

Fragmentary Caste-Identity Politics in Bengal: Jogendranath Mandal and His Never-ending Struggle for Empowerment of Downtrodden

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JogendranathMandal (1904-1968) emerged as an important personality in the political history of Indian subcontinent during the period of 1940s and 1950s. He was the last minister in the department of law, Public Works and Housing of the united Bengal. He became a member and temporary chairman of the Constituent Assembly of the newly formed state of 'Pakistan' in 1947, and later he took over the charge of the first ministry of 'Law and labour' and also was second minister of 'Commonwealth and Kashmir Affairs' of the Government of Pakistan. His rise from a poor family of an indescribable lower caste society was phenomenal. He was very controversialand criticized figure in the then political scenario of Bengal and India. However, in the later period, he was surprisingly ignored and kept outside the purview of discussion in the main stream historical analysis. Anyway, there wasintermittent reference of his political ideology, services and some other matters in the magazines published by the Dalit class and his names were reminded with much regards in various functions of the lower castes of people. Jogendranath Mandal was closely associated with the movements of the backward dalit classes, cautiously demanding for their socio-economic and political rights. The political history of modern Bengal and India would be rather incomplete if we do ignore his activities. His political movements at different times as a dalit politician were against the interests of the Zamindars, hoarders and to the people with vested interests and were much condemned and criticized by those racist people but that also was appreciated and accepted by the marginal classes as it was related to their demands of socio-economic upliftment and political rights.

His Academic Years

Jogendranath Nath Mandal was born in a so called 'Chandal' family in the village '*Mestar Kandi*' of Barisal district on 29th January, 1904. His father, Ramdayal, was a poor peasant. Jogendranath finished his primary education in a

school at his village and got admitted in class V at '*Banitara Institution*' in the neighboring village which was mainly inhabited by the upper class people.¹ At that time, the lower caste people of Bengal was hated and insulted on racial consideration. The lower caste people were not allowed to wear shoes inside a village inhabited by upper caste people. They were not allowed to participate in the religious ceremonies in the houses of the local Zaminders.² The newlywed brides were not allowed to travel in *Palanquin*. The Chandala and other dalit classes could not use the same '*Kolke*' for smoking though the people from the classes other than the Chandal and dalit were given that privilege. They were considered as '*Ajalchal*' in the society.³ Jogendranath Mandal had the experiences of that inequality and misbehavior. He was the only Namasudra student who got enrolled in 'Banitara School' but his fellow students too misbehaved with him. If he ever sat beside his class mate, he had to face the brick batting of words by his class mates such as; 'The Namasudra became very audacious. How did you dare to sit beside me?' One upper caste student also supported that misbehavior and said 'to remove Jogendranath from that place'. Jogendranath that day was in defendant mood and said that 'I would not move out from the place, the school did belong to all students. All had equal rights here and let me see, how powerful, you were to remove me from the place where I was sitting at the moment.' The Head master of that school praised the firmness and courage of his brilliant student, Jogendranath and admonished the other students for their meanness. Jogendranath passed matriculation with first division from that school in 1924 and got admitted in B.M. College in Barisal. There he also faced the same caste hatred. The lower caste students were not allowed to offer their prayers to goddess '*Saraswati*' during the festival, along with the students from the upper castes. Jogendranath opposed that system and he mobilized the students from the lower castes and organized separate worshipping ceremony of the goddess *Saraswati*.⁴ Those two incidents helped Jogendranath to strengthen his protesting mentality against injustice and later his political activities followed that way. However, Jogendranath, overcoming all the social and financial impediments, could be able to pass out his I.A. examination in 1926 and B.A with economics and mathematics in the year 1929. In spite of the severe economic condition of his family, he enrolled himself with Calcutta University to pursue law, and he passed his law examination in the year 1967. He practiced as a junior in the lower court in Calcutta and thereafter moved to Barisal to practice independently as a lawyer at Barisal '*Sadar*' court. He fought the judicial battle

for the peasants and labours to get their legal problems solved at minimum fees. And for that reason, he had to face the reprehension from the upper caste lawyers as '*Sage from the sacred place*', '*Munificent of providing justice*' etc.⁵ But those bantering and oblique references to his mission of service could not dissuade him from his commitment. However, within no time, he became popular as a demagogue and efficient lawyer among all classes of people, lawyers and clients.

Making Political Ideology

The political ideology of Jogendranath Mandal was formed through his everyday experience of life directly. He was of the opinion, that the rural peasants and scheduled caste class remained backward due to their poverty and lack of education. From the stand point of socio-economic development, it was more important to them to get properly educated and obtaining of service than to get access into temples. He opined that the backwards classes should have their representative in the assembly in order to stop the economic exploitation of the labour and peasant class by the Zamindars and to enact new laws in respect of education and service and to ensure special privilege for the backward class of the society. He said; "let us be remained as a '*Ajalchal*' class but we want political rights, separate representative for our class and stipend for our students and service in government institution."⁶The upper-caste influenced nationalists were as much as adulator of the British as much they were the exploiter of the peasants. There was no mention of the issue like the development plan for the lower caste peasants and labourers in the programme of their national movement. Fundamentally, his endeavour was to form the scheduled caste society as a third political forces in Bengal, the other two forces were the Muslim and the upper caste Hindu Zamindars and money lenders. His statement in this regards was straight and simple.⁷ He said, 'we are neither Hindu nor Muslim, we are a separate class of schedule caste. Those who will go against our interest, he may either be Hindu or Muslim or even from our class, working against our class interest, would be considered by us an enemy towards our aim to gain political rights.⁸Religion was secondary in the political ideologies of Jogendranath Mandal. On one side, he tried to establish a separate political identity for the scheduled castes and on the other in the interests of the peasants and labourers and against the vested interests of the Hindu and Muslim higher ups; he tried to build up a class-conscious political movement.⁹ In various meetings and conferences, he urged the peasants and labourers both Hindu

and Muslim to fight unitedly against the atrocities of the Zamindars and to maintain their unity in their daily lives as they were like brothers in respect to their profession and proximity to each other. As the president of the 'Scheduled Caste Federation', he demanded the followings; abolition of Zamindari system, reducing of tax on agricultural land, equitable distribution of agricultural land, fixing of minimum price for agricultural products, and minimum wages for the labour class, etc. His fighting spirit was not at all communal in nature rather it was against the vested interests of the bourgeois class which could only be termed as class struggle. The scheduled castes were immersed in utter desperation due to economic exploitation in addition to caste discrimination. And he thought it appropriate to demand reservation for the dalits in the areas of education, service and in the representation to the assembly, for the upliftment of the neglected class of the society. He faced tremendous opposition and criticism from the conservative politicians in his efforts to implement his ideologies. However, his political ideology was very much acceptable to the conscious scheduled caste people.

Political Activities In and Out of the Legislature

The Namasudra who used to live in the outlying marshy land were the peasant subjects/tenants of the upper caste Zaminders in East Bengal. Though, they were the main producer of agricultural products but in terms of their caste, they were hated as '*Ajalchal*' or *Chandal*, and the Zaminders exploited them economically by imposing various illegal taxes on them and also forcing them to give free labour.¹⁰ In 1872, the Namasudra started their boycott movement against the upper caste people and refused to work for them in an outburst of their distress for years due to the exploitation and deprivation by the upper caste people.¹¹ From the middle of the nineteenth century, under the leadership of Harichand-Guruchand Thakur, the contending Matua religious movement was started against the Brahmanistic oppression. They were devoted to the reform movement of their society and started establishing schools, etc with an object to educate the Namasudra to make them eligible for the government jobs, etc. The Namasudra as a result of that movement started becoming self-reliant from that period.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, one section from that confident class of Namasudra realized that in the nationalized movement, led by the upper caste Zamindars and the money lenders, had no issue of the socio-economic

development for the lower castes. And for that reason, they did not participate in the movement against partition of Bengal and in the Swadeshi movement. Rather, at that time, they became more caste conscious and formed associations viz 'Namasudra Hityeshi Samity' (1912), 'Bengal Namasudra Association' (1914) and 'Bengal Depressed Classes Association' (1926) and through those associations raised their demands for socio-economic developments of the lower castes and separate political representations for them. Along with the All India dalit movement, the Bengal Dalit movement also in the 1930s got strengthened with their demands for separate election process and representation for the dalits. And as a result of that demand, thirty seats were reserved for the dalits in the legislative assembly of Bengal according to Puna pact in 1932. Jogendranath supported the agreement, granting separate political rights for the scheduled castes. In 1936, he was elected as a member in the local board of Gournadi PS of Barisal district and later in the Barisal district board. In the general election of 1937, he did not join Congress but won from the general seat at North Barisal. He defeated Saral Dutta, the nephew of the Nationalist leader, Aswini Dutta by a huge margin. In that election, Congress won only seven seats out of 30 and the rests were won by the scheduled caste candidates. The elected scheduled caste candidates supported Fajlul Haque of Krishak Praja Party to acquire political power and Mukunda Behari Mullick and Prasannadeb Raikat both were made ministers in the 'Haque' Ministry. At that time, separate legislative party was formed with an object to meet their demands and to safeguard the interests of the scheduled castes. The secretary of that legislative party was Jogendranath Mondal and its president was Hemchandra Naskar.¹² Due to immoral pressure from the members of Muslim league, the Haque ministry did not pay attention to their demands in the areas of education and on economic issues. In that circumstance, Jogendranath Mandal and Pramatha Ranjan Thakur, the grandson of Guruchand Thakur took the decision to join in the main stream politics of the Nationalistic movement under the leadership of Subhas Bose and Sharat Bose.

Subhas Bose, the then president of Congress supported the Guruchand initiated movement of the dalits, for self-respects.¹³ Jogendranath Mandal and Pramatha Ranjan Thakur opposed the proposal of separate election and supported the joint election process during the discussion of Calcutta Municipal Amendment Bill in 1939-40. In 1940, Jogendranath Mandal was the congress elected candidate

in the Calcutta Corporation election in 1940.¹⁴ Jogendranath did not lose the confidence on Subhas's political acumen ship even after his expulsion from Congress. Jogendranath presided over in a meeting of Forward Bloc at Barisal Town Hall when Subhas Bose toured East Bengal on political campaign for 'Forward Bloc'. In 1940s, the scheduled castes supported Congress in the parliamentary politics.¹⁵ However, despite that in Shyama-Haque ministry in 1941, only Upendranath Burman was inducted in the council of ministers and the indifference on the issues of education and employment of the scheduled castes and the negligence on the issues of development for the peasants were quite evident. And as a result of that Jogendranath was directly influenced and encouraged by the political ideals of the all India scheduled castes federation and after his meet with Dr. Ambedkar at Bombay in 1943, Jogendranath founded the Bengal unit of All India scheduled class federation and became its first president.¹⁶ Due to his effort, '*Tapashili Chhatra Federation*' was established in the same year under the leadership of Apurbalal Majumder a young student leader. '*Jagoron*' a mouthpiece magazine of the Federation was published. 'Shyama-Haque' ministry fell in 1943 and in the changed political scenario, the importance of the scheduled caste members of the assembly increased for the formation of the new ministry. In accordance with the plan made by Jogendranath, Federation placed their three-point demand which were; i) Induction of three schedule caste ministers and three parliamentary secretaries ii) Granting of an aid of Rs.5 lacs per annum for the education of the scheduled castes iii) Reservation of service in accordance with the population ratio followed by Poona Pact. The federation also made it clear that they would give their support to the party which will accept their demands.¹⁷ The Muslim leaders acceded to the three-point demands of the Federation and the federation joined the ministry of Muslim league under the leadership of Najimuddin. According to their demands, Jogendranath Mandan, Premhari Barman and Mukunda Bihari Mallick were inducted as ministers in the Najimuddin ministry.¹⁸

Jogendranath showed his prudence in the political empowerment of the scheduled castes. On the eve of the election of Bengal in 1946, the political scenario of Bengal got quite frenzied due to communal card used by the Muslim league, Hindu Mahasabha and Congress.¹⁹ The Hindu and the Muslim, the two sects got polarized in the process. In the changed scenario, the scheduled castes mostly supported the Congress and Congress won 26 out of 30 reserved constituencies.

Jogendranath was the only federation candidate in the entire India who won that election. Jogendranath supported Muslim league and became the minister for law, public works and Housing in the ministry of Surawardi's cabinet.²⁰ At that time, Jogendranath Mandal made earnest efforts to get Dr.B.R.Ambedkar elected in the election of the constituent assembly from Bengal. Jogendranath made that effort because Dr.Ambedkar was supposed to write/compose the constitution of India and he was the only person who could do justice to the interests of the scheduled castes and he was in favour of reservation for them. In 1946, Jawaharlal made an interim government at the central and Jogendranath Mondal was made the minister of law as a Muslim league supported candidate. Although, he was a selected member of Muslim league, in the ministry but at the same time he was the president of the Bengal unit of the federation. And it was his notion that as a central minister, he would be able to reinforce Federation in the entire India. However, in the meantime, communal riots spread in Bengal and Punjab and the politics of Bengal as well as India was in total jeopardy on the issues of freedom and partition of the country. The Muslim league demanded Pakistan and on the other side, Hindu Mahasabha was firm on their demand for a separate state namely West Bengal for the Hindus within Indian republic. Congress also supported the demand of Hindu Mahasabha. Jogendranath, Surawardi, Sarat Bose and others supported the demand for a sovereign united Bengal.²¹ The scheduled castes were mostly habitant of East Bengal and all their belongings were in that country. Jogendranath, Mukunda Behari Mallick and some others decided to stay at Pakistan considering the safety and security of the huge numbers of scheduled castes who had no option to leave that country immediately. Jogendranath was elected as the officiating President of the legislative assembly of Pakistan. He was also inducted as the law and labour minister in the ministry of Liaqat Ali Khan after 15, August, 1947.²²

During his tenure as a minister in Pakistan, he looked after the socio-economic interests of not only the scheduled castes but for the entire Hindu community. After the sudden death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah on 11, September, 1948, one section of the ruling Muslim league was very expressive in their anti-Hindu stance. There were unabated riots and Hindus were butchered by the Muslims and Pakistan was firmly on their way to islamisation. Jogendranath criticized the government in various meetings and seminars and soon became repellent to the leadership of Muslim league. Pakistan government kept sharp eyes on his activities

and opened a separate intelligence file to track his activities.²³ Despite his being a heavyweight minister, he was not consulted on the issues of 'Nehru- Liaqat Pact' and on the appointment of ministers from the minority community. The traitor law was passed targeting him. The law was about punishing those people who spoke against Pakistan.²⁴ He apprehended that a section of the fundamentalists was on the job to reduce his powers and also to kill him. And for that reason, he left Pakistan for West Bengal on 16, September, 1950 and sent his resignation to Liaqat Ali Khan by post. And in the later period, he asked his followers at East Pakistan to leave that country and come to West Bengal.²⁵

Public Welfare and Jogendranath

Jogendranath became a member of the Bengal legislative assembly in the year 1937. Jogendranath arranged for giving stipend to the underprivileged children from class V instead of earlier from class VII to increase the scope of education to them. He upgraded the Bhogai Halder Public Academy school at Ageljhara in the lower caste dominated Barisal to English High School. He was secretary of that school from 1937-1940.²⁶ He also developed the proper irrigation system of Satla Bil in North Barisal which facilitated the cultivation in that area for the Hindu and Muslim peasants. In his different speeches during 1937-1938, he showed his sensuality for the peasants and labours. In the Budget session of 1937, he supported the bills relating to the reduction of tax on the peasants, fixing of the minimum price for jute, abolition of Zamindari system, etc. ²⁷Due to his efforts, as the leader of the separate scheduled caste parliamentary party, provisions were made for joint election process for the scheduled caste, and seven seats were reserved for them in Calcutta Municipal area in the Calcutta Corporation Act which was passed in the State legislative assembly. At that time, 5% reservation was also made in the government service for the scheduled castes.²⁸ That apart, he, as well, arranged separate housing for scheduled caste police at Calcutta. In 1943, he was the minister in the Najimuddin Ministry and during that period for spreading of the facilities for education among the scheduled caste students, he increased the grant to 5 lacs rupees in the budget for construction of the school hostels for the scheduled castes in the rural areas. During Second World War, there was famine like situation, in Bengal and as a remedy of food scarcity; he demanded free distribution of food, cloth and fuels, in his speech in the legislative assembly on 10th March, 1943. ²⁹He recommended inclusion of primary schools in various

districts in the administrative control of the district boards. Various primary schools were set up in the scheduled caste inhabited areas of the districts of Barisal, Jessore, and Faridpore due to his efforts. He also initiated the process of setting up of a standing committee with 14 schedule caste MLAs as its members under the chairmanship of Abdur Rahaman Khan for monitoring the spreading of education among the scheduled castes.³⁰ Though there was reservation for them in the areas of education and employment in service but that was not implemented properly. During the minister ship of Jogendranath, the interests of the scheduled castes were executed correctly due to his influence and close monitoring. Shashibhusan Halder, a scheduled caste was included in the selection committee for admission in the Calcutta Medical College and Campbell Medical due to the efforts of Jogendranath. At that time, to increase the opportunities of higher education for the rural scheduled caste students, two hostels one '*Udayan Chatrabas*' at Nirmal Chandra Street and another viz '*Bharati Bhavan*' were constructed with the financial aids provided by the government.³¹ As the central law & labour minister of the newly formed state 'Pakistan', he influenced the industrialists to fix minimum wages for the labours and to concede to the legitimate demands of the labour class. He kept a close look on the misbehaviour of the upper class officials to their scheduled caste subordinates at lower grades.

Due to his efforts, even in independent Pakistan, Golam Muhammad, the then finance minister, allotted a fund of Rs. 5 lacs for the education of the scheduled castes. Apart from that free and compulsory primary education was introduced. In 1949, the Pakistan government allotted Rs. 10 lacs for supporting the growing interest for education among the scheduled class and also to develop the cottage industry for their benefit. One officer was appointed for each sub-division and district to implement the scheme effectively. The government also announced 20% reservation in government services in East Pakistan for the scheduled castes.³² 'Scholarship Board' was formed on the initiative of Jogendranath for the scheduled caste students. The Board provided, a stipend of Rs. 40 per month to each college-going scheduled caste students.³³ Therefore, it is quite evidenced that before and after the independence of the country, Jogendranath, tirelessly, utilized his political power to meet various demands of the scheduled class. He also made various plans to improve their position in respect of education and in getting government services, etc. He also took an important role in eliminating the grievances of the peasant and labour class.

Jogendranath Mandal in West Bengal

As leader of the Scheduled Castes (Dalits), Jogendranath had made common cause with the Muslim League in their demand for Pakistan, hoping that the Scheduled Castes would be benefited from it and joined the first cabinet in Pakistan as the Minister of Law and Labour. In 1950, Jogendranath came to West Bengal and took Indian citizenship. After he came to West Bengal, the scheduled caste specially, the Namasudra left all their belongings in East Bengal and flooded the government organized transit camps opened for the refugees at different districts of West Bengal. The camps were very unhealthy and not livable enough for human beings. However, they somehow survived with the help of 'dole' and cash provided by the government. That laborious peasant and labour class were not allowed to go outside the camp area and for that reason; they could not earn anything for their living. The refugee rehabilitation department of the government of India took the policy to rehabilitate the refugees, living in transit camps, first at Andaman and thereafter at Dandakaranya, on the plea of shortage of space in West Bengal. The left influenced '*UdbastuUnnayanParishad*' and other refugee organizations jointly protested against the policies of the government to rehabilitate the refugees outside Bengal, suspension of '*cash and dole*' aides to the refugees and the removal of refugee colonies constructed on the forcibly occupied land etc.³⁴ And the beginning of popular refugee movement started that way. Jogendranath from the very beginning allied with the left political parties and joined the refugee movement. In the meantime, the left leadership decided to withdraw from the civil disobedience and violent '*Satyagraha*' movement.³⁵ Jogendranath was not in favour of any soft kind of movement for the refugees. Soon, he realized that the leftist leaders had utilized the help of "*Sonjukto Kendriyo Udbastu Parishad*' or United Central Refugee Committee (UCRC) only to grab political power.

Jogendranath from the year 1954, started to visit the Namasudra infested refugee camps at Nadia, 24 Parganas and Bankura. Initially, he was not acceptable to them as they considered him as a traitor and made him responsible for their wretched conditions. But Jogendranath was patient in explaining the reasons for his leaving the country and promised them to be, by their side always. Gradually, he could place himself as acceptable to the refugees. In 1956, almost 70% of refugees living in the camps were from the Namasudra sects. Jogendranath placed himself as the spokesperson of those refugees. In 1956-57, on his initiation, the refugees

in the camps of Nadia, 24 Parganas, Murshidabad and Bankura joined the organization of 'Sonjukto Kendriya Udbastu Parishad' which increased the strength of that organization. Jogendranath participated along with U.C.R.C in the '*Satyagraha*' movement and got arrested.³⁶ He was imprisoned for 35 days in Presidency jail and during that period, he realized that the left leaders only utilized the Namasudra refugees as a tool for gaining of political profit. Though they encouraged the refugees with various words of hopes but their main intention was to collect funds and grab political powers by showing the refugee manpower of support in their favour. Jogendranath was released from jail and in July, 1958, he set up a separate political refugee organization as "*Purbabharat Bastuhara Parishad*".³⁷

The political movement of U.C.R.C was limited only on the demands of the city centric refugees which were mainly, education, service and in governmental recognitions of refugee colonies constructed on forcibly occupied land. At that time, Jogendranath joined the all India non-Congress and non-leftist and '*Praja Socialist Party*' controlled '*Sara Bharat Bastuhara Samity*' (SBBS) and participated in the joint '*Satyagraha*' movement with them. However, that time, the refugee movement got divided and in accordance with the '*Dandakaranya rehabilitation*' programme of the government of India, the refugees were sent to Dandakaranya.³⁸ Since the beginning of 1959, Jogendranath Mandal and SBBS jointly started their '*Satyagraha*' movement against the government's decision to send the refugees to Dandakaranya. On the 22 December, 1959, a Satyagraha movement was organized under the leadership of Jogendranath Mondal at Calcutta Maidan to submit a deputation to the refugee rehabilitation department and also to burn the effigy of Meher Chand, the then refugee rehabilitation minister at Central government. Jogendranath was arrested on 7 January, 1961, in the context of that incident and was put into Dumdum Central Jail.³⁹ In protest against the arrest of Jogendranath, there was huge uproar in the refugee camps throughout the entire Bengal. Hunger strike was observed for 12 days at Bagjola camp demanding Jogendranath's immediate release. At last, government was compelled to release Jogendranath from jail. After his release, Jogendranath held a meeting at Bagjola camp and submitted an alternative plan for the rehabilitation of the refugees to the refugee rehabilitation department. However, the government paid no attention to his plan and decided to stop 'Cash and Dole' as before. On the 18, August, 1961, more

than three thousand camp dwellers under the leadership of Jogendranath Mandal marched towards Writers' Building in protest against the discontinuance of cash, Dole hitherto provided to the refugees. They requested for an appointment with the Chief Minister which was turned down. In the circumstance, they submitted their representation to the government.⁴⁰ In 1965, 7500 refugee families were rehabilitated at Dandakaranya.⁴¹ In that way, thousands of Jogendranath's followers were dispatched to Dandakaranya before getting their citizenship or voting rights here. And Jogendranath that way lost the entire prospect to gain political power.

The scheduled castes in West Bengal had various impediments in their emerging out as a separate political entity with a distinct political consciousness. A major portion of the Namasudra refugees among the scheduled caste community, were Matua followers and they supported Congress under the leadership of Pramatha Ranjan Thakur. The Namasudra refugees who came to West Bengal during 1960s were mainly camp dwellers and were sent to Dandakaranya. In the meantime, who could manage a place to live on at Bengal, had no voting rights. And because of that no area could come up with the political influence of Namasudra. During 1952 to 1962, Jogendranath participated in the three assembly elections but got defeated. Jogendranath realised the weakness of not having any political organization and due to his association with the refugee movement, he set up one political organization viz '*Paschimbanga Krishak Praja Parishad*' but that organization could not make a ripple among the people.⁴² In 1963, 'Republican Party' was set up by the followers of Ambedkar at all India level. In October, 1963, Jogendranath set up a branch of 'Republican Party' in West Bengal. Jogendranath was the president and Ashutosh Das was elected as the secretary of the newly formed party. Within a very short time, he set up the regional committees of the 'Republican Party' in the Namasudra inhabited areas.⁴³ Jogendranath contested in the parliamentary election of 1967 as a Republican Party candidate from Barasat constituency with the support of Communist Party of India (Marxist). As an alliance partner, on the request of Jyoti Basu and Promod Dasgupta, Jogendranath participated in the election campaign at various refugee dominated constituencies. As a result, he could not give much attention to his own constituency. During the election, mass contact could be established within the scheduled caste community throughout West Bengal. He got defeated in the election with a casting of 84,644 votes in his favour.⁴⁴ There was no doubt that Jogendranath played a big

role in the overall success of CPIM in the scheduled caste dominated areas. In the interim assembly election of West Bengal in 1968, Jogendranath concentrated his efforts on increasing the strength of the Republican Party. On 4th October, 1968, he opened a Branch office of Republican Party at Helencha at 24 Parganas and on his way back he became seriously ill. On the 5th of October, 1968, he breathed his last.⁴⁵

Jogendranath was born in a society whose socio-economic conditions were very precarious. He, throughout his entire life, worked tirelessly and uncompromisingly for the elevation of that society. In the pre-election period, he could establish the scheduled caste community at the center-stage of power sometimes working unitedly, in the class interest of Hindu and Muslim peasants and labours against the oppression of the upper caste conservative Zamindars and money lenders with vested interests, and often allied with the Muslim league for separate election process and reservation with the sole objective of attaining the distinct political identity for the scheduled caste. Even after the birth of the new state of Pakistan, he preferred to remain in power in Pakistan only to ensure the rights of the scheduled caste for education and government services. He took the vow voluntarily for the emancipation of the Dalits. His rise as a Dalit leader was highly criticized by non-dalit propagandist and by the conservative racists. However, the progressive section of the society and dalit magazines and the scheduled castes still remember him as a noble person of Indian politics. He never compromised with the communal politics though he took the separate way of 'Dalit Politics' to safeguard the interest of the Dalits. His sudden disappearance from Pakistan was a betrayal to his followers but in the later period, in the sixties, in West Bengal, he got back his popularity with his political acumen. He was neither desolate nor lonely among the Namasudra refugees. He could not make his own political area in West Bengal as a major portion of Namasudra refugees were rehabilitated outside Bengal and the rest who were scattered throughout the state, had neither the citizenship nor the voting rights. But Jogendranath is still present with his defendant entity, in the feelings of the contemporary dalit writers and literatures of West Bengal.

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