

*Noakhali*

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**SHANTANU SINGHA**

Translated by Kaushik Majumdar

Produced by J.K. Mitra

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## **Foreword**

Noakhali, Noakhali! Alas! You were the victim of the experiment for Pakistan. Rather the first successful experiment for gaining Pakistan. The first experiment was Kolkata, but that was a failure. Then you were selected for the next round. We failed to save you from demons. All of us failed —

The revolutionaries failed, the Marxists failed, the secularists failed, even the Hindutvaists failed. Over all theories and practices, the experiment for Pakistan was done successfully.

The demons failed in Kolkata. Then they selected you. Far from Kolkata, among the lush greeneries of rural Bengal, far away — so that your screams, your pains fail to reach Delhi, or even Kolkata. But why you? Have you ever asked anyone? At the confluence of Padma and Meghna, you are lying peacefully. Why did they choose you? A student of history, if he sees history through his own eyes may give you the answer. There were only 18% Hindus at Noakhali. The rest were non Hindus. That is why you were the guinea pig of Rahmat Ali, Iqbal and Jinnah. For them the land they live is not the mother, only assets to be divided or raped. That is why they wanted to divide their mother. They put in action the **Theory of Division of the Mother**. The shameless Communists, who have been thrown in the dustbin of history, hailed this theory.

Today you are there. Padma and Meghna are there. But is there any temple? Is there any housewife in Noakhali who prays to Bhagwan? Can you hear the conch shells blowing? Holi, Durgapuja has stopped there and we have taken as marks of advancement (?). In the name of development and non-violence we have sacrificed the entire East Bengal, Punjab, Baluchistan, N.W.F.P. and the Sindhu (Indus). The Sindhu, where man had heard the first recitation of Vedas, now only hears the sound of Azaan. The voice of secularism can be heard thousands of miles away from Sindhu, at the banks of Ganga. Our secularism had failed to save Sindhu. We failed to save Padma. But have we learned the lesson? But we still wear the coloured glasses. These glasses look good, but it does not show the correct way, does not give a clear vision. It only shows the path to an ever deepening chasm.

But still we have not learned the lesson. Proof? Kashmir is the proof. Burning, bloodied Kashmir. The white snow on 'heaven on earth' is not white any more, it is red. Red because of blood. Because we have not learned we are about to lose Jhelum like we lost Sindhu. We have not learned, that is why two and a half lakhs of Hindus are now refugees in their own land. Next? Will it be Ganga ? Yamuna? Godavari or Cauvery? Yamuna had given shelter to those whom Padma had failed to keep. Ganga had taken those whom Sindhu had been unable to protect. Yamuna had called those whom Jhelum had to send away. But what if Yamuna, Ganga and Godavari all go?

But now we have to learn the lesson. The teachers can be Jhelum, Padma and Sindhu. But Jhelum and Sindhu are far away. A few students of Bengal — NO —divided Bengal, of West Bengal are ready to hear from Padma. But Padma, you tried to speak once before through the voice of Shyama Prasad. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had tried to tell the world, to show the blind leaders of Hindustan, who had shouted till he was hoarse and bleeding — to tell the truth, to tell your story. But we Bengalis were deaf, we

kept our eyes closed. The result of that has been paid dearly by the previous generation and we are still paying it today.

But today we want to hear from you Noakhali. We want to learn from you. We want to know about the terror days of '46 and '47. Those days that had been kept away from us by the intellectuals, artists, writers and the internationally famed people. They have not let us see your tears.

*Tamas* had been written on the division of Punjab. But there is no *Tamas* on the division of Bengal. For many people the tearful time of Bengal is still in darkness. We want to bring light to this darkness, to show the people the true incidents of the misfortunes of Noakhali. We want to tell the people about what had actually happened. History is being lost because there is no written history and the eyewitnesses are dying. That is why we are hurrying. We want to save history from being lost. We want to keep it for our next generation, so that they will know what had happened and not repeat the mistakes again. They will provide the theories. We will save the facts for them.

*Noakhali Noakhali* is written to educate the GenerationX about the misfortune of Bengal. The blessings of the readers will give us the needed push to write the *Tamas* of Bengal.  
Kolkata

14th August 2008

***Tapan Kumar Ghosh***  
**Publisher**

## ***Introduction***

I have not seen East Bengal. I was born in the 60s in Kolkata. So, I cannot feel from heart the pain of losing everything and becoming a refugee. But sometimes when I used to hear my elders talking about our ancestral home somehow, in a corner of my heart, I feel a void for that unseen place which makes me yearn for it.

But why did they come. They came to escape the riots. They had to accept the division of the motherland to be free from the constant terror of riot. RIOT – this word had changed the entire socio-economic picture of Bengal.

I had wanted to write a book on incidents just prior to the division of India. But that is not possible at this time. Lack of money and time is the prime cause. But I was able to finish this booklet. Here one may find a lot of controversial issues. But they came because I wanted to keep history as it was.

Lack of informative writings was the main problem. Thus my main source is the write-ups from different newspapers and periodicals. Also I had to depend upon the interviews of those people who were the eyewitnesses of the riots. Their interviews are assets of this book.

When the memory of the tears and historical accounts of the division of Bengal is being removed from the mind of Bengalis, we are trying to keep the history alive. The previous editions were sold out within months of being published. That gave us confidence for the future editions. We have added some new facts in this edition.

Kolkata  
August 1, 2008

Shantanu Singha

*November, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1946*

**Chandpur**, a lesser known village of Bengal.

He was walking along the village lane, under the shadow of the trees. He was old. His age has made him weak and bent. But he walked. He has to go a long way. He has to go to every house in every village. He has to listen to all the accusations. He has to give them advice. He was seventy-eight, but he walked. His 'duty' had made him come from far away Delhi to Bengal.

He had wanted to come earlier. The Great Calcutta Killing had assaulted his beliefs. Again the riots had struck, within two months and that too in Bengal.

But he had not been able to come at that time. He had not been able to know what his 'duty' was. His 'inner voice' had not given him any direction.

Bengal is alien to him. Bengal had recognized him, honored him but had not accepted him. When India had knelt under his charisma, Bengal had stood apart, undaunted. Bengal had never surrendered. On the contrary Bengal had challenged him; Bengal had not forgotten the spirit of revolution.

No one could fathom his charisma by just looking at his weak body. He was short, thin, had thick lips and toothless mouth.

But this man was the uncrowned king of India, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi, also called the Father of the Nation. He had the godlike power to feel the emotions of the common people. To his followers he was a soldier and a sage (Sanyasi). To the bureaucrats of the British **He was a strange blend of great moral principles and quirky obsessions**. To the Indians, Gandhiji was their close person, someone to depend on.

Gandhiji had toured the Noakhali district. He came to the people who had lost relatives, family and home. He did not come with an entourage but came with only four people. With him came the famous image of the three monkeys – See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. Gandhi had said in Delhi that except for God he does not want anyone with him. This was his **last and greatest experiment**<sup>1</sup> with the Hindus and Muslims.

His ideology was in stake. He had started from South Africa. His test on Hindu-Muslim relationship had fulfillment in Khilafat Movement. Many people had told him not to join in any communal movement, but Gandhiji had not listened. This was Gandhiji's characteristics. He was separate from others. He would not move with others, others would move with him. When Kashmir to Kanyakumari had wanted movements, he was silent. Many times he had stopped satyagrahas in the middle. He had started the Quit India Movement in the very last moment. He loved to walk alone. The song "Ekla cholo re" ("Walk alone") by Rabindra Nath Tagore was his favorite.

He had come to Noakhali for his last test on Hindu-Muslim relationship. The success of this will show him the next step. He had come here for, in his words, "to rekindle the lamp of neighbourliness"<sup>2</sup>.

To succeed he had asked the Muslims to protect their Hindu brothers. But he drew the line for Hindus to protect themselves. So he had asked the Hindus to die bravely, with sacred thoughts, to submit themselves to the swords of Muslims. In his own words, "**It is the duty of every Hindu not to harbor any thoughts of revenge**". "**Hindus should not die helplessly, but face death bravely and without a murmur**."<sup>3</sup>.

His last and greatest experiment failed at Noakhali. The Muslims did not protect the Hindus. The Hindus did not face death, they ran away to save their lives, to save the honour of their women. Those who failed to run, they had the choice between Koran and death.

But Gandhiji's last and greatest experiment did not end here. His advice to girls menaced with rape in Punjab was "to bite their tongue and hold breath until they were dead."<sup>4</sup> They are not to try to save their honour. Under no circumstances Gandhi can give advice to stray away from the path of *Ahimsa*. Gandhiji was also a giver. He was not satisfied with creation of Pakistan. When Jinnah had wanted the Rs. 500 million, Gandhiji had threatened to go for hunger strike unless India gives the money to Pakistan.

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<sup>1</sup> Larry Collins & Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, p-22

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p-22

<sup>3</sup> Amrita bazar Patrika 18.10.46

GANDHI'S DEMAND FOR THE PAYMENT OF PAKISTAN'S 500 MILLION RUPEES, the teleprinter gave the news as a young Maratha stood thunderstruck in the office of "Hindurashtra". "Not any more", the words had come out of his mind. "Let Gandhi die." Nathuram Godse told his companion Narayan Apte in crisp and clear words.

Did Godse kill Gandhi? No. Long before him, the death warrant of Gandhi had been signed. Gandhiji was not only a man; he was a soldier and a sage. Gandhiji was the name of an ideology. At least to his followers. He himself had said "My life is my work". But he failed to teach his followers. Those who said they were Gandhi's followers did not follow his ideology. They never took Gandhian policy seriously. All they had wanted to use Gandhi's popularity to gain advantage for themselves. This was Gandhi's greatest tragedy. Those whom he believed, loved were never with him. Gandhiji lived simply. This was not well taken by Nehru who had been brought up in Western style. Nehru loved both meat and wine. At times Gandhiji had said about Nehru, "He is more English than Indian"<sup>5</sup>. Gandhiji's love for truth had failed to impress Azad. At the very end of his life Gandhiji had seen the true nature of his followers. He had wanted to dissolve Congress to save the country from future feuds.

If someone goes away from Hinduism, it does not only mean that Hindus have lost one of their numbers, it also means an increase in the number of the enemy.

A well-to-do family of Gujarat had converted to Islam only two generations back. His grandfather had embraced Islam but not the fundamentalism. There was openness in the family. So his grandson was brought up with an open mind. The grandson was the most controversial person of the Indian politics of the age.

He did not support the communal talks to gain political targets. That is why he had opposed Gandhiji's Khilafat Movement in support of the Turkish Khalifa. In his speech in the Assembly he had declared "A nationalist first, a nationalist second, a nationalist third". His love for his country had brought him close to Lokmanya Tilak. He fought for Tilak in the Bombay High Court against the British Raj. Many had seen a true leader in him in his way of secularity and immense willpower. Gokhale had placed him high and had said "he has true stuff in him, and that freedom from all sectarian prejudice which will make him the best ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity".<sup>6</sup> Even after he had joined the Muslim League, his dedication to the country had not diminished. Sorojini Naidu had commented on this Indian Sahib's joining the Muslim League as "His two sponsors were required to make a solemn preliminary covenant that loyalty to the Muslim League and the Muslim interest would in no way and at no time imply even the shadow of disloyalty to the larger national cause, to which his life is dedicated".<sup>7</sup>

He was friendless in social life, alone in family life and totally constitutionalist, Muhammad Ali Jinnah was never interested in Islam. He had never read the Koran. Even when he became an M.L.A. he had to take oath with Koran in hand, but was never interested to know what was inside. Rather Islam was Nonsense to him.<sup>8</sup> No one had ever seen him to visit a mosque. This Barrister hated to see himself with the common Muslims. Dr. Ambedkar had said, "He (Jinnah) was never known to be a very devout, pious or a professing Muslim. Besides kissing the Holy Quran as and when he was sworn in as an M.L.A., he does not appear to have bothered much about its contents or its special tenets. It is doubtful if he frequented any mosque either out of curiosity or

religious fervor. Mr. Jinnah was never found in the midst of a Muslim mass congregation, religious or political.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Larry Collins & Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, p-256

<sup>5</sup> Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *The History of Indian national Congress (Vol-2)*, p-132

<sup>6</sup> V.B Kulkarni ; *India and Pakistan*, p-278-9

<sup>7</sup> *ibid* p-212-3

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* p-275



Jinnah loved to relax with wine. He would find the enjoyment of *behest* (Heaven) in the banned drink of Islam. Pork, the food that is the highest sacrilege in Islam was his regular dish. <sup>10</sup> Wine and pork were the two items that was taken regularly by Jinnah. He did not know Urdu or Farsi. He hated to be identified with the Indian Muslims. But Muhammad Ali Jinnah became the undisputed leader of eight crore (80 million) Muslims of India.

The election of 1937 was the greatest turning point in the political life of Jinnah. He had joined the Muslim League but he still believed in the Ideal of Nationalism. When he had visited England in 1933, the 'Father of Pakistan Idea', Chaudhry Rahmat Ali had advised him to create 'Pakistan State'. It was dismissed by Jinnah as an 'Impossible dream'.

The election of 1937 was important for Jinnah. It was the first step for him to establish himself as a political leader. This was because this was the first election after he had joined Muslim League. But the results were devastating for the League. The states where the Muslims were numerically superior, like Bengal, Punjab and Sindh declined the Muslim League. In Bengal the Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Haque got absolute supremacy. In Punjab the power came in the hands of Unionist Party of Sir Khizr Hayat Khan, who was totally against Pakistan. In Sindh, Muslim league could win only 3 seats among 33.

Jinnah took the defeat personally. He wanted to take revenge. The man who even a few weeks ago had declared himself as 'a nationalist first' now started communal propaganda against the Hindus. He commented that **"Pakistan was born the day when the first Hindu was converted to Islam centuries ago."**

23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940, at the Lahore convention of the Muslim League the "Pakistan Proposal" was accepted. Muhammad Ali Jinnah explained it as "India's problem is not racial but communal. It is sad to see that our Hindu friends cannot fathom the actual facts of Hinduism and Islam. Hindu and Muslim are not only two different religions but two different national identities. They get inspirations from two different histories. One's great person is the other one's enemy. Mussalmans are not minorities...Mussalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their own homeland, their territory and their state".<sup>13</sup>

But Jinnah knew very well that with their hue and cry it was impossible for the Muslim League to get Pakistan by themselves. So, when he got Pakistan so easily, an astonished Jinnah had commented to his A.D.C. that "I never thought it would happen. I never expected to see Pakistan in my lifetime."<sup>14</sup>

Actually it was some irresponsible Congress leaders who had instigated Jinnah about Pakistan. In 1944 Gandhiji had met Jinnah a number of times. He called Jinnah Quaid-e-Azam. But as per Gujarati way he should have called Jinnah as 'Jinnahbhai". But Jinnah had called Gandhiji as Mr. Gandhi". At this time Gandhiji had begged Jinnah:"I am neither the enemy of you nor Islam. I am only a servant of yours. Please do not return me empty handed." <sup>15</sup>

Jinnah was jubilant in the submission of Gandhiji. He told the Executive Committee of the Muslim League that:"At last --- and is good and conducive to further progress... Mr.

Gandhi has, at any rate in his personal capacity; accepted the principles of partition or division of India.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1945-46 the Parliamentary Elections were held. Muslim League fought on the single issue of Pakistan. <sup>17</sup> Congress came in the fray with the slogan of “Independent and Unified India”. But the Hindu Mahasabha Supremo Veer Savarkar warned the nation that the weak leadership of Congress is not enough to stop the secessionists. So a vote to Congress means a vote to the cause of Pakistan.

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<sup>9</sup> Ambedkar : Pakistan or Partition of India, p-405

<sup>10</sup> Larry Collins & Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight*, p-102

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p-102

<sup>13</sup> V.P. Menon: Transfer of Power, p-82

<sup>14</sup> Leonard Moseley: Last Days of the British Raj. P-274

<sup>15</sup> V.P. Menon: Transfer of Power, p-162

<sup>16</sup> Madan Gopal: Sir Chhou Ram, p-134

<sup>17</sup> R.C Majumdar:History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol-3, p-747

But Savarkar's accurate analysis of the scenario failed to appeal to the masses. Congress got the Hindu vote. But the Muslim contestants of the Congress in the Muslim Reserved seats faced disaster. The Muslim League got 86.6% votes and took 76 seats out of 79. Congress won only 3 seats.<sup>18</sup>

On this disaster of the Muslim leaders of congress in the reserved seats, Jinnah commented, "The point that is raised by the Congress that Mussalmans are with them is totally false. In the Parliament, Mussalman leaders of Congress had won only three seats from 79 and these traitors are being kicked out everywhere."<sup>19</sup>

In March 1946, the newly elected Prime Minister of England declared a Cabinet Mission. The Viceroy of British India, Lord Wavell called both the Muslim League and the Congress in the Cabinet Mission to discuss the next steps. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the then Congress President. Jinnah declined to meet the Mussalman delegate of the Hindu Congress, because **Hindus were "enemies", he (Jinnah) said, but non-League Muslims were "traitors". He could not deal with "traitors".**<sup>20</sup>

Congress submitted to Jinnah and sent 'Hindu' Nehru as the President's delegate.<sup>21</sup> Jinnah also demanded that in the coming Ministry there should be no Muslim in the 'Hindu Congress' contingent. Maulana Azad accepted this demand and sent a letter to the viceroy, keeping the Congress Working Committee in darkness. Later when the Stafford Cripps showed the letter to Maulana Azad, he flatly denied that he wrote it.

Sudhir Ghosh, who was a close associate of Gandhiji, had written in his *Gandhiji's Emissary* that Gandhiji asked Maulana sahib a straight question whether he had written any letter to the Viceroy about the negotiations that were going on. The Maulana flatly denied having written any letter at all. He did this while the letter in original was lying in front of Gandhiji on his little desk at a distance of two or three yards from the spot where Maulana sahib was sitting ... what deeply upset Gandhiji was that a life-long colleague to whom he had such unflinching loyalty could be so untruthful..."

On 6<sup>th</sup> July, in a press conference in Bombay, Nehru refused a meeting with the Cabinet Mission. Jinnah could not accept this decision. Jinnah broke out of his 'Constitutional image' and came down to the masses. Muslim League started to prepare for **Direct Action**.

Rahmat Ali had come back to Calcutta on 15<sup>th</sup> August with his men. They spread out to Khidderpore, Kolutola, Rajabazar, Dharmatala, Taltola and Park Circus. By this time the plans had been made clear. Nobody is to give any percentage of loot to anyone. The Police will not action against any mundane things like rape, murder or abduction of women.

The day 16<sup>th</sup> August was the day of **Direct Action**. The League supporters would do road meetings in different places in support of Pakistan. In Bengal a Bandh was called on that day. Suhrawardy was the Chief Minister of Bengal. Under him the Muslim League government declared 16<sup>th</sup> August as holiday. It was an 'indirect support' to the 'Direct Action'. The Congress leaders raised voices, but kept it confined to the Legislative Assembly. They did not come down to the masses to move against the Bandh. Only Hindu Mahasabha tried to organize the people to rally against the Bandh. But they had

no mass support like the Congress. Gandhiji concluded his duty by believing the League and Jinnah that the Direct Action would be a peaceful affair. Nehru, in his way of 'revolt' advised the people to work normally.

The Communist Party of India gave an unusual comment. In a press release on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1946, Jyoti Basu the leader of CPI in the Legislative Assembly remarked that the CPI would try to keep the state peaceful on the day, **with a strike where necessary and without a strike where necessary.** <sup>22</sup> A very surprising decision indeed! They would support the strike in Muslim areas and oppose the same in Hindu areas!

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid* p-751

<sup>19</sup> *The Statesman*: 29-07-1946

<sup>20</sup> J.B.Kripalani: *Gandhi --- His Life and Thought*, p-235

<sup>21</sup> *The Statesman*: 27-07-1946

At the dawn of 16<sup>th</sup> August, the men of Rahmat Ali started the carnage. They started an orgy of rape, murder and abduction. Thousands were made homeless. There were no accounts of how many women were raped or abducted. Small hillocks of dead bodies began to form on the roads of Calcutta. The vision prompted the British reporter Kim Kristen to comment that after seeing the Second World War his nerves had become strong. But war was not this horrible. This could be termed as a medieval carnage. This was made such.<sup>23</sup>

Sharif Khan, the then Mayor of Calcutta was at the helm of this carnage.<sup>24</sup> The Government actively helped the riots. With this in mind, there had been a number of changes in the Police. The Home department was in the hands of Chief Minister Suhrawardy. Under him Hindu Police Officers were removed from all of the 24 Police Head Quarters. Muslim Officers were placed in 22 and the rest 2 were filled by Anglo-Indians.<sup>25</sup> The Police were kept totally inactive. The Government refused to acknowledge that there had been any trouble. Even the Governor F. Burrows commented that there had been no riots in the state.

The Hindus realized that the Government would not give them safety. So from the afternoon of 17<sup>th</sup> August they formed their own forces. In different places the Muslims began to lose. But that was unacceptable to the Government. They brought in the Police and military to stop the Hindu defense forces.<sup>26</sup> In Calcutta alone the death toll rose to 5,000 and 15,000 wounded.

But the plan of Direct Action had not been kept from public by Jinnah. At the National Convention of the All India Muslim League on 27-28 July 1946, the resolution for the Direct Action had been taken. Jinnah had proclaimed that without Pakistan the Muslim Nation (Jinnah had proclaimed that Muslims are of different nation) will not negotiate with anything. He also said: "Now the time has come for the Muslim Nation to resort to direct action."<sup>27</sup>

But why Direct Action? Jinnah explained: " ... to achieve Pakistan and assert our just right and to vindicate our honour and to get rid of the present slavery under British and contemplated future of the caste Hindu domination."<sup>28</sup>

What was the way of Direct Action? Jinnah commented that from that "... from the moment of the founding of Muslim League, we had followed the Constitutional path. But now it is time to bid good bye to the constitutional methods. Till date we had asked two parties, one had shown us machinegun and power of oppression, the other had threatened us with Satyagraha. But today **we have a pistol and are in a position to use it.**"<sup>29</sup>

This pistol was used extensively in Calcutta. But the smoke cleared quickly. In the Bengali-Hindu's mind the Great Killing of Calcutta did not register. Even after such an act, the Muslim League Government did not face any action in or out of the Legislative Assembly. Congress did not organize any mass movement against the League. "While Calcutta was the scene of an unprecedented holocaust, Nehru was busy negotiating with the viceroy about the interim Government."<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee tried to educate the Hindu-Bengalis about the need to form self defense forces. But the traditional Bengali snobbery refused to acknowledge his call. But the Muslims did not forget their defeat at Calcutta riots. When the Muslim League was in power, the Hindus had been able to stop the Muslim onslaught. This humiliation burned in the Muslim mind. So they started anew.

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<sup>22</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika: 14-08-1946

<sup>23</sup> J.B.Kripalani: Gandhi --- His Life and Thought, p-253

<sup>24</sup> ibid

<sup>25</sup> ibid

<sup>26</sup> ibid, p-254

<sup>27</sup> Text of the Resolution, Bombay, 1946

<sup>28</sup> ibid

<sup>29</sup> Pirzada --- Foundation of Pakistan, p-559-560

<sup>30</sup> R.C Majumdar:History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol-3, p-789

The Muslim leaders had planned in such a way that there could be no repeat of Calcutta. In the next round, they had planned that far from fighting, the Hindus could not even run away. That was why Noakhali was chosen. In this district there was one point in favour of the Muslims. Here the Hindus were minorities. Of the total population, Hindus were 18.6% and Muslims 81.4%. So the next phase of operation was done in Noakhali. Golam Sarowar was the ex-M.L.A of Muslim League. He was also the president of Sahapur School. He was the undisputed leader of the Muslims in the district. The idea that to take the revenge of Calcutta, Hindus must be terrorized came from the brain of this Muslim leader. To succeed with this project, he was supported by the School teachers, maulavis and even the Union Presidents.

From September, anti-Hindu propaganda was started. The call went up to boycott the Hindu shops. The volunteers of Muslim National Guard used to stand just outside the Hindu shops so that any Muslim cannot buy any goods from the shop. The Government report clearly states that: "Muslims buying goods from Hindu shops were abused and beaten."<sup>31</sup>

Even the Muslims were encouraged to boycott the Hindu lawyers at the court.

On the days of Haat (Market), the Muslims picketed so that the Hindu shops of *paan* were boycotted.

Along with these economic blockades, other forms of attack were also used. The main aim was to make the Hindus feel insecure and unsafe in their homeland. Dacoity was made on the Hindu houses, killing of cows in public and sending the meat to Hindu houses, committing sacrilege on Hindu temples --- all these were planned by Golam Sarowar. He wanted to make Noakhali bereft of Kafirs. In the Bengal Legislative Assembly, different speakers had spoken about these insecurities of the Hindus in Noakhali. "Widespread reports of Hindus deprived of their valuables while travelling in boats, of Hindu houses burgled, of cows sacrificed in public places, of Hindu shops looted and temples and idols desecrated."<sup>32</sup>

The Hindus villagers of Panch Gaon still shed tears when they recollect how they were terrorized. "There was a Brahmin family close by. They were four brothers. On the day of Qurbani, a cow was killed in front of the temple and the meat was sent to their house. They were horrified and threw the meat away. Immediately all the Muslims came to their house saying that the brothers had committed grievous crime by refusing the prasad of their Khoda. The brothers were fined Rs 250 and faced other humiliations".

An elder of Govindapur village, Naoli had tearfully recollected the mental tortures they had faced. The amount of abusing languages the Muslims had said still brought tears to his eyes.

A lawyer, who had just appeared for Matriculation Examination had recollected, "Suddenly our servants started to address us in a derogatory manner. If any relative came from Calcutta, they used to ask, "How many Muslims did you kill in Calcutta?"

There are no exaggerations in this writing. This is based on the interviews of the people living in Noakhali at that time. In 1946 the Report of Bengal Press Advisory Committee

(B.P., A.C.) had given details of this. The documents prove that the riots of Noakhali had been ore-planned in meticulous way.

From the Police Diaries of B.P.,A.C. Noakhali District, it is clear that the Hindus had warned the Government a long time back about the impending riots planned by the Muslims. But the local governing authorities were silent and deliberately blind.

Some incidents mentioned in the diaries are provided here. The B.P., A.C. had kept the names hidden, that is why we are unable to provide the names here.

Ranigunj Thana 13.09.1946, a villager had alleged that “When I was returning from the ration shop, some men attacked me. I was rescued by some fellow villagers and the attackers ran away. Before running away they threatened us that they would take revenge of Calcutta.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Burrows to Pethick Lawrence, 17 October, 1946, Transfer of Power, Vol-VIII, Document 472, p-473

<sup>32</sup> G.D.Khosla : Stern Reckoning : A Survey of the events Before and following the Partition of India,  
p-69-70

<sup>33</sup>Bengal Press Advisory Committee Report, 1946 (Oct)



A letter to the District Magistrate of Noakhali by some villagers, 10.09.1946, "We (Hindus) are feeling insecure. Regularly there are processions with the cry of 'Revenge of Calcutta'. They are picketing our shops and threatening to kill us. We want police protection in the village. The expenses will be met by the villagers."

Another diary, dated 18.09.1946 states that "Our life is hanging in a thread. We are being told everyday that we will all be killed. Only the High Command had not given the order that is why they are not taking any action."

Not only threatening, but also there were calls to desecrate the Hindu temples. In 10.09.1946 a police diary states that a Muslim procession led by Golam Sarowar had raised communal slogans and had desecrated a Hindu Temple.

On one hand there were mental terrorism on the Hindus and on the other hand the Muslims were being excited into communal frenzy by the Muslim maulavis. They propagated that within some days the world will end. If the people want to live then all the people must be converted to Islam.<sup>35</sup>

So huge was the planning that outsiders like Peshawari and Pathan Muslims were brought to different points of Noakhali. **Amrita Bazar Patrika reported "Many of the hooligans in Noakhali appeared to be brought from outside."**<sup>36</sup>

One of the refugees from Noakhali, Phanibhusan Sur took shelter in Bangabasi College Refugee camp. He had said: "The attack to our village (Hazigunj) had been led by Peshawari Muslims. They carried long swords in their hands. They had commanded the orgy of rape, murder, looting and abduction."<sup>37</sup>

To organize the riots in a systematic way, the command was given to retired Muslim military personnel. All the training given to the military were used against the Hindus. The leaders of the Muslim League were ready to take revenge of Calcutta and thus they used all their weapons. The reporters who had visited Noakhali had reported "**the heads of miscreants were Ex-servicemen and they organised the raids in military fashion...The people knew how to dig up roads and cut communication.**"<sup>38</sup>

The riots were organized professionally. In different places the roads were cut and boats were used to form barricades in the canals and rivers, so that the besieged Hindus could not escape. The places where they could not build barriers were kept under heavy and armed guards of the rioters. Even the chief of League Ministry, Surahwardy had admitted that "**Some canals in the affected areas had been damaged and roads cut.**"

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After taking all precautions and organizing the riots, on 10<sup>th</sup> October, the official opening of the riots took place. Deadly attacks came down on the Hindus. In Noakhali and areas of Tripura, rape, murder, looting and abduction were started in organised and free way. The local government stood sleeping with their eyes open. The terrorized Hindus began to run away.

The riots had started on 10<sup>th</sup> October. But the State Government released the news only on 15<sup>th</sup> October, after five days and that too in a very short form.

The Statesman reported in their first news that the “State Government had come to know that riots have started in Noakhali district. The rioters had used weapons to attack a number of villages. The attacks had started from 10<sup>th</sup> October. Rape, abduction, loot and murder had been rampant. In many places Hindus had been forced to take up Islam and Hindu sacred places had been burned and desecrated. Many people had been murdered. Some had been burned alive. The President of the District Bar Council had been murdered along with his family.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid* 34a, *ibid* 34b, *ibid* 34c

<sup>35</sup> McNlery Papers. 1976

<sup>36</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 22-10-1946

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid* 19-10-1946

<sup>39</sup> V.P. Menon : Transfer of Power p-32

<sup>40</sup> The Statesman : 17-10-1946

The 'Black-out' of the news by the Government was condemned by the Amrita Bazar Patrika. The Editorial said, "The devastating news of the Noakhali riots has reached us. From both the Government and other sources it is clear that the entire series of riots have been pre-planned. The riots had started in a pre-mediated way. The most surprising point is that the first news of the riots had come out only after five days, in 15<sup>th</sup> October. Sadly or we should say, very suspiciously the Bengal Government's Directorate of Publicity had given a press note in such a laconic way that one could not fathom the extent and terror of the riots."

"But why did they keep the common people in darkness for five full days? Noakhali is not Peshawar or Quetta. Noakhali is only a few hours journey from Calcutta. Is it that the State Government had received no news from the District office? And if they had received the news, what did they do in these five days?"<sup>42</sup>

If it was only for loot or murder, the Maulavis would not have gone with the attackers. This was the preview of what would happen in future Pakistan. The league leaders had wanted to convert all the Hindus into Muslims to create a Dar-ul-Islam in Noakhali. That is why this rampant terrorism was unleashed. Kamini Kumar Dutta, the member of Bengal Legislative Assembly analysed the 'Noakhali Riots' as "that the apparent object behind the disturbances was to make the entire district exclusive to the majority community (Muslim)."<sup>43</sup>

To change Noakhali into Dar-ul-Islam a ceaseless reign of terror was unleashed. Equally, women from twelve to forty-two faced the indignity of rape and abduction. Those lucky women who could escape had terror in their eyes. The Hindus were forced to convert to Islam in the theory of '**Either Koran or Death**'. The Hindus were forced to kill cows and eat the meat. All the temples were desecrated. The Statesman reported:"In an area of about 200 sq miles the inhabitants surrounded by riotous mobs, are being massacred, their houses burned, their womenfolk being forcibly carried away and thousands being subjected to forcible conversion. Thousands of hooligans attacked the villages, compelled them (Hindus) to slaughter their cattle and eat. All places of worship in the affected villages have been desecrated."<sup>44</sup>

What did the Government and Police do to stop the carnage? The newspaper reported that **The District Magistrate and the Police Superintendent of Noakhali took no steps to prevent it.**

The Police had absolutely no intention to take any positive step to stop the riots. The Police Superintendent of Noakhali was active supporter of the riots and his anti-Hindu sentiment was high. The Muslim Superintendent of Police in Noakhali made his partisan attitude so apparent that the Divisional Commissioner had to censure him.<sup>45</sup> Orders came from the Writer's Building (The seat of Bengal Government) to release all the Muslim League supporters who had been arrested for rioting. The Report of Police Detective Department was: "Support for the rioters from the League Government became apparent when it directed the Police to discontinue prosecutions against a large number of those arrested."<sup>46</sup> Even Fazlul Huq, who was known as a liberal, supported the rioters. Fazlul Huq himself went to Comilla to secure the release of some of the accused.<sup>47</sup>

V.P.Menon had written about the Noakhali Riots as: "It was an organised attack engineered by the Muslim League and carried out with the convenience of the administrative officials."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The Statesman : 15-10-1946

<sup>42</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 17-10-1946

<sup>43</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 23-10-1946

<sup>44</sup> The Statesman : 16-10-1946

<sup>45</sup> Bell Papers, C.S.A.S. Cambridge

<sup>46</sup> Modern Review : May 1947

<sup>47</sup> ibid

<sup>48</sup> V.P.Menon : Transfer of Power, p-322

Bibhuti Bhusan Das of Noakhali wrote a letter to his brother Sudhangshu Bhusan Das of Kolkata. It came out in Amrita Bazar Patrika as **WE ALL HAVE BECOME MUSLIMS**. It created uproar in the society.

“In the night of 10<sup>th</sup>, we had been forced to become Muslims. A huge mob of Muslims attacked us and said that if we do not convert to Islam we will be burned alive. That night they forced us to become Muslims. They also said that their ‘High-Command’ had ordered them to convert the entire Noakhali District into Dar-ul-Islam. In this way they had converted the villagers of Chatkhil, Rampur, Dasberia villages.”<sup>49</sup>

After conversion the neo-Muslims got new names. The Muslims were very lenient about the names. The converted Hindus could choose their own names. For example, Priyomoy Chakroborty of Khalashipara took the name of Maulavi Haider Ali Chaudhary Thakur. The ‘lenient Muslims’ would give high ranking names and titles to the converted Hindus. After conversion the Hindus had to read Kalma. They closed their ears with hands or by clothes and handkerchiefs while reading the texts.

But even after all these the converted Hindus were not taken as full Muslims until the girls of ex-Hindus were married to the Muslims. “A neighborhood girl of six was converted to Islam and was forced to marry a Muslim boy. This was to prove that the Hindus have indeed become Muslims.” This was said by Uttam Basu who had escaped from Begumunj.

A rescued Hindu had told about his experience,” They (Muslims) said that the girls of our house has to marry the Muslims. One of my cousin sisters was very beautiful. Many of the Muslims were eager to marry her. The President of the Village local committee of the Muslim League wanted to marry her. He was 60, she was 15. We all sat together and planned. Then we told the local Maulavi that I want to marry her. There is a Muslim law that one can marry his cousin sister. Luckily the Maulavi agreed and for seven days we acted as husband-wife. Then the military came and rescued us.”

Even through all the tears and travails, there were some comic moments for the terrorized Hindus. The Muslims said “You all have become Muslims but you have yet to take the *Gost* (beef). But as you are not accustomed we will all sit together and take *Sinni* and then we will have *gost*.” Almost two thousand sat together to eat. Suddenly news came that **Sikhs** had come. The Muslims of East Bengal feared the Sikhs. Especially in Kolkata the Sikhs had shown great bravery. The news of their fighting prowess had spread to even the remote villages. Whenever there was news that Sikhs were coming, the Muslims would shout “Allah ho Akbar” to warn others and used to run away. So that day, when the news came that the Sikhs are coming, the Muslims warned the Hindus “None of you have become Muslims, you are still Hindus.” Then they ran away.

Actually at Choumohani Station a wagon bearing iron rods had arrived. The East Bengalis call the rods as **Shik**. Thus the word spread that Sikhs (actually shiks) had come.

To convert the entire Noakhali District into Dar-ul-Islam the first thing that was needed was to break the pillars of the Hindu society. So the Muslims attacked those Hindus who

were influential economically, socially and politically. Swami Tryambakananda of Bharat Sevasram Sangha had told about his eye witnessing of the experience as —  
“In 10<sup>th</sup> October there was a meeting at Begumgunj Bazar in the Muslim area. The main speaker was Golam Sarowar. In front of 15,000 people he used vile language to attack the Hindus. The Police station In-Charge himself was present there but he did not take any action. After his speech the excited mob attacked the Hindu shops. These were looted and burned. They the mob divided into three groups and went away.”

One of the groups attacked the local Zamindar Surendra Kumar Bose’s house. He was killed mercilessly. Then the mob set fire to the office building. A number of women and children were inside the building, they were burned to death. Those who were able to come out were hacked to pieces.

Another group attacked the house of the president of Noakhali Bar Association, Rajendralal Roy. But here the Hindus were united and the Muslim mob was defeated. The furious mob struck at the nearby villages and desecrated the Hindu temples. In the meantime Rajendralal Roy made a written request to the Begumgunj Police Station for help but he did not get any support. Next day at around eight another group attacked his home. Again using his gun he turned them away. He bravely defended his home from three such attempts. But the fourth time the rioters succeeded. Under the orders of Golam Sarowar the ex-M.L.A. of Muslim League, Rajendralal Roy was killed and then his family was put to death.<sup>50</sup>

The head of Rajendralal Roy was exhibited on a silver platter and presented to Golam Sarowar. Under his orders, two of his lieutenants received the two beautiful daughters of Rajendralal Roy as their prizes.<sup>51</sup>

The killing of Rajendralal Roy and Surendranath Bose was well analyzed by the brother of Rajendralal Roy, Prof. M.L. Roy. He was a professor in a College. His analysis was that “The Mussalmans wanted to convert the entire Noakhali District. That is why they attacked those who could fight back. That is the only reason why my family was killed.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 19-10-1946

But in this situation the Government was totally and suspiciously silent. The police did not go to save the people; rather they refused to become their saviours. The elder brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sarat Chandra Bose returned from Noakhali and told the reporters, "No police help was given to the persons and families attacked through timely appeals for help were made."<sup>53</sup>

'To take immediate action to save the people and control the situation, the Central Government must act in a positive manner' - Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee appealed to Pundit Nehru, the Prime Minister of the Central Government, to save the Hindus. He wrote a letter to the Central Government "We can understand the destruction on the enemy during wartime. But this type of attacks on innocent people is unthinkable. The Congress Government in the Centre must warn the Bengal Ministry that they are playing a dangerous game which will excite the people of other states."<sup>54</sup>

Shyamaprasad Mukherjee's appeal was not heeded because the High Command of Congress said that their organization does not infringe in the internal affairs of a state.

This incompetence of Congress was utilized by the Muslim League Government. Far from saving the Hindus, even after thirteen days the Government did not help the Hindus who had ran away to the jungle. The relief failed to appear because the Government did not want it. Amrita Bazar Patrika wrote: "For the 13<sup>th</sup> day today, about 120 villages in Ramgunj, Lakshmipur, Raipur, Begumgunj and Senbag thanas in Noakhali district with a Hindu population of 90,000 and nearly 70,000 villagers in Chandpur and Faridgunj thanas in Tippera (Tripura) district remained besieged by hooligans. Death stared in the face of the people in these areas and immediate rushing of supply to these areas with the help of military, who alone could do it, would save these people, most of whom have been without food for the last few days."<sup>55</sup> There were very few families from which one of their women had not been raped or abducted.

Some Non-Government Organizations had gone to Noakhali for relief. Miss Muriel was one of the people who had gone there. In 6<sup>th</sup> November 1946, she had written: "Worst of all was the plight of the women. Several of them had to watch their husbands being murdered and then be forcibly converted and married to some of those responsible for their spouse's death. Those women had a dead look. It was not despair, nothing as active as that. It was blackness... the eating of beef and conversion to Islam has been forced upon many thousands as the price of their lives."<sup>56</sup>

Mr. Simpson who had gone to investigate the riots of Noakhali had written: "From trusty sources we can gather that in one area over 300 helpless women had been raped. In another the number was more than 400. To the Muslim crowd, violation of the honour of Hindu women meant the exposure of the most protected aspect of the Hindu identity and religion."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 22-10-1946

<sup>51</sup> Binoy Bhusan Ghosh: Dwijatatva O Bangali, P-68, The Statesman : 16-10-1946

<sup>52</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 22-10-1946

<sup>53</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 23-10-1946

<sup>54</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 18-10-1946

The barbarous way the riots at Noakhali were administered was horrendous. A reporter of The Statesman reported that the experience made him think of the Muslim rules in the dark ages. He had written in The Statesman: "A young girl told me this story. She was from Raniganj Thana of Noakhali. On the 10<sup>th</sup> October a Muslim mob came to her house and demanded Rs 500 for the Muslim League Fund. They threatened to kill everybody if the payment was not made. Fearing for life the girl's father gave them the money. The mob came back again after some time. One of the elders went forward to talk with them, but before he could speak his head was cut off. Next to die was the girl's grandfather. Then came the turn of the girl's father. The mob laid him on the still warm dead body of his father. The girl's grandmother came to save his son, but she was struck on the head and became unconscious. They threw her to a side and prepared to kill her father. The girl had hidden, but now came out and asked the mob to spare her father and was ready to pay Rs 400 and all the jewelry on her body. A Muslim man took the offered money and jewelry with his left hand and immediately killed her father with his right."<sup>58</sup>

Gandhiji was asked to take the responsibility of the safety of the Hindus of Noakhali. But he refused to come, because "**Ever since I heard the news of Noakhali, indeed ever since the bloodbath in Calcutta, I have been wandering what my duty is God shall show me the way.**"<sup>59</sup>

Not only had he refused to comment on the incitement made by the Suhrawardy Government for the riots, he made it clear that he will only speak at the Congress Working Committee session at Delhi on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.<sup>60</sup>

This cowardliness of Congress and Gandhiji was taken up by the Muslim League Government. In a press conference Suhrawardy said "We don't see any sign of complete disturbance. Generally speaking, there are a few houses which had been damaged."<sup>61</sup> In 24<sup>th</sup> October, a press release was given by the Muslim League. In it they said "There had been no instance of a communal attack on one by another. Only some anti-socials were trying to create disturbance. No instance of rape or violation of women had been recorded. The media was falsely putting up a hue and cry."<sup>62</sup> Jinnah also concurred: "All are false."<sup>63</sup>

Even the British agreed with the Muslim leaders. The Governor of Bengal said that there had been few deaths in Noakhali and that too less than three figures category. He was challenged by the founder of Socialist Republican Party and elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose, Sarat Chandra Bose. He said, "I do not know the base of the Governor's figures. But in different periodicals I have seen the news that says clearly that the death toll is much higher and is not less than four figure category. The death at the house of Surendra Kumar Bose has crossed 400."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 23-10-1946

<sup>56</sup> V.V.Nagarkar : Genesis, p-446

<sup>57</sup> Binoy Bhusan Ghosh: Dwijatatva O Bangali, P-68, The Statesman : 16-10-1946

<sup>58</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 23-10-1946

<sup>59</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 17-10-1946

<sup>60</sup> The Statesman : 20-10-1946



The then Congress President Acharya Kripalani toured Noakhali and said in his words: "The riots and terrorism at Noakhali and Tripura has a special point which must be noted. The entire thing was done under trained leadership and well planned. Roads had been cut and uses of guns were everywhere. Many anti-socials had been brought from outside. Many thousands of Hindus had been forcibly converted. Thousands and thousands of Hindu women had been raped or forcibly married. The sacred places of the Hindus had been desecrated. Not even the children were shown any mercy. The state government was totally silent and the viceroy had refused to step in."<sup>65</sup>

The viceroy had not only refused to do anything but also had commented that the violation of Hindu women in the hands of Muslim were very '**Normal**'. '**Normal**' because "**Large scale abduction of Hindu women (by Muslims) was quite natural since Hindu women were more handsome than Muslim women.**"<sup>66</sup>

To save the Hindus from Muslim attacks Gandhi presented a fantastic *Ahimsa* formula to the Hindus. He called "the Hindus not to die helplessly. But they are to die without a murmur. Only then the riots will stop."

He also put forward a call to the raped women not to fight the rapists. "The women must know how to die ... women (should) face death bravely and without a murmur. Then only would the terrible killing now going on, stop."<sup>67</sup>

This absurd theory was challenged by Congress President Acharya Kripalani. He had been touring the riot area at that time. He called "from what I have seen and heard the day before and yesterday. I am clearly of the opinion that whatever the Government's provincial or central, may or may not do, every Bengali, male or female, has to defend him or herself."<sup>68</sup>

He also said: "though I am a believer in Ahimsa (non-violence) but still I salute Rajendralal Roy. Each Bengali must know about the fight he and his family put up for two days to keep the attacking mob at bay."<sup>69</sup>

In opposing the barbarous attacks on the Hindus of Noakhali, different places of India held movements. In Bombay (Mumbai) the shops stayed closed in sympathy to the dead Hindus. In Banaras the students boycotted classes; Bandhs were observed at Delhi and Patna. In Delhi, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and even in the Muslim League dominated Sindh there was **Black Deepavali**. The Sikhs and Hindus did not observe the age-old custom of lighting *diyas* (*ceremonial lamps*).

But in Bengal there was no shadow of Noakhali. Like each year, 1946 also saw full lightings and pomp in the Kali Puja. There was no grief or sympathy for the killings in Noakhali. We have no newspaper reporting of any movement by the Hindus of Bengal in retaliation to the Noakhali riots. The question of whether this was Bengali's progressiveness or otherwise was answered within ten months. When one crore Bengalis had to leave their ancestral land at the time of the birth of a new state.

On 24<sup>th</sup> October, the Hindu Mahasabha organised a huge rally at Delhi. There the public asked Gandhiji to take action to save the honour of Hindu women in Noakhali and to dissolve the Suhrawardy Ministry. But Gandhiji, in his own way, advised all Hindus to

surrender to the swords of Islam. Because to oppose them meant '**unnecessary bloodshed**'. That is why the Mahatma called "**To get killed, but not to kill.**"<sup>70</sup> But in 29 October 1946 each newspaper carried two opposing news. One was that "**Gandhiji had arrived in Kolkata to stand in support of the people of Noakhali**". The other was that "**In many places of Bihar terrible riots have started.**" The first news was expected, the second was not.

### **29<sup>th</sup> October 1946, United States of America**

First one to speak was Begum Shah Nawaz. She came from India to America to organize mass support in favour of creation of Pakistan. The killings at Calcutta and at Noakhali were not taken well by the Americans. They were questioning about the future of Hindus in Pakistan.

Though they came to provide the arguments for Pakistan, Begum Shah Nawaz, Muslim League M.L.A. from Punjab and A.H. Ispahani, Working Committee Member of Muslim League, took the first chance to say that riots would go on until Pakistan is born. Also the Muslims were ready to leave everything for the creation of the new state. "India is heading for a great civil war unless the question of Pakistan is settled. We are sitting on a bomb in India. That is what very few people abroad realized. The sooner the question is solved, the better it would be for everyone. We Muslims are prepared to sacrifice everything in our fight for our ideal."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The Statesman : 21-10-1946

<sup>62</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 25-10-1946

<sup>63</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 25-10-1946

<sup>64</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 23-10-1946

<sup>65</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 22-10-1946

<sup>66</sup> J.B.Kripalani : Gandhi --- His Life and Thought, p-286

<sup>67</sup> The Statesman : 18-10-1946

<sup>68</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 22-10-1946

<sup>69</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 22-10-1946

<sup>70</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 25-10-1946

They had the right to threaten. In Noakhali the Muslims were the winners and the Hindus defeated. In their grand strategy, they had everything ready for the riots in Bihar. The Muslim League did not keep that a secret. They had commented: "That the events in East Bengal were but a part of all-India battle for Pakistan."<sup>72</sup>

But the riots in Bihar went on a different path. Now the Muslims fell defeated. The Muslim League leaders were jolted, the Congress leaders were frightened. "On hearing of the Bihar trouble Gandhiji wanted to change his programme and proceed there immediately."<sup>73</sup>

Gandhiji had no time for three months to come to riot-ridden Bengal. Now, even coming to Calcutta, he wanted to cancel his plans to go to Bihar. Pundit Nehru came running with four Ministers of his cabinet. **The Statesman wrote that Bihar was fortunate than Bengal because in time of need Bihar had the support of many notable people, the support which had been denied to Bengal.**

But was the support of the 'notable people' for Bihar as a state, or was it for that community which was being decimated? In Bengal that community was the aggressor. That was why the 'notable people' had no urge to come to Bengal.

So, within four days of the Bihar riots, on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1946, three ministers came to Bihar along with Nehru. But from 16<sup>th</sup> August to 3<sup>rd</sup> November, for three long months no Central Minister had the time and inclination to come to Bengal.

The two-faced ideology of Nehru and Congress faced criticism from many people. One letter from C.L.Mehta can be placed here — "Maybe the so-called national Government is trying to usher a new age. But their absurd policy of secularism in the face of communal problem is enriching the medieval communal madness. If one person of the tribes (Muslim) in the North-West Frontier Province has a small cut, Nehru runs around having hysteria. When the Kashmir Government fires a couple of bullets to the separatists, Nehru loses mental balance. But if the Hindus of Hyderabad or in Noakhali are slaughtered, that does not appeal to Nehru and his colleagues, if they become communalists."<sup>74</sup>

The Muslim leaders also were stunned at the ferocity of the Bihar riots. At the same time Hindu backlash was seen in Bombay, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. This was a ferocious Hindu reaction against the Muslims. Muslim League had commented after 18 days of 'Noakhali Riots', but this time they did not wait.

Gone was the jubilant Jinnah. The arrogance that one had seen at the time of 'Direct action' was gone. He had thrown a challenge to the Hindus in Calcutta riots. He was happy with the killings at Noakhali. But the terrible Hindu reaction at Bihar devastated him. Now he knew that a river does not flood only one bank, but both.

Nehru travelled widely in Bihar. With his Finance Minister Liaquat Ali, he spoke in a number of 'Peace Meetings'. But he never spoke a word against Muslim League for the massacre of Hindus at Noakhali. In reverse he blamed the Newspapers for spreading "Exaggerated news" about Noakhali and inciting the Hindus. He also wanted to punish them for this. His words:"Some people believe they are taking revenge for the atrocities

in East Bengal. It was bad enough. But exaggerated reports were published in the press. Culprits must be punished severely.”<sup>75</sup>

Those who had raped, looted and murdered in East Bengal; Nehru was totally silent on them. But for Nehru, the culprits were those who printed the real news of the carnage. But did not stop there. He even threatened to bomb and machine-gun the Hindu areas. **“The government had to follow such a course by firing machine guns and bombing the people.”**<sup>76</sup> This was followed literally. Police and Military fired and killed over 200 people in Bihar.

The Congress ideology of ‘not involving in the states’ own affair’ was thrown away. Nehru argued that **“No government can tolerate such lawlessness”**. But only 25 days ago he had spoken against such action. Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee’s plea had left him unmoved under the pretext that Congress will not get involved in a state’s own affair.

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<sup>71</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 30-10-1946

<sup>72</sup> V.P. Menon : Transfer of Power, p-320-321

<sup>73</sup> J.B.Kripalani : Gandhi --- His Life and Thought, p-260

<sup>74</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 01-11-1946

<sup>75</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 05-11-1946

But Nehru got his prize for his Muslim-love. Muslim League supported him, saying "Pundit Nehru's indefatigable effort there (Bihar) is now some consolation for the distressed Muslims."<sup>77</sup>

Gandhiji also took a two-faced agenda. At Noakhali he had advised the Hindus to surrender to the swords of the Muslim attackers. But now he forgot his *Ahimsa*. Gandhiji asked the Central and Provincial governments to do everything in their power to control the situation.<sup>78</sup>

Obviously 'everything' does not mean only *Ahimsa*. In order to stop 'tortures' on Muslims "Gandhiji also reduces his diet 'as a penance for the violence and lawlessness in Bihar'.<sup>79</sup> He even threatened to fast to death if the riots do not stop.

The jest was that Gandhiji had only come to Noakhali a day before. The riots had started on 10<sup>th</sup> October and only after 24 days Gandhiji had the time to come to Noakhali. He had failed to know his duty as God had not shown him the path. But during the Bihar riots, he had found the path immediately.

Many people think that Gandhiji had saved the Hindus at Noakhali. But this is utter nonsense and this is being propagated. Gandhiji had reached Noakhali after 24 days, by that time the riots had stopped naturally, because there was nothing to gain for the Muslims and all was lost for the Hindus.

But the riots of Noakhali stopped because of furious Hindu countering in Bihar. This was 'terror being dealt with counter terror'. So to stop the Hindus at Bihar the main condition was to stop the Muslim atrocities in Noakhali. The Muslim leaders saw the real truth. The Chief Minister of Bihar told the Viceroy that 'it could be extremely difficult to maintain order in Bihar unless the situation was controlled in East Bengal.'<sup>80</sup> Now the question is - was it really the news of Noakhali riots were exaggerated? The leaders of the Muslim League had accused the Newspapers for spreading the news. They were supported by Nehru by threatening to 'punish' the newspapers. But the truth? The Statesman (at that time a staunch supporter of the British Government) gave the news that the dead was more than 5,000 at Noakhali.<sup>81</sup> The Killing of Hindus had started on 10<sup>th</sup> October and by 13<sup>th</sup> that had spread to 300 sq miles including 300 villages of Tripura District. The intensity was such that 1,800 soldiers, 600 armed police and the Royal Air Force had to be used to control the situation.<sup>82</sup>

The atrocities on women was in such a state that Sucheta Kripalani, the wife of Acharya Kripalani had to keep a capsule of Potassium Cyanide with her, when she was touring the riot ridden areas of Noakhali. When the wife of the President of the All India Congress Party had such fears, then the range of security and safety of a common Hindu girl can be easily assumed.

The next question is that whether the Bihar riot was reaction of the riots at Noakhali? Muslim leaders, Nehru and even Gandhiji were convinced that The Bihar riots were the direct reaction of Noakhali. But history does not say so. The Bihar riots had not started with a blood for blood theory.

Acharya Kripalani had observed that on 24<sup>th</sup> October different states of India had observed a 'Black Diwali' in sympathy to the Hindus of Noakhali. The Hindus of Bihar had stopped the age-old custom of lights festival but in the Muslim areas the Muslim leaders had urged and had succeeded to observe fully lighted 'Victory festival'. The next day the Hindus went to the Muslims against this 'Victory day' and the riots started immediately.<sup>83</sup>

So Noakhali did not urge the riots of Bihar. The ground had been made before by the Muslim leaders. Congress is a Hindu party and the Muslims are being oppressed in the Congress ruled states. This was the propaganda carried on by the League. They also called to teach the Hindus a lesson in Bihar after Noakhali.

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<sup>76</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 07-11-1946

<sup>77</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 10-11-1946

<sup>78</sup> J.B.Kripalani : Gandhi --- His Life and Thought, p-260

<sup>79</sup> The Statesman : 07-11-1946

<sup>80</sup> Amrita Bazar Patrika : 11-11-1946

<sup>81</sup> The Statesman : 18-11-1946

<sup>82</sup> File No 51.3.36

The Hindus were feeling insecure. In the Calcutta riots, 700 Hindus had died in Gardenreach-Watgunj area. Most of them were coolies and labourers from Bihar. When they had returned home after losing everything their relatives were furious. At that time the Muslim urged for riots.

The riot in Bihar was not because of any communal planning. The eye-witnesses had said that in Noakhali the riots were led by Maulavis. They would convert the Hindus into Muslims by threatening them to kill. But in Bihar, there was no incident that a Muslim had been converted to Hinduism. Not a single Mosque had been destroyed. In Noakhali the main condition given to the Hindus were to eat beef and convert to Islam. But in Bihar, no League leader had accused that a Muslim had been forced to take pork.

One characteristic of Noakhali riot was atrocities against the women. But in Bihar, no such incident took place. No Muslim women had been raped or abducted. Hindu women had sold their ornaments to rehabilitate the Muslims. Hindus had gone to the refugee camps to bring back the Muslims to their homes.<sup>84</sup> The rehabilitation of Muslims was done by a Muslim Minister. But in Noakhali the picture was opposite. Acharya Kripalani had said that even Gandhiji had faced trouble in Noakhali and that by the Muslims.

From Kolkata to Bihar, within four months the number of deaths crossed fifteen thousand. There were fifty thousand wounded. The Kolkata riot was started by Muslims, but the Hindu backlash had broken the pride of the rioters. The Hindus were defeated in Noakhali and Muslims in Bihar. But the main loss was India's. Jinnah had analyzed correctly that there was no practical leadership with the Congress. On the other hand, the Hindu Mahasabha has practical leadership but they have no mass support. Jinnah knew if he can shout "I want", Congress will give it to him. Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, everybody was same in this respect.

It was India's misfortune that there was no Abraham Lincoln at the helm. Jinnah got Pakistan by bloodshed. But no leader could see a dream of unified India. The country was divided, mothers lost sons, children became orphans, and women lost husbands, sometimes their honour. But the Hindus remained unmoved, maybe this was the biggest success of riot, the greatest gift of the Division of Motherland.

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<sup>83</sup> J.B.Kripalani : Gandhi --- His Life and Thought, p-264

<sup>84</sup> J.B.Kripalani : Gandhi --- His Life and Thought, p-269