sup>90</sup> They also campaigned for the people of the district to participate in the Quit India Movement.<sup>91</sup> Sheikh Sahib of Mainampur was a communist leader, provided winter clothes to the flood victims of Purbasthali and Monteswar.<sup>92</sup> Bengal Provincial Student Society was established on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1943. "Student Fund" was created in 1944 under the leadership of Abdus Sattar to provide financial aid and assistance to the needy students of the district.<sup>93</sup> Abdus Sattar, Golam Rahaman (Kachi Miah), Abul Hayat, Muhammad Yeasin, Musa Mian, Abdullah Rasul, Syed Sahidullah, Syed Abdur Rahaman Ferdausi, Abdul Ghaffar Mollah, Syed Ali Mohammad Jan and other prominent leaders of the district were not only participated but also provided powerful leadership to the movement in various parts of the district.<sup>94</sup>

Women also took an active part in the Quit India movement in the district. Rabeya Begum, Samsunnahar, Maksuda Khatun, Nurunnessa Sattar and others were notable in this regard. Rabeya Begum, the pioneer of the awakening Muslim women in Burdwan district in India's Freedom Movement, was a public leader and wife of Syed Shahedullah. 'Mahila Atmaraksha Samity' (Women's Self Defense Association) was founded in 1943 under her active initiative and leadership. It played a great role in the awakening of women in Indian Independence Movement. Samsunnahar, Maqsuda Khatun, Nurunnessa Sattar were active members of this association.<sup>95</sup> They were actively involved in various programmes of action of Indian freedom movement from 1940

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onwards. Samsunnahar was the President of 'Mahila Atramaksha Samiti'.<sup>96</sup> She led every march, attended public meeting organized by women against the arrest of Congress workers in the district during the Quit India movement. She was the main speaker in women's associations in different places of the district. Members of the "Mahila Atramaksha Sangathanik Samiti" of Burdwan district organized women to take part in Quit India Movement.<sup>97</sup> "District Mahila Atmaraksha Sangrami Samiti", was a National Organization. The association is mainly concerned with social welfare but during the Quit India Movement, it organized various protests including demonstrations on various political issues. Several Muslim women especially Mrs. Rabeya Begum, Mrs. Maqsuda Khatun and Nurunnessa Sattar participated in the various activities of the "Mahila Atramaksha Sangathanik Samiti" during Quit India movement.<sup>98</sup>

The great leader Kalu Sheikh addressed the crowd of workers when he gathered for a program during the Movement.<sup>99</sup> The people of the district did not experience communal chaos during the Quit India Movement. District leaders including some leaders of the Muslim community especially Muhammad Ismail, Abdus Sattar, Syed Sahedullah and Mansoor Habibullah played a leading role in maintaining communal harmony within the district. The Communist Party of India did not participate in the August Revolution for ideological reasons. The Communist Party withdrew from the Movement by adopting the policy of 'people's war'. Syed Mansoor Habibullah was arrested by the British at dawn from Gayokhali port in Nandigram, Midnipur district and sentenced in Tamluk Jail.<sup>100</sup>

Abdul Bari led the Quit India Movement in Asansol as a worker's leader. Abdul Bari from Muslim community involved in various strategic activities of Quit India Movement. He was arrested for many times by the British authorities during Quit India Movement.<sup>101</sup> Muhammad Ali was one of the leading personalities of Asansol who led the Quit India Movement in many ways. He was a decorator trader in Asansol. He mobilized railway workers to take part in Quit India Movement.<sup>102</sup> Dr. Kazi Qayem Hussain of Asansol was deeply involved in Quit India Movement.<sup>103</sup>

Food Committees were formed in different places of the district during the famine of 1943.<sup>104</sup> Syed Shahedullah was the secretary of Sadr Sub-division Food Committee. Abul Hasanat of Kusumgram organized the food conference under the initiative of Musa Mian of Karojgram, Katwa.<sup>105</sup> Abul Hasanat of Kusumgram organized a 'Food Conference' at Nadanghata along with the others.<sup>106</sup>

An anti-fascist meeting was held on around 15 villages in the vicinity under the chairmanship of Zayed Ali, the leader of the farmers' association of Parbatpur village under Jamalpur police station of Burdwan district.<sup>107</sup> On April 10, 1943, a conference was held in Burdwan city with the initiative of the members of the All-Party Committee. This conference was presided over by Abul Hayat. The Movement spread to the surrounding districts. Farmers, students, youths and women provided strength in the Movement. During the Movement around nineteen hundred (1900) workers were arrested and imprisoned by the British Government."<sup>108</sup>

#### **Situation in Burdwan district after Quit India Movement:**

Abdul Mominis an active leader of Trade Union Movement in Burdwan district. He was the trade union secretary of the district.<sup>109</sup> Abdul Ahad was a popular leftist supporter and the president of Union Board of Gushkara, led the Workers Movement in the district.<sup>110</sup> Shamsujjoha Mandal was the vice-president of Purbasthali Union under Kalna Local

*Role of Unsung Patriotic Leaders of Burdwan District in Indian Freedom Movement...* Kabirul Haque Khan Board. He was an active Peasant leader.<sup>111</sup> Ajay Dam Committee and Ajay Dam Movement Committee were started under the leadership of Abdus Samad. He was the president of those two committees.<sup>112</sup> Abdul Ahad, son of Abdus Samad, was elected to the District Board in 1940 as a Congress candidate from Mangalkot West. Abdul Ahad directly joined the Peasant Movement.<sup>113</sup> Abdul Baset, son of Abdul Ahad joined the left-wing teachers' movement in the district.

The Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti of Burdwan District played an important and significant role during the next four years (1943-1947). Nurunnessa Sattar was selected vice-president in Kalna and Mrs. Maqsuda Khatun from Burdwan was selected as one of the members of this Samity. In this conference, several important decisions were taken, including the demand for the release of nationalist leaders, maintaining Hindu-Muslim unity, necessary rations for the victims, shelter for helpless women and children. The people of the district continued to jointly fight against British Rule until India gained its independence on 15 August 1947.

### **Conclusion:**

The present research work explored the situation and the demographic condition of Burdwan district under British Colonial period. The origin of the name of Burdwan district and the various theories on it are also discussed. The work dealt with the objectives, justification of the topic, research methodology and the contribution of unsung nationalist leaders of Burdwan district in Indian Freedom Movement during the period of study.

The prominent unsung patriotic leaders of Burdwan district namely Moulavi Abul Kasem, Maulavi Muhammad Yeasin, Abul Hayat, Molla Zayed Ali, Kochi Mian, Syed Sahedullah, Abdul Qadir, Kalu Shaikh, Muhammad Ismail, Abdus Sattar, Abul Hashim, Rebel poet Qazi Nazrul Islam, Shaikh Kalu, Taher Hossain, Dr. Kazi Qayem Hossain, Abdul Bari, trader Muhammad Ali, and Shaikh Babulla Mandal had tremendous contribution in bringing ideological changes in the mind of the people of the district. They spread the message about the atrocities of the Colonial Government among the people through various meetings and processions, and stimulated anti-British feelings among the people of the district. Their political activities were directly and indirectly influenced by the national and provincial leaders. The Muslim leaders from local areas of the district were also in touch with the District, Provincial and National leadership of different political parties. The educated Muslims of the district were not influenced by the separatist ideology and never supported the communal politics. The rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam strongly advocated communal harmony, which was the key to the success of Hindu-Muslim unity.

The research work has shown that the people of the district had been profoundly conscious about the "Nationalized Politics". The political outlook of a united Indian Nation was their main objective and all their endeavours were directed towards it. The research work to sketch out the contributions of Freedom Fighters of the District that were relegated into forgetfulness.

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