

Reassessing Women Role in the Communist Leadership: A case study of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty in Midnapore

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Abstract

In the communist movement in Midnapore the role and contribution women were generally neglected. Adequate attention towards their participation was not paid even within the Communist party itself. However, it will be clear from this paper that women played extremely significant role in the popular protest movement organized by the communists. The leadership quality of women cadres like Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty was not less important for the rise of the party. The paper exhibits many examples of advanced and decisive role of women leader for building communist organizations and protest movement in most unconventional ways. Mrs. Chakraborty stood in front of the movement against the repressive agencies of the state but her name as leader is not uttered in the communist literature in the district. The present paper attempts to reveal her skillful leadership, her endless inspiration to the women cadres and her lifelong sacrifice to the growth of the Communist party.

Key Words: - *Communist, Movement, Woman leadership, Midnapore, Agitation, participation, liberation. Mobilization, struggle, sacrifice.*

We are living in the age of great social transformation that is steadily progressing. Indian traditional society, women relation in society, society's outlook towards women had been drastically changed in touch with western civilization and bourgeois capitalism in the colonial period. My interest in the gender history in the colonial period has drove me to find out women's viewpoint, stance and women's role in the history of the communist movement in Midnapore and to assess the contribution of women leader, like Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, through her various political activities for the vertical growth of the Communist party in Midnapore. For writing this paper I consulted with mainly archival records, government of West Bengal. I think that Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty had played extremely crucial role as other woman leader like Bimala Mahji in the earlier stage of the communist movement in Midnapore, yet she is forgotten in the history of the Communist party of the district. My intention is only to show the leadership quality of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty and to divulge her sacrifice for the Communist party in 1940's when society itself stood as a big challenge to the coming out of the woman in the public sphere from their acute zone of household activity.

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In this paper I am going to represent the contribution, sacrifice, role and the political activities of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, one of the leading women of the communist movement in its earlier period, who changed the model of women representation in the androphilic system of communist party in her time in the district of Midnapore where the leftist party emerged as a second largest political party. In the evolution of party's development the utmost endeavour of the women leadership was as equally important as the men's role and leadership. In the 40's of the previous century it was the herculean task for the women to express herself in the public sphere after accomplishing all the duties and responsibilities in her family life, the domestic domain. The conservative and backward mentality, the patriarchic hierarchy and the superstitious Bengal society stood as a Chinese wall for a woman to go out beyond her domestic domain. Putting behind society's all hindrances and irrationality Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty came out in the public sphere, joined the communist party of Midnapore and participated in all kinds of movements. She not only participated but successfully led the popular protest movements in 1940's and emerged as a vanguard women leader of the party. She created a new kind of identity of women and proved herself by her activities that Public sphere should be shared both of men and the women.

Midnapore was one of the epicenters of anti- colonial movement as well as revolutionary movements of India. Despite the failure of the revolutionary movements, it touched all strata of the people of Midnapore and kindled a new kind of passion and sensation among the people of Midnapore towards the liberation of India from foreign rule. On the other the success of Union Board movement witnessed the strong hold of the Congress party to launch democratic anti-colonial movement.² These two kinds of anti-colonial movement brought about a change in the ideology of women participation in politics as well as women liberation in society because women sacrifices and contribution in the above two movements gradually came to the public.

The construction of India as a motherland (who is symbolised as a woman) and her extortion and exploitation by the British ruler created an ideology of women who is being deprived and exploited in the traditional patriarchic society of India. This dimension of cultural construction of women and material witness of the female suffering in day to day's life in society provided a space for women in the public sphere of Midnapore since the days of Swadeshi Movement.³ The western education and the openness of society, to some extent, in the colonial structure hailed the new identity of woman and the society speculated that the woman should be honoured and respected. Therefore women in the public place in the district of Midnapore was not reproduction of the communist tenet of women liberation, it was a evolutionary process of changing notion towards women in society which was remodeling through social reforms in colonial bourgeois structure.

Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty represented the women empowerment by promoting herself as the leader of the Communist party of her age. She was born and brought up in the district of Hoogly (her childhood and studies and family background is in dark for the paucity of information as the file

² Swarajee Pathe – Hitesh Sanyal, Papyrus, Second Edition 2014, Kolkata p- 48

³ Nationalist Iconography: Images of women in nineteenth century Bengali literature – Tanika Sarkar, Economic and political weekly, 21 Nov, 2011

kept in the archives is almost silent about it) and came to the district Midnapore after her marriage.⁴ She was involved in the communist politics in Hoogly before her marriage and continued her political activities as a communist worker in Midnapore where the attachment of common people towards communism favoured after the joining of large number of revolutionaries in the Communist Party in the decade 30's of twentieth century. At the same time it was seen that the Congress was gradually decreasing its mass base for its internal fractional politics as well as for the activities of the local leaders who were engaging for the benefit of the rich and zamindars / jotedars. For these justified reasons the poor people and the peasantry community were deserting the Congress. In this conducive and congenial atmosphere, the Communist Party was formed and began to gain its mass base through their political activities in accordance with Marx theory of class struggle. The participation of women in the communist politics made the party acceptable quickly to the masses. In this regard the role of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty was unforgettable but she was almost a forgettable woman in the Communist party of Midnapore district.

As an ardent member of the communist party she primarily worked in the women front in Midnapore town and made their conscious increase by propagating the upliftment and the general condition of the women as well as exploitation of the colonial machineries abiding by the line of politics of the communist Party.⁵ It is generally said that socialist and communist ideologies were explicitly favoured of women's emancipation from their dependence on man. It has been reflected in the master piece work of August Bebel *Women and socialism* (1879) and *in the origin of the family, private property and the state* (1884) of Friedrich Engels.⁶ Both wrote about the changing role women in society and economy and both of them assumed that women's emancipation is not just as a byproduct of class struggle, but it is a strategy to attain communism. Gender equality and women's progress are an essential part of the socialist and Marxist doctrine, a necessary extension of their concept of oppression.⁷ But most of the woman Marxist write do not believe it. Patriarchal attitude and superior masculine complex cannot create a space for woman in society and even in the party. Women have to fight against patriarchal environment to get her place, her dignity and rank and file in society and in the party. Moreover, the Marxist intellectuals think that the women's interest in politics is considered as the logic of individual rights which is deeply bourgeois political strategy.⁸

The classical Marxist literatures uphold the theoretical foundation for understanding the roots of women's oppression in which the women is treated as a domestic labour, a contemptible fellow, deprived them from education, modern employment and their existence is only delineated just to embellish the patriarchal necessity of society. The feudal mindset of patriarchal society and women

⁴ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Both the writers are the utopian socialist, as a result the politico – theoretical exercise, the participation, involvement and sacrifices of the women in the most turmoil period of the communist movements were not counted as makers of party building

⁷ World Revolution and socialism in one country- ed by Silvio Pons and Stephen Smith, Article - Bolshevik Feminism and Gender Agenda of Communism – Anna Krylova, CUP, Cambridge, vol -1,2007 p- 4,

⁸ Interpreting political, Ideological Formulation of C.P.I. in 1947 – 48, from revisionism to Revolutionary Ideology, Chandan Basu, quarterly review of Historical Studies, Vol -LIII, Oct 2013 Mar 2014, no 3 &4, p- 86-93

economic dependence on man has been placed the women as second class citizen in society. The demolition of traditional forms of familial living in colonial period brought about a slight change in the position and status of women in society. Capitalist development and bourgeois setting in the colonial period forced the society to unfasten and in this context the introduction of woman education opened a space for women liberation. The pace of women liberation for getting their meaningful space in society was generated by the involvement of the women in politics and her economic independence. This is the process in which the women came out as a formidable social force, a product of industrial capital which generated the new identity of woman as labour who works outside her domestic domain and a new historical agent, gaining consciousness of her triple burden – wife, mother, and worker who also joins the male dominated politics of class struggle or bourgeois revolution.⁹

Being an impassionate communist worker Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty was an important organiser along with her male counterpart in the party in the district of Midnapore and one of the important communist members in the Calcutta Secretariat of Mahila Atma Rakshya Samiti from 1944 to 1951.¹⁰ The Mahila Atma Rakshya Samiti (MARS), Women Self Defense Association) was an association of women movement in Bengal was founded in 1942 in the midst of Second World War and on the eve of great famine when Calcutta was filled with destitute women fleeing from famine affected countryside Bengal. These women became the pray for sexual exploitation (either to send military camps or lured for force into prostitution of the city). Incident of sexual abuse or kidnapping of local women by the American soldiers were taking place very often. In reaction to these developments, a group of communist women organised MARS to protect women. The MARS organised various training camps for the self defense of the women and it was quickly popularized among the local women of the city and suburbs area, but it should be mentioned that MARS had its origin in the Congress Mahila Sangha formed in Calcutta in 1939 with the object to prepare for defense against Japanese occupation of Bengal. In 1941 a group Mahila Sangha had been joined by communist women and since then it was known as Mahila Atma Rakshya Samiti.¹¹

Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty worked whole heartedly to activate the women workers of the party and the members associated with MARS. She travelled several female institutions in Midnapore for extending influence over girls in favour of communism.¹² She inspired the girls for the exploitation free society and dreaming them of women liberation from family to society. She addressed at the girl institutions against social inertia and inspired the girls to be agile so that the society will move forward after repudiating its superstitions and substandard religious practices.¹³ He always urged the girls to be scientific at home and outside home and inspired them to take the responsibility in own shoulders to lead the family and society in its constructive construction. She was very popular

⁹ Communism was a State Patriarchy, not State Feminism, Mahaela Miroiu, Google Writer, *Aspasia*, Vol- 1, 2007. www.aspasia.com

¹⁰ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata

¹¹ File No – 35/26 – I/B, W.B, Nov 3, 1948 Communist activities in Midnapore West Bengal state Archives, Kolkata

¹² File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata

¹³ Ibid

among the girls of different institutions for her gynophonic speeches as she created a female gaze to look society. Although she was restricted by the guardians of girls but her indomitable attitude and unassailable mentality was very helpful to mobilise the large number of girls in the unfolding umbrella of communism. In this way the activities of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty was successful for ploughing the ground in the soil of Midnapore for the future communist activities among the womenfolk.¹⁴

She hardly lost her temper, disappointed or disheartened when women refused her or people abused her. Her dedication to this work made some impact over many of the girls in the various women institutions and women of different strata of society. It was seen that the numerous women participated in the Tebhaga movement and in the other various political movement organised by the communist party in the later period. It was no doubt to say that this was the result of the activities of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty and other leading women in the district and it was denied to be said the this ideological mobilization created useful communist pockets among the womenfolk for the future agitation of the district.

Therefore it was cleared that the role of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty was not less importance to her male counterpart in respect of bestowing leadership to mobilise people towards communism and organising the agitation on different issues of the party. She broke up the masculine myth that it was only the man who could able to lead the party, women always needed men in her day to day life, woman could not be prepared herself as a leader. But she proved her as self made leader who was polished by Manikuntala Sen and others members of the central committee.¹⁵

Some of the political activities of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty are necessitated to be discussed for her transformation as a top ranking woman leader of the communist party of the district. She had been given responsibility by the party to launch agitation with the poor section of women on the issue of food. Getting opportunity to lead women agitation she expressed her leadership quality of excellence. As an organiser and leader of the movement her vision was very clear. To gather large number of women participants in the women agitation she instructed all the primary committees of woman fronts to reach to the middle and poor class of the society and convinced them to join in the movement. As a member of the central committee and secretary of district of MARS she instructed all the primary committees of the district to join in the agitation on the issue of food and cloth. She thought that without the support of the middle class and poor class the party would never be turned as mass based party. Poor class of women was the first target of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty as the poor class was struggling in their life for getting food and cloth. The mindset of the poor people was that as the bourgeois congress government did not provide them food and cloth, the alternative communist government might be able to arrange their food and cloth and eradicate their poverty.¹⁶ Utilizing this psychology of the poor people she took above kind of strategy and it was proved successful.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ File 35/26 – I/B, W.B, Nov 3, 1948 Communist activities in Midnapore West Bengal state Archives, Kolkata

Giving importance to the basic needs of the poor people she convinced the poor women to take part in good numbers in the agitation. She also travelled various Basties (slums) in the Midnapore town and other downtrodden area of the district and persuaded the womenfolk to participate in the ongoing agitation on the issue of food and cloth. Taking all previous preparation she launched the women agitation in front of the Collectorate gate in Midnapore on this issue. It was remembered that the food and cloth, the two basic needs of human beings and these items were desperately needed for their survival since the time of natural calamities in the district.¹⁷ Launching agitation on these issues for the survival of common people Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty came in touch with the very common and proletariat women in the district. The agitation in a short time was much popularised which emerged Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty as one of the top ranking women leaders in the district.

Besides this kind of activity she organised street corner meeting, procession and secret meeting in the house of sympathisers of the communist party to make understand the poor women why their participation was necessary in the agitation. In the meetings with the women she urged the government to make necessary arrangement to provide food and cloth to the common people.¹⁸ In the result of such the kind efforts of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty numerous women came in public place to join leftist politics putting aside their social and family barrier and they took part in the movements organised by the communist party to make their life better. The participation of the poor women in these movements marked as the liberation of women from domestic and social oppression. The making of political consciousness of the downtrodden women by Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty provided the words of protest to the lips of the poor women when they were being oppressed in family or in society. The emancipation of poor women from the encirclement of domestic oppression could be interpreted in two ways – it could be the consequence of communist strategy to extend its mass base among the women in society or it was the result bourgeois democratic movement led by the Communist party.

Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, as a member of the district committee, was assigned to carry out another important agitation -- the agitation of abolition of zamindari system. On the eve of the independence of India there were two extremes – in one extreme there were landless labour and tenant at will and on the other there were big zamindars/Jotedars having huge estates. The communist party from their ideological doctrine put up a ceaseless struggle for the abolition of the zamindari system without any compensation. In Midnapore district Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty contributed the significant role for putting up the ceaseless struggle for the abolition of zamindari system. For making the movement successful she with the help of Anil Bhanja, a district communist leader, visited numerous places of Midnapore to mobilise poor peasant especially poor women to take part in the struggle for the abolition of zamindari system without any compensation.¹⁹ Her

¹⁷ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata.

¹⁸ File No- 35/26 – I/B, W.B, Nov 3, 1948 Communist activities in Midnapore West Bengal state Archives, Kolkata

¹⁹ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata

efforts were not in vain when it was seen that there were a large number of women participants in each and every agitation against prevailing zamindari system in the district of Midnapore.

Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty was not only a great organiser, a planner and a strategist but also an evocative contributor in shaping the model of the movement. In spite of the dominance of the male members in the district committee she clearly expressed her opinion and spoke explicitly if she found any theoretical and practical weakness in organising and conducting the movements.²⁰ For organising the agitation against zamindari abolition system without any compensation her opinion was that the peasant's and labourer's womenfolk would be advised to stand at the front of the movement to attack the loan realising party with knives, broom stick, swords and then the party workers would be stood to infuriate the spirit of resistance.

She again and again emphasised the womenfolk to lead the movement standing at the very front with sickle, bout and sweep at their hand to attack loan realising party. It made them the primary target of the police and the administration.²¹ The police would be puzzle watching the women at the front of the agitation. It might stop firing on the part of the police to the agitators. It was suggested that this idea was not the brain child of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, it was the brain child of central committee of CPI. When the communist leadership was hesitating to implant this idea Mrs. Chakraborty emphasised to implement it in the agitation against existing zamindari system. Therefore she could establish herself as one of the leading strategy maker of the Communist party in the district of Midnapore.

In this context the action work of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty in the Tebhaga movement needs to be discussed. The women leader of Tebhaga demonstrated their caliber to exert leadership quality of excellence and they did it so delicately when CPI policy was not to be over violence. However short lived the uprising may had been, through their practice, the peasant women of Midnapore posed a challenge to traditional concept of patriarchic dominance of the movement. In a careful analysis it would be cleared the women were more rebellious than men and the woman participants in this movement was more than man in number. This was happen due to the proper leadership and guidance of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, and other women leader such as Bimala Mahji, Sibrani Dixit, Sucharita Das and others.²² The name of Bimala Mahji is plentifully discussed in the communist literature of the district, but Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty's mesmerised contribution is not remembered.

The following political activities of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty deserved her name to be mentioned in the communist literature of the district. She like other women leader such as Bimala Mahji, Sibrani Dixit, Sucharita Das held numerous open and secret meetings in the different parts of the district, held street corner meetings, organised numerous processions, travelled to poor women in the numerous of villages in the district and guided them to be soldiers of the Tebhaga movement. The women leaders of Midnapore had taken such kinds of strategies during last two years before the

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, West Bengal State Archives. Kolkata

commencement of the Tebhaga movement.²³ As a consequence, it had been drawn to our attention that the women participants were more in number than their man and their political activities was more vigorous than male workers in the Tebhaga movement. It was the enormous success of the women leadership and it also proved that women as a leader could guide and mobilise the people far better than their male counterpart.

Therefore it had been proved that the incidents and political activities in the Tebhaga movement broke up the myth of patriarchic dominancy of the movement and it also shattered the androphonic thought of male participants were to be more violent and rebellious than their women counterpart in the movement.²⁴ Having proving wrong this masculine gaze of conception, the women participants in the Tebhaga movement became more violent and more rebellious and women like Mrs. Chakraborty came out as a strong and potential leader like their male leaders. This marked the emergence of women delicate demagogue and wise politician in the politics of communism in Midnapore. But it was a matter of regret that the communist party did not take this opportunity of the resurgence of women power by bringing them in the dignitary post of state committee or district committee to stand the party on solid mass base.²⁵ For this reason the women historians blamed the patriarchic attitude of male leadership of the communist party.

The emergence of women power had also been expressed beyond the event of political cause. The humanitarian activities of the women workers of the Communist party affected the common people within very short time. Mrs. Chakraborty played the role of harbinger among the communist women workers in the time of need of common people. The destructive and ruinous cyclone on 16th October, 1942 and its immediate consequence of flood destroyed Midnapore especially the eastern side of this district. The situation became worsen in the next year in 1943 when the district was over flooded with the swelling water of river Damodar. After eight months later of flood there was a severe famine that virtually demolished the rural society of Midnapore.

The entire communist worker engaged in the rescue work but here again the women leader took very prominent role to survive the poor peasant community of the district. The new kind of engagement of the women leadership along with Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty helped a lot to revive the catastrophic peasant family of the district.²⁶ They engaged in the relief work which included opening many milk centres, medical service units, opening self help group, distributing food and clothes to the rural poor peasant community of the district. The poor peasant women joined the self help group to bring food for her family. It gave women a new identity that she felt proud herself as she could also bring food for her family like their male earning member.

The women in self help groups engaged in husking rice to provide food for the poor, in medical unit was for the treatment of flood affected people and in the milk centres bestowing milk to the

²³ File No - 35/26 – I/B, W.B Communist activities in Midnapore West Bengal state Archives, Kolkata

²⁴ Sharecropping and sharecroppers Struggle in Bengal , 1930 – 1950, Adrienne Cooper K. P. Bagchi, Kolkata, 1988, p - 67

²⁵ Interpreting political, Ideological Formulation of C.P.I. in 1947 – 48, from revisionism to Revolutionary Ideology, Chandan Basu, quarterly review of Historical Studies, Vol -LIII, Oct 2013 Mar 2014, no 3 &4, p- 86-93

²⁶ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, West Bengal State Archives. Kolkata

children and women. It had the deep impact on the people of the district. All the functions of these centres were so delicately executed by the women leaders along with Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty that poor peasant women at large portion were moved and they inclined towards the unfolding umbrella of communism. In Midnapore town the activities of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty particularly during the period natural calamities attracted the people especially to the people of middle class and downtrodden class.²⁷ The people who almost rejected communist party for their people's war theory, now accepted once again after watching the humanitarian activities of communists during the time of distress caused by the natural calamities.²⁸ Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty came out as a crowd puller in communist politics in Midnapore.

Form the above discussion it was cleared that Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty had played the most important role in the political career of since the time of natural calamities in the district and her prolific political participations were intimated in the time of Tebhaga movement. It was said undoubtedly that Tebhaga was the watershed in the rise of the communism in Bengal politics. The role of women leadership cannot be denied for this vertical rise of communism in this period. In this aspect, again we were acknowledged the following contributions and actions of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty who could not be ignored for the perpendicular rise of the communist party in the district.

Mrs. Chakraborty numerously travelled the eastern part of Midnapore, mobilised womenfolk, and arranged meetings both open and secret, prepared the strategy for launching Tebhaga movement. On 25th of May, 1948 Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty along with Mani Kuntala Sen with some agitators shouted slogan in front of Midnapore Collectorate for release of the communist prisoners.²⁹ After holding a small meeting with the women agitators they condemned the action of the police on the communist. They gave slogan with loud voice in association with the large number of supporters and sympathisers and then they threw stone and brickbats to the police. This event was highlighted in the local newspaper in the next morning and these types of propaganda accelerated the pace of the communist movement.

In an another political event on 28th of August, 1948 Mrs. Chakraborty with her MARS members observed anti- repression day in the Midnapore Collectorate campus in collaboration with district civil Liberty Committee by organizing a procession after having a meeting in the Harding school premises, Midnapore town. In this meeting Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty demanded release of Gita Mukherjee and other communist prisoners and withdraw of repressive measures of the police against peasants and the students.³⁰ In the group meeting with member of MARS she emphasised to revive and continue to work at the milk canteen in the district.

On 29th February, 1948 Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty visited the sweeper colony of Midnapore with other two girls and assured the sweeper that their pay should be increased and they would get cloth

²⁷ File No - 35/26 – I/B, W.B Communist activities in Midnapore West Bengal state Archives, Kolkata

²⁸ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, West Bengal State Archives. Kolkata

²⁹ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty, West Bengal State Archives. Kolkata

³⁰ Ibid

from municipality if they successfully launched agitation.³¹ She organised meetings, processions with sweepers on their issue of the enhancement of pay and demand of cloth at the time of Puja festival. Her strategy was quickly successful among the sweepers of the Midnapore and most of the sweeper joined in the movement organised by Mrs. Chakrabortty and other members of the Communist party. This strategy revealed really helpful for the extending the mass base of the communist party in the district.

A seized letter,(written by one Niranjan Maity, Tamruk, on 13th Nov, 1948) by District Intelligence Branch disclosed the organizational affair of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty in the party at that time.³² The letter divulged that Mrs. Chakrabortty was now organizing the women railway labour in Kharagpur. She was planning to call on a general strike in the Bengal Nagpur Railway demanding the equal wages for equal work for women as well as to hike of daily wages for casual workers. This letter also unfolded the fact that Mrs. Chakrabortty was then staying at her mother place Serampore, Hoogly and she was very anxious in accomplishing party propoganda among the students in Midnapore after mentioning her difficulty in carrying on party work as she was continuously being watched by the Hoogly police.³³ The letter ended with the note that she wanted to resume the party programme in Midnapore if she would be permitted to do so by the district committee. In the interpretation of this letter it was revealed that Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty was engaged in organising in railway women front, casual workers in Kharagpur, organizing the female students in Midnapore in the later half in 1948.

Above discussion showed the fact that Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty like her many male counterpart spent almost her entire life for the spread of communism in the district. Her engagement in the different fronts of the party made general workers in the party more enthusiastic and she was accepted to all section of the party members. Her speeches made deep impact on the women of the contemporary society. Her manner and eloquences made her popular not only among the women but also among the men too.

In the time prior to independence the middle and upper class women or Bhadra Mahila belonging to the upper caste played an important role both in national and leftish movement. However, with the rise of expanding agrarian politics in 1946 in Bengal's countryside the peasant women vehemently reacted against colonial rule particularly in the time of Tebhaga movement.³⁴ The critical involvement of women in the agrarian upsurge contributed to the development of a new paradigm in the history of Bengal, which become more visible in post 1947. The most authoritative research of Adrienne Cooper showed that though women were more militant than men in Tebhaga movement, but they were generally excluded from the formal organization of Bengal Provincial Kishan Sabha and the Communist party.³⁵ This research also exposed that peasant women fought

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ File No – 789/46 (1), I/B, W.B. Nov 1, 1950 Name -Mrs. Usha Rani Chakrabortty, West Bengal State Archives. Kolkata

³⁴ The Defining Moments in Bengal. – Sabyasachi Bhattacharya,, OUP, New Delhi, 2014 p- 128

³⁵ Sharecropping and sharecroppers Struggle in Bengal , 1930 – 1950, Adrienne Cooper K. P. Bagchi, Kolkata,1988, p 67

not only for Tebhaga but also they fought against patriarchal social domination during all kind of movements organised by the Communist party.

The above paragraph helps us to understand the position of women leadership within communist party and the communist organization. Most of the research focused on how the communist movement struggle against economic disparities of society, not to break patriarchal inequality of society. In the study of the communist movement in Midnapore the communist leaders did not think to include the social topsy-turvy conditions with the economic exploitation in the programme of their political activities. Most of the communist leaders could not go beyond patriarchal conception of psychological and physical weakness of women. Therefore the struggle of Mrs. Usha Rani Chakraborty was not only confined against state machinery of oppression and exploitation but also against dominated pelvic gaze towards women. Her intelligence, skills, power of taking policies, strategies and innovative ideas to execute the strategy and technique of eloquence, and above all, the ability to exert leadership made her one of the prominent leaders in the communist party in its earlier phase in the district of Midnapore. She really became the symbol of inspiration of peasant and downtrodden women of her time in Midnapore.