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Research Paper

Students' Movement in Bihar During the Freedom Struggle (1906-41)

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ABSTRACT

This paper locates the role of students in Bihar from 1920 to 1941 during the freedom struggle which has been be ignored. It was during the period of freedom struggle in India that the student's movement was taking its roots in various parts of Bihar. They continued their participation in the political movement till they achieved victory in the freedom struggle of India.

Keywords: *Student, Bihar, Freedom Struggle, Conferences, Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience*

For the mentioned topic the Research Methodology used to collect primary and secondary resource is historical method. Collection of information is a vital part in historical approach and past work over this topic can be systematically arranged by the previous work done by the researchers. So basically, historical method would be the most appropriate approach of doing this research work.

After the end of the first world war, Mahatma Gandhi set on the platform searching his mind for a plan of action. He was looking for the programme and then for a word that would be a like a slogan and a perfect summary of the programme, "Non-co-operation".[1] Non-cooperation became the name of an epoch in the life of India. Gandhiji had a unique capacity to move the mass and great unprecedented excitement and enthusiasm all over the country.[2] The principle of the non-co-operation was also adopted by the Central Khilafat Committee. The movement was formally started on the 1st of August, 1920, a day also removable for the death of Tilak. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi changed the outlook of the Congress. Like the people of other provinces in India, the lawyers, doctors, professors, politicians, students and the common people of Bihar joined in large in the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movement.

Whenever Mahatma Gandhi launched a movement, the students of Bihar took part vigorously. Of great significance from the point of view of education generally was the influence exerted upon the students by non-cooperation doctrine. Thus, the boycott of educational institutions was pursued in a vigorously aggressive fashion.[3] The students of Bihar had established a union, named Bihari Student's Conference in 1906. Rajendra Prasad took a prominent part and its first meeting was held in same year at Patna College Hall under

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the presidency of Sir Safaruddin, Bar-at-Law.[4] This organisation presented a high ideal before the students. The prominent leaders of the country took a lot of interest in its activities. Among them were Sri Safaruddin, Hasan Imam, Deep Narayan Singh, Sachchidanand Sinha, Rajendra Prasad, Prof. Jadunath Sarkar, Mazhrul Haque and Brajkishor Prasad from this province. Mahatma Gandhi, Anne Bassant C.F. Andrews, Sarojini Naidu and Sarla Devi presided the Conferences organised by the students.

Thus, under the able guidance of these leaders, the meetings of the students were held in several districts and thousands of them joined the Non-cooperation Movement. From 28th to 29th August, 1920, the meeting of Bihar Provincial Congress Committee was held at Bhagalpur. At the same time on 28th August, the 4th anniversary meeting of Bihar Students' Association Bhagalpur was celebrated under the Presidentship of Rajendra Prasad.[6] Rajendra Prasad had unique capacity to organise the students. Bhagalpur was the centre for these activities.[7] The principles of non-co-operation was adopted in this meeting and Viceroy's recall of resolution was reiterated. Mazharul Haque and eight others with-drew from the election for the council. Three students, Saiyed Mohammad Sher of Patna College, Abdul Bari and Mohammed Saqui of Bihar National College took prominent part in the Khilafat agitations. They were sent in requests to their principal to remove their name from the Resister of their college. Another meeting of the Bihar Students' Conference was held on 10th to 11th October, 1920, at Deltenganj. This meeting was presided over by C.F. Andrews of Bolpure and about one thousand students were reported to have been present at the meeting.[9] Barister R.K.L. Nandkhuliyar of Patna appealed through the *Searchlight* to the students to participate in the non-cooperation movement of 10th October, 1920.[10] Mazharul Haque, Chandravanshi Sahay and many of the prominent persons attended this conference and the resolutions were passed in favour of the Central and district students Association. Thus, the non-cooperation agitation was being vigorously prosecuted among the students of Bihar. The technique of the movement included boycott of foreign goods, withdrawal of pupils from Government school and the discouragement of enlistment in the Army service outside India.

According to the official view the non-cooperation movement had not made much progress, but it was stimulated when Mahatma Gandhi arrived at Patna on 1st December, 1920. Gandhiji made a hurried tour of Bihar, in the course of which he delivered speeches at several places. He visited Bhagalpur and Monger and at these places he had rather more success than elsewhere.[11] According to the report dated 12th December, 1920, of the Director of Public Instructions, Bihar and Orissa it appeared that the non-cooperation movement hitherto made little progress in schools and colleges outside Patna and Tirhut Divisions. But in fact, many students of school and colleges appeared to have left their institutions to take part in the struggle for independence. Many students of different schools and colleges had left their studies. In Chotanagpur seven students has been struck off the roll of the Ranchi Zila School for continued absence. At Godda High School a teacher forwarded an application for his son that his name should be withdrawn from the roll-on account of the injustice of the British Government. Both teacher and son were dismissed by the Managing Committee. At Patna College, three or four students had withdrawn and one subordinate teacher and a professor resigned. At Bihar National College twenty-six students withdrew their names by 22nd November, 1920. At the Bihar School of Engineering fifteen students withdraw their name in November, but six of them changed their minds.[12] According to the Government report, about thirty student withdrew their names at G.B.B. College Muzaffarpur. The Headmaster of Bagaha Middle School played an important role in the movement and a teacher of Hazipur High School with thirty-four students withdrew from the school. The impact of the movement was seen at Narthbrook Zila School Darbhanga and Western School Madhubani, took.

According to the Government report about forty students joined non-cooperation movement from T.N.J. College, Bhagalpur.[13]

The students of Bhagalpur played an important role under the leadership of great liberal leader Deep Narayan Singh. On 22nd November, 1920, they held a meeting to discuss the problem relating to non-cooperation at the residence of his house on Saturday on the subject of Non-cooperation and the desirability of their leaving the college. He told them that they should leave the college only for as a sacrifice without any idea of going to the newly started national college. Non-cooperation, at present, he said was meant only for a sacrifice. And if they thought that they would go to a national college as soon as they left the college supported by the government, they were wholly mistaken. Students must realise their own responsibility and obligation while leaving the college.[14] After Gandhijee's visit to Tirhut a number of students had left schools. Seven students had withdrawn from the Muzaffarpur Zila School before the end of November. But report of Bihar and Orissa 1919-1920 mentioned that the rural population took very little interest in the campaign.[15] Like other provinces, a considerable number of national schools and colleges were also founded in Bihar.

The number of national institutions was 442 in Bihar and Orissa.[16] A national school had been established at Hajipur during the march of Mahatma Gandhi in Bihar in December, 1920. A national school was started at Nawada in the district of Gaya. Another national school was running at Bakarganj Mohalla in Bankipur. It was aided by Khilafat fund. Its inauguration was completed by Acharya Kripalani.[17] The students, who had left their schools and colleges managed to live together with the students of Bihar School of Engineering at Sadakat Ashram, near Deegha in Patna. Mazharul Haque was the superintendent of the Ashram. He came to join these youth friends by leaving his magnificent house situated at Frazer Road, Patna.[18] At that time, Rajendra Prasad was the member of the senate and the syndicate of the Patna University. He resigned both the posts.[19] Many of the patriot teachers resigned from the government schools and colleges and joined the national institutions. Rajendra Prasad and other leaders thought in such national colleges.[20] Thus the teaching on government schools and colleges was started along with establishment of national institutions. The students were interested not only in the boycott of the schools and colleges but also in the constructive works of the Congress. When Deep Narayan Singh was making an intensive tour in the interior of Bhagalpur district on bullock carts for establishing Congress Committee, and collecting Tilak Swaraj Fund, he was greatly helped by Shashinath Kant, a B.A final Honours students of T.N.J. College. All of them visited Madhepura, a subdivisional headquarter town of north Bhagalpur, and stayed with Rajidshore Choudhary for a number of days and laid the foundation of the Indian National Congress in that area.[21]

The meeting of Indian National Congress at Gaya in December, 1922 added a new dimension to the history of the Indian National Movement in the province of Bihar. C.R. Das arrived on 21st December, 1922 along with Hakim Ajmal Khan and Motilal Nehru. When the session opened, various other organisations also held their meeting. The meeting of the all Indian Conference of Students opened on 27th December, 1922 in the Ulema Pandal.[22] But the British Government was hard pressed and decided to take repressive measures. By the end of 1921 all-important leaders except Mahatma Gandhi were behind the bars. The congress and the Khilafat volunteer organisation were declared unlawful. The working committee had permitted each province to start civil-disobedience. Before mass civil disobedience was started there was a case of mob violence at Chauri Chaura and at Gandhiji insistence such

movement was dropped. In November 1922 Kamal Pasha came to power in Turkey and Kaliphate was abolished. Khilafat Movement in India also lost momentum.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that the Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movement was a total failure. It contributed to an awakening of students. In January 1925 at Patna, Purnea, Muzaffarpur, Saran, Madhubani and Hazribagh campaigns in support of Khadder were organised. Attempts were made to make to learning of spinning compulsory in primary schools. [23] When the Autum session of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council opened at Ranchi on 29th August, 1927, a resolution was moved by Babu Girindra Mohan Mishra recommending that immediate steps be taken to make arrangements for military training of students in all secondary schools and to appoint a committee for making the necessary rules and prescribing the syllabus.[24] Rai Badadur Dwarkanath, Baldav Sahay and Mishra Narayan Singh strongly supported it. But Mr. Faucus, Director of Public Instruction, opposed the motion on the ground of expense and pointed out that it would not be possible to impart military training to boys at tender age in school. [25]

The period of 1928 was most eventful in the history of student movement in Bihar. Under the dynamic leadership of Deep Narayan Singh, a debate was held in March, 1928 at T.N.J. College Hall to discuss the contemporary events. The subject of the debate was "students and politics". Most of the students and members of the staff including the principal Mr. S. Sen took part in the debate. The debate opened with a fervent and eloquent speech delivered by Satya Murti Verma of third year who advocated the view that students should take part not only in academic discussion of political subjects but should also actively participate in political work. [28] After the long discussion among the students and the teachers, Deep Narayan Singh closed the proceeding with an eloquent speech. He said that politics unfortunately came to be known in India as anti-government politics. Various politics had grown amongst Indian politicians. The students could not be expected, for lack or training and experience to decide which party should receive their support. Thus, those who sincerely desired to pay an honorable part in this conduct, must be trained physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually for the noble task.[27]

There is no doubt that leftist ideas were influencing Indian minds in certain quarters, particularly the student's community, who besides organising their own conferences also established the youth leagues. The All-India Youth Conference and the Socialist Youth Congress was held in Calcutta on 25th to 27th December,1928. This conference was attended by the national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose.[28] The growth of socialism in the Soviet Union and Europe attracted the Indian youth and many students came under the influence of new radical ideas.[29] The students of Bihar were also influenced by these developments. The twenty first session of the Bihar Students' Conference was held at Motihari on Sunday the 4th October, 1928. But the unavoidable absence of Prof. Vaswani, the President elect, owing to illness, the address was read to audience by Rajendra Prasad. He had recently returned from Europe and endeavoured to stimulate "Youth Movement."[30] While addressing the students Rajendra Prasad said:
"I love the students. I have the youth. I have faith in them. The nation of tomorrow is being made not in we paper resolution of our conferences and councils but in the deep, silent resolves of the same among the students of to-day."[31]

During the session the Bihar Youth League had come into existence. Its aim and organisation were described by its Secretary Prof. Gyan Saha in November 1928 in these words:

"The association should aim to imparting to the members ideas of purity and simplicity, fearlessness, equality, fraternity, dignity of labour and discipline. Any person, male or female, who is above 18 years of age and who believes in the ideal of the complete independences of India, who were Khadi, does not observe touch ability and is not a member of any communal organisation, is entitled to be a member of the League".[32]

On 10th April, 1929 Prof. Gyan Saha issued another appeal exhorting the youth to celebrate the "First Youth Day" on the 14th April next.[33] The Patna Youth League celebrated its second anniversary on the 22nd September, 1929.[34] The Bihar Youth Conference met at Monger on the 12th December, 1929. In the absence of Subhas Chandara Bose, Pandit Prajapati Misra presided over it. He spoke with great emphasis on the use of Khaddar by young men. One of the resolutions adopted by the conference proclaimed that "India's goal is nothing but independence".[35]

Thus, since 1928 the agitation of students developed rapidly as a mass movement in Bihar for freedom struggle. By the end of 1929 there was an irresistible urge all around for independence. With the inauguration of civil-disobedience movement, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, 1930 proved to be one of the most eventful years in the history of our country. In Bihar the Provincial Congress Committee issued on the 20th January, 1930, the programme for the celebration of the Independence Day on the 26th January, 1930. The student joined in large numbers, and many municipal buildings all over India hoisted the National Flag on the Independence Day. In February 1930, an attempt was made to start a branch of the youth Sangh in Bihar in which the students of National College took prominent part. The subdivisional officers of Bihar were asked by the authorities to "Keep an eye on the youth" regarding this matter.[36] Since 1931, the movement took a progressive turn. The 24th session of' the Bihar Student's Conference was held at Arrah. Due to absence of the elected president, Munshi Iswar Sharan of Allhahabad, Prof. S. Mahani of Banaras Hindu University, read the presidential address. Most of the congressmen of the district of Sahabad attended the conference. Twenty-three resolutions were passed, all of which excepting the first two dealt with educational matters. The first called upon every student to serve his country by using Swadeshi Cloth, and the district and other branch association to draw a programme of work providing opportunities to the students to come in contact with the villagers for educating them in mattes like untouchability, boycott of intoxicating drugs, all liquors and foreign cloths and evil of communalism.[37]

But soon a dynamic change came in the history of National Movement as well students' struggle. Emergence of various political ideas in the arena of freedom struggle, ended the control of one particular political group. Socialist group, Forward Block, Muslim League, Leftists and Progressive Writers Association influenced the growing educated youth all intelligentsia by their own thought and theory. No doubt, unfortunately, communalism spread over the country vigorously, Unlike Non-cooperation, civil-disobedience did not leave a strong impression on the literary world, which was marked by growing disillusionment with Gandhian rigidities and a search of more radical ways.[38] While in the Soviet Union, Stalin was amending a new constitution for Soviet Citizen in 1936, the greatest Hindu writer Prem Chand was presenting his famous novel 'Godan' for the Indian people. It was a stark reality of peasant misery, reflecting the Gandhian idealism, was a bitter critique of the capitalist profit motive with appreciation of the Soviet experiment.[39] Prem Chand presided over the first session of the Progressive Writers Association in Lucknow in April, 1936, another leading figures, who influenced these ideas were Hasrat Mohani, Josh Malihabadi, Firaq Gorakpuri, Krishna Chandar and Sajiad Zahir. In the Lucknow Session of the All-India

Students' Conference in 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his radical view. He exhorted the students to make themselves worth to keep the torch of struggle for freedom alight and ready to be handed down by the present generation.[40] On the same stage, the president of the conference M.A. Jinnah addressed that he would not mind a revolution, even bloodshed, if it brought self-government within 24 hours.[41] He exhorted students to cultivate toleration and fellow feelings and thereby to minimise regrettable differences and pave the way for the ultimate goal of independences.[42]

Thus after 1930 different political parties began to mobilize students for propagating their political ideology and social goal. Apart from the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha, the radical parties like the Communist and Socialist started their separate wing for the students and youths. Soon the student movement became pluralistic in character. Muslim League has its axe to grind. All India Muslim Students' Conference met at Patna on the 29th December, 1938. It was inaugurated by Jinnah and presided over by the Raja of Mahmudabad. Muhammad Ali Jinnah observed that there were three forces in the country the British, the states and the Congress. The time had now come to give a battle to all these forces and the sooner young men, made up their minds to do so, the better for them. [43] In this conference Jinnah was highly critical of the Congress. He said that young men had been deluded into believing that the Congress fought for the freedom of the country and the masses, and the Congress would turn the country into a land of milk and honey. But not it was amply evident that the Congress said one thing and meant another. He strongly repudiated the various changes and criticism levelled against him, such as being a communalist, a fanatic and ally of imperialism, seeking personal gratification in the face of the gravity of the problems facing the people, especially the Muslims.[44] Concluding, Jinnah appealed to young men not to be deluded, but to assert themselves and be prepared for sacrifices for the advancement of the community and the freedom of the country.[45]

The Muslim students of Bihar celebrated the Muslim League Day on 5th February and Palestine Day on the 9th February, 1939. They sent telegrams to the British Prime Minister demanding restriction of Jewish immigration of Palestine and the establishment of an Arab National Government there.[46] The conference of the Bihar Provincial Muslim League was held at Patna on the 12th March, 1939. A resolution was passed that the Muslim League would "start civil disobedience against the Government if the latter introduced the Wardha scheme in the province. Number of investigating committees toured the country on behalf of the league, and collected data which they published as charged against the congress Government which were not, however, substantiated.[47] The Bihar Congress Ministry, as the Congress Government in the other provinces, issued suitable replies to these and held that they were just in all respects to the minority community.

National leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru strove to end the growing rift in the student movement and stressed the need of unity and national feeling among the students. On 2nd January, 1939 at the fourth session of the All India Students' Conference he said, "you must come to their clear decision that the students' movement must be broad based and must not an any account become sectarian."[48]

The second annual conference of the Bihar Muslim Students' Federation was held on 22nd December, 1940. This conference was presided over by Prof. Gulam Imam of City Muslim College, Lucknow. He advised the students regulated their lives on the lines of the Islamic injunctions. Referring to the Pakistan scheme, he pointed out that the Muslim did not want to

set up a state owned by them but only wanted to get a parcel of land where the Islamic laws could have sway.[49]

The radical parties, meanwhile strove to create base among the students. They began to organize separate wing of students of their respective parties. The Leftist commented adversely on the insistence of the spinning wheel in the independence pledge and did not consider it as part of the constructive programme. The leaders like Jai Prakash Narayan expressed a new radical programme, and stressed the need of labour and peasant's organisation in Bihar. Subhas Chandra Bose had his own opinion. He visited Patna on the 15th January, 1940 and addressed two largely attended meetings in which he exhorted the audience to join the Forward Block and celebrate Independence Day in a fitting manner.[50] Communist student leaders like Ashraf Ali and Sunil Mukherjee were arrested for their radical ideas. Asraf Ali was arrested at Patna on the 19th March, 1940 and detained in the Hazaribagh Jail under the Defence of India Rule. Sunil Mukharjee was arrested at Giridih on 12th March, 1940.[51] The authorities of the educational institutions also took strong disciplinary steps against the students' leaders for organising strikes on the Independence Day. The Monger District Students' Conference was held at Begusarai on the 3rd February, 1940. Rahul Sankritayana was in the chair and the Chief speaker was Subhash Chandra Bose. Several resolutions were passed and in one of the resolutions the students were congratulated for their worthy conduct on the Independence Day.[52]

When on the 8th February, 1940, Jai Prakash Narayan was arrested under the Defence of India Rules, for a speech delivered at Jamshedpur, the students of Bihar protested against this action variously. *The Searchlight* described it as a "challenge to the Nation.[53] Even the moderate paper, *The Indian Nation,* called it "an unimaginative step."[54] A public meeting of protest was held at Patna.

The Bihar Students' Conference met at Darbhanga on 27th and 28th April, 1940. This conference was presided over by Maquimuddin Faruqi, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the All-India Students' Federation Conference, which was a radical organisation of students. The objects of the students' Federation included "the safeguarding of the students' rights and the development of political consciousness" among the.[55] Local Students Federations in different districts were also increasing in number. The Federation was dominated by the Communist Group. But sometime Congress leaders also took parts in it. When the district student Federation met at Arrah on the 13th to 14th April, 1940, Anugraha Narayan Sinha addressed it on the first day and asked the audience to work according to the instructions of Mahatma Gandhi. On second day it was addressed by Shri Krishna Sinha who gave sound advice to the students.[56]

The General Secretary of the Bihar Students' Federation Narayan Prasad Verma was convicted in July 1940, on the charge of possession a "prescribed leaflet". But this did not dampen the spirit of the students. They were determined to launch wider agitation against the repressive measures of the Government by organising hartals, strikes, rallies and other demonstrations. A Youth League Conference was held at Laherisaria on the 18th August, at which a resolution was passed rejecting any compromise with British imperialism. When the Secretary of the Provincial Students' Federation Chandra Sekhar Singh was arrested under Defence of India Rule on 4th December, the students of Patna observed hartal in the college, as the protest against it, on 5th December, 1940.[57]

In January 1941, a procession of students was followed by a meeting in front of the Patna University Library at which a resolution was passed, condemning the arrest of Achutanand Prasad, President of the Gaya District Student's Federation. Sahabad Students' Conference met on the 12th to 13th April under the presidentship of Abdul Bari. He made a special appeal to the students to maintain unity among themselves and to promote Hindu-Muslim harmony.[58] Surajpura Students' conference was also held on the 13th April with Krishna Mohan Verma in the chair. This conference adopted two very important resolutions regarding constructive work and Hindu-Muslim unity.[59] During the first half of April 1941, a district students' conference was held at Madhubani with Ram Brikish Benipuri in the chair. On the 22nd August, 1941 the open session of the Second Bihar Students' Conference was held under the presidentship of Mazhar Ali Khan of Punjab. In this conference the president said that the student movement should have an independent character of its own and it should not be under the control of one particular political group. He appealed to the Students to contribute towards the formation of a new social order for freedom, peace and progress.[60]

A vast body of students assembled on the 23rd August 1941, to listen to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's inaugural speech on the Calcutta Conference, held under the auspices of the Bihar Provincial Students' Conference, Shri P.R. Das, Bar-at-Law, was in the chair. Dr. Radhakrishnan exhorted the students to cultivate humanity and tolerance. He very significantly observed "what is wrong with the world today is not that we lack intellectual and moral achievements. We lack a sense of direction in the system with which we can adjust these achievements."[61]

There appeared for divisions in the ranks of the students, such as the Royist group, M.L. Saha's group, the Forward Block group and the Communists, due largely to the influence of the leaders of different groups who were trying to organise them according to their own ideas. There were, however, some students, who sincerely tried to put an end to internal factions and preparations continued for holding the seventh annual session of the All India Students' Federation at Patna on 27th December, 1941. In inaugurating it Anugraha Narayan Sinha explained to the students their duties to the motherland laying special emphasis on the need of following Mahatma Gandhi's Constructive programme. He appealed to students individually. He said, "Every one of you can make your life better and nobler and the thus equipped to take your proper place in the world of tomorrow.[62] In this session several resolutions were passed on national unity, unity among the students, political situation and the war. The resolution on the war maintained that it had not changed its imperialistic character and called upon the students to work for a new order in which was would be impossible and exploitation of man by men and of nation by nation would cease.[63] To annihilate the communalism among the students the president, Meher Ali, advised students to make friends with students of all communities.[64]

The Faruqui Section of the All India Students' Federation held their session at Patna on the 31st December, 1941. This conference considered that the character of the war had changed after Russia's entry into it. They passed a resolution for unconditional support to war. Their other resolution included recognition of India's right to independence, release of all political prisoners and withdrawal of war time repressive legislation.[65]

CONCLUSION

Thus by 1941, the student's movement has lost its monolithic character and it had become highly heterogeneous in nature. The student's movement, in fact, reflected the growing political polarisation of the political scene of the country in general and of Bihar in particular.

The British ruling elite sought to suppress the student's movement by taking recourse to various repressive legislature like the Defence of India Rules. However, in spite of the restriction on the civil liberties of the students, the growing flame of liberty among the younger generation could not be extinguished. Soon students of Bihar took prominent part in the political activities during the Quit India Movement of 1942.

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