

Indian National Congress and Its impacts on Bihar

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Subject: History

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Abstract

The growing of political consciousness among the Indians was marked by the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

Bihar, the ancient land of Buddha and Mahavir has witnessed golden period of Indian history. It is the same land where the seeds of the first republic were sown and which cultivated the first crop of democracy. Such fertile is the soil that has given birth to in numerous intellectuals which spread the light of knowledge and wisdom not only in the country but in the whole world. The state has its capital at Patna, which is situated on the bank of the holy river Ganga. The state as it is today has been shaped from its partition from the province of Bengal and most recently called as Jharkhand.

Introduction:

The foundation of congress warmly welcomed in India. In Bihar the beginning of the modern political consciousness can be trace from the early days of the congress the enthusiastic persons were attracted by the Congress.

In the Calcutta session total no. of delegates were 434. While Bihar was represented by Nand Kishore Lal, Syed Sharfuddin, Narayan Mehta, Gajadhar Prasad, Bisheshwar Singh, Rajeshwari Prasad Singh.

The middle class played a significant and inspiring role in mobilising the masses in favour of the Congress and it was mainly due to its earnest efforts that the Congress got victory with absolute majority in the provincial elections of 1937. The role of the leaders coming from the middle class was remarkable in the propaganda against the War Policy of the British. Their contribution was highly commendable in making the session of the Ramgarh Congress and the Satyagraha Camp at Sonapur a success by participating and mobilising the masses to attend these two occasions. The Individual Civil Disobedience was mainly a movement by chosen leaders coming, in most cases, from the middle class. The Quit India Movement was a mass movement. But it was the middle class which played the leading

role in educating and preparing the masses for this irresistible mass upsurge against the British imperialism. Besides, the members of the middle class, who remained outside the prison bars, played the role of a guiding force in this movement. Students, mainly college students, remained in the vanguard. It is because of this fact that this movement is called as a movement of students. The underground revolutionary movement was carried on under the leadership of Jai Prakash Narayan, a member of the educated middle class. Besides him there were others belonging to the different groups of the middle class who played marvelous role in this movement. After 1943, the leaders coming from the middle class played a commendable role in the national movement and political development leading to the attainment of independence in 1947. Besides, the middle class of Bihar played an important role in making successful observance of hartals, Independence Day and other national occasions. They organised meetings at which demands were made for the release of national leaders. Indian nationalism has not been a mere political phenomenon. It aimed not only at securing political freedom of the country from the alien domination but also sought to affect a potent socio-economic revolution. And it was the enthusiastic and persistent efforts of the middle class that charged the masses with consciousness for successful consummation of a creative and constructive revolution. From the Non-Cooperation to Independence constructive programmes, which stood for production and use of khadi, establishment of Panchayats, removal of untouchability, establishment of national schools and consolidation of the Congress Organisation, were carried on under the guidance of the leaders belonging to the middle class of Bihar.

In the early days of the Congress there used to be a great deal of enthusiasm in Bihar about the foundation of the Congress and a large number of delegates, used to attend the session. But, there was no any platform for political activities in Bihar. The leader of the Bihar realized that a political association should be formed in Bihar to carry on the policies and programme of the congress. This Political consciousness led to the foundation of Bihar Provincial Committee.

In year of 1912 is very significant in history of Bihar. In this year Bihar was separated from Bengal. It was a result of popular movement "Bihar for Biharee". The several factors contributed to the separation of Bihar from Bengal i.e. social-economic, political and educational etc.

During most of British India, Bihar was a part of the Presidency of Bengal, and was governed from Calcutta. As such, this was a territory very much dominated by the people of Bengal. All leading educational and medical centres were in Bengal. In spite of the unfair advantage that Bengalis

possessed, some sons of Bihar rose to positions of prominence, by dint of their intelligence and hard labour. One such was Rajendra Prasad, native of Ziradei, in the district of Saran. He became the first President of the Republic of India.

When separated from the Bengal Presidency in 1912, Bihar and Orissa comprised a single province. Later, under the Government of India Act of 1935, the Division of Orissa became a separate province; and the Province of Bihar came into being as an administrative unit of British India. At Independence in 1947, the State of Bihar, with the same geographic boundary, formed a part of the Republic of India, until 1956. At that time, an area in the south-east, predominantly the district of Purulia was separated and incorporated into West Bengal as part of the Linguistic Reorganization of Indian States.

Champaran Satyagraha was the India's first civil disobedience movement. Resurgence in the history of Bihar came during the struggle for India's independence. It was from Bihar that Mahatma Gandhi launched his civil-disobedience movement, which ultimately led to India's independence.

Champaran is a district in the state of Bihar. Under Colonial era laws, many tenant farmers were forced to grow some indigo on a portion of their land as a condition of their tenancy. This indigo was used to make dye. The Germans had invented a cheaper artificial dye so the demand for indigo fell. Some tenants paid more rent in return for being let off having to grow indigo. However, during the First World War the German dye ceased to be available and so indigo became profitable again. Thus many tenants were once again forced to grow it on a portion of their land- as was required by their lease. Naturally, this created much anger and resentment.

At the persistent request of a farmer, Raj Kumar Shukla, from the district of Champaran, in 1917 Gandhiji took a train ride to Motihari, the district headquarters of Champaran. Here he learned, first hand, the sad plight of the indigo farmers suffering under the oppressive rule of the British. Alarmed at the tumultuous reception Gandhiji received in Champaran, the British authorities served notice on him to leave the Province of Bihar. Gandhiji refused to comply, saying that as an Indian he was free to travel anywhere in his own country. For this act of defiance he was detained in the district jail at Motihari. From his jail cell, with the help of his friend from South Africa days, C. F. Andrews, Gandhiji managed to send letters to journalists and the Viceroy of India describing what he saw in Champaran, and made formal demands for the emancipation of these people. When produced in court, the Magistrate ordered him released, but on payment of bail. Gandhiji refused to pay the bail. Instead, he indicated his preference to remain in jail under arrest. Alarmed at the huge response Gandhiji was receiving from the

people of Champaran, and intimidated by the knowledge that Gandhiji had already managed to inform the Viceroy of the mistreatment of the farmers by the British plantation owners, the magistrate set him free, without payment of any bail. This was the first instance of the success of civil-disobedience as a tool to win freedom. The British received, their first “object lesson” of the power of civil-disobedience. It also made the British authorities recognize, for the first time, Gandhiji as a national leader of some consequence. What Raj Kumar Shukla had started, and the massive response people of Champaran gave to Gandhiji, catapulted his reputation throughout India. Thus, in 1917, began a series of events in a remote corner of Bihar, which ultimately led to the freedom of India in 1947.

Shaheed Baikuntha Shukla was another nationalist from Bihar, who was hanged for murdering a government approver named Phanindranath Ghosh. This led to the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. Phanindranath Ghosh hitherto a key member of the Revolutionary Party had betrayed the cause by turning an approver and giving evidence, which led to his murder. Baikunth was commissioned to plan the murder of Ghosh. He carried out the killing successfully on 9 November 1932. He was arrested, tried, convicted, and, on 14 May 1934, he was hanged in Gaya Central Jail.

Role of Peasants in Bihar: Under the guidance of their leaders, Kisans played a significant role in the struggle for freedom from the foreign yoke. Thus we see that the middle class in Bihar played a significant role in India's struggle for freedom. Among the various components of the middle class in Bihar, the middle class educated elites played the most dominant role. This class not only provided leadership at the various stages of the movement but also contributed greatly in spreading consciousness among the people and mobilising mass support for the congress in fighting the British imperialism. This greatly helped Gandhi in transforming the character of the national movement into a mass movement, thereby increasing the pressure on the British to quit India. Conclusively, it is to say that the role of the Muslim leaders in educating and preparing the people for irresistible struggle against the British imperial rule, launching the call of the Quit India Movement and other such activities greatly changed the political landscape of Bihar's contribution to national freedom struggle. Not only political leadership caused the people to rise up though peacefully but activities like organising the underground revolutionary activities, containing the outburst of the communal politics, the elections to the Provincial Legislature, the constructive works have been accounted for a better analysis of the Freedom struggle in Bihar.

Role of J.P. Movement:

It was natural; therefore, that many people from Bihar became leading participants in India's struggle for independence. Dr. Rajendra Prasad has been mentioned above. Another was Jay Prakash Narayan, affectionately called JP. JP's substantial contribution to modern Indian history continued up until his death in 1979. It was he who led a movement that led to massive win of a non-Congress government - The Janata Party – at Delhi, for the first time. With the blessings of JP, Morarji Desai became the fourth Prime Minister of India. Sadly, soon after attaining power, bickering began among the leaders of the Janata Party which led to the resignation of Shri Desai as the Prime Minister. JP continued with his call for “total revolution”, but he succumbed to kidney failure at a hospital in Bombay in 1979. Subsequent bickering in the Janata Party led to the formation of a breakaway political party – the Janata Dal. This political party was a constituent unit of the then ruling coalition at Delhi, the so called, United Front. It was also from this party that Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Chief Minister of Bihar was elected. The bickering continued. A new party led by Mr. Yadav was formed as – the RashtriyaJanata Dal (RJD)– which went on to rule for almost 15 years in Bihar.

Conclusion:

Present study is based on reports of the All India and Provincial Congress Committee, Government reports, unpublished records of the National Archives of India, New Delhi and the State Archives of Bihar, Patna, and of the West Bengal, Calcutta and the Divisional and District records, memoirs of the leaders of the period, biographies. A select bibliography has been given at the end of the book for an advanced reading.

References:

1. Datta, *Freedom Movement in Bihar*, vol.1, p.146.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Imam, *RoJe of Muslims*, p. 46.
4. *Ibid.*,pp. 50-51.
5. Datta, *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. 111, Pt. I (Patna, 1976), p. 226.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
