



## **The political awareness and revolutionary gesture in Bihar**

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### **Abstract**

The political awareness in Bihar in the Pre-revolutionary era was not favourable for the growth of revolutionary movement. of-course, there existed some racial feeling, and frequent occurrences of famines and scarcity had caused immense hardship to the people, but there was not that keen sense of resentment which partition of Bengal and brought about among the Bengalis. On the contrary the educated Biharis engaged in the agitation for separation of Bihar from Bengal looked forward to the prospect of having a province of their own.

**Keywords:** awareness, revolutionary, gesture

### **Introduction**

This paper attempts to examine the political awareness and revolutionary gesture in Bihar. On the out break of the First World War the government apprehended that the revolutionaries might take advantage of the situation and their movement was likely to gather momentum. It did gather momentum in Bengal. But the government's assessment of the political feeling in Bihar, as recorded in their first fortnightly report of 1914 was that "notwith standing frothy talk and writing in time of peace, the educated Hindus are fully aware that their welfare is inseparably bound up with the continuance of British Rule".<sup>1</sup> In the 19th century there was a section of Muslim in Bihar which was deeply engaged in the promotion of Indo-Turkish Collaboration on large scale.<sup>2</sup> The Kanpur Mosque episode of 1913 had greatly wounded the Muslim feeling in Bihar.<sup>3</sup> Maulana Mazharul Haque, the leader of the Kanpur Mosque agitation, visited constantinople in 1914 on his way back from England and he was reported to have associated himself closely with the Pan-Islamic movement there.<sup>4</sup>

It is true that in the beginning the revolutionaries of Bengal hesitated in taking Muslim members in their organisation<sup>5</sup>, but at a subsequent period when they approached the Wahabis for support they did not succeed. As a matter of fact the government had, in view of the strong anti British attitude of the Wahabis, cautioned the local authorities against "the possibility of revolutionaries joining up with the Wahabis and using the latter for their own purposes."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Gandhiji had asked his co-workers in Champaran to work with undivided attention so long as his mission had not been fulfilled there. They were prevented from taking interest even in the Home Rule League movement sponsored by the Indian National Congress. Later the Khilafat and Non-co-operation Movement assumed more prominence in the political life of the province.

Despite its unfavourable political atmosphere Bihar's strategic importance, however, necessitated the establishment of some revolutionary centres here to provide the necessary link between Bengal and the Punjab, the two very prominent centres of revolutionary organisation. The government too was not unmindful of it, for in confidentially note, dated 12 August 1916, W. Booth-Gravelly remarked

that "it is too much to hope that Bihar will remain free from the taint of sedition that affects her two neighbours."<sup>7</sup> Indeed there existed in Bihar some non-Bihari elements susceptible to revolutionary feelings. They were the domiciled Bengali, Maharastrians and Punjabis. Gradually the Bihari students were also drawn to the movement. The movement actually started in Bihar and Bengal at about the same time.

In the earliest phase it veered round the activities of the trio consisting of Dr. J. N. Mitra, Kedar Nath Banerji and Babaji Thakur Das. Their link with Bengal revolutionaries is, however, not very clear. The Banaras Anushilan Samiti under the overall supervision of Rash Behari Basu was perhaps the first revolutionary organisation which tried to extend its activities to Bihar students. Raghubir Prasad Singh and Ram Krishna Pathak were amongst the earliest Bihari recruits. Raghubir was the first Bihari to be tried under the Defence of India Rules. But for various reasons the Banaras Anushilan Samiti had limited success. Real credit for organising the Bihari students for revolutionary work goes to the Dacca Anushilan Samiti. With its provincial headquarters at Bhagalpur it soon spread its network to almost all the district head quarters of Bihar. There is, of course the single instance of Kanyakubja group in Bhagalpur but caste considerations did not influence the movement in the least. If there were high caste Hindu boys in the movement there were also boys belonging to the lower order of the society. The leader of Dhanraj Sharma's group in Patna was a Kurmi or Koiri by caste. Sukhdeo Pasi of Monghyr town was another important member of the organisation who was sentenced to me internment and was ordered not to attend his classes for six months. There were also some Halwais and Dusadhs in the movement. It is really a very significant matter, particularly in the context of Bihar's political life where political consciousness had been allowed to grow on caste line.

But the Bengali organisers of revolutionary movement very well knew that without the active support of the children of the soil the movement could not make much headway in Bihar. They were naturally very anxious to enlist the support of Bihar students. The following extract from the statement of Rash Bihari Lal, a student of T.N.J. College,

dated 29 March 1917, makes this point very clear, "Rebati frequently talked about the mother land and exhorted me to emulate the students of Bengal. He frequently told me that there is no strong public opinion in Bihar and there are no political leaders. He always told me that we should always be ready to laydown our lives for the sake of the mother country.... In short, he told me that we Biharis should do the same word as is done by the anarchists in Bengal. He pointed out to me that it is not possible for Bengalis to work in Bihar. They (Bengalis) can only educate and instruct the Biharis...."8

Bihar has played a major and significant role in India in the sphere of politics and culture from the beginning of Indian History. Its political and cultural heritage is immorable no doubt. Likewise after coming of the Britishers and their political establishment in India, Bihar has also major role in politics from pre-mutiny to the early two decades of 20th century.

Bihar, with its rich mineral resources and the valuable legacy that history has bequeathed to its people, is almost certainly one of the most fascinating and interesting state of India. As a state paradoxically rich and poor at the same time, where the process of non-performance and inaction has now been stemmed and happily reversed in every sector of national contribution during the period from the earliest period. It occupies an important position on the national map of India. An attempt has been made here to deal with and uncover that aspect role of early revolutionary gesture in Bihar particularly from mutiny to the national movement in the 20th century.

The period under discussion for the research work, Bihar had no important place in administrative structure of British India. Bihar was a part of Bengal Presidency till 1912. After that Bihar was separated from Bengal and Orissa, it became independent administrative unit of British India till 1936. After 1936 Orissa became separate state from Bihar. Though Bihar was not separate state but Bihar and its people maintained the separate identity and independent existence in political history of India from the very beginning of the British Rule in India.

### Conclusion

This proposed work aimed at giving a detailed account of the early revolutionary and political awareness or consciousness in Bihar which began in the wake of mutiny and partition of Bengal in 1905. In this work it has been tried to discuss throughly in this connection on the subject which is not existed till now. What actually it has been struken to me most was the significant observation of the Indian sedition committee that the movement only slightly affected the people of Bihar and Orissa.

Their efforts did make some headway in that direction too. In his detailed report on the Dacca Anushilan Samiti's activities in Bihar, dated 18 January 1918, E. L. Marriott, noted that after a brief period of inactivity in Bankipur, in 1917 "a Bihari student is the present leader, the post boxes and retreats for absconders exist and that the party are in possession of revolvers....."9 But the local members had hardly consolidated their position and made any very great progress when the police got wind of the organisation and nipped it rather in the bud. The seeds, however, had not been sown on a barren land, and they sprouted with the advent of a more favourable season. Phani Bhushan Ghosh of Bettiah and Ram Binod Singh of Saran who had been

released on the proclamation of the general amnesty, became the leaders of the recrudescant revolutionary movement in Bihar.

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