Chapter –VI.

Tārakeswar Satyāgraha : 1924.
Satyagraha had, in fact, been considered to be an effective weapon by Mahātmā Gāndhī to fight against the British Rāj through non-violent means in the then Indian political perspective. The authoritarian rule of the British Rāj had certainly been shaken to its roots owing to the Satyagraha movement organised under the illustrious leadership of Gāndhīji in course of the Indian struggle for freedom. Taking cue from the phenomenon of Satyagraha with its inherent thrust for obliterating the malaise from public life in all respects, there had developed Satyagraha movements in different parts of India with regional orientation.

Gāndhīji had unequivocally propounded that when “there is an occasion, everyone has a right to practise non-cooperation or Satyagraha” against every sort of injustice. Therefore, the Satyagraha was resorted to at Tārakeswar in 1924 with the intention to remove the glaring abuses of all sorts that had crept into the management of the age-old religious institution. In fact, the monastery at Tārakeswar was alleged to have been a den for corrupt and immoral activities under the regime of the Giri Mohāntas. The last phase of the Giri regime in particular witnessed a few Mohāntas at the helm of affairs who were supposed to have given up their commitment to the injunctions of Brahmacharya. Mention must be made of Mādhābchandra Giri and Sātishchandra Giri who were alleged to have been the embodiments not only of irresponsible power and authority, but also of sensuality. Hence, the Satyagraha movement in this pilgrim town had been organised as a genuine reaction against the aberrations of the later Mohāntas who had taken over the reins of administration one after another in accordance with the Guru-Śiṣya Paramparā or preceptor-disciple lineage.

The bubble of the authoritarian halo of the Giri regime had burst during the administration of Satishchandra Giri, the last Mobanta of the Giri order at the monastery at Tārakeswar. In spite of his commendable activities in different spheres of administration of the temple as well as the estate, he could in no way escape the usual allegations put forward by his opponents. The inhabitants of this pilgrim town as well as the pilgrims in general, were very much antagonised by the authoritarianism of Satishchandra Giri in almost all spheres. This, in fact, led to a rise in opposition at this famous place of pilgrimage in Eastern India during the first half of 1924. Even eminent persons of contemporary Bengal extended support to the organisation of a full-fledged movement in order to thwart the last vestiges of the Giri regime.

There is no denying the fact that Satishchandra Giri had earnestly endeavoured to facilitate the smooth inflow of pilgrims round the year. But grievances against him in so far as the pilgrims were concerned began to take shape also during his tenure. The pilgrims who thronged this place of pilgrimage were alleged to have been under constant pressure to accede to forcible exactions of different kinds inside as well as outside the temple by the agents of the Mobanta. The Birbhadra Dal was organised under the personal supervision of the Mobanta to perpetrate his authoritarianism in this place of pilgrimage. The pilgrims in general were aggrieved over the utter callousness of the authority towards ensuring convenience of the women pilgrims in respect of bathing as well as sanitary arrangements. Moreover, accusing fingers were raised against the Mobanta for his voluptuous character which, indeed, added fuel to the fire in the mobilisation of the movement. But it must be taken note of that he was in no way the trend setter in the given context. Besides, the Mobanta during this


Also,

Pramathanāth Sānyāl – Tārakeswar, P.- 32.
phase behaved like an authoritarian *zamindār* to his subjects living in and around the sacred complex. The grievances of the tenants fortified also the base for *Satyāgraha* at Tārakeswar.

In order to redress these grievances, a proposal had been put forward for the formation of a popular committee. It was suggested that the committee should be entitled to exercise supervisory authority over the management of the trust and performance of rituals in accordance with the *Shāstras*. The *Mobānta* would simply carry out the directives of the proposed committee with his role only as an important member of the committee. The proposal was also put forward for the instant abolition of all sorts of forcible exactions perpetrated for so long in this pilgrim town at the behest of the *Mobānta*. Therefore, the *Satyāgraha* movement at Tārakeswar had primarily begun with the purpose of abolishing all sorts of forcible exactions from the tenants as well as pilgrims. The *Satyāgrahīs* were above all committed to ensure the honour of the female pilgrims. The need of the hour also necessitated the earnest endeavour to determine not only the real proprietor of the estate but also to define the actual role of the *Mobānta* as a functionary of the trust.

However, one *Śwāmī* Viswānanda had taken earnest initiative to build up an organisation of the *Sannyāsīs* known as *Mahābir Dal* and came forward to stand against the ensuing oppression in this place of pilgrimage. He had mercillessly been beaten up for his courage in standing up against the *Mobānta*. This, indeed, in no way dampened his spirit. He had chalked out a programme for taking recourse to *Satyāgraha* at Tārakeswar in collusion with his trusted lieutenants on the eve of the *Śivarātri* festival in the month of *Phālgun*.

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He got support not only from the oppressed tenants and irritated pilgrims but also gained overwhelming support from the Pundits. This, in fact, strengthened his ethical standpoint in the struggle against the Mohanta. Mention should be made of Pundit Dharanath Bhattacharya and Pundit Sarat Chandra Sankhya Vedantairtha who had played an important part in the movement. Pundit Dharanath Bhattacharya joined hands with Swami Viswananda in the initial phase of the movement.

The office bearers of the Mahabir Dal were named at the behest of Swami Viswananda. Swami Viswananda, the chief protagonist, was declared the founder of the Dal while Swami Satchidananda, Makhan Lal Roy, Durga Singh and Swabhob Brabmachari (alias Kali Krishna Ghosh) were named Commander, Secretary and Assistant Secretaries respectively.

Prior to the start of the movement Swami Satchidandananda made a fervent appeal to all concerned to help the Satyagrahis in terms of money as well as through enrollment as volunteers. In his appeal, he put forward certain proposals for consideration to the people. He had primarily proposed the overthrow of the Mohanta, followed up by the creation of a trust for all the properties of the monastery at Tarakeswar. He had also put forward the idea of the organisation of a committee, composed of learned persons of commendable morality, for supervising the sacred performances within the temple. He also made it a point that three-fourth (3/4) of the total income accruing from the property of the temple would be spent for the maintenance and improvement of the temple. Moreover, arrangements for public amenities and improvement of the condition

### References

of tenants were also suggested. The remaining one-fourth (1/4) of the total income was to be left as a fund in reserve. Provision was also made for the rejuvenation of the temple as and when it would be necessary and for the livelihood of the Mohânta till his death. It was incidentally proposed that the money for expenditure owing to the arrangements of daily worship and for other charitable activities would come from the income accruing from the temple. He had, indeed, pleaded also for the deposition of jewels worth lakhs of rupees, which were lying in the custody of the then Mohânta, in the banks. The income accruing from it was proposed to be spent in accordance with the direction of the temple committee. Finally, he opined in favour of the appointment of anyone in future as Mohânta who would be a high-profile person conversant with the scriptures ¹⁰.

II

To make the whole project a complete success, Svâmi Satchidananda prayed for permission from the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (B.P.C.C) to start the Satyagraha movement at Târakeswar on the eve of the Śivaratri festival. In his letter to the President of the B.P.C.C, he assured in unequivocal terms that the Satyagrahis would always remain non-violent in body and spirit although there was very little possibility of the Mohânta’s as well as the Government’s remaining non-violent ¹¹.

Meanwhile, Svâmi Viswânanda tried his best to organise the volunteers of the Mahâbîr Dal for the impending Satyagraha movement. He opened an office for this purpose at 179, Harrison Road, Calcutta, and another at Târakeswar ¹². He appealed to the residents of this pilgrim town to prepare themselves for participating in the intended movement for non-payment of rents to the Mohânta

¹⁰. Ānanda Bâzâr Patrikâ – 27. 2. 24, 3 (6).
¹¹. Amrita Bâzâr Patrikâ – 28. 2. 24, 6 (3).
through the Manager of the monastery. Besides, the members of the monastery willing to take part in the movement were asked to get themselves ready to render service for the movement, for their help would be required in need\textsuperscript{13}. The Satyagrahis were directed to remain ever alert to save the pilgrims from the agents of the Mobanta. But at the same time, they were advised to remain non-violent alongside their determination to undo all wrongs\textsuperscript{14}.

In fact, the organisers of the Satyagraha movement were very much aware of the fact that the success of the movement depended to a large extent on organisational skill. Therefore, emphasis was given to the steady recruitment of volunteers from the initial phase of the movement in order to make it a success. Immediately after the B.P.C.C took the decision to sanction the Satyagraha movement in this place of pilgrimage, the volunteers from outside were urged to proceed through District Congress Committees. Besides, an alternative channel for recruitment of volunteers was also arranged through Hindu Sabha with its office at 10/1/1 Syed Gally Lane, Calcutta. The temple of Baldeoji at 25, Grey Street was also made a centre for recruitment of volunteers for the movement at Tārakeswar\textsuperscript{15}. Besides, innumerable centres for recruitment of volunteers had been opened in Calcutta to gear up the course of movement. Of these, the following were important centres\textsuperscript{16}:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.</td>
<td>38/1, Sukea Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bāgbāzār Darjipārā Rastra Samiti.</td>
<td>62, Shyampukur Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Central Calcutta Rastra Samiti.</td>
<td>1, Lālbehāri Thākur Lane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Simlā Garpār Rastra Samiti.</td>
<td>69, Simlā Street.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Āmṛita Bāzār Patrikā – 2. 3. 24, 7(4).
15. Āmṛita Bāzār Patrikā – 4. 5. 24, 5(6).
Moreover, the volunteers were also requested to register their names at 9, Russa Road, Calcutta. Thus the Satyagraha movement, that had primarily been initiated with the assistance of the local people, transcends its local context with the involvement of the B.P.C.C.

No arrangement for their travelling allowance was made in this context. But these volunteers were assured of meals at the langarkhānā (feeding center) set up by the Akālis at Tārakeswar. A large number of Satyagrahis were fed from this langarkhānā on daily basis as long as the Satyagraha was in full swing. The interest of the Akālis in this movement can be explained with reference to the nature of the Akālī movement that had been started also during the freedom movement with similar effort to remove the glaring abuses in the management of religious institutions. The Akālis, incidentally, received their inspiration from the Satyagraha movement launched by Gāndhī.

However, an office was also opened at Tārakeswar station. There had been constituted nine departments to carry on several types of activities in relation to the course of movement. Of these departments, the medical and sanitary department in charge of Dr. Ashutosh Das achieved great popularity in this pilgrim town by virtue of its commendable service, free of cost, to those in distress. This department took utmost care to ameliorate the sanitary condition in order to prevent the outbreak of epidemic diseases. The Satyagrahis were ever alert with regard to the propaganda and publicity campaigns. They were in

17. Ibid. – 13. 6. 24, 3 (3-4).
touch with reporters of Calcutta Press and Associated Press in order to publicize the cause of the movement. They were, indeed, successful in rousing public sympathy for the movement at Tārakeswar.

The leaders of the Mabābīr Dal were, in fact, conscious of the end as well as means of the Satyagraha movement. They wanted the removal of the Mohānta along with the transference of the debutter property to the representatives of the Hindu Committee for management. They were ready to give the upper hand to the Congress in the matter of selection of members of the committee immediately after it came forward to take up the reins of the movement. To achieve the end, they emphasised the necessity of resorting to peaceful means. The Satyagrahis were, however, urged to elect their leader from among themselves in course of the movement. The leader was expected to have a commitment to the proposed end, which would always remain beyond question. In fact, the Satyagrahis were always keen to take help from the Congress for mobilisation, once the movement had started.

The Satyagraha Committee had the sagacity to carry on earnest endeavour for keeping itself always informed of the reaction of all concerned about the arrangements made by the organisers. Sometimes, inquiries were made by this committee to ascertain this objective as far as possible.

However, the B.P.C.C responded promptly to the letter written by the Commander of the Mabābīr Dal on behalf of the Satyagrahis. Accordingly, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Dās, President of the B.P.C.C; Subhās Chandra Bose and Srīsh Chandra Chatterjee visited Tārakeswar on 8 Apr. 1924 to inquire into the matter and chalk out a line of reforms following a spot-study of the developments as had taken place at Tārakeswar in the meantime.

23. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 22. 5. 24, 3(2).
25. Forward – 8. 4. 24, 3(5).
A preliminary survey convinced the leaders of the reign of terror let loose in this place of pilgrimage. The people could hardly venture to speak out in public against the *Mohānta* as they were in stark fear of danger to their lives and property. The leaders were prompt to assure the inhabitants of the pilgrim town as well as the pilgrims in general of protection against the agents of the *Mohānta*. They had declared in no uncertain terms, their commitment for rendering adequate service to them. An Enquiry Committee was, therefore, set up to enquire into the whole matter in association with members like Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Dās, Netāji Subhās Chandra Bose, Śrīś Chandra Chātterjee, Maulānā Ākrām, Dr. J.M. Dāsgupta, *Pundit* Dharānāṭh Bhattāchārya and Śrī Anīl Barān Roy. In his statement Subhās Chandra urged the progressive section of the *Hindu Sabā* (Bengal branch) to take up the matter. He had also made it completely clear that the B.P.C.C would be compelled to take action if the *Hindu Sabā* failed in its duty at this stage.

However, the findings of another Enquiry Committee instituted by the *Hindu Sabā*, Burrābāzār, also referred to the illegal exactions by the agents of the *Mohānta* from the pilgrims, shopkeepers as well as residents of the pilgrim town. Besides, it also referred to the cases of the violation of women visiting this place of pilgrimage. This amounted naturally to violation of all the principles of decency and morality. *Śwāmī* Viswānanda, the founder of the *Mabābīr Dal* had primarily thought of taking recourse to direct action to achieve the goal. But his wisdom guided him to convey prior information to the Divisional Commissioner of Burdwan and District Magistrate of Hooghly before undertaking such a momentous step. Urging the Government to take immediate step to settle the dispute amicably, he requested the authorities concerned at the same time to

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27. Forward - 10. 4. 24, 3(5).

28. Amrita Bāzār Patrikā– 6. 5. 24, 6(3).
come forward with necessary measures in keeping with the popular demand for the recognition of the people's right to the possession of the temple to which they were entitled.

### III

On 7 Apr. 1924, a confrontation occurred in this place of pilgrimage when a few volunteers of the *Mahābīr Dal* reached Tārakeswar for the proposed movement and were assaulted on the spot by the agents of the *Mobānta*. Allegations and counter allegations ensued. In fact, a few agents of the *Mobānta* took on the volunteers of the *Mahābīr Dal* while they were busy in distributing leaflets in the market place at the behest of *Śwāmī Satchidananda*. The untoward turn of the event was indeed checked with the timely arrival of the Subdivisional Officer (S. D. O), Sreerāmpur and the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Hooghly.

The *Mobānta* was capable of sensing the implication of the brewing storm and he promptly endeavoured to move against those who were supposed to have been making capital on public grievances. To foil their campaign against him, he planned the attack on the *Mahābīr Dal*, accusing it of its earnest endeavour to dislodge him from the office of the *Mobānta*. Meanwhile, he began to conduct meetings and conferences at Tārakeswar with a view to ensuring proper state of affairs in this place of pilgrimage and to reassert the *Mobānta*’s rights enjoyed over the years.

In order to instil fear into the mind of his opponents he arranged to bring hired miscreants from different places and began to oppress the tenants as well as to coerce the students of the locality. As his oppressive measures yielded little or no

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29. Ibid. – 20. 4. 24, 3(4).
31. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 6.3. 24, 2(3-4) & 20. 3. 24, 4(2).
32. Ibid. – 20. 2. 24 & 13. 4. 24, 2(5-6).
no result, he made an appeal to the Government for help. In a letter dated Apr. 21, he complained against Swāmī Viswānanda and Swāmī Satchidānanda, accusing them of fomenting trouble at Tārakeswar. In order to overcome the impasse, he proposed a conference and, agreed on arbitration with leading members of the public. But he was always over conscious to emphasise the fact in this connection that the temple was in no way a public endowment and therefore, the public had no right to interfere in any way with the management of the trust. The Mobānta, meanwhile, met Sir Āshutosh Mukherjee to seek his advice in the context of this development, but in vain.

The Mobānta incidentally prayed for an injunction against the Mahābīr Dal which he suspected to have contemplated not only interference with the management of the temple and the properties of the deity, but also to take possession of the palace of the Mobānta. It had also been reported that the Mobānta was making efforts to create communal disturbances to complicate matters.

But none had faith in him. Naturally, he failed to create any impact on the public. The Mahābīr Dal got overwhelming support from the people which, however, resulted in an increase in the number of volunteers.

The ensuing Gajan festival brought a chance for the volunteers of the Mahābīr Dal to rise to the occasion for making arrangements to relieve the sufferings of the people caused by the extortions of the Mobānta. All sorts of collections were

33. Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 25. 4. 24, 8(1).
34. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 27. 4. 24, 2(4).
35. The Bengalee – 9. 5. 24, 6(3) & 14. 5. 24, 3(7).
36. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 11. 5. 24, 2(7).
stopped except the pranāmī offered in obeisance to the deity. No extra charge was taken for even munḍan (tonsure) except the charge of the barber. Moreover, the other religious rites within the sacred complex were performed by the pilgrims with the help of the volunteers, free of cost.

The movement was put off for the time being immediately after the Gājan festival was over. In the meantime, the volunteers devoted themselves earnestly to initiating intensive propaganda in order to mobilise the public opinion in favour of the movement. The pressure of work on the volunteers became considerably less as the flow of pilgrims ceased to a large extent after the Chaitra Samkrānti i.e., end of the month Chaitra (March-Apr.) in the Bengali calendar. The volunteers of the Mahābīr Dal, meanwhile, had taken over the right of performing the sacred rituals within the shrine. At this stage, the rumour of an impending compromise between the contending groups was in the air. Sensing the mood of the people of the pilgrim town Swāmī Viswānanda warned against any such rumour and declared that the Dal would work as usual in relation to the sacred performances within the sacred complex. Even the rumour of a compromise initiated by Deshbandhu C.R.Das in exchange for two lākhs of rupees embarrassed the leaders of the movement, who refuted the charge immediately.

The Mobānta got exasperated by these developments and appealed to the Government for help. The Government was very prompt to respond to the

37. Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 16. 4. 24, 6(5).
38. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 20. 4. 24, 2(4-5)
39. Ibid. – 19. 4. 24, 2(6)
40. Ibid. – 24. 4. 24, 2(6)
appeal of the Mobānta. It set up a committee to inquire into the matter. Henceforth, the movement began to take a political overtone in spite of its religious character. The volunteers of the Mahābir Dal under the guidance of their leaders were determined to launch the Satyagraha movement with a view to occupying the palace (Math) of the Mobānta on May 20, 1924.

A few days prior to the formal launching of the Satyagraha, a rumour was again heard about an alleged endeavour on the part of Deshbandhu to initiate a selfish compromise. In order to scotch the rumour Deshbandhu in a frank statement said—“I assure everybody that I shall be no party to any settlement which will not protect the people of Tārakeswar or those who stood by a true religious spirit against the Mohunt. The temple and the debutter property (property devoted to god) must also be protected.” This statement reassured those concerned with the course of movement in the pilgrim town.

The B.P.C.C intervened at this juncture and in a meeting on 14 May, 1924; the B.P.C.C was directed by its Executive Council to strengthen the movement. The decision was also taken for sending a contingent of volunteers immediately to the pilgrim town for the relief of the residents as well as pilgrims.

Just four days prior to the commencement of the movement an incident occurred at Tārakeswar which, however, increased the tension in an already grave situation. A few vendors had brought vegetables and fruits for sale from adjacent places. As they were getting ready to leave the market after transactions were over, the ijāradar of the market appeared to claim toll by order of the

41. Ibid. - 2. 5. 24, 2(2)
42. Buddhadeb Bhattāchārya – Satyagrahas in Bengal. P. 88
43. The Bengalee – 9. 5. 24, 4(7).
44. Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 16. 5. 24, 6(2).
Mohanta. They naturally refused to oblige as they were well aware of the developments of the last two weeks during which the volunteers of the Mahābīr Dal had achieved commendable success in thwarting forcible exactions by the agents of the Mohanta. As a result, the vendors were severely beaten up by the hired goons of the Mohanta in the scuffle that ensued. As soon as the news of the scuffle spread, Swāmī Satchidananda arrived at the spot with volunteers. His arrival added fuel to the fire. He was mercilessly beaten up by the Gurkha goons engaged by the Mohanta and was ultimately carried to an unknown place. The rumour of his murder aggravated the whole atmosphere of the pilgrim town. Even Swāmī Viswananda sent a telegram to Calcutta on the basis of this rumour that Swāmī Satchidananda had been killed. However, the police was successful, following rigorous enquiries, to find out the severely injured Swāmīji in a room on the ground floor of a nearby dharmaśālā. A few miscreants were apprehended and arrested by the police. The Swāmīji in his statement referred to an attempt on the part of the Mohanta to kill him on the spot.

This infuriated the people who organized a sit in demonstration on the nearby railway line to protest against the event. The B.P.C.C responded promptly in this context and sent Shyamsundar Chakrabarty to inquire into the matter. His talk with Swāmī Satchidananda and the volunteers of Mahābīr Dal convinced him that the irate mob would in no way allow any train to run until and unless the Mohanta and his agents were stopped from carrying on atrocities on this scale. They even demanded the arrest of the Mohanta along with his trusted lieutenants as soon as possible. However, the information regarding the arrest of culprits

45. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya – Satyagrahas in Bengal. P. - 89
46. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 17. 5. 24, 2(1).
47. Ibid – 18. 5. 24, 2(7).
from no less an officer than the S.D.O partly pacified the demonstrators. He was at the same time candid in his admission that the Mohanta could not be apprehended owing to the lack of evidence against him. This, indeed, pacified the volunteers and they at once decided to lift the barricade 48.

In a meeting organised the following day, the leaders of the movement urged the people to carry on the Satyagraha movement to a fruitful end. Moreover, hartal (general strike) was observed in the pilgrim town, the day after the incident took place 49.

Meanwhile, one Subodh Krishna Basu, who identified himself as the Secretary of Hindu Temple Reform League, despatched a telegram to the Governor, the Viceroy and Mahātmā Gāndhī respectively. He clearly stated in that telegram that "after the publication of Deshbandhu Das's message to adopt Satyagraha, riot and violence have started this morning in Tārakeswar temple...Public apprehends repetition of Chauri Chauti. Pray immediate intervention and investigation through reliable agency" 50. An enquiry into the authenticity of the person and his telegram proved without doubt that the person was a trusted agent of the Mohanta. The telegraphic message was instantly contradicted by Mākhanlāl Sen of Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā, who assured Gāndhiji of the falsehood of the message 51.

48. Ibid. – 17.5. 24, 2(1).
49. Ibid. – 18. 5. 24, 2(5-6).
51. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 18. 5. 24, 2(7).
IV

The Government intervened at this stage with the earnest endeavour to achieve a settlement. In the meantime, the District Court of Hooghly ordered the appointment of a Receiver for the temple of Lord Tāraknāth as well as for the vegetable market in pursuance of an appeal made by the plaintiffs. The Government expected that the bone of contention between the Mohānta and his opponents would become non-existent immediately after the appointment of the Receiver as he would henceforward be entitled to look after the management of the temple. Moreover, the complaints against the Mohānta would naturally cease to exist once he was kept away from the management of the temple by virtue of the verdict of the court. However, the course of events took a different turn with the bold assertion of Swāmī Viswānanda that the people alone should have the right to appoint the Receiver.

But the Government made it unequivocally clear that the standpoint of the Swāmīji necessitated the vindication in the court that the property assumed the character of public debutter property. Moreover, relevant laws enacted by the legislature were also thought to be necessary to vindicate the right of the people in this context. Swāmī Viswānanda was in favour of legislation based on public opinion. He did not hesitate to make it distinctly clear that the Satyāgraha would be started in no time to vindicate the right of the people. Naturally, an arena of confrontation developed, following the eagerness of the public to assert its right and the strong determination of the Government to maintain law and order.

Armed with the decree of the District Court and the accompanying police officers, Shyāmācharan Ukil Bānerjee appeared as Receiver to take charge of the shrine and the local market. The organisers of the Satyāgraha were, in fact, completely

52. Ibid. – 17. 5. 24. 2(4).
53. Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 18. 5. 24, 5(1-5).
against the appointment of a Receiver. They were very much in favour of the formation of a committee by the public for the management of the debutter property. Realising his helplessness, given the hostile mood of the people, the Receiver thought it wise to leave the place at the earliest. He, however, sent a report to the District Judge in which he admitted that he had been able only to prepare an ‘Inventory’ of the properties belonging to the temple. But the list of properties remained incomplete owing to unavoidable reasons. As the Mohanta was away and his whereabouts were not known, he suggested that ‘the ornaments of the deity’ might be left in the custody of Prabhātchandra Giri, the favourite disciple of the incumbent Mohanta. Hence, the upshot of the action of the Satyāgrahīs was that the Receiver could not take charge of the temple.

Ultimately the fateful date 20 May, 1924 scheduled for the start of Satyagraha came. The District Magistrate invited Sri Anil Baran Roy, Secretary of the B. P. C. C, on behalf of the Government to reach an amicable settlement. The District Magistrate proposed the full access of the Receiver to the possessions of the temple. He also solicited support from all concerned to make his endeavour for the creation of an Arbitration Board to settle disputes, a success. Moreover, he argued in terms of deciding the issues related to the temple by a committee acceptable to both the contenders. The Secretary of the B. P. C. C had his own terms for a compromise in the given context. He had pressed for the acceptance by the Mohanta of the Arbitration Board to be appointed by Deshbandhu as the President of the B. P. C. C. Pending the creation of this Board, the Satyāgrahīs were to have been in possession of the temple. He had also argued in favour of releasing all the prisoners arrested on previous occasions.

54. Ibid. – 20. 5. 24, 5(1-2).


56. Swarna Kumār Ghoshāl - Tārakeswar Satyāgraher Itiḥās. Chaps. III and IV.
But the difference between the two parties was insoluble.\(^5^7\)

When the talks for compromise failed, the Satyagraha began on May 20, 1924 and continued for about four months under the illustrious leadership of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das.\(^5^8\) Accordingly, four volunteers offered Satyagraha in front of the monastery at 12 noon on May 20, defying the prohibitory order.\(^5^9\) The actions of the Satyagrahis were vividly reported in the contemporary newspapers. The volunteers tried to enter the palace (monastery) of the Mohanta claiming it as public property. The Satyagrahis had to breakthrough the cordon set up by the police at the gate and were consequently arrested.\(^6^0\) The day after the start of the movement, Swami Viswananda was arrested on the ground that he was trying to foment trouble in the pilgrim town.\(^6^1\)

However, the entire situation had taken a turn for the worse on May 22 following an order of the Government for the cancellation of trains from Howrah to Tārakeswar. The Government was anxious to stop the further inflow of the Satyagrahis to Tārakeswar. It was already very much worried about the information regarding the arrival of about two hundred workers from the Liluah Workshop to the pilgrim town to join the Satyagraha. Even the District Traffic Superintendent of Liluah was asked to take appropriate steps to prevent willing sympathisers of the movement from boarding the train. In spite of the best efforts of the station authority as well as the Railway Police, they entrained themselves as soon as the train for Tārakeswar reached Liluah. The cancellation

\(^5^7\). Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 21. 5. 24, 5(4).


\(^5^9\). The Bengalee – 21. 5. 24, 4(4).

\(^6^0\). Ananda Bāzār Patrikā – 30. 7. 24.

\(^6^1\). Ibid. – 22. 5. 24, 3(1).
of the train was responded to with the setting up of a barricade on the line but with no result.\(^{62}\)

Meanwhile, the Government was becoming very anxious about the tense situation in the pilgrim town. Initially, a special Magistrate was posted at the temple as breach of peace was apprehended. An armed police force was stationed at Tārakeswar in addition to the local police to withstand any sort of disturbance.\(^{63}\) That the Government was instrumental in suppressing the movement is evident from its order for reinforcement by police contingents from Sreerāmpur and elsewhere.\(^{64}\) The District Magistrate warned against any endeavour to violate law and order.\(^{65}\) A keen perusal of the course of events will clearly show that the Government showed no hesititation to side with the *Mobānta* and to apply its power to suppress the *Satyāgrahis*. The *Satyāgrahis* were arrested at random and were sent to jails in different districts of Bengal. The way the *Satyāgrahis* were maltreated in jails speaks much of the high-handedness of the Government. It was reported that fourteen *Satyāgrahis* of minor age were mercilessly beaten up in Bānkurā jail.\(^{66}\) The *Satyāgrahis* were compelled to take recourse to a hunger strike as a result of the merciless oppression of the jail authorities.\(^{67}\) The imprisoned *Satyāgrahis* in different jails were deprived of basic amenities. The *Satyāgrahis* in Sreerāmpur jail were huddled together in

\(^{62}\) Ibid. – 23. 5. 24, 3(1-2).

\(^{63}\) Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 15.5.24, 6(3) & 18. 5.24, 5(1-5).

\(^{64}\) Ibid. – 20.5.24, 5 (1-2).

\(^{65}\) The Bengalee – 21.5.24, 4 (4).

\(^{66}\) Ibid. – 26.6.24, 5(7).

\(^{67}\) Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 6.7.24, 5(3).
unhygienic conditions and were deprived of even beds at night. Moreover, the prisoners in Berhampore jail were the victims of indecent assaults every now and then. To make the matter worse, the jail authorities denied necessary medical aid to the ailing Satyagrahis. The reaction of the Government in this connection no doubt smacked of its revengeful attitude towards the Satyagrahis at Tārakeswar.

VI

The Satyagraha movement at Tārakeswar achieved considerable impetus with the visit of Deshbandhu to Tārakeswar on 30 May, 1924. He was not permitted by the police to enter the temple. He, however, conferred with Swāmī Satchidananda, the Commander of Mahābīr Dal, about recent developments. This meeting resulted in the decision that he would assume the responsibility to head the movement in right earnest after his return from the Serajgunj Conference. In the meantime, some differences cropped up between Swāmī Satchidananda and the volunteers of Mahābīr Dal over the question of conducting the Satyagraha movement at Tārakeswar. Things went so far that he decided to resign from the leadership of the Mahābīr Dal and even thought of offering himself for arrest in disgust. He was dissuaded by Deshbandhu from taking such an extreme step as it would jeopardise the common cause. He also requested the volunteers of the Dal to maintain cordial relation among themselves and work in unison. The intervention of C.R.Dās at this juncture, indeed, amicably settled the matter.

After his visit to Tārakeswar, Deshbandhu said:

“From what I have seen, I am confirmed in my view that it is the duty of every Hindu in Bengal to support this Satyagraha movement. In my opinion, unless

68. Ibid. – 8.7.24, 6(5) & 9.7.24 5(6).

69. The Bengalee- 31. 5. 24, 4(7).
the Mobunt accepts a reasonable settlement, the Provincial Conference at Serājgunj should take it up and invite the whole of Bengal to this struggle for the purification of one of the most important shrines in the province". 

He was deeply perturbed at the “unwarrantable position” taken up by the Government in relation to the developments in the pilgrim town. He was unequivocal in contradicting the claim of the Mohanta that the Tārakeswar estate was his private property.

However, an appeal, bearing the signatures of over two thousand residents of this pilgrim town, was sent to the B.P.C.C and also to the Provincial Conference at Serājgunj. The B.P.C.C was earnestly urged in this appeal to take charge of the Satyāgraha movement at Tārakeswar. Accordingly, the conference rose to the occasion and resolved to extend full-fledged support to the movement. It asked the B.P.C.C to take charge of it.

In accordance with the resolution taken up at the Serājgunj Conference, the B.P.C.C came forward to shoulder the responsibility for continuing the movement at Tārakeswar. Accordingly, C.R. Dās reached Tārakeswar along with his wife Bāsanti Devī and Dr. Pratāp Chandra Guharoy on 6 June, 1924. After his meeting with Swāmī Satchidananda, the Commander of Mahābīr Dal, he gave the responsibility of conducting the Satyāgraha movement to Dr. Guharoy.

The B.P.C.C organised a committee to direct the course of the movement. Deshbandhu was declared President while Lāl Mohan Ghosh was appointed the

70. Amrita Bāzār Patrikā - 31.5. 24, 5 (4).
71. Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 5. 6. 24, 2(7).
72. Ibid. - 7. 6. 24, 2(5).
Secretary of the committee. The other members were Śasādhar Roy (President, 
Hindu Sabha), Pijush Kānti Ghosh (Secretary, Hindu Sabha), Panchānan 
Tarkaratna (President, Brāhmaṇa Sabha), Mahamahopādhyāya Lakṣmān Śāstri 
(Secretary, Brāhmaṇa Sabha), Binoy Bhusan Mukhopādhyāya (Secretary, 
Brāhmaṇa Sabha), Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Basanta Kumār Majumdār, 
Amarendranāth Bose, Śrīsh Chandra Chāttterjee, Satish Chandra Sarkār, Dr. 
J.M. Dāsgupta, Dharānāth Bhattāchāryya, Shyām Sundar Chakrabarty, Śvāmī 
Viswānanda, Śvāmī Satchidananda, Gaur Hari Som, Tulsī Charan Goswāmī 
(Treasurer), Madan Mohan Barman, Sātkari Pati Roy and Anil Baran Roy 73.

Henceforward, the volunteers of the movement began to court arrest under the 
direction of the B.P.C.C. Initially, the volunteers of the Mahābīr Dal and of the 
Congress joined hands and stood shoulder to shoulder in managing the affairs of 
the temple. The door of the temple was opened to all, and all sorts of exactions 
were stopped forthwith. All other suspected malpractices were also done away 
with. Chiraranjan Dās, the son of Deshbandhu, was also among the large 
contingent of Satyagrahis at Tārakeswar who courted arrest during the 
movement which continued for about four months 74.

Meanwhile, public meetings were arranged not only at Tārakeswar but also in 
Calcutta to give vent to the gravity of the situation caused by the misdeeds of the 
Mobānta and his followers. One such meeting was held at Harish Park, Calcutta, 
on May 16, where the speakers resolved to support the Congress which had 
started the Satyagraha to oppose the Mobānta, in order 'to keep the fair name

73. Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 10. 6. 24, 8(2).

of the fair sex’ in tact. Although the volunteers from outside thronged this pilgrim town every day, the local people did not lag behind.

The Tarakeswar Satyagraha was, in fact, a religious movement organised sedulously to weed out corruption from the religious complex. But it is important to note that Muslims also sympathized with the Satyagraha movement at Tarakeswar. The Calcutta Khilafat Committee extended its support for the movement and expressed its willingness to render practical help if called upon to do so by the Hindu community. It was reported that a large number of Muslim youths had already reached Tarakeswar from Dacca and Tripura to join the Satyagraha. They were given the responsibility of mobilising mass support and of collecting money for the movement. Thus the Satyagraha movement achieved a wide base with the participation of the people irrespective of creed and caste.

VII

The most interesting development in course of the Satyagraha movement was, in fact, the overwhelming participation of female volunteers, who dared to stand against the all-pervasive corruption which prevailed in this pilgrim town at the behest of the Mobanta. A large number of women volunteers were arrested on June 11 but were set free by order of the Magistrate. They eventually refused to leave the spot until and unless Swami Satchidananda was released.

75. Amrita Bazaar Patrika - 17.5.24. 5(2).
76. Ibid. – 20.5.24, 5 (1-2).
77. Ibid. – 16. 5. 24, 6(2).
78. Ibid.- 5.7.24, 6(1).
79. Ananda Bazaar Patrika – 22.5. 24, 3(1).
He was, meanwhile, ordered to be remanded in police custody since the Police Inspector took exception of the endeavour of the Swāmījī to exhort those around him to join the Satyāgraha movement in large numbers. At this stage, the Inspector of Police issued order for escorting the Swāmījī to the police station. The endeavour of the police to implement forcibly the order of the Inspector resulted in a scuffle following which the Swāmījī fell down unconscious. However, he regained his senses in hospital.

The participation of women volunteers, indeed, raised the eyebrows of those sceptics who questioned their personal characters. This became clear from the application of the plaintiffs in the District Court for the examination of a few women with reference to their being pardānashīn. Some of them were land-ladies of lodging houses, some were prostitutes and some of them joined the Satyāgraha movement and publicly mixed with male volunteers. They were arrested by the police and sent up before the court. It was also stated that the names of the fathers or husbands of those women were not given which led to the assumption that they were not respectable women. Incidentally, proofs were given in support of this assumption in the court of the District Judge of Hooghly.

The defendant Mohānta alleged that Kālī Dāsī, a woman Satyāgrahī was a fish-seller by profession. Therefore, the application for her being examined was rejected by the District Judge. The same happened to Rāshmoni Dāsī, a Keorā woman by caste and a sweeper by profession. Krishna Bhābinī Debī, a prostitute, was also disqualified for the known reason along with Aghorebālā Dāsī, a mid-wife by profession and a Keorā woman by caste.

The remaining four women—Hari Dāsī Debī, Kālī Dāsī Debī, Jñānādābālā Debī and Lakṣmīmāni Debī were all Brāhmīn women by caste. Hari Dāsī Debī joined

the Satyagraha movement publicly as well as actively and was sent up to Sreerampur Court on being arrested by the police. Joining the Satyagraha movement was exceptional, as many women who otherwise used to observe parda, discarded it during the Satyagraha. Hence the Judge allowed her for being examined.

Kāli Dāsi Debi, as had been alleged by the defendant Mōbānta, was a sister of one Guirām Chātterjee and had incidentally been turned out of her home for immorality. She appeared in public as an assistant of Jnānādā Debi who had joined the Satyagraha movement publicly. The District Judge allowed also the prayer for her examination despite allegation against her.

Jnānādā Debi was the most active participant in the Satyagraha movement. The defendant's allegation against her was that she always used to appear in public. She was arrested and sent up by the police for having joined the Satyagraha movement. The District Judge was of opinion that a landlady of a lodge of her type, common to Tārakeswar, might not be termed a pardanashin woman. “But if she comes from a respectable Brāhmin family and claims the privilege of the parda, I do not see any reason for not respecting her wishes. So I order that she also may be examined on commission”.

Lakṣmīmaṇi Debi was stated to have been the owner of a shop and hotel at Tārakeswar and went about in public. She had also joined the Satyagraha movement actively and publicly. Again, the District Judge found no reason for rejecting the application for her being examined on commission 81.

The discussion about women participants in the Satyagraha movement must not

lead us towards generalisations. It seems that the repeated emphasis on the examination of a few women, with reference to their being pārdānāshīn, was a pointer to the endeavour to generalise social status of the women volunteers in the Satyagraha movement from the standpoint of the sceptics.

VIII
However, the Satyagrahis had already chalked out a plan for approaching the palace of the Mohānta through the eastern as well as the southern gate. The course of events meanwhile took a serious turn on Janmāstamī (Aug.22). Tradition demanded that the deity of Lakṣmī-Nārāyan should be taken out of the temple, which was within the monastery, to the temple of Lord Tāraknāth for worship on auspicious date. The Satyagrahis were desirous of asserting their right of entering the temple of Lakṣmī-Nārāyan, despite the fact that negotiations with the Magistrate were under way. But the endeavour of Swāmī Satchidananda, along with a large number of his associates to rush through the eastern gate disregarding even the warning of the Magistrate made the situation worse. The Magistrate was left with no other alternative but to order the police to fire on the irate Satyagrahis. The Swāmijī along with a few of his associates suffered injuries as a result of this. However, the police report referred to a premeditated attack on the Magistrate as well as the constables on duty in the context of sporadic violence that continued for some time 82.

But the version of Satishchandra Chakrabarty, Superintendent of the Satyagraha Committee at Tārakeswar contradicted the police report. He boldly asserted that "missiles and brickbats were thrown at the innocent people and gunshots were also made" 83. The Statesman in its editorial column observed that "the disturbance which took place at Tārakeswar on Friday evening was clearly no

82. The Bengalee – 24.8.24, 5(1).
part of Congress agitation, and deserves to be considered in its proper light. It was caused by genuine pilgrims who had arrived in large numbers at the shrine for worship and who had the right to expect that the images of Lakṣmi-Nārāyan should be exposed on the Janmāstami day. The Mohunt’s Chelā refused to allow the images to leave the place, because he feared that they would not be brought back after the ceremony and the loss would be fatal to his master’s prestige. Whether the images would have been restored or not it is impossible to say, though it is easy to understand the Chelā’s fears. The Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā also reported the arrest of sixteen Satyāgrahīs as a result of the fracas that ensued because of the attempt to forcibly enter the precinct of the temple of Lakṣmi-Nārāyan jiu. Moreover, the demise, owing to pneumonia, of one Paritosh Kundu, a Satyāgrahī, in the prison at Krishnanagar, was also reported in the same edition of the Patrikā.

IX

There opened a rift between the leaders of the movement, while it was in full swing. In fact, the campaign of vilification at this stage had told heavily on the course of this movement. Even Deshbandhu was not spared from this campaign of vilification. Certain glaring allegations were put forward against him by his opponents. He was alleged to have the motive to create friction between landlords and tenants. He had already been branded an earnest propounder of the Permanent Settlement. Moreover, his identity as a Brāhmaṇ had given scope to his detractors to complain that he wanted always to do away with Hindu shrines. Over and above, he was also accused of trying to take control of the shrine with an eye to the financial gain of his Swarājya Party. The allegation against him of taking fullest political advantage of this movement was not difficult as he was by then at the helm of affairs of the B.P.C.C, in which the Swarājya Party was dominant. To make his endeavour a success, he was thought to have been

instrumental in installing a *Mobānta* of his choice following the consequent removal of the incumbent. Deshbandhu was prompt to refute the allegations labelled against him. In his statement he argued: "I do not desire any friction between landlords and tenants. I have opposed the idea of such class war from public platforms. The question of the repeal of Permanent Settlement is an undesirable question to raise and in my opinion whatever steps are taken must be taken after the attainment of self-Government and even then only as a matter of agreement between landlords and tenants".

"I am not a *Brāhma*. I am a Hindu and I claim to be sincere. It is absolutely untrue that I want to take up Hindu shrines to finance my party. My point of view is the Hindu point of view. I want the shrines to be purified and reformed. I do not want to remove *Mobuntsbhip* but to have a devout *Mobunt* appointed, so that the service in the temple may be properly supervised and income applied to the good of the pilgrims and the locality by establishing such educational and charitable institutions as may be required for the good of the people. In my opinion this is not politics. But if it is so regarded I am not ashamed of it".

"Nor is it true that I want the *Mobuntsbhip* to go to some Bengali instead of Hindi-speaking gentleman. I do not wish to interfere in the slightest degree with the traditions of the particular sect to which the *Mobunt* belongs".\(^\text{86}\)

The whole situation had become somewhat tense with the rumour gaining momentum that a settlement had been arrived at, between C.R.Dās and the incumbent *Mobānta*. The *Mobānta* on his part was by then quite willing to initiate the process of settlement only if he was left with his absolute right over his own fortunes. He thought it wise to be a party to a settlement immediately, as he had no other choice in the given state of affairs. He was, however, not averse

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86. The Bengalee - 20.7.24, 6(4).
to the idea of the formation of a committee for management of the temple with its property worth a lakh of rupees\(^87\). Deshbandhu initially contradicted the report to this effect, published in the *Amrita Bāzār Patrikā*, but did not hesitate to rise to the occasion. He eventually published certain terms for a settlement. Accordingly, he pleaded for the abdication of Satishchandra Giri, the incumbent *Mobānta*, in favour of his Chelā Prabhātchandra Giri. The new *Mobānta* Prabhātchandra Giri would remain under the control of the committee vested with the power to, if necessary, remove him from the seat of the *Mobānta*. The properties with a net annual income of over Rs.30,000/- and the ever increasing income accruing from the temple offerings would be left in charge of the committee for the purpose of necessary charities. The other properties with a net annual income between Rs.25,000/- and Rs.32,000/- would be managed by the *Mobānta* Prabhātchandra Giri. The income would be utilised for the maintenance of whoever the *Mobānta* might be in future. The *Mobānta* would henceforward not claim any other sum for his maintenance. The *Mobāntas* from Prabhātchandra Giri onwards were proposed to be subservient to the scheme of management to be devised by the committee. It was also made clear in his terms for settlement that the committee should have the absolute right to take immediate possession and manage directly the properties vested with the *Mobānta* if he was found to be an oppressor to his tenants. The temple as well as the estate along with other properties would be considered as public properties, managed by the committee. Finally, C.R.Dās’s terms for settlement demanded that the worship of *Lakṣmī-Nārāyan Jīu* would have to be opened to the public at the earliest\(^88\).

However, *Swāmī* Satchidananda, the Commander of the movement, did not accept these terms for settlement. Not only he was completely against the

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appointment of Prabhātchandra Giri as the Mohānta but also was against the constitution of various committees on the ground that the Swarājyists would form a majority in them. The denial of the Swāmi to accept the terms for settlement stands for the fact that the local participants in the Satyagraha movement were becoming sceptical about the role of Deshbandhu C.R. Dās.

X

At last the day of reckoning dawned on Satishchandra Giri. He was ultimately compelled to announce his decision to abdicate in favour of his Chelā (disciple) Prabhātchandra Giri on 22 September, 1924. The police personnel were withdrawn from the gate of the Mohānta's palace (monastery) and none of the Satyagrahis were arrested thenceforward, after the monastery was declared as public property. The Satyagraha was, however, withdrawn on September 23, 1924 to make the terms of settlement effective. A meeting was arranged later on, at which Satishchandra Giri, in the presence of Deshbandhu and Swāmi Viswānanda, apologised to all for the harm he might have knowingly or unknowingly caused to them.

The announcement of his abdication of the Mohāntaship in favour of his Chelā Prabhātchandra Giri, however, facilitated the process of a compromise for the withdrawal of the Civil Suit pending in the District Court, Hooghly. It is to be mentioned here that one Dharanidhar Sinhāroy along with six others had already

89. Ibid. - 20.9.24, 4(6).


Also,
Narendranāth Bandopādhyāya – Tārakeswar Satyagraha Sangrām. PP.-52-56.

91. The Bengalee – 25.9.24, 5(7).

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filed a suit against the incumbent Mobānta. Nobody dared present himself as a witness against the Mobānta. But Śripati Hāzrā and Tīrthabāsī Sinhāroy were the only two persons who had the courage to stand against the Mobānta of the Tārakeswar Math at least in the initial phase\(^\text{92}\). Despite this development, a prayer had been made for the withdrawal of the Civil Suit immediately after the termination of the Satyāgraha movement.

It has been alleged in the ‘Satyāgrahas in Bengal’ (Chapter-IV) with reference to the Tārakeswar Satyāgraha that Dharanidhar Sinhāroy and seven others agreed to withdraw the Civil Suit by reason of a deed of compromise\(^\text{93}\). In fact, D. Sinhāroy was never a party to this deed of compromise which was agreed to between the Mobānta and the other six plaintiffs. Meanwhile, three persons claiming to be interested in the trust applied for being considered plaintiffs to the suit. The court added them as plaintiffs after notices were duly given to the defendant Mobānta and the original seven plaintiffs on 23.8.24\(^\text{94}\). These additional plaintiffs were from the Brāhman Sabbā which objected instantly to the compromise on several grounds.

Primarily, the Brāhman Sabbā was against the compromise as it was an endeavour to stifle judicial enquiry into the merits of several important questions. Moreover, they emphasised that the question already raised in the original suit could not be disposed of by virtue of a private adjustment, as it affected the orthodox Hindus in general. This compromise was also in no way satisfactory to them as it failed not only in the matter of ensuring the rights of the deity but was also not at par with existing laws and customs. The plaintiffs

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94. Serial No. of Order or Proceeding – 121. Date of order – 28.3.25.
were also of opinion that the terms of compromise were contradictory in character and, thereby, failed to create confidence in the devotees, in the matter of management of properties and other affairs of the temple. They even characterised as illusory, the nature of constitution of the proposed committee.\textsuperscript{95}

It will not be out of context to refer to the fact that the expenditure incurred by the \textit{Brāhman Sabhā} in relation to the suit, was made up by one Brojendra Kishore Roychowdhury of Gauripur, Mymensingh. He had incidentally contributed one \textit{lakh} of rupees with the desire to make the whole process a success.\textsuperscript{96}

The \textit{Brāhman Sabhā}, composed of mostly orthodox \textit{Brāhmins}, had pitted itself against the \textit{Satyagraha} movement. Initially, a few members of the \textit{Sabhā} were included in the committee formed by the B.P.C.C. But it resolved later on not to join and support the committee as it was in favour of dislodging the \textit{Mohānta} by legal means.\textsuperscript{97} It was always in favour of an appointment of a successor to Satishchandra Giri in accordance with the orthodox Hindu scriptures and traditions.\textsuperscript{98} The \textit{Sabhā} was completely against the implementation of the terms of settlement put forward by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Dās and formulated its own terms instead.

Accordingly, the \textit{Sabhā} argued in terms of ensuring the right of the public to have a \textit{darshan} of \textit{Lakṣmī-Nārāyan} whose \textit{sebā} and \textit{pūjā} should be in

\textsuperscript{95} Amrita Bāzār Patrikā – 12.3.25, 3(3).


\textsuperscript{97} Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā – 13.6.24, 3(3-4).

\textsuperscript{98} The Bengalee – 20. 7.24, 2(3).
accordance with the Shāstras. It was against allowing either Satishchandra Giri or his Chelā Prabhātchandra Giri to reside in the monastery at Tārakeswar after its legal categorisation as debutter.

It was not against the creation of a permanent Arbitration Committee. But it emphasised the point that the members of this committee should in no way be the members of the Managing Committee. It had incidentally put forward an exclusive list of eleven members who were to form the first Managing Committee. Besides, it had also made propositions regarding the composition of the Deb- Sebā Samiti. All the seven members of this committee were proposed to be orthodox Brāhmins, prominent in Hindu society. Finally, it argued in favour of installing, in accordance with the rules of the temple, a young Brabmachārī of commendable character in the office of the Mohānta. Hence, the deed of settlement was required to record clearly the rules relating to the appointment of the Mohānta.

The Brāhmaṇa Sabha exposed itself as a congregation of fanatics by virtue of its terms of settlement in this regard. Therefore, it was only natural that the Brāhmaṇa Sabha would create difficulty for the terms of settlement already arrived at the behest of Deshbandhu C.R. Dās from being effective.

However, the new plaintiffs of the Brāhmaṇa Sabha prayed before the District Court not only for the cancellation of the terms of settlement but also for the appointment of a Receiver. Swāmī Satchidananda also appealed, in the meantime, to the Government for the appointment of a Receiver to overcome the impasse. The court, in its judgement, ordered the appointment of a Receiver. Amulya Chandra Bhādurī was appointed as the Receiver and took charge of the


100. Ibid. – 18.2.25, 7(2).
temple as well as the monastery on 7 July 1925 by virtue of the order of the court. The aggrieved Mohnata was prompt in appealing to the High Court for an instant stay-order against the verdict of the District Court with reference to the appointment of the Receiver. Ultimately, the High Court in its judgement sanctioned the appointment of a Receiver exclusively for the debutter property.

XI

In spite of commendable organisational skill and activity, the Satyagraha movement in this place of pilgrimage lost much of its thrust simply because of the lack of human and material resources. Deshbandhu C.R. Das had become excessively eager to initiate at least an honourable settlement as he was getting very tired of the allegations made by his opponents. But his cherished objective was fulfilled in the long run with the exit of the corrupt regime of the Girl Mohnatas. In fact, the appointment of the Receiver changed the whole scenario and the Satyagraha movement ultimately lost much of its edge as a result of this appointment. This development, however, marked the beginning of a new era in the history of this place of pilgrimage in Eastern India.

There is no denying the fact that the Satyagraha movement launched under the leadership of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Netaji Subhäs Chandra Bose and

101. Ibid.- 10.7.25,3(4).

Also,


102. Serial Number of Order or Proceeding.-134. Date of order. – 9.7.25.


Swāmī Viswānanda to eradicate the evils associated with the Tārakeswar Math achieved the desired goal in the long run. The Title Suit No.28 of 1922 filed in the court of the District Judge, Hooghly challenging the rights of the Mohānta resulted in the verdict that the Math was a public-endowment. The Mohānta was allowed to remain as the executive head, functioning under the directions of the Managing Committee with its power to remove the Mohānta as and when needed.