CHAPTER SIX

Swarajist Politics

The Swarajist Party was formed by one section of the Congress, known as pro-changers, after the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement. They suggested that nationalists should end the boycott of Legislative Councils, enter the councils, obstruct their working and expose the fact that the councils did not work in people’s interest. This, they felt, would not amount to giving up Non-Cooperation but continuing it in a different and more effective form. The Swarajists also argued that the boycott of councils would in the long run weaken the hold of the Congress because non-Congressmen would contest and win the elections, thereby capturing vantage positions and using them to weaken the Congress. If the Congress joined the councils, it would prevent the government from getting legitimacy for its laws. In other words, the Swarajists claimed that they would transform the Legislatures into arenas of political struggle. Their intention was not to use them, as the liberals desired, as organs for the gradual transformation of the colonial state, but to use them as the ground on which the struggle for the overthrow of the colonial state was to be carried out. The Swarajists also believed that this new line of political activity would not only keep up the spirit of resistance to colonial rule but also fill the temporary political void.¹

The studies on the Swarajists have concentrated on how the Swarajists transformed the Legislatures into arenas of political struggle. While this was no doubt an important aspect, Swarajist politics is significant in other ways too.

¹ AICC Papers, File no. 13/1923; Bipan Chandra, et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, pp. 235-238.
The Swarajists' role in the elections and the manner in which election campaigns furthered nationalist politics is an important area hitherto side-lined in the studies. The Swarajists also succeeded in dismantling the hold of certain sections in the Provincial Council and local bodies. Most works on Swarajist politics have concentrated on their role in Provincial Councils while their role in local bodies has not received much attention. In Bihar, the Swarajists were more successful in local bodies as compared to the Council. A government report pointed out that in Bihar "the general political apathy after the withdrawal of non-cooperation found a striking contrast in the influence exerted by the Congress in local bodies". The report further said, "the politics of municipalities and district boards proved to be of such absorbing interest and so much more productive of immediate and tangible results that little energy or inclination was left for the wider aspects of Indian affairs". This chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section studies the election to the Central Legislature, Provincial Council and local bodies and the second section analyses the role of the Swarajists in the Provincial Council and local bodies.

**Election to Central Legislature and Provincial Council**

This section studies how the Swarajists performed in the elections to the Central Legislature and Provincial Council in the 1920s. Elections to these bodies have been taken up chronologically. Before taking up the election, a brief description is given of the Central Legislature and Provincial Council. The Central Legislature was a bicameral body under the 1919 Act, popularly known as the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. The Upper House was known as the Council of State and the Lower House, the Legislative Assembly. The Council

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3 Ibid.

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of State was constituted for a period of five years. It had 60 members, of whom 33 were elected and the rest were nominated. The franchise of the Council of State was based on a very high property qualification. The Legislative Assembly was constituted for a period of three years. It had 143 members, of whom 104 were elected and the rest were nominated. The voting qualification for the Assembly, too, was based on property criteria. No special qualifications were laid down for the candidates seeking election to either of the House, except that they were to be over 25 years of age and qualified as voters for the constituencies from which they sought election. The Act of 1919 gave powers to the Indian Legislature to make laws for all persons, courts, places and things within India. 4

The Act of 1919 also constituted Legislative Councils in the Provinces for the local government. The franchise to the Legislative Council was also based on property criteria. The normal qualification for a voter was residence within the constituency, coupled with the payment of a small amount in land revenue, rent or local rates in rural areas and municipal rates in urban areas. All payers of income tax and all retired, pensioned or discharged officers or men of regular forces were also given the right to vote. A voter had to be 21 years old. 5 According to the figures of the census taken in March 1921, the combined total electorate amounted to 1.9 percent of the adult male population of the province. The women still did not have the right to vote. 6 Under the Reformed Scheme of 1919, the membership distributed among various communities of Bihar and

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6 Ibid, p. 68.
Orissa to the Legislative Council rose to 103. Out of 103 members, 76 members were elected and 27 nominated. The term of Legislative Council was 3 years.

The Swarajists contested the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Council election in November 1923. 52 percent of the total electorate exercised their votes. This compared favourably with the percent recorded in the 1920 election, in which only 41 percent of the total electorate voted. But the Swarajists did not do well in this election in Bihar, with only 13 Swarajists getting elected to the Council. The following Swarajists got elected from different constituencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swarajist Members</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaleshwar Prasad</td>
<td>North Saran Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedar Nath Prasad Sah</td>
<td>South Champaran Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajendra Misra</td>
<td>North Bhagalpur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhuvaneshvari Prasad Mandal</td>
<td>Central Bhagalpur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Shaikh Muhammad Husain</td>
<td>Chotanagpur Division Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimut Bahan Sen</td>
<td>Chotanagpur Division Non-Muhammadan Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna Ballabh Sahay</td>
<td>Hazaribagh Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalcantha Chatterji</td>
<td>South Manbhum Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Majibur Rahman</td>
<td>Purnea Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirsu Narayan Sinha</td>
<td>South Saran Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakshi Jagdam Prasad Lal</td>
<td>North Manbhum Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radharanjan Das</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godavaris Misra,</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason for the poor performance of the Swarajists in the Provincial Council election was that Bihar was the stronghold of no-changers. The differences between the no-changers and pro-changers, which till then had not

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7 Ibid.
8 Bihar and Orissa Annual Administration Report, 1921, p.13
9 Ibid, 1923, p. 22.
10 Umeshwari Charan, Responsible Government, p. 69.
11 B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties, An Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour up to 1947, Delhi, 1976, p. 221.
12 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926, “From J.D.Sifton, Chief Secretary to the Secretary to the Govt of India-Elections in Bihar and Orissa to the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislative Council”; Bihar and Orissa Annual Administration Report, 1923-24, pp. Xvi-XiX.
been resolved, affected the election. Further, he Swarajists could not get any support from the Congress as the Congress was opposed to the election. In addition, the Swarajists were also unable to find suitable candidates for the Council.\textsuperscript{13} Many candidates who stood on behalf of the Swarajist party were not members of the Congress. The compulsion to win the election also pressurized the Swarajists to field certain candidates who were not members of the Swarajist party.\textsuperscript{14} However, one of the significant aspects of this election was the defeat of Maharaja of Hathwa, one of the most influential candidates, by a Swarajist candidate.\textsuperscript{15}

Election to the Central Legislative Assembly also took place in 1923. The Swarajists won 8 out of the 12 seats that were allotted to Bihar and Orissa. From Tirhut M.M. Shafi, Gaya Prasad Singh and Shyama Charan, from Patna Sarfaraz Hussain, from Bhagalpur Ganganand Singh and from Chotanagpur Devaki Prasad Sinha were elected.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1925, election to the Council of State took place. Bihar had four seats in the Council.\textsuperscript{17} By 1925, the differences between the no-changers and pro-changers were resolved at the national level. This helped the Swarajists not only to get the support of the Congress but also enabled them to field Congress candidates in the election. The people who had the right to vote belonged mostly to moneyed, zamindari and business classes. Mostly candidates from the bigger zamindari background stood for this election. Influential zamindars like Darbhanga Maharaj, Dumraon Maharaj, Prithvi Chand Maharaj and Maharaja

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Searchlight}, 24 October 1923.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 23 November, 14 December 1923.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 23 November, 14 December 1923.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} A.N. Sinha, \textit{Mera Sansmaran}, pp. 100-102. This entire para is based on this source.
Girivar Narayan Singh of Ranka contested the 1925 election. The Swarajist who stood in opposition to them were Shah Muhammad Zubair, Sri Krishna Sinha, A.N.Sinha and Mahendra Pratap. This election was a tough battle for the Swarajists because the Maharajas held a lot of influence in their areas and were also very resourceful.\(^{18}\) The people in their constituencies were mostly under their domination and did not have the strength to oppose them. The kind of power they wielded is described by A.N.Sinha in his autobiography:

Had Dumraon Maharaj told me to withdraw my nomination, I cannot say what I would have done. But Dumraon Maharaj's consultant thought it enough to use humiliating words for candidates like us. We were repeatedly told that compared to Maharajas who would vote for men of no means like us.\(^{19}\)

In addition to contesting the influential and resourceful candidates, the Swarajists also faced other kinds of problems. There was no fixed polling booth for casting votes in the election to the Council of State. Voters cast their votes in the presence of a government official. This resulted in a great scramble for the collection of ballot papers because success depended on the speed with which they were collected and dispatched. The Swarajists had to cover a wide area in their election campaign.\(^{20}\)

The Maharajas exerted different kinds of pressure to win the election. Darbhanga Maharaj was a member of the Council of State from the time the Council was constituted and it was very difficult to defeat him in this election. He wielded great influence amongst different sections of people because of various reasons. He was a Brahmin of a superior caste, a zamindar, "Sanatandharmi", head of "Mathadheesh" and "vyavasayi". He patronized

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\(^{19}\) Ibid, p.102.
many people by giving them jobs in his zamindari. In this election, his entire staff from the Manager to Circle Officers went all round the zamindari to garner support for him. A large amount of money was also spent to mobilize votes for him.

Despite this tough battle, three Swarajist candidates succeeded in winning the election. Amongst the Maharajas, only Darbhanga Maharaj could win the election. The Swarajists in this election succeeded in dismantling the hold of bigger zamindars in the Council. Even a few High Court judges and English officers voted for the Swarajists. Their argument was that the Swarajists fought this election on behalf of a political party with a definite political programme, while the other independent candidates had no programme.

In 1926, election was again held for the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Council. This election was fought in the name of the Congress and on the programme decided by the Congress. This election evoked a greater degree of interest than the previous election. This is reflected in the comparatively high polling figures. In 8 constituencies, more than 80 percent of the voters registered their votes, and the percentage for the elected constituencies as a whole was over sixty, as compared with thirty in 1920 and forty in 1923. The polling in rural areas was higher than in the towns.

Another feature of this election was intensive campaigning just before the polls. A large number of popular Congress leaders from other provinces, who had by that time been released from their own constituencies, campaigned

21 A.N. Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, p.102.
22 Ibid.

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for the Swarajists' cause in Bihar. Though there were more election meetings in 1926 as compared with the 1923 election, public meetings were not very popular and posters, leaflets and house to house visits were more extensively used for the election campaign. The Swarajists also used magic lantern slides for campaigning. Sometimes the Swarajists took the help of local bodies for canvassing. The services of clerks of the municipal and district boards, doctors of local dispensaries and teachers of primary schools of the municipal and district boards were occasionally enlisted on behalf of the Swarajists candidates.

The Swarajists in their election campaign highlighted the adverse impact of British rule in India. Magic lantern slides were shown depicting important events of history and the poverty in India brought about by the British regime. A large number of leaflets were distributed criticizing the past record of the rival candidate. The Swarajists ridiculed the loyalists and co-operators, and projected this election as a fight against the British government. They promised that once they came to the Council, they would pull down the ministry by bringing in a no-confidence motion. The Swarajists put up many candidates against the ministers. Counting this as one of the factors that helped the Swarajists, the government said, "the results showed that at least in the general Hindu constituencies, any candidate, who could not prove that he had worked or was

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27 Searchlight, 12, 14, 19, 26, 28, 30 November 1926.
29 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 176/1927, "From District Magistrate of Monghyr to the Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, dated 18/19 July 1927".
31 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926, "From Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated 21 December 1926, Subject: Elections in Bihar and Orissa to the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislative Council".
32 A.N. Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, p.105.
prepared to work in consistent opposition to government, stood little chance of getting elected". The election thus set the tone against the British government.

The election campaign was an extension of nationalist propaganda and brought candidates to villages where the audience extended beyond eligible voters. Some villages even held general meetings to encourage the three or four eligible voters to support village interests when they cast their ballots. The coloured ballot boxes that were guarded and secured against theft were kept at police thanas and local headquarters, so that many voters had to travel a great distance. Campaign slogans and election songs garnered widespread interest and provided a political outlet for some villagers. Teenagers in groups went to the polling booth just to watch the spectacle.

The Swarajists also took up peasant grievances in their campaign. In fact, the peasants put pressure on candidates to take up their demands. This was the time when peasant discontentment was sharpening in north Bihar. The questions of forced labour, begar and illegal exactions were perennial sources of tension. Commutation of produce-rent and the mode of payment of rent were also issues that contributed to agrarian conflict. Settlement of diara lands and the rights to forest produce and grazing also led to tension. There were also

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33 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926, "From Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated 21 December 1926, Subject-Elections in Bihar and Orissa to the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislative Council"; A.N. Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, p.4.
34 Searchlight, 19 December 1923; Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of December 1926, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) Special File no. 112/IV/December/1926, NAI.
35 Searchlight, 14 November 1923.
36 Ibid, December 1923.
37 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926, "From Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated 21 December 1926, Subject-Elections in Bihar and Orissa to the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislative Council".
38 Searchlight, 18 April 1924.
tensions over bakasht land. The determination of some of the lower castes to improve their social status also led to friction between the landlords and tenants.

In Madhubani and Gaya, peasant struggles were waged against zamindari oppression.\(^{39}\)

Agrarian problems were raised several times before in the Council. There was a proposal in the previous Provincial Council to amend the 1885 Bengal Tenancy Act to suit the particular conditions of Bihar. But nothing happened because differences between the landlords and tenants could not be amicably resolved.\(^{40}\) The Swarajists in their campaign to the third Council in 1926 addressed peasants' grievances and promised to take up amendment of the Bengal Tenancy Act when they came to the Council.\(^{41}\) In Darbhanga and Bhagalpur districts, just on the eve of the Council election, attempts were made to form peasant organisations.\(^{42}\) Peasants pinned their hopes on these elections. In fact, for some years, the peasants' arena of politics shifted to the Council.\(^{43}\)

The Swarajists performed well in this election.\(^{44}\) Out of 76 elected members, 34 were Swarajists, while five others fought the election under the Independent Congress banner. The rest comprised Independents, Moderates, Liberals, Loyalists and Constitutionalists. Some candidates did not have an

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\(^{39}\) Arivind N.Das, *Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980*, pp. 84-88.

\(^{40}\) Jadunandan Prasad, "Gaya Congress and Swaraj Party in Bihar (1920-27)", in P.N.Ojha, (ed.), *History of Indian National Congress in Bihar*, p.270.

\(^{41}\) Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of December 1926, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 112/IV/12/1926 . NAI.

\(^{42}\) Arivind N.Das, *Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980*, pp.84-88.

\(^{43}\) Ibid; *Searchlight*, 16 April 1924.

\(^{44}\) Ibid, 3, 5, 10 December 1926.
association with any political party. The following Swarajist members got elected from different constituencies in Bihar: 46

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swarajist Members</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rai Brij Raj Krishna</td>
<td>Patna Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gur Sahay Lal</td>
<td>East Patna Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Ahmad Hussain Kazi</td>
<td>Gaya Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidheshwari Prasad</td>
<td>Arrah Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath</td>
<td>Tirhut Division Non-Muhammadan Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Abdul Ghanii</td>
<td>Tirhut Division Muhammadan Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirsu Narayan Sinha</td>
<td>South Saran Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbans Sahay</td>
<td>North Champaran Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakur Ramnandan Sinha</td>
<td>North Muzaffarpur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramdayalu Sinha</td>
<td>East Muzaffarpur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahanth Badri Narayan Das</td>
<td>West Muzaffarpur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep Narayan Sinha</td>
<td>Hajipur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Muhammad Ishaq</td>
<td>Muzaffarpur Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahanth Ishvar Gir</td>
<td>North West Darbhanga Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girindra Mohan Mishra</td>
<td>South East Darbhanga Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satya Narayan Singh</td>
<td>Samastipur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Abdul Hamid Khan</td>
<td>Darbhanga Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rameshwar Narayan Agrawal</td>
<td>Bhagalpur Division Non-Muhammadan Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajendra Misra</td>
<td>North Bhagalpur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kailash Bihari Lal</td>
<td>South Bhagalpur Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Krishna Sinha</td>
<td>East Monghyr Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram Charitra Singh</td>
<td>North West Monghyr Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalika Prasad Singh</td>
<td>South West Monghyr Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rameshwar Lal Marwari</td>
<td>Santhal Pargana Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Abdul Bari</td>
<td>Santhal Pargana Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilkantha Chatterji</td>
<td>North Manbhum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimut Bahan Sen</td>
<td>Chotanagpur Division Non-Muhammadan Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna Ballabh Sahay</td>
<td>Hazaribagh Non-Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldeva Sahay</td>
<td>Patna University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maulavi Shaikh Majib-ur Rahman</td>
<td>Purnea Muhammadan Rural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this election, the mandate of the electorate to a large extent went against the government. The articulation of peasant’s demands in the election

46 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no.311/1926, "From Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated 21 December 1926, Subject-Elections in Bihar and Orissa to the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislative Council”.
47 Searchlight, 10 December 1926.
campaign by the Swarajists was considered to be an important factor contributing to their success. To quote a government report:

One of the most effective planks in the Swarajist platform was a better and well organised attack on the landlords, coupled with promises to redress the grievances of the tenants by means of radical alteration in the tenancy laws. This had greatly facilitated their success, which was particularly noticeable in the trans-Gangetic districts, where the Swarajists mainly won the election by defeating some of the candidates set up by the zamindars on the anti-landlord cry.48

The Swarajists also did well in the Legislative Assembly election held in 1926. Out of 12 elected members from Bihar and Orissa, 9 belonged to the Swarajist Party.49 In this election, the Swarajists got support from many big and small zamindars.50 From Gaya-Monghyr Sidheshwar Prasad Sinha was elected. He was supported by Maharaja of Amawan, Tikari and Dev. From Chapra-Darbhanga Narayan Prasad Singh was elected. He defeated Aditya Prasad Singh who was the manager of Darbhanga Raj. Kumar Ganganand Singh was elected from Bhagalpur Division. The Swarajist candidate from Patna-Shahabad lost the election to Ambika Prasad Singh.51 Khan Bahadur Sarfaraz Hussain Khan was elected from Patna-Chotanagpur. Mohammad Shafi got elected from Tirhut Division. Gaya Prasad Singh got elected from Muzaffarpur-Champaran.52 The reason given by the government for the success of the Swarajists in the Legislative Assembly was that “theirs was the only party that had any real organisation and the non-Swarajists had weakened their chances in certain

50 A.N.Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, p. 107.
52 Bihar and Orissa Annual Administration Report, 1927, p.iii.
constituencies by splitting the votes of their supporters between two or more candidates of the same party”.  

Election to Local Bodies

This section studies the election to local bodies – municipal councils and district boards. The Congress considered these local bodies very important and wanted to bring them under its control for furtherance of nationalist politics. Even the no-changers, who were opposed to the Council election, did not have any objection to contesting election to local bodies. The BPCC at its meeting in Monghyr in April 1923 resolved to contest all the seats in the municipal councils and district boards in the coming election on behalf of the Congress.  

The electorates for the municipal councils were from urban areas and those for the district boards were from rural areas. The electorates for the local bodies, which initially were very limited, expanded by the 1919 Act. The 1923 election to the local bodies was held under the extended franchise. The extended franchise was a great advance on the pre-reform days. On an all India basis, the municipal electorate was doubled, an increase from 6 percent to 14 percent of the population, while there were now five rural voters for every one before, that is, 3.2 percent of the population compared with 0.6 percent previously. The qualifications of the voters varied from Province to Province and often from town to town. Those qualified included service pensioners, persons with high educational qualifications, ratepayers and tenants. However, the masses, that is, coolies, landless labourers and many artisans even in this

53 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 290/1926, “From Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated 21 December 1926, Subject-Elections in Bihar and Orissa to the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Legislative Council”; Bihar and Orissa Annual Administration Report, 1926-27, p. 4.

54 Searchlight, 23 April 1923.
extended franchise did not have the right to vote. But even though a large number of people was excluded from franchise, the composition of the electorate had definitely changed under this extended franchise. This extended electorate would now determine the election, in contrast to the earlier limited electorate, which had helped only certain sections. Previously, the officials, appointees of officials and a certain section of people because of their status in society could easily win the election. But now with the extended franchise and the changing political scenario under the national movement, it was not easy for them to control votes. Only those candidates who could reach out to the larger electorate and raise their issues could win the election.

Election to the municipalities took place in 1923. The Municipal Council election in Patna aroused great excitement. Many prominent Congress members like Rajendra Prasad, Khurshaid Hussain, Jagat Narayan Lal and A.N. Sinha also stood for this election. This was the first experience of the Congress seeking votes. Meetings were held in different muhallas to explain the aim of the Congress to the people. Rajendra Prasad in his article, “Patna on Trial”, in Searchlight appealed to the electors to cast their votes in favour of the Congress. He said:

Congressmen have no other object than that of service and they only seek an opportunity for service. They will devote their time and energy to the improvement of municipalities, as also to advancing the cause of swarajya through them. Let us hope that ratepayers will rise above petty personal considerations and vote for the Congress candidates. It is a matter of congratulation that the Congress Committee is fighting a clean fight in the biggest of the municipalities of the Province, and if

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58 *Searchlight*, 17 August, 12 September 1923; A.N.Sinha, *Mera Sansmaran*, p.73.
59 *Searchlight*, 3 October 1923.

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for nothing else, for the education, which is being given to the voters of Patna, the elections are worth contesting.  

Following were the results of the municipal council election in some places:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Total no of candidates</th>
<th>No of declared Congress candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chakradharpur</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagalpur</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giridih</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katihar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daudnagar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumka</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samastipur</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danapur</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Khagaul</td>
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<td>Bettiah</td>
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<td>Muzaffarpur</td>
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The Swarajist Party succeeded in getting some of its members elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman in a few municipalities. Rajendra Prasad was elected as Chairman and A.N. Sinha as Vice-Chairman to the Patna Municipality. In Muzaffarpur, Vindheshwar Prasad Verma was elected as Chairman and Ramdayalu Singh as Vice-Chairman. Rameshwar Narayan Aggarwal was elected Vice-Chairman of the Bhagalpur Municipality. These Swarajist candidates got support from many non-Congress members. According to A.N.Sinha, the non-Congress members of the municipality supported them because of the valuable services they had rendered. He also felt that the

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60 Ibid.
61 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 191/25, "Result of Municipal election in Bihar and Orissa"; Searchlight, 7, 12, 28, 31 October, 7, 14 November, 5, 19 December 1923; Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the second half of January 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/Jan/1924, NAI.
personality and fame of some of the Swarajist candidates helped them. Vindheshwar Prasad Verma, who was elected as Chairman to Muzaffarpur Municipality, had rendered valuable service when Muzaffarpur was afflicted with plague. Despite friends and relatives warning him not to go to the plague afflicted areas, he visited the deceased and offered his condolences. Even Mr. Amlus, the Collector of Muzaffarpur, acknowledged the services rendered by him.

In early 1924, elections were held for the district boards. The Swarajists did very well in Tirhut Division, where they captured 83 percent of the contested seats. In Muzaffarpur, they secured 23 out of 30 seats. In Saran, they won 26 out of 30 seats. In Champaran, they won all 27 seats. In Darbhanga, they captured almost all seats. In all four districts, Swarajist members were elected to the posts of Chairman and Vice-Chairman. In Champaran, Bipin Bihari Verma was elected Chairman and Prajapati Mishra Vice-Chairman. In Darbhanga, the Swarajist members, Harinandan Das and Mohammad Shafi, were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Ramanand Singh was elected Vice-Chairman of Sitamarhi District Board. Satyanarain Singh was elected Vice-Chairman of Samastipur District Board. Dip Narayan Sinha was elected Chairman of Hajipur District Board.

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Searchlight, 16 May 1924; Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of May 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/May/1924, NAI.
66 Searchlight, 16 May 1924; Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of May 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/May/1924, NAI.
67 Searchlight, 2, 16 May 1924; Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa, for the first half of May 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/May/1924, NAI.
68 He had quit law profession when the Non-Cooperation Movement had started and had extensively worked for the movement in Champaran district.
69 A.N.Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, pp. 88-91.
70 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926.
In Bhagalpur Division also, the Swarajists performed well. The Swarajists swept the district board in Bhagalpur. Kailash Bihari Lal was elected Chairman of Bhagalpur District Board. Jimut Bahan Sen was elected as Vice-Chairman of Purulia District Board. In Monghyr, out of 28 seats the Swarajists captured 27 seats.\(^{71}\) The Swarajist members Shah Zubair and Shri Krishna Sinha were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Monghryr District Board.\(^{72}\) Kalika Prasad Singh was elected as Chairman of Jamui District Board.\(^{73}\) Syed Abdul Halim was elected as Vice-Chairman of the Sadr District Board.\(^{74}\) The Swarajists did very badly in the Patna Division. In Patna district, they secured only 4 out of 30 seats. In both Gaya and Shahabad districts, they secured only 6 out of 30 seats.\(^{75}\) Sidheshwar Prasad Singh was elected Vice-Chairman of the Gaya District Board. In Chotanagpur Division, the result was “mixed”. The Swarajists swept the boards in Manbhum\(^ {76}\) and Hazaribagh districts but did not do well in Ranchi, Singhbhum and Palamau districts.\(^ {77}\) Ram Narain Singh was elected Vice-Chairman of the Hazaribagh District Board.\(^ {78}\)

If the election result is surveyed district-wise, one finds that the Swarajists performed well in those districts where the Non-Cooperation Movement had made a strong impact. A.N.Sinha pointed out in his autobiography that most of the Swarajist candidates, who won the election, were actively involved in the movement. To quote him:

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\(^{71}\) Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of May 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/May/1924, NAI.

\(^{72}\) These two leaders were very popular and exercised great influence in their district.

\(^{73}\) Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926.

\(^{74}\) Ibid.

\(^{75}\) Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of May 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/May/1924, NAI.

\(^{76}\) Searchlight, 1 August 1924.

\(^{77}\) Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the second half of June 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/June/1924, NAI.

\(^{78}\) Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926.
The Non-Cooperation Movement was very strong in Tirhut Division. This sub-division had become a model in jail-going and various other programmes of the Congress. The Non-Cooperation Movement had also made strong inroads in Bhagalpur and Monghyr districts. The Congress did very badly in Shahabad and Patna districts. None of the local influential persons from these areas had participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement. The Congress work in these areas was carried out by local people, and in the whole district’s politics, they had not left any remarkable impact. In Gaya, there were not many true followers of the Congress and even those people, who were elected on Congress tickets, had later distanced themselves from the Congress. The meaning that comes out of it is that those who did not have contact with the rural areas did not get success in the district board election or they faced difficulties in the election.  

The social composition of the candidates in these district boards changed.

Expressing apprehension at the kind of candidates elected to district boards, the Chief Secretary noted:

Taking the Province as a whole, the personnel of the newly elected district boards must be regarded as distinctly disappointing. Letters to the press, which are normally anti-government (e.g., the Searchlight), indicate that those who are ordinarily extreme critics are getting alarmed at the class of men who are securing election, and at the tactics by which they are succeeding in doing so. The number of old members, who had secured re-election, was very small and few indeed of their successors had any administrative experience. Immature youths fresh from College, paid lecturers of the Swaraj Party, national school masters, and persons, who had been convicted under the Criminal Law Amendment Act or bound down to keep the peace, were amongst the personnel of the new district boards. For example, in the Muzaffarpur District Board, out of 30 elected members only 3 are reported to possess any previous experience of district board work; 19 are declared non-cooperators, of whom 11 have been sentenced to imprisonment. In the Saran district board, 23 of the elected members are non-cooperators; of whom 5 are described as students; 2 are clerks, who have been dismissed from the Hathwa Raj; and 2 are ex-school masters. In Bhagalpur, of 27 elected members, only one has had any experience of district board work; 19 are reported to belong to the Swarajist party. In Monghyr, of the 29 elected members, 26 are said to have signed the swaraj creed, and the connection of 17 has been traced to the old Non-Cooperation party.

80 Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the second half of June 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/June/1924; NAI.
The Swarajists in the 1923 election succeeded in dismantling the hold of certain influential sections in these district boards. Earlier, people from urban areas who held high government posts were elected to these bodies. Many of them were lawyers and mukhtars who got support from the zamindars. The zamindars wielded strong influence in their areas and whomsoever they supported managed to secure the maximum votes. Electors were afraid to go against the wishes of the zamindars. Many planters who were also zamindars too wielded strong influence in these bodies. “Influential people” of the locality did not consider it prestigious to contest the elections themselves but they exercised great influence over the various district boards through their men. In Gaya District Board election, especially for the post of Chairman there was strong contest between the Swarajists and the zamindars. A.N.Sinha stood for the chairman’s post. His contender Vishun Prasad, a close associate of Tikari Raj, also had the support of other influential zamindars of this area. However, despite strong opposition from Tikari Raj, A.N.Sinha emerged victorious and got elected to the chairman’s post. A.N.Sinha accounted for his victory in the following words:

Last year because of my role in the Gaya Congress’s preparation, people of the town had known me. I had been involved with the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee from the very beginning, and because of this I had become familiar with the Congress workers and had also established close relationship with them.

These elections had generally been used by larger zamindars, that is, the Maharajas, to reassert their power. Their loss in the elections indicated divisions

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81 Searchlight, 7 October, 7 December 1923, 5, 8, 12 December 1926.
82 A.N.Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, pp. 81-84; Searchlight, 14 May 1924, 19 September, 20, 22, 29 October 1926.
83 A.N.Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, pp.82-85.
84 Ibid, p.83.
among the rural elite. The success of the Swarajists in these elections meant that the large tenants of the Maharajas, who comprised the rural elite, voted against them.\textsuperscript{85} Thus, nationalism had stolen the support of the Maharaja’s national constituency of large tenants by showing them another route to gain power. They turned away from the zamindari pattern of authority to seek power in the nationalist arena. Patronage became devalued as the Congress offered electoral avenues to power and influence. The tenants chose nationalism and electoral politics over traditional means of exercising power. Thus the election results indicated the erosion of Maharajas’ power in their region. The balance of power in the rural areas was changing.\textsuperscript{86}

However, the Maharajas and the bigger landlords did not take their defeat lightly. They considered these bodies to be their domain, and when this domain of theirs was attacked, they were greatly enraged. In Bettiah, this led to a confrontation between the planters and Congress members. The Bettiah Municipal Council was for a long time under the monopoly of indigo planters and their supporters. Even though their power had to a great extent declined after the Champaran agitation, their domination in the Municipal Council continued. They faced their first defeat in the municipality in 1922 when the Congress captured seats in the Municipal Council. In 1923, two Congressmen, Bipin Bihari Verma and Prajapat Mishra, contested for the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship of the municipality respectively. They succeeded in defeating Rutherford, the manager and a sub-registrar of the Bettiah Estate. In 1924, the same candidates again won the election. Rutherford and the Raj official did not contest the election this time but the Bettiah Estate had not

\textsuperscript{85} Searchlight, 7, 14 December 1923.
\textsuperscript{86} B.B. Misra, \textit{Indian Political Parties}, pp.247-248.
forgotten the insult of Rutherford’s defeat in the earlier election. The anger that had been simmering amongst the planters took the form of an open confrontation with the Congress members over an incident in Bettiah. A meeting was convened by the Congress Committee in Bettiah in January 1924, where prayers were to be offered for the speedy recovery of Gandhi who was released from jail after he fell ill. Prajapati Mishra, Vice-Chairman of the municipality, along with another Congressman, had gone to the Meena bazaar, which belonged to the Bettiah Estate, to appeal to the shopkeepers to attend the public meeting. An officer of the Bettiah Estate slapped Prajapati Mishra’s companion and turned them out of the bazaar. This infuriated the shopkeepers. In protest, they participated in the public meeting in the evening. After the prayer, these shopkeepers also decided to leave Meena bazaar and reopen business on some other site, which they got on lease from the municipality. The new bazaar flourished, resulting in a rise in the income of the municipality and an annual loss of income of about Rs. 50,000 to the Bettiah Estate. The Congress Committee also declared at a public meeting in Bettiah that if the general situation in Bettiah did not improve and Congressmen continued to remain exposed to “acts of violence by hooligans”, it would be compelled to advise the tenants of the Estate to launch a no-rent campaign. The matter was also raised and hotly debated in the Bihar Provincial Council. Jaleshwar Prasad, a Swarajist

87 Searchlight, 27 January, 15 February 1924; Rajendra Prasad, Autobiography, pp.204-206. The rest of the para is based on these sources.
88 Ibid.
89 Searchlight, 15 February 1924.
90 Ibid, 20 February 1924.
91 Ibid, 7 March 1924.
who collected facts about the activities of the estate officials, was able to expose them in the Council. 92

In the election to the district boards in 1927, the Swarajists did not perform well. In Purnea and Bhagalpur, the Swarajists failed completely and returned only one candidate. The “moderates” in Bhagalpur secured a substantial majority over the Swarajists. 93 In Darbhanga too, the Swarajists did not achieve the same success as they had achieved in the 1924 election. 94 The district board election in Madhubani sub-division of Darbhanga resulted in the return of “the candidates with moderate views and the defeat of those with extreme nationalist views”. 95

The only district where the Swarajists achieved great success in the 1927 election was Monghyr, where they won all except two seats. The Swarajist members Shah Zubair and Sri Krishna Sinha were again elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Monghyr District Board. 96 According to the District Magistrate of Monghyr, the following factors facilitated the success of the Swarajists in this district:

As a party, the Swarajists were well organised and showed praiseworthy energy and unity. Apart from this, some of the leaders like Mr. Shah Muhammad Zubair, Chairman of the district board, and Shri Krishna Sinha, Vice Chairman of the board, who wielded great influence in the district had canvassed actively for the Swarajist candidates. Even Deokinandan Singh, who was the brother of Shri Krishna Sinha and also a mukhtar, used the considerable influence that he had in the Sadr sub-division in favour of the Swarajist candidates. Even the school masters, contractors, doctors, pundits

92 Proceedings of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, 1924, Vol XX, pp 934-973; Searchlight 16, 28, 30 March 1924.
93 Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of May 1927, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 32/May/1927, NAI.
94 Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of June 1927, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 32/June/1927, NAI.
95 Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the second half of May 1927, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 32/May/1927, NAI.
96 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 176/1927, “From District Magistrate of Monghyr to the Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, dated 18/19 July 1927”; Searchlight, 5 June 1927.
and other servants of the district board canvassed actively for the Swarajist candidates. The Swarajist candidates and their supporters toured the villages and promised free education, construction of village roads, wells, facility of ayurvedic and hakimi treatment for the sick and remission of taxes. Motor cars and tum-tums were freely employed to bring voters to the polling stations. The Swarajists also published lists of the achievements of the boards, when the board was under Swarajists control in the previous term. Lectures with lantern slides were often given showing that people would become prosperous once the British government was replaced by an Indian government. Further appeals were made in the name of Mr. Gandhi to seek votes for Swarajist candidates. Swarajist candidates were also laying stress on the achievement of Congress party and on the fact that some of the Swarajist candidates like Kalika Prasad Singh and Shyama Prasad Singh, had chosen to go to the jail in the interest of the country. They described the candidates who had stood in opposition to them as supporters of the tyrannical government and enemies of the country. They were also persuading the rich and influential people of each Thana to join their party. This would have helped them to raise subscriptions, which would enable them to fight their cause.97

Caste and communal factors played a determining role in this election.98 1920s was a period when different caste associations were formed. The caste associations looked upon district boards as important centres of power because, in comparison to panchayats, the district boards offered an extra-village and extra-taluka source of power and prestige. In many places, caste alliances determined the voting pattern. This election was also communalised to a great extent.99 Expressing concern at this communalisation of election, Rajendra Prasad wrote in his autobiography that “the electioneering took an ugly turn. Some people reaped advantage by raising the bogey of communalism and casteism. Even some Congressmen could not rise above these tactics.”100

97 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 176/1927, “From District Magistrate of Monghyr to the Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa, dated 18/19 July 1927”.
98 AICC papers, File no. 21, Part II/1926; Sahajanand Saraswati, Mera Jeevan Sangharsh, pp. 178-180.
100 Ibid, p. 250.
The hold of the zamindars was also very strong in certain pockets like Patna Division. In Gaya district, this election was again a contest between the Swarajists and the zamindars.\textsuperscript{101} Mr. Vintal, who was the manager of the Aurangabad circle of Tikari Raj, wanted to become the Chairman of the Gaya District Board. In order to enable him to succeed, candidates of Tikari Raj stood from all those areas which lay under the zamindari of Tikari Raj. The board had seven members from Aurangabad. From four places, Raj’s candidates were nominated. A.N. Sinha attributed great significance to this district board election. According to him, this would be the last test for the zamindars to exhibit their strength in this district. The Swarajist candidates in Gaya faced severe opposition from candidates supported by Tikari Raj. The following personal account of A.N. Sinha, while campaigning in Tikari Raj, throws light on the nature of opposition encountered by the Swarajists:

I visited many areas during the election days. One such area lay under the zamindari of Tikari Raj. I did not get a place to stay in that village because of the strong opposition of the zamindar of Tikari Raj. In my capacity as Chairman, I stayed in a Dak Bungalow but our helpers, with great difficulty, got a small hut in another zamindari village which was a little away from the election area....The opponent candidate of this area was Mr. Vintal. Tikari Maharaj himself had come to this area to mobilise votes. The candidate from our side was a small zamindar, named Mr. Naurangdev Narayan Singh Karmawali. Our voters as compared to Mr. Vintal’s were much larger in number. The Deputy Magistrate tried to prevent our voters from entering the polling booth and casting their votes on the election day. But even after putting all such obstacles, when the opponents could not succeed in their plan, they resorted to their pre-planned programme. According to this plan, the soldiers of the Raj started terrorising the people by brandishing their swords around 3 p.m. This created a great commotion. Taking advantage of it, many voters of the Raj managed to enter inside the polling booth but most of our voters remained outside. The remaining voters, comprising mostly our sympathisers, were ordered not to enter the booth. Raj’s voters, who had entered the booth, were allowed to cast their votes. This was total denial of

\textsuperscript{101} A.N. Sinha, \textit{Mera Sansmaran}, pp.114-117. This para and the next para is based on this source.
justice. I did not know where I could have lodged my complaint. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate, George Chander, could have heard our complaint but who knew all this might be happening on his indications only. Despite all such odds and opposition, our candidates won from all the four zamindari areas of the Raj. Mr. Vintal was deeply enraged by his defeat. He wanted to take revenge on not only those voters, who helped the Congress, but to whom so ever he even slightly suspected of offering help to us. Smaller peasants became victims of his massive beating and against the richer peasants legal cases were sued. People had to undergo all sorts of torture. This was a sheer case of personal vendetta. So long as George Chander had remained the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, poor people could not even lodge their complaint against the oppression of Mr. Vintal. In the whole sub-division, clients of Raj who helped us had to bear all forms of difficulties.

In the Gaya District Board, A.N.Sinha again succeeded in getting elected as Chairman. In this election unlike the previous election, A.N.Sinha was supported by Tikari Raj and Amawan Raj. Rameshwar Prasad Singh who stood in opposition to A.N.Sinha exercised great influence over the Amawan Raj and expected support from his men. But when he sought the help of Amawan Raj, he was told by the Raj that his men’s sympathy lay with A.N.Sinha and that his order to his men to vote for Rameshwar Prasad would not be obeyed. Amawan Raj even advised Rameshwar Prasad Singh not to stand in the election.

Thus, on the whole the Swarajists did not perform well in this election. Various factors determined the outcome of this election. Caste and communal factors played a determining role in this election. The Congress also did not nominate its candidates from many district boards in this election. Besides, by the time this election was held, the euphoria of the Non-Cooperation Movement had ebbed and a political lull had set in. In addition, disillusionment also started building up against the functioning of Swarajists in these boards. In fact, the presence of Congress members in these boards had given confidence to a large

102 Searchlight, 11, 18 May 1927.
number of people who earlier did not have the courage to come forward with their grievances. The people, who had started approaching these boards with many of their problems, soon discovered that their demands were not getting met.  

Role of the Swarajists in the Council

Second Provincial Council

The Swarajists were not very successful in election to the Bihar Provincial Council in 1923. Since only thirteen Swarajists were elected to the Provincial Council in 1923, they were not in sufficiently large numbers to bring about a situation of constitutional crisis. Commenting upon the smooth functioning of the Council in Bihar and Orissa, the Governor said:

When the political history of India for the year 1924-25 and the three preceding months comes to be reviewed, much that is hopeful and gratifying will emerge from the record of Bihar and Orissa during that period. At a time, when the very foundations of the new constitution were being loosened in other parts of India, this Province may claim to have kept its head. Elsewhere some of the newly elected legislatures were exposing their considerable powers with the avowed object of bringing government to a stand still. In Bihar and Orissa, although the extreme section of political opinion was not unrepresented in the new Council, a different atmosphere prevailed and that element of mutual good-will, which is essential to the working of dyarchy has not been lacking. Thus the Ministers have retained the confidence of the majority of the Council, and at the same time, there has been a notable absence of friction in their relations with the other members of government and with the permanent officials working under them. Its function was rather more to lead the opposition against government in debate than to adopt purely obstructive tactics. Swarajists recognised their limitations, so that they were determined to accept the general programme only so far as it was suited to local conditions and the limitations of their own organisation.

Although the Swarajists could not bring about a constitutional crisis, they raised some issues of general concern, which were extensively reported in the

103 A.N.Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, pp.86-87, 99.
104 Bihar and Orissa Annual Administration Report, 1924, p.16.
nationalist press. One of the main concerns of the Swarajists was better treatment of political prisoners. The Swarajists demanded the release of political prisoners. In fact, this matter was raised in the Council from 1921 onwards. On 24 November 1921, Maulavi Saiyid Abbas Ali moved the following resolution:

This Council recommends to the government to take early steps to treat all political prisoners, including non-cooperators, as similar prisoners are dealt with in England during their imprisonment, and that the facilities in the matter of food, clothing, lodging, interviews and communications extended to the European prisoners be given to all such prisoner.

Although this resolution was carried, but it was not effective in practice and political prisoners did not escape cruel treatment. This issue was again raised in 1922, though the government continued to defend its policy on grounds of administrative order and jail discipline.

Swarajist members also raised this issue in 1924. On 26 February 1924, Nilkantha Chatterji moved a resolution asking the government to free all political prisoners. Another Swarajist member, Krishna Ballabh Sahay, said that political prisoners should be given special treatment and kept in a different institution. He wanted political prisoners to be given simple imprisonment because, according to him, they had neither “erred against any individual nor committed murder or dacoity or shown any inhumanity or were guilty of moral turpitude”. According to him, political prisoners were actuated by a better sentiment than the people who were ordinarily jailed and one could not expect political prisoners to behave in the same slavish and servile way as the other

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107 Ibid.

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prisoners. He also pointed out that other civilized countries such as Ireland did not treat their political prisoners rigorously.\textsuperscript{110}

Swarajists also wanted to change the whole spirit of jail administration. Krishna Ballabh Sahay moved a resolution on 26 August 1924 recommending the government to take immediate steps to revise the jail code.\textsuperscript{111} He said that the principle of jail administration should deter prisoners from crime. According to him, due to lack of reformatory influences in jail, when a prisoner was released, he found himself a lonely and isolated being.\textsuperscript{112} He said "the prisoner, who had lived away from home for a very long time, once released did not know how to live in society, and having lost the interest as well as the knowledge of his original profession, again committed crime and was again sent to jail".\textsuperscript{113}

Krishna Ballabh Sahay was also against sending children to jails. According to him, the children committed crime because of circumstances. He said "there is a greater chance of children again committing crime after being released because they contract vicious habits in jail and their lives also become hardened".\textsuperscript{114} He also said that greater precaution should be taken while sentencing adolescents. He pointed out that in countries like England institutions were established to train young offenders in trade and industry so that these people instead of becoming a burden on the jail administration generated income for society.\textsuperscript{115}

The first suggestion made by Krishna Ballabh Sahay for reformatory influence to be effective was to reduce the number of prisoners.\textsuperscript{116} He said that

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, pp. 424-425.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, p. 418.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, p.419.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, pp.419-421.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p.421.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, pp.422-426. The rest of the para is based on this source.
because of overcrowding in the jails neither proper medical care nor good diet were provided to the prisoners. He also suggested that prisoners should be educated. According to him, if the prisoners were allowed to read, they would spend their time in a more meaningful way and not entertain any vicious thoughts.

He suggested that those prisoners who could not read should be provided with games such as playing cards. He suggested that religious teachers should be allowed to enter jails and impart education to the prisoners. He also said that prisoners should be allowed to frequently meet their relatives. Behind all these suggestions was Krishna Ballabh Sahay's belief that if a prisoner was cut off from home, he became more hardened. Besides, he also believed that prisoners sent to jails were not irrecoverable and could be taken back to society.

For all this, need was felt for different type of men to administer the jail affairs. Krishna Ballabh Sahay said that wholetime Jail Superintendents should be appointed. The officers had to be given proper training and sensitized to treat the prisoners with sympathy and love. The officers were to be well paid. For all this there was need for more resources. Krishna Ballabh Sahay suggested that resources should be generated from within the jails. He gave the suggestion to start some factories which would give the prisoners opportunity to earn. The prisoner in this way would not only support himself but even contribute to his family. There was also a suggestion that a committee should be appointed to go into the whole matter.

Another demand of the Swarajists was separation of judicial and executive functions. In fact, for this separation a resolution had already been moved in the last Council on 18 July 1921. In that resolution, it was decided to form a

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117 Ibid, p.423. The rest of the para is based on this source.
118 Ibid, February 1924, p.98.
committee, consisting of officials and non-officials, for settling the whole scheme.\textsuperscript{119} A resolution was moved on 13 February 1924 that the report of the committee on the separation of executive and judicial functions be published for eliciting public opinion and criticism.\textsuperscript{120} The Swarajist members said that two years had passed, but this was yet to be implemented. This was considered a very serious omission.\textsuperscript{121}

The Swarajists also demanded that Council proceedings, containing the summaries of speeches of the members of the Council, should be published in vernacular. This resolution was moved on 12 February 1924.\textsuperscript{122} The Swarajists considered it to be their duty to inform the electors of the proceedings of the Council and thus to also educate them.\textsuperscript{123} One Swarajist member also pointed out that the electors had begun taking keen interest in the affairs of the Council and were desirous to know what their representatives were doing in the Council. But, since the proceedings were in English, a very small number of electors were able to follow the proceedings of the Council.\textsuperscript{124} He also said that some villagers had formed unions of voters. Such union, for example, had been formed in Fatwa. These villagers asked their representative in the Council to give them a copy of the agenda and of the proceedings of the Council.\textsuperscript{125}

Primary education was another concern of the Swarajists. They asked the government to assist in the expansion of primary education, pointing out that other provinces spent more money on education than Bihar.\textsuperscript{126} A strong desire was also

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, p.98.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, pp. 98-99.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid, p.47.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, pp.53-54.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid, pp.47-48.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid, August 1924, p. 509.
expressed by the Swarajists that within a year or two primary education should be made absolutely free throughout the province.\(^{127}\) Jaleshwar Prasad asked the government in the August session of 1924 to sanction Rs.60 lakhs to the district boards for the promotion of primary education.\(^{128}\) The Swarajists favoured primary education to be under the control of local bodies. Accordingly, one of their demands was transfer of the control of school sub-inspectors to local bodies.\(^{129}\)

The Swarajists also wanted to promote spinning in schools. Nilkantha Chatterji moved a resolution on 19 February 1924 recommending arrangements be made in all public schools for teaching boys and girls above the age of ten the art of spinning by charkha.\(^{130}\) Nilkantha Chatterji’s plea was that promotion of spinning by charkha would remove the poverty of the country to some extent.\(^{131}\) He also hoped that this would revive the old existing industries.\(^{132}\) Jaleshwar Prasad also said that spinning would give subsidiary work to the villagers and improve their economic condition.\(^{133}\) The Swarajists also believed that spinning would make Bihar self-sufficient in the matter of dress and thus India would save more than 60 crores of rupees spent on buying foreign clothes.\(^{134}\)

The Swarajists believed that some aspects of Indian social life were particularly conducive to spinning. One was the existence of the *parda* system. Spinning was something which women could do at home. The other was that India was primarily an agricultural country where people were without any occupation

\(^{127}\) Ibid, p.505.  
\(^{128}\) Ibid.  
\(^{129}\) Ibid, p. 508.  
\(^{130}\) Ibid, February 1924, p. 282.  
\(^{131}\) Ibid.  
\(^{132}\) Ibid.  
\(^{133}\) Ibid, p.317.  
\(^{134}\) Ibid, pp.312-313.
for seven months in a year in the non-agricultural season when they could take to spinning. There were also vast tracts in India where cotton could be grown.\textsuperscript{135} Some members argued that under the existing economic conditions there was no better solution than taking to spinning, since India did not have resources to set up big mills and purchase costly machinery from England or America.\textsuperscript{136}

Some members saw other benefits of spinning. Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath believed that spinning would inculcate simplicity amongst people and teach children to be manly and self-reliant citizens of the country.\textsuperscript{137} Besides this, students would have no aversion to manual training or labour. He also believed that by taking to spinning people would spend their free time in a more constructive way because they would not waste their time in playing cards or other amusements in a club.\textsuperscript{138} He pointed out that since charkha and khaddar inspired a national feeling in people's heart, men with pride and patriotic feeling said that they had a dhoti or a shirt spun and woven by them.\textsuperscript{139}

The special significance of charkha for girls was also highlighted. Krishna Ballabh Sahay said:

\begin{quote}
The charka was meant more for the girls, more for the women than for the use of men. The great propagandist of charka, Mahatma Gandhi, always emphasized the fact that it is our women who alone must give their entire and better portion of their attention to charka. \textellipsis Our ideal about womanhood is altogether different. We Indians have begun to feel, at least the poorer section have begun to feel, that our women should learn some trade and industry so that they might not be dependent upon the male section of the population. Would it not be a very wholesome change, if our women learn charka in the schools and they ply the charka at their homes and give at least a yield of Rs. 10 a month to their husbands? Sir, we do not want our women to earn their livelihood by coming in contact with industrial centres. As I have already told you, our ideal is altogether different. We want that our
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\begin{figure}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{135} Ibid, pp.284-285.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibid, pp.311-312.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Ibid, pp.296-297.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid, pp.296-297.
\end{itemize}
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women should not become rough, should not become dissolute by coming in contact with the industrial society. The effect of the women coming in contact with industrial society has already been witnessed and it has already become evident in Bombay and other parts of India, where women are forced to take to industry. So charka should be encouraged amongst girls.\textsuperscript{140}

Another member also talked of its advantage for women in the following words:

The problem of our women folk is a very acute problem. The Europeans sitting in this House may not realise that our women folk are not aspiring to go to the offices or to some out door work, for their living but their place is their home and that is their world, and if we have anything to give them at present, it is charka.\textsuperscript{141}

The prevailing health system in the villages was also an area of concern of the Swarajists. Fever, cholera, plague and small-pox took a large toll every year. So need was felt for a large number of regular dispensaries in rural areas. District boards were sincere but lacked funds.\textsuperscript{142} Swarajist members drew the attention of the members of the Council to the inadequate health system in villages. A resolution was moved in the Council on 28 August 1924 asking the government to grant five lakhs to the district boards for the construction of dispensaries in rural areas.\textsuperscript{143}

Amendment of the Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885, was another important issue raised in the Council. Though this issue was not taken up by the Swarajist members, the Swarajists voted with Shiva Shankar Jha, the member who had raised this issue in the Council.\textsuperscript{144} Shiva Shankar Jha, who had stood as a peasant’s representatives and who mostly voted with the Swarajists in the Council, moved a resolution in August 1924 to amend the Bengal Tenancy Act.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, p.300.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid, pp.311-312.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid, August 1924, pp.619-625.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, p.619.
\textsuperscript{144} Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 311/1926.
The reason that he put forward for moving the resolution was the strong pressure of tenants to get Bengal Tenancy Act amended. While moving the resolution, Shiva Shankar Jha also emphasized that the Tenancy Act should not be amended solely in the interest of the tenants or landlords but to suit the interests of both.

Shiva Shankar Jha’s resolution was opposed by the landlords in the Council, who said that there was no necessity for such amendment because the tenants in Bihar were not discontented. The landlords also activated their associations in different districts in the wake of the amendment of the Tenancy Act. Gaya District Landlords’ Association presented an address to the Governor expressing its apprehension over the development of a tenants’ agitation and the proposal to amend the Tenancy Act. A suggestion also came from the landlords that it would be better if both the landlords and tenants sat together and framed a joint bill, so that the bill might have an easy passage through the Council. Shiv Shankar Jha withdrew the resolution on the assurance given by Amawan Raj, the leader of the landlords in the Council, to come forward with the joint bill in the next session. But despite the assurance given by the landlords for negotiation, the tenants did not get any information till 10 January 1925, when the session was to begin from 12 January. In the meeting held on 10 January only five out of seven representatives of the zamindars were present. The other two representatives considered to be the most important members

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147 Ibid, p. 411.
150 Ibid.
were absent, hence those landlords who were present at the meeting could not hold out any hope of settlement. 151 When this meeting failed, Shiv Shankar Jha, Shiva Bachan Sinha, Kedarnath Prasad Sah, Gur Sahay Lal and Mahanth Ishvar gave notice of a motion to introduce the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Bill 1925 on 12 January 1925. 152 Shiv Shankar Jha said that he was forced to come forward with the bill because there was no response from the zamindars:

I know sir that we are in a minority and we also know that we cannot expect to get this bill through without the good will of our zamindar friends. Therefore there is no reason why we should bring forward this bill on our initiative unless and until we found that we were absolutely helpless. We have brought this forward in utter despair. I entirely agree with the Hon’ble, the leader of the House, when he says that this bill cannot be considered to be the last word on the subject. We shall meet together, we shall discuss and any compromise that is effected on these points, which will not be objected to by another party, would be welcomed by us. 153

The two most important provisions of the bill were the rights given to the tenants to transfer occupancy holdings in whole or in part and to plant and cut trees and appropriate their timber. 154 The transfer of tenant’s occupancy land had increased by several lakhs. The landlords recognized these transfers on payment of nazaran or premium. 155 Shiva Shankar Jha said “the bill is nothing but an effort to legalize that which though it has become a common practice is called illegal and has penal consequences attached to it”. 156 He also said that as the zamindars were primarily rent collectors, they should not be allowed to settle the lands with tenants and deprive them from acquiring occupancy rights. 157

152 Ibid, p.1575.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid, August 1925, p. 175.
The landlords criticized the bill as being one-sided and not based on a fair compromise. They said that the bill did not have any provision to meet the grievances of the landlords. Countering the attack of the landlords, Shiva Shankar Jha said that objections of the landlords had arisen because the tenants had begun demanding redressal of their grievances. He asked:

Was any resolution ever moved by landlords to have the Bengal Tenancy Act amended? Was such a step taken in this Council? No. Has any bill been introduced by them up till now to redress those grievances? As a matter of fact, they have got no grievances. Besides, all the attempts that we have made for the presentation of a joint bill failed. What other alternative was left to us? Why do you not bring forward a bill yourselves? They will not do anything themselves and when some one upholding the raiyats claim brings up a bill, they criticize it on the ground that it is one-sided. They say we will not do anything and if you do anything we will stop it....I appeal to the landlords and to the government to see to these grievances of the raiyats which are real and genuine.

However, Swarajist members like Jaleshwar Prasad requested the Council to give one more chance to the representatives of the landlords and tenants for reconciliation and compromise. He said that further consideration of Shiva Shankar Jha’s motion should be adjourned till the next session of the Council. His reason for a reconsideration of the bill was:

It is never too late and any time that is spent upon reconciliation and compromise is not wasted. There is very great chance of a compromise between the landlords and the tenants, if only some more time is given to them to consider the matter. The complain of the landlords is that the bill as it stands today is one-sided. With the merits of the bill, either this way or that, I am not at present concerned, but what I think is that there should be an attempt made to frame a common bill either by the landlord and tenants sitting together or by a neutral party.

The motion of Shiva Shankar Jha was adjourned till the next session. But in the next session in 1926, the landlords did not come forward with their bill. As

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159 Ibid, August 1925, pp. 171-176.
160 Ibid, pp. 198-201.
no response came from the landlords, Shiva Shankar Jha proposed that the bill be referred to a select committee. The landlords again asked for the postponement of the bill on the promise of a joint bill. But this time, without heeding the landlords' demand, Shiva Shankar Jha, along with the Swarajists, pressed the bill to be referred to a select committee.

However his motion was defeated. The official members and members representing the government voted with the landlords against the motion. The Governor refused to be in charge of a Tenancy Bill to which the landlords were opposed. The landlords dominated the Council in Bihar. The government got maximum support from them in their business in the Council. The Governor went to the extent of saying that Bihar enjoyed the benefit of a Tenancy Act that was in advance of the tenancy law in force in some other parts of India. He said that no legislation would be undertaken unless either the differences between the landlords and tenants became so acute as to call for intervention or there was a very strong desire on the part of all concerned to have their outstanding differences settled.

Besides raising these issues of general concern the Swarajists could not do much in the Council. In many cases, even when resolutions were passed no action was taken by the government. Moreover, the Swarajists were also not in such large numbers as to bring the Council proceedings to a halt. By the beginning of 1926, even at the national level a strong feeling had begun developing that the Swarajists' policy was not being very effective. The Swarajist party was going through dissolution and disintegration. In March 1926, the Congress party leaders

reiterated their faith in mass civil disobedience and decided to withdraw from the legislatures. The AICC gave a call to the Swarajists to walk out from the Council.\footnote{Bipan Chandra, et al., \textit{India's Struggle for Independence}, p.243.} At the call of the AICC the Swarajists in the Bihar and Orissa Council staged a walkout on 8 March 1926. However, before the withdrawal, Jaleshwar Prasad, leader of the Swarajist Party in the Council, made the following statement:

Sir, with your permission, on behalf of the members of the Swaraj Party in this Council I have the honour to make the following statement. The AICC at its meeting on the 6th March called upon such members as are Swarajists to leave their seats in the Legislatures. It is incumbent upon us henceforth to take no part in the work of this Council. The Government of India and the Secretary of State by their attitude of indifference towards the joint demand of the Assembly, incorporated in the Assembly resolution of 1924, and by their assertion that no steps towards Self-Government could be taken without further signs of cooperation in the country, and the reactionary attitude of the Local Government in respect to all various unanimous demands of the members of this Council, have convinced us that we may expect to get nothing from them unless we completely surrender ourselves to the wishes of the bureaucracy, which is repugnant to the sentiments of any group of self respecting persons. The only alternative left for us, therefore, so far as work in the Council is concerned, is to pursue a policy of opposition and obstruction as detailed by the All India Congress Committee. This programme, we must confess it, is impossible to follow with the help of the present elected members of this Council, who hold different views and do not see eye to eye with us. Our attempt in this Council to bring over other members to our way of thinking and to present a united front in this respect have failed. We have therefore decided to leave our seats without resigning our membership and we hope that when the next Council meets, we shall be in a position to carry out our programme in full.\footnote{Indian Quarterly Register, Jan-June 1926, pp.327-328.}

\textbf{Third Provincial Council}

With the rise in number of Swarajists in the third Bihar Provincial Council, they became a force to contend with.\footnote{Searchlight, 17 December 1926.} On some issues, with the help of other independent candidates, it became possible for the Swarajists to defeat
the government. In others, they raised objections, forcing the Governor to certify certain legislation, one example being budgetary grants. Besides, in the election to the third Council, by clearly expressing their opinion against the ministers the Swarajists had indicated that their policy when they came to the Council would be to oppose the ministers. The government expressed its apprehension in the following words: "In the new Council (third Council) we have got a majority of elected members of the Swaraj Party and their avowed policy is to throw out the Ministry, throw out the budget and put all sorts of obstructions to government measures."

In the first session after the members assembled in 1927, the Swarajists raised some constitutional issues. They criticized the ministers for accepting office without commanding a majority, stating this to be a violation of constitutional convention. They said it was unconstitutional for the ministers to exist merely on the support of official and nominated members and not on an electoral mandate. Sri Krishna Sinha, who was the leader of the Swarajist party in the Council, said that the Governor should have first called the leader of the Swarajist Party to form the ministry since it was the largest party. Condemning the Governor, another Swarajist member said "it is a great slur on the province that no capable men could be found to replace these ministers, who had been appointed for the third time". Ministers were also criticized for not enunciating any definite policy in their term of office.

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169 Ibid.  
171 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 109/1927.  
172 Indian Quarterly Register, Jan-June 1927, p. 381.  
173 Ibid.  
175 Ibid.
The Swarajists condemned the dyarchy system of government granted to the provinces under the 1919 Act.\textsuperscript{176} Under dyarchy some subjects such as finance and law and order were called reserved subjects and remained under the direct control of the Governor. Others such as education, public health and local self-government were called transferred subjects and were to be controlled by ministers responsible to the legislatures.\textsuperscript{177} But the Swarajists said that the 1919 Act had given the Governor greater power and made the ministers powerless.

The ministers were mere advisors to the Governor. The 1919 Act had given the Governor greater powers even with regard to the transferred departments. The Governor could overrule the ministers on any grounds that he considered special. Besides, the Governor could withhold his assent from any act of the Council. The ministers also had no powers over the purse.\textsuperscript{178} The Swarajists wondered how a system of government could be sanctioned which had no real power, and demanded that the ministers be given a free hand with regard to the administration of the transferred departments. The Swarajists said that by not allowing this system to continue they would show that the present government was not carried on by the consent of the people.\textsuperscript{179}

Many other issues of general concern also came up in the Council. The Swarajists again took up the cause of primary education and spinning - the two most important aspects of the constructive programme. The Swarajists demanded that local bodies be given discretion to work out an education policy with an emphasis on primary education.\textsuperscript{180}

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\item \textsuperscript{176} Ibid, p.385.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Manoranjan Jha, \textit{Role of Central Legislature in Freedom Struggle}, pp. 39-41.
\item \textsuperscript{178} \textit{Indian Quarterly Register}, Jan-June 1927, p. 385.
\item \textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Ibid, p.386.
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Along with primary education, the Swarajists also expressed their concern for higher education. Baldeva Sahay introduced the Patna University (Amendment) Bill in August 1927.\(^{181}\) This would convert Patna University, an examining university, into a teaching university. This bill also introduced the concept of a self-governing university, in contrast to the control of a minister. There would be one controlling body over all colleges, and the university would be able to effect economy of teaching and would no more be guided by administrative considerations. By taking away from the government the power of making appointments to the colleges there would be no political considerations. The university would frame rules and regulations, laying down the conditions of service, pay, pension, leave and the emoluments of service with no fear of the Director of Public Instruction. It was also hoped that the professors would be able to freely discharge the sacred direction of education and have a positive approach towards swaraj. Thus, this Act would change the character and composition of the university. The Act would provide the students a healthy life in a residential university.\(^{182}\)

Promotion of hand spinning and hand weaving was once again a major concern of the Swarajists. Dip Narayan Sinha moved a resolution on 29 August 1927 asking the government to purchase hand-spun and hand-woven cloth prepared in the country for office and other use so as to promote spinning and weaving.\(^{183}\) He said that this would to some extent redress poverty and seasonal unemployment in the country.\(^{184}\) The significance of khadi was even more in Bihar where there was no industry worth the name outside the coalfields of

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\(^{181}\) Proceedings of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, August 1927, p. 57.

\(^{182}\) Ibid, August 1928, pp.110-145.

\(^{183}\) Ibid, August 1927, p. 57.

\(^{184}\) Ibid, pp. 57-59.

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Jharia and the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur. Spinning was still prevalent in most parts of Bihar and a large number of weavers also existed. So the Swarajists felt that with some efforts this industry could be easily revived. But one major difficulty was that there was not much demand for khadi. The Swarajists strongly felt that the government should take the main responsibility for its promotion. They suggested that the government could easily help this industry by purchasing hand spun and hand woven cloth for office use. The Swarajists asked the government to issue instructions to its various departments to purchase khadi for curtains, dusters, punkhas, table cloth, uniforms of chaukidars and others, liveries of peons and for many other departmental purposes.

Another Swarajist member, Abdul Bari, moved a resolution in February 1929 asking the government to start the manufacture and sale of khadi and spend Rs.1,00,000 for the promotion of khadi. Krishna Ballabh Sahay said that the government should not look at investment made for promotion of khadi from the profit motive. He said that khadi would provide subsidiary income, thus rendering relief to poorer sections of people.

In the September session of 1929, the Swarajist member, Ramcharitra Singh, moved another resolution asking the government to issue a circular to the Directors of Industries and the Textile directing them to visit the Congress Khadi Organizations (depots and centres of production), study them and send

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185 Ibid, pp.60-61.
186 Ibid, p.60.
188 Ibid.
recommendations to the government as to how to promote manufacture and sale of khadi.\textsuperscript{189}

The Swarajists’ concern for workers’s problems is reflected in their stand on the strike of the workers of Golmuri Tin Plate. The workers of this factory had gone on strike in April 1929. Workers had grievances over low wages, denial of leave, insufficient housing, absence of bonus, a provident fund scheme, maternity benefits and other benefits. The workers had put up their demands many times before the factory management. But the management instead of trying to redress their grievances began to victimise them with suspension and dismissal. So the workers resorted to a strike in April 1929. After this the management came down very heavily on them. Pathans were employed to terrorise them and many workers were dismissed.\textsuperscript{190}

The Swarajist members expressed full sympathy with the workers and their demands. Sri Krishna Sinha and Krishna Ballabh Sahay drew the attention of the Council members to the workers strike at Golmuri Tin Plate Industry in September 1929.\textsuperscript{191} Sri Krishna Sinha said that the workers were forced to go on strike because of the defiant attitude of the management of the factory. He said that the management had first held out hopes when the workers presented grievances to them. But despite such assurances the workers were not given any benefits, and instead were further victimised.\textsuperscript{192} He said that the strikers were willing to resume work if the management was prepared to stop victimisation, reinstate all the dismissed workers and appoint an impartial committee to

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid, September 1929, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid, pp. 308-337.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid, pp. 308-309.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid, p. 310.
enquire into their grievances.\textsuperscript{193} Krishan Ballabh Sahay said that the industry was ruining itself because of its defiant attitude. He said that the factory had already suffered a loss of Rs.19 lakh because of the prolonged strike.\textsuperscript{194}

The Swarajist members believed that the welfare of a country depended on the peaceful relationship between labour and capital and that no Indian could look with indifference on industrial unrest. They said that it was not only in the interest of workers but also in the interest of industry that the strike should end.\textsuperscript{195} The Swarajist members were critical of government’s attitude to the strike which they felt was more to help the British capitalists.\textsuperscript{196} Warning the government of the consequences of a labour problem, Sri Krishna Sinha said:

Never for a moment think that you will be able to crush labour. Labour has been triumphant all over the world. All the great thinkers of the world agree in giving a certain definite position to labour in the modern economic organizations of the world. Labour unrest in India is simply a symptom of that upheaval and unrest all over the world. Here there are 3,000 workers, without any job for the last five months and they are starving. Never treat slightly these poor men who are dying for want of bread. It is such penniless men who have undone empires. Try to approach the situation with a sympathetic heart. Try to improve their lot, or else the result will be what has already been happening all over the land. It may be that as a result of your tactlessly handling the situation there may sooner or later be a terrible industrial unrest throughout the country....I know these strikers are peaceful and mean to remain peaceful. They are being advised by their leaders to remain so. But I warn government that when they are hungry they will forget everything and may do things which otherwise they would not have done. The responsibility is on government. I ask the government to show a spirit of conciliation and try to do his best for them. Do not think that because government has already passed an order, nothing can be done for these poor workers. I say, help the men and do not think of prestige.... I appeal to him to do something for them, or else let them rest assured that public will say, and they have already begun to say and suspect that your entire attitude so far as the strike is concerned is guided by the principle of helping these British Capitalists, who own this enterprise.\textsuperscript{197}

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid, pp.309-315.  
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, p. 315.  
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid, pp.335-337.  
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid, p. 336.  
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, pp. 312-314.
The Swarajist members reminded the government that it was its duty to intervene in the strike at this critical juncture. Krishna Ballabh Sahay said that if the government kept aloof at this hour, the contagion would spread and the labour unrest would assume a serious form in the country. He asked the government to apply the provisions of the Trade Disputes Act and appoint a Conciliation Board. The Trade Dispute Act was supposed to promote goodwill between the workers and employers.\textsuperscript{198}

The Swarajists also raised the issue of democratization and decentralisation of power. They opposed classification of Chotanagpur and the Santhal Pargana as a backward tract. On that basis, the government retained District Officers as the Chairmen in the district boards of these areas. Pressure built up for withdrawing the notification that had declared Chotanagpur Division a backward tract. The Swarajists demanded that non-official members be elected as Chairmen of the district boards of those areas declared as backward tracts.\textsuperscript{199} In January 1927, Sri Krishna Sinha moved a resolution demanding the privilege of electing non-official Chairmen to be extended to district boards in Chotanagpur. He said that Chotanagpur was unjustly deprived of an important political right. He said that the Local Self-Government Act was intended to train people in the art of self-government and it had a direct influence on public life, as people in villages were directly connected with affairs of district boards and they properly understood them.\textsuperscript{200}

Another demand of the Swarajists was for the extension of part V of the Village Administration Act to Union Boards. This resolution was moved on 24

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid, pp. 316-317.
\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Indian Quarterly Register}, Jan-June 1927, pp. 382-383.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid
August 1928.201 The main objective of the Bihar and Orissa Village Administration Act was to entrust a small self-contained organization, elected by the villagers themselves from amongst their own members, with powers to decide petty cases, both criminal and civil, and with the duty of improving the condition of the village community and of taking their share in the working of the chaukidari system.202 This Act was meant to revive the ancient village institutions of the country. It was looked upon as the foundation of future political structure and it was hoped that every village would have its own organisation.203 Part V of the Act dealt with judicial powers, that is, with the constitution of village courts or panchayats. The Swarajist members believed that union boards would be able to prove their utility to the people at large if judicial power was granted to them.204

The same concern for democratization can be seen in the Swarajists’ demand for extension of franchise to women. Godavaris Misra moved a resolution on 6 February 1929 demanding that franchise be extended to women since it was their legitimate rights and privilege.205 The reason that he put forward for bringing this resolution was that women had made considerable progress and this right could no longer be denied to them. He said that women were now members of the Senate and Syndicate of the University and also the Bar Association. Anti-purdah demonstrations were held in most of the districts of Bihar206 and many women defied purdah and came out in public. Women started attending public meetings in large numbers. In Patna, a Women’s

204 Ibid, p. 584.
206 Ibid, pp. 223-224.
Conference in 1928 was attended by 500 women. The Educational Conference held in Muzaffarpur in the end of 1928 was largely attended by women.\(^{207}\) Godavaris Mishra declared that the object of the resolution was not merely the registration of names of females on the electoral roll but ultimately to open the gates of the Council to them.\(^{208}\)

While supporting this demand, Swarajist members gave examples from history to show how Indian women held very high public positions in the past. Sri Krishna Mahapatra said:

> Indian women occupied a very high position in the past. Leaving the Puranas alone, come to history, you will find women in India taking part in battles, discharging important administrative functions and gloriously shining in different other spheres. For their present condition, the responsibilities lies with us. How long are you going to keep your women in the back-ground? How long are you going to tell the world that they are fit for only cooking your meals, cleaning your utensils and making cow-dung cakes? This is the age of progress. Remove their disqualifications, give them a chance, they will shine and regain their position. It is well known to the members of this House that some provinces of India have already given their women the right to vote. Let not his province lag behind them. The anti-pardah movement in this province and the All-India Ladies Conference recently held in Patna have given ample proof of advancement of women in this province and they deserve our support.\(^{209}\)

Some members also argued that the grant of voting rights to women would set them free to cooperate with men in the more efficient functioning of state administration. Swarajist members hoped that women would participate in educational and social upliftment programmes.\(^{210}\) Keshari Prashad Singh said that swaraj would have no significance if women were not given independence. He also said that without women' cooperation and assistance one could not get

\(^{207}\) Ibid, p.212.
\(^{208}\) Ibid, p.209.
\(^{209}\) Ibid, p.212.
\(^{210}\) Ibid, pp.213-214.
It was also considered essential that women should know politics because children received their first education from their mothers. Role of women in the family was considered very significant. Brajananda Das said that it was the quiet and unostentatious work of women at home that shaped the lives and actions of men outside. In fact, the women in the families were considered to be the real makers of men in the state. It was said that the best men, the best citizens and the best administrators were the products of the training they had got at home.

Some Swarajist members like Nirsu Narayan Sinha strongly felt that as long as the decision for women to join politics was left in the hand of men, women would never be considered fit to take part in politics. To quote him:

How very often we have been told that we cannot have responsible government because we are not yet fit. Leave the men who are in power to judge and we will never be fit. That is exactly the position with men in power today. My answer to them is that the women are not fit because you are to judge about the fitness of women. Let them judge and they will declare themselves fit to take part in politics. In all enlightened countries, it has been decided that women should participate in politics. Well, no doubt that nature has awarded certain functions to men as well as to women but nature does not deprive them of equal intellect with men. Why then deprive them of giving their opinion? If you think that females are a very important part of your society, that the society cannot exist without them, that they have to look after many things more carefully than you do yourself, why not allow them to come and take part in politics? There is no reason then why women should not be allowed to take part in politics. If women are allowed to vote, the rigour of pardah is bound to relax. Indian women in the past had done great deeds. May I ask him why this has been discontinued in India to-day? Why no Indian women can be found to-day who could manage state as the Rani of Indore? Why no women can be found to-day who will be as literate as Gargi? The answer is that because you have kept them ignorant, because you have kept them in pardah, therefore they cannot find proper channel for their intellectual expansion. Now I want that barrier should be removed....Why should she be kept confined? Why

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212 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
should she not be allowed to come out of pardah and take an active part- an intelligent part- in all the affairs in which both men and women are equally concerned? Do you mean to say that the women have absolutely no interest in the politics of the country and that she is not affected by any legislation that you pass here? What right have you then to shut her out of politics? If men came without training in politics, why cannot women come. These are arbitrary dictates of men who are in power to-day. It was also said that they will neglect domestic affairs. If men do not neglect their affairs, why should women neglect.215

The Swarajists demanded the right to speak in the Council in any recognized vernacular of the province.216 To speak in one’s mother tongue was considered to be the fundamental right of every individual. It was said that no country could maintain originality if one had to study and think in a foreign language.217 Rai Brij Raj Krishna, who had moved this resolution on 30 August 1927, said that since this right was granted in every other country, it should also be granted in India. He also expressed the desire that a day would come when one vernacular would be recognized as the common language of the province and adopted as the language of the courts and offices.218 Supporting the resolution, Nirsu Narayan Sinha said that if members who did not know English could get elected to the Council, then they should also be allowed to speak in their own vernacular.219 Krishna Ballabh Sahay also pointed out that the Council members were accountable to the electorate.220 As speeches were delivered in the Council in English, the voters remained ignorant of the work done in the Council. He said that if speeches were delivered in Hindi and proceedings of the

216 Ibid, August 1927, p.156.
Council were also published in Hindi, the voters would not have much difficulty in understanding the work done in the Council.\(^{221}\)

One important issue that dominated the Council was once again the amendment of the Bengal Tenancy Act. Although this issue was not taken up by the Swarajists in the Council, they took keen interest in it and strongly desired improvement of tenants’ condition. In the August session of 1927, Shiva Shankar Jha tabled the bill known as the Bihar Tenancy Amendment Bill, 1927.\(^{222}\) Apart from the rights given to tenants to transfer land, plant trees and appropriate timber, the bill also introduced a provision to curtail enhancement of rent by the landlords.\(^{223}\) Shiva Shankar Jha said that he tabled this bill to respect the feeling of the tenants of Bihar.\(^{224}\) The landlords criticized the bill as being one sided, and wanted it to be circulated for public opinion.\(^{225}\)

The Swarajists strongly criticized the landlords’ opposition to the bill. Devaki Prasad Sinha said that the purpose of the tenancy legislation was not and had never been to give more rights to the landlords but to protect the weaker party, that is, the tenantry. He said to confer additional rights upon landlords would be against the purpose and scope of the preamble of the Bengal Tenancy Act. He said that if any additional right was to be conferred on landlords this could only be done in a spirit of compromise.\(^{226}\) Thus the Swarajists emphasised that the purpose of the bill was to define and improve the rights and position of the tenants. The Swarajists had no problem if certain other facilities were to be given to the landlords in compensation for the rights taken away from them but

\(^{221}\) Ibid.
\(^{222}\) Ibid, August 1927, p. 718.
\(^{223}\) Ibid, p. 719.
\(^{224}\) Ibid.
\(^{225}\) Ibid.
\(^{226}\) Ibid, p. 725.
that, according to them, was to depend on negotiations. They felt that there was always a possibility for such negotiations. But they were not in favour of postponing the bill, which would, according to them, amount to not doing anything.\textsuperscript{227} The Swarajists were angry that the landlords, while promising to introduce an amendment to the Bengal Tenancy Act, desired to secure for themselves additional rights and facilities.\textsuperscript{228} Nirsu Narayan Sinha opposed the motion of the landlords that the bill be circulated for public opinion. He said that there was nothing new in the provision of the bill as opinion was already taken in 1921 on certain sections of the bill. These opinions were collected in a printed book in which a suggestion was made that these should be taken into consideration when legislation relating to the Bengal Tenancy Act was brought before the Council.\textsuperscript{229}

However, the Swarajists also expressed a keen desire for a fair and reasonable settlement between the two parties, that is, the tenants and the landlords. They did not want to stand in the way of a fair negotiation between the two. They said that it was never their intention to confiscate any rights of the landlords but all they wanted was to improve the position of the tenantry so that the tenants could live in a prosperous condition on the land which they cultivated.\textsuperscript{230} Some Swarajists adopted an intermediate position on the bill. Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath said that the Congress did not agree with all the provisions put in the draft bill by Shiva Shankar Jha. He said that the bill introduced by Shiva Shankar Jha was adopted by the Swarajist Party only to the extent that it provided a fair basis for discussion. He said sending the bill to the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Ibid, p. 744-745.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Ibid, pp. 737-738.
\item \textsuperscript{230} Ibid, p. 823.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Select Committee simply meant that the landlords were entitled to consider the bill. The landlords were free to substitute or add to the bill. To quote him:

They have not adopted every clause of the bill, they have not adopted every section of the bill, they have not committed themselves to every item of the tenant's programme for the simple reason that our party does not represent the tenants alone. The mission of our party is to adjust the relations between the landlords and tenants. We do not want to be unjust to the landlords but at the same time we cannot forget the long standing sufferings of the tenants. That is the position which our party has taken up with regard to tenancy legislation in this Council.231

The Swarajists as a whole did not take favourably to the landlords opposition to the bill. They said that the landlords would not introduce a bill and neither would they allow anybody else to do so.232 Nirsu Narayan Sinha said that this delaying tactic of the landlords would not benefit them either. Warning the zamindars of the consequences of the delay, Nirsu Narayan Sinha said:

The tendency of the time is that there must be some sort of legislation with regard to the relationship of landlords and tenants. You cannot avoid it long. You may delay but the longer you delay, the greater will be the agitation. If you try with the help of government to thwart this measure or any other measure that the tenants representative might bring in future, it means really that the measure that will come after a long time will be much more severe to the landlords than they are at present. What will satisfy the tenants today will not satisfy them tomorrow and the result will be that if you go on obstructing like this, the whole right of the landlords might be swept away. You must not think that you are invincible. Your rights are based upon legislation and they can be done away with by legislation. If you therefore do not satisfy the public at present, if you do not like that any ameliorating measure should be introduced in this council and passed, I tell you it will really be to a great disadvantage to all the landlords.233

Nirsu Narayan Sinha also warned the zamindars of the strength of the tenants. He said that even though the tenants at present were helpless and did not

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231 Ibid, pp. 824-825.
233 Ibid.
understand their rights fully, a time might come when they would try to impose their own remedies upon the landlords.\textsuperscript{234}

Most Swarajists felt that amendment of the Tenancy Act needed urgent attention from the point of view of tenants and that the Council should not lose a single moment in this regard.\textsuperscript{235} The Swarajists also felt that it was their moral responsibility to bring forward a tenancy bill because they were answerable to their constituency.\textsuperscript{236} Nirsu Narayan Sinha said the demands from the tenants were so great that the Swarajists did not want to be a party to any delay.\textsuperscript{237}

The Swarajist members once again made an attempt to bring about negotiations between the landlords and tenants. Baldeva Sahay asked the landlords whether they would support the bill if the clause relating to enhancement of rent was removed. He even asked Shiva Shankar Jha whether he would give an assurance to the landlords not to press this clause.\textsuperscript{238} Another Swarajist member, Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath, also assured the landlords “so far as tenant party is concerned nothing is wanting on their part to come to an amicable settlement with them. Rest assured that we are not in a militant or hostile mood. We want to meet them so far as it is consistent with the safety and protection and well-being of the interests of the tenants”.\textsuperscript{239}

The government’s role in this respect was strongly critiqued by the Swarajist members.\textsuperscript{240} The government’s position was that there was no justification in Bihar for any agrarian legislation. It claimed that the zamindars

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{234} Ibid, pp. 744-745.
\item\textsuperscript{235} Ibid, p.726.
\item\textsuperscript{236} Ibid, pp. 742-743, 746.
\item\textsuperscript{237} Ibid, pp.742-743.
\item\textsuperscript{238} Ibid, pp.735-736.
\item\textsuperscript{239} Ibid, p.826.
\item\textsuperscript{240} Ibid, pp.824-825
\end{itemize}
of Bihar were not very bad as compared to other provinces and the denial of occupancy rights and the liability to ejectment were not serious greivances of the peasantry in Bihar.\textsuperscript{241} The Swarajists said that the government took this stand because it needed the support of the zamindars, who were in a majority in the Council, to maintain the dyarchy government.\textsuperscript{242} Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath asked the government not to leave the tenancy legislation for an amicable settlement between the tenants and the zamindars because he believed that on tenancy legislation no amicable settlement was possible or practicable.\textsuperscript{243} He asked the government to assume the leadership of the democratic party and make an alliance with the masses. He said that in these days of rising democracy the government should at once shake hands with the tenants and tell the landlords, “your days are numbered fast. It is no longer in the interest of the government that we should make an alliance with you. We have tried long to pat and support you; we have given you great titles; we have placed your name high on the darbar list; we have tried to glorify your name.”\textsuperscript{244}

In the August 1928 session, the landlords came up with their own bill known as the Bihar Tenancy Amendment Bill, 1928. According to this bill, in case of transfer of lands by the tenants, the landlords were to be entitled to a statutory fee which was twenty percent of the sale in case of whole transfer and twenty five percent of the sale in case of part transfers. However, a landlord could exercise the right of pre-emption in respect of the transferred holdings, and he would be entitled to the fee only if he did not avail himself of that right. Under this bill, the landlords were also entitled to have the transfer set aside on

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid, p. 823.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid, p. 827.
some specified grounds. The bill also conferred the status of *zirat* lands, that is, proprietor’s private land, on all *bakasht* lands. This status was not only conferred on those *bakasht* lands which were recorded in the last settlement operations but also on lands which the landlords would acquire in future. In order to facilitate the realization of rent by the landlords, certain measures were provided in the bill. These were firstly, joint suits against a number of tenants holding land in the same village; secondly, transferring the distraint sections to the revenue courts; and thirdly, making the grant of certificate power easy. Every co-sharer landlord was given the power to bring a suit for ejectment and a suit for enhancement of rent. Average rent was substituted for prevailing rent. Regarding the right on trees, the rights of the zamindar and the tenants in the trees standing on cash rent paying *kasht* lands would be half and half.245

This bill came under heavy attack by Shiva Shankar Jha, who said that the bill would strengthen landlords’ position vis-à-vis tenants. He said by this bill even the transferee of a portion of an occupancy holding had to pay *salami*, while until now no *salami* was paid in such a case.246 He said that so long as the tenants did not learn to stand on their own feet, got organised and acquired power, the Bengal Tenancy Act would not be amended in a satisfactory manner.247

The next year, that is, on 17 September 1929, the government came forward with its bill. The government stated that the aim of the bill was a fair solution of the outstanding points of difference.248 As regards the trees, the bill retained the existing rights of the landlord but trees planted on occupancy

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246 Ibid, p.58.
247 Ibid, pp.56-57.
248 Ibid, September 1929, p. 806.
holdings after the date of the passing of this bill were to be treated like any other crop and would be the property of the tenants who grew them. But, the tenants could not grow trees in a manner which would materially impair the value of the land or render it unfit for the purposes of the tenancy. Tenants could transfer their lands but they had to pay a mutation fee at twelve and half percent of the consideration money. However, the landlords were given the right of objection on any reasonable ground. Landlords were allowed to convert 10 percent of the bakasht land into zirats.

The government's bill too was strongly criticized by Shiv Shankar Jha. He said the bill limited the transfer right of tenants, who now had to pay high mutation fees. He also said the bill generalized salami which earlier in many places was nominal or even waived. He said the bill had also restricted the plantation rights of tenants. He pointed out that in amending the law one could not take every individual person's interest into consideration. The government should take into consideration the greatest good of the greatest numbers.

The government bill also came under a strong critique by the Swarajists. Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath said the conditions of the tenants would be worsened by the bill. He said the bill had granted the tenants the right to transfer occupancy holdings but this right was hedged with many conditions. He said the time had come when peasants were to be given rights without any condition, and asked the zamindars to give up their claim to timber and trees, and also allow

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249 Ibid, p.808.
250 Ibid.
251 Ibid, p.810.
252 Ibid, pp. 822-23.
tenants to build houses on their land.\textsuperscript{254} Another Swarajist member Baldeva Sahay critiquing the bill said that the provisions of transfer were retrograde depriving the people of the right based upon custom to transfer. The bill gave the landlords the right to eject a part transferee. Baldeva Sahay said the government had not given proper reason for fixing such heavy salami. He said the amount of salami should depend upon the nature of the tenant’s right. If the right of occupancy tenant was not a personal privilege but a right of property, which could be disposed of in any manner, then, according to him, there was no justification for demanding salami.\textsuperscript{255}

Another Swarajist member, Satya Narayan Singh, criticizing the bill said that the government had by this bill tried to consolidate its power. He said the bill introduced a new criterion, that is, even in the sale of a part of a holding the landlord would be paid salami. Moreover, he also considered the twelve and a half percent salami very high. He said that even though tenants theoretically could not transfer their holdings, tenants had been transferring these lands after taking legal advice and precautions. In some places, the tenants had got a free right of transfer, and, in others, only a nominal salami or nazarama was paid. According to Satya Narayan Singh, the bill did not take into consideration all these to safeguard tenants interest since the amount of salami, which was made uniform, would entail enormous hardships. Besides, he said, the government by putting numerous clauses for setting aside the transfer had given the landlord pre-emption in its worst form.\textsuperscript{256} He said the bill had not given any right to the tenant on existing trees but only on trees which they would plant in future. The

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{254} Ibid, p.825.
\bibitem{255} Ibid, p.839.
\bibitem{256} Ibid, p.812.
\end{footnotesize}
division of trees into two clauses, future and existing, according to him, would open the gate for large-scale litigation. He said the bill gave the record of right, which was generally against the tenants, the same force as the decree of a court. Under the proposed amendment, a tenant was prevented from challenging the entry in the record of right.

While critiquing this bill, Swarajist members like Baldeva Sahay again emphasised that the guiding principle of tenancy legislation should be to enlarge the tenants' rights although facilities were to be given to the landlords to realize their rents and dues. He said that only when this principle was accepted could one take into consideration the principle of the preservation of existing rights.

The Swarajists repeatedly told the zamindars that it was to their benefit to live amicably with the tenants. They also pointed out that the identity of one was dependent on the other. Swarajists warned the zamindars that their hostile attitude would have adverse consequences for them. While appealing to the landlords, Ramnandan Sinha told them that he did not merely speak to them as a representative of tenants but being a zamindar was also trying to emphasise certain matters for zamindars' own benefit. To quote him:

I being a zamindar appeal to the zamindar brothers that you should not do such work or not put obstacles in the way of reform of law which increases the enmity between the landlords and kisans. I know at this time zamindar brothers are intoxicated and they understand that this time will always remain, but my understanding is that this jamana and their khumari now will not last for long. Unfortunately if this condition continues, then Hindustan's zamindars will face the same consequences as that of France and Asia. On the support of government, these zamindar brothers are doing kud fand but in my understanding their well wishes is in that they should keep their behaviour with the kisans in this way that

258 Ibid.
259 Ibid, p.839.
260 Ibid.
once the British government goes their identity should remain in future too. If their believe is that the government throughout will remain to support them, it is quite foolish.\textsuperscript{262}

Another Swarajist member, Rai Bahadur Dwarka Nath, also warned the zamindars in the following words:

Unless the zamindars are prepared to make liberal concessions to the tenants their position will become untenable. I would not ask the zamindars to wait for the time when all the threats which have been held out by some of the speakers in this Council are carried into action, and to wait for the time when the red flag of Bolshevism will be flying over their castles. I will ask them not to wait for that time. I will ask them to make liberal concessions, to make timely concessions in advance, to make sacrifices just as they did in Japan and to strengthen their position not by securing great privileges and monopolies for themselves but by surrendering some of their cherished rights and privileges in the cause of Indian nationalism. So far as the zamindars are concerned, I must tell them that their days are numbered. They can only strengthen their position, maintain their dignity and prestige by making timely concessions to the feeling of the raiyats and by surrendering some of the privileges which they have enjoyed so far. Unless they are prepared to do so posterity and the zamindars themselves will brand them as people who were shortsighted, not able to see ahead, and to safeguard their interest by making timely concessions. This is the position which I take in this Council.\textsuperscript{263}

All the three bills, tenants’, landlord’ and government’s, were referred to the Select Committee.

Thus, the above were some of the issues of general concern taken up by the Swarajists. Even though many of these issues could not be settled in the Council, they were extensively reported in the press. They became a focal point for agitation and political propaganda, arousing popular interest and criticism.

**Role of Swarajists in Local Bodies**

The Congress considered local bodies very important for advancing its nationalist politics. Domination of these bodies meant virtual control by the

\textsuperscript{262} Ibid, pp.828-829.

\textsuperscript{263} Ibid, pp.846-847.
Congress of all activities of local importance. Its members could acquire control of education, sanitation, public health and roads, as well as have access to higher government officials, whom they could influence to their advantage. By trying to improve the quality of life of the people through these local bodies, the Congress could widen its base amongst the people.\textsuperscript{264} In fact, the local bodies assumed a different character and role when they came under Swarajists' control for the Swarajists had contested the elections with a set political programme.\textsuperscript{265} Office bearers of local bodies often convened and addressed political meetings. The local bodies welcomed the non-cooperators on their visit to their districts. Municipalities like Kishanganj, Deoghar, Giridih, Purnea, Hazaribagh, Bhagalpur and Sewan passed resolutions in 1925 to present addresses of welcome to Gandhi, when he visited their districts.\textsuperscript{266} The resolution passed at Darbhanga Municipality may be quoted as one such example:

In view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest sponsor of non-violence is coming to Bihar to give to the people of the province his message of khaddar, Hindu-Muslim unity and on untouchability, be it resolved that an address of welcome be presented to him on behalf of the municipality on his expected visit to the district of Darbhanga.\textsuperscript{267}

Besides municipalities, many district boards like those of Monghyr, Purnea, Araria, Bhagalpur, Patna, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Saran also passed resolutions in their meetings to present addresses of welcome to Gandhi when he visited their districts in 1925.\textsuperscript{268} Rajendhari Singh, Chairman, Patna District Board, read the following address welcoming Gandhi on 24 September 1925:

\textsuperscript{265} \textit{Searchlight}, 18, 23 April 1923, 23 May 1926.
\textsuperscript{266} Bihar and Orissa Political Special File nos. 27/1924, 77/1925, 78/1925, 310/1924 and 54/1924; \textit{Searchlight}, 12 July, 7 August, 16, 23 September, 7, 9 October 1925.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid, File nos. 77/1925 and 78/1925.
\textsuperscript{268} Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no 310/1924, "Copy of resolution no. 38 passed by the district board of Monghyr at a meeting held on the 5th September 1925"; Fortnightly Report of
Revered Mahatmaji,

We are grateful to have you in our midst to-day and words are too feeble to express the sincere joy your visit has given to us. Sir, your mighty sacrifice, burning patriotism and all-embracing love, far above the reach and comprehension of ordinary men, have been moulding the life, history and thought not only of this great country, but the world at large which hails you to-day as the messenger of peace, love and non-violence in the world sick of strife, hatred and bloodshed all round. Sir, it is no mere lip homage that we are offering you to-day. In our actions and deliberations, as representatives of a great number of people, we are trying in our humble way and to the extent of our little capacity to be actuated by that spirit of service and devotion which you seek to create amongst our countrymen. We are all united in our wish and efforts to spread education in the villages and are glad to be able to tell you that the Board is making appreciable progress in this direction by the increase of the primary schools and teachers in the district. We are also alive to the necessity of upliftment of depressed classes of our countrymen and are encouraging and providing free education amongst them as far as possible. You will be further pleased to learn that our Board has resolved to introduce hand-spinning in the primary schools both for boys and girls and a fairly good number of charkhas have already been introduced. Through our Union Boards, we hope to create, revive and foster that old spirit of self-help and co-operation amongst the people which was characteristic of the old village panchayat in the early days. Sir, we assure you once more of our earnestness and devotion to the spirit which animates all your activities and sayings and we pray to the Almighty that you may be spared long for the good of our country and the world. We once again accord you a most hearty and cordial welcome.

Besides Gandhi, other leaders were also presented addresses of welcome. Bhagalpur Municipality passed a resolution to present addresses of welcome to Shaukat Ali and other leaders when they visited Bhagalpur on 28 January 1924. The local bodies in many cases presented addresses of congratulation to the non-cooperators on their release from jail. In a meeting in 1924, the Monghyr District Board congratulated Sri Krishna Sinha, the Vice-Chairman of the Monghyr District Board, Satish Chandra Bose and Jamuna Prasad Sinha, the

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Bihar and Orissa for the first half of June 1925, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 112/June/1925.

270 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 54/1924.
271 Fortnightly Reports of Bihar and Orissa for January and September, 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File nos. 112/January/1925 and 112/September/1924, NAI; Bihar and Orissa Annual Administration Report, 1924-25, p. 4.
Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Begusarai Local Board, and Karu Prasad Sinha, a member of the Monghyr District Board, on their arrest and conviction by the British. They were congratulated for their sincere and patriotic spirit in the cause of the struggle for the freedom of the country. The government was condemned for the brutal and inhuman treatment accorded to them.\textsuperscript{272}

Local bodies emerged as important promoters of khadi. The no-changers actively joined the venture of controlling these bodies with a belief that these could be effectively used to promote the constructive programme. Khadi wearing and its use were made compulsory for all the Congress members of the board.\textsuperscript{273} Khadi wearing was also obligatory on all their employees, including teachers. Learning of spinning was made compulsory for all the students at primary schools. Khadi ashrams for training primary school teachers in spinning were opened in many districts. Some district boards even laid down a rule that knowledge of spinning was not only compulsory for appointment of teachers to schools but also for promotion of district board's employees to higher grades.\textsuperscript{274}

The Muzaffarpur District Board passed a resolution on 27 September 1924 that spinning should be introduced as a compulsory vocational subject for girls over 10 years and optional for all children of that age in all boys schools under the board. Further, knowledge and practice of spinning was to be a necessary qualification for teachers of all schools maintained or aided by the board and was to be considered in their appointment, retention and promotion in

\textsuperscript{272} Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 310/24.
\textsuperscript{273} Searchlight, 19 November 1924; Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 310/1924, "From Secretary to Government, Bihar and Orissa, Ministry of Local Self Government, to The Chairman of the Hazaribagh district board".
\textsuperscript{274} Bihar and Orissa Political Special File nos. 27/1924 and 78/1925.
future.\textsuperscript{275} The Muzaffarpur District Board in another meeting on 21 March 1925 resolved that voluntary subscriptions payable in kind and cash be raised unofficially and locally for meeting the expenses of providing cotton and other requirements to the boys of the schools for spinning.\textsuperscript{276} The Begusarai Local Board also passed a resolution at its meeting on 30 November 1924 to promote khadi. It decided to supply khaddar liveries to the peons and chaukidars employed under the local board.\textsuperscript{277} Similarly, the Monghyr District Board also passed a resolution at its meeting on 15 December 1924 to establish 4 circles, one in each out-lying sub-division and two in the Sadr sub-division to train the board school teachers in charkha spinning.\textsuperscript{278} The Patna District Board passed the following resolutions to promote khadi at its meeting on 22 December 1924:

1. The committee is of opinion that the teachers of all the schools, Middle, Upper Primary and Lower Primary, board management and stipendiary be trained in ginning, carding and spinning.
2. That charkha Master be appointed for each sub-division who will go round to each board managed school by turn, stay there for 7 days and train there the teachers of that particular board managed school as well as those of the surrounding stipendiary schools.
3. That even after such training those teachers who do not get themselves trained and acquainted with the art should be seriously dealt with.
4. That at the same time a circular be issued to all the teachers to get themselves trained in the above mentioned art by the end of March 1925.\textsuperscript{279}

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid, File no. 272/1924, "Extract paragraph 10 of proceedings of an ordinary meeting of the district board, Muzaffarpur, held at their office at 1 pm on 27 sept 1924".
\textsuperscript{276} Ibid, "Resolution no. 11 passed at an ordinary meeting of the Muzaffarpur district board held on 21 March 1925".
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid, File no. 310/1924, "From Commissioner Bhagalpur Division to the Secretary to the Government of Bihar and Orissa, (Ministry of Local Self Government), 20 Dec 1924".
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid, "From Commissioner Bhagalpur Division to the Secretary to the Government of Bihar and Orissa, (Ministry of Local Self Government), 6 Jan 1925".
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid, File no. 75/25, "Proceedings of a meeting of the sub-committee of the Patna district board formed under board’s resolution no. 8 dated the 22 December 1924 for devising ways and means of introduction of spinning system in board’s schools held on the 24 January 1925".
Besides these, several other district boards and municipalities passed resolutions to promote khadi. The resolutions passed in different district boards and municipalities are given below:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of District Board Or municipalities</th>
<th>Date of meetings on which resolutions passed</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Hazaribagh Dist Board</td>
<td>9.9.24</td>
<td>Wearing of khaddar cap and khadder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Champaran Dist Board</td>
<td>15.9.24</td>
<td>Use of khaddar by the employee of the board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bhagalpur Dist Board</td>
<td>4.11.24</td>
<td>To use khaddar by the employees when on duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Manbhum Dist Board</td>
<td>24.11.24</td>
<td>Use of khaddar by the employees of the Board</td>
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<td>5. Begusarai Local Board</td>
<td>30.11.24</td>
<td>Supply of khaddar liveries to the peons and chaukidars of the board</td>
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<td>6. Monghyr Dist Board</td>
<td>13.9.24</td>
<td>Recommending the use of khaddar by all the employees.</td>
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<td>7. Sitamarhi Municipality</td>
<td>30.6.24</td>
<td>Use of khadi by the boys of the municipal schools.</td>
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<td>8. Patna City Municipality</td>
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<td>10. Darbhanga Dist Board</td>
<td>(reported in a letter dated 25.3.25 from Tihut Division Commission to Secretary, L.S.G.)</td>
<td>Use of khaddar by the teachers and pupils of the schools controlled by the board.</td>
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<td>7.7.25</td>
<td>Introduction of spinning in the district board schools</td>
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280 Ibid, File no. 76/1926.
Local bodies also promoted national schools to spread education in villages. District boards made an attempt to subsidize national schools.\textsuperscript{281} In many schools which were under local bodies, hymns with “anti-government tone” were prescribed to be sung every morning before the classes started.\textsuperscript{282} One such hymn was “Ish Vinay”, an extract from a book called Bharat Bharati written by Maithili Saran Gupta. The District Board of Darbhanga printed it in leaflet form and prescribed the song to be recited in all the schools under its management before the class began. The government ordered the forfeiture of all copies of the hymn wherever found.\textsuperscript{283}

Local bodies also declared some national holidays to celebrate certain political events. Government holidays like the King’s birthday were no longer celebrated. In their place, events like Gandhi’s birth anniversary and Tilak’s death anniversary were observed as national days.\textsuperscript{284} The holiday list, which was approved by Monghyr District Board, did not contain three official holidays - New Year’s Day, Good Friday and Darbar day. The Bettiah Municipal Commissioner altered two official holidays of its municipal schools and substituted them with national holidays.\textsuperscript{285} The British had been using political ritual like celebration of certain days to demonstrate their authority. They were important symbols of British Raj. Declaration of some national holidays to celebrate certain political event was a kind of ritual subversion and substitution.

\textsuperscript{281} Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of September 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/September/1924, NAI.
\textsuperscript{282} Searchlight, 23 October 1925; Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of May 1925, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/May/1925.
\textsuperscript{283} Searchlight, 23 October 1925.
\textsuperscript{284} Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 310/1924, “From Secretary to Government, Bihar and Orissa, (Ministry of Education) to the Commissioner, Bhagalpur Division, 2\textsuperscript{nd} June 1927, Resolution by the Monghyr District Board sanctioning the list of holidays for Middle and Primary Schools”.
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid.
by the Swarajists to delegitimise the imperial ceremonial order. In fact, ceremonies and rituals were crucial arenas of politics by which authority was generated, confirmed and contested.

Local bodies also furnished assistance to the Swarajist candidates in the election. The Swarajists used the entire machinery of local bodies for propaganda purposes. The employees of these bodies and the contractors working under such bodies were required to give active support to the Swarajists contesting the election. They played a crucial role in the victory of Swarajist candidates in the Provincial Council election. This has been discussed in the earlier section.

The Swarajists made an attempt to define the offices of local bodies as their own domain. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Monghyr District Board decided that after accepting office in 1924 their first duty would be to remove from the Monghyr District Board Meeting Hall the portrait of the Governor which was presented by the Bhagalpur Commissioner in commemoration of the opening of the building and had been unveiled by the Maharaja Bahadur of Gidhaur. Hoisting of the swaraj flag over the municipal building was another attempt by the nationalists to define these offices as their own domain. The Madhubani Municipality passed a resolution on 5 January 1925 authorising its Chairman to hoist national flags over municipal offices on ceremonial occasions. The Muzaffarpur Municipality

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286 Ibid, File no. 311/1926; Searchlight, 20 October 1926..
287 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 310/1924.
288 Ibid, File nos. 231/1924 and 21/1925, “Extract from the proceedings of a meeting of the Municipal Commissioners of Madhubani held on the 5th January 1925”; Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa for the first half of August 1924, Govt of India, Home Department (Political) File no. 25/August/1924.
also passed such a resolution.\textsuperscript{289} The officials saw such activities as defiance of
government authority and threatened the local bodies that they would withhold
their grants. The Tirhut Division Commissioner said:

I have explained to the Chairman of Madhubani that government aid
can hardly be expected when a flag is flown on the building (which
by the way is on government land), that flag being regarded as the
symbol of non-cooperation. If the commissioners give an
undertaking that there shall be no more such incident, I shall have
pleasure in recommending that all possible government aid be given
to the commissioners in the execution of their public duty.\textsuperscript{290}

To this, the Chairman of Madhubani Municipality replied that the
government had no right to withhold grants because grants came from people’s
funds. He said that grants should be given to a municipality even if its
representatives were non-cooperators.\textsuperscript{291}

Thus, withholding of grants was one of the most effective ways of
obstructing the working of local bodies. Local bodies remained heavily
dependent on the government for funds. The minister concerned with Local Self
Government had the power to withhold grants, which were meant for the
development of primary education, medical relief and sanitation. In fact, the
minister quite often arbitrarily withheld funds when the local bodies came under
the Swarajists’ control. The Swarajists thus lacked resources for development
activities,\textsuperscript{292} and were also unable to raise resources by charging extra local
taxes, as this measure would have made them unpopular amongst the people.\textsuperscript{293}

Besides withholding funds, the government took certain other measures
to control such bodies. The government prohibited servants of the district board

\textsuperscript{289} Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 231/1924.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid, File no. 21/1925, “Copy of paras 2 and 3 of the Commissioner of the Tirhut Division
Inspection note on the Madhubani municipality, dated the 24 Nov 1924”.
\textsuperscript{291} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{292} Rajendra Prasad, \textit{Autobiography}, p.209.
and persons in receipt of emoluments from the board from taking part in the political movement. But the District Board of Monghyr in its meeting on 13 September 1924 moved an amendment to cancel such prohibition. The amendment was carried by a majority.294

The Minister for Local Self Government also came out with measures that were arbitrary in nature. One such measure was the passage of the Local Fund Audit Act in 1924.295 It invested the Government Auditor with the power to decide that certain expenses incurred by the board were illegal and could be realised from the officer or members responsible for sanctioning the amount.296 To consider the Bill and its various implications, a conference of the representatives of local bodies was held at Patna. The Bill was severely criticized by the Swarajists at this conference.297

Another arbitrary measure was the demand of a medical certificate from all members of the district boards, who failed to attend six consecutive meetings on the ground of illness. This power gave a kind of political leverage to the minister to use it against the Swarajists.298 The minister also made an attempt to supersede the Gaya District Board, which had A. N. Sinha as its Chairperson but could not succeed in its effort.299 The Minister for Local Self-Government also started nominating his own men in large numbers to local bodies to counterbalance Swarajists influence in these bodies.300 All these measures

294 Bihar and Orissa Political Special File no. 274/1924, “Resolution passed at a meeting of the Monghyr District Board held on 13.9.24, permitting their servants to attend political meetings and to adopt a new list of holidays including important national holidays”.
295 Searchlight, 6 August 1924.
296 Bihar and Orissa Annual Administration Report, 1925, p.47.
298 Ibid, p.265.
300 A.N.Sinha, Mera Sansmaran, pp.105-106.
created strong resentment amongst the Swarajists who moved a motion of no confidence against the Local Self-Government Minister to express their anger. But the motion was defeated. The Swarajists also resorted to a cut motion in the budget to express their resentment and also to bring down the ministry. These were, however, invariably lost by virtue of the fact that the treasury bench had the unqualified support of most of the zamindar members. Thus one sees how these local bodies emerged as important arenas of struggle between the government and the nationalists. However, these local bodies succeeded in resisting absorption into the colonial structure.

Thus, this chapter has brought out the significance of Swarajist politics. Though the Swarajists in the Provincial Council in Bihar could not bring about a situation of constitutional crisis, they nevertheless made an important contribution. The Swarajists raised many issues of nationalist, democratic and general concern in the Council like improvement in the conditions of jails, better treatment of political prisoners and demand for their release, improvement in the condition of workers, expansion of primary education and promotion of spinning. The nationalists tried to push ahead nationalist agenda in the Council. In fact, at that juncture of the national movement, raising such issues was very important. Besides, these issues were extensively reported in the press, with newspapers highlighting the discussions and debating on some of the major issues in the Council. They became a focal point for agitation and political propaganda, arousing popular interest and criticism.

The study has also highlighted the significance of the Swarajists' election campaign. The election was primarily projected by the Swarajists as a fight

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against British rule. Their election meetings were basically nationalist meetings where aims of the Congress were explained. Local agitations also got linked up with the election campaign. During this time, peasant agitations were sharpening in some parts of Bihar. There was pressure by the peasants to get the Bengal Tenancy Act amended. The Swarajists took up peasant’s demands in their election campaign to the Provincial Council in 1926. They promised to amend the Bengal Tenancy Act. Thus, electioneering accentuated class divisions in rural society. Peasant organisations got activated and for some years peasants’ hopes pinned on Swarjist members in the council. The election represented percussion to the Maharajas continuing decline in power in their region. Till now bigger zamindars and Maharajas held their sway in the election. In fact, elections were used by Maharajas to assert their power. But the Swarajists in these elections succeeded to a great extent in ending the domination of bigger zamindars in these local bodies and the council. The success of the Swarajists in these elections meant that the large tenants of the Maharajas, who comprised the rural elite, voted against them. Nationalism had stolen the support of the Maharaja’s national constituency of large tenants by showing them another way of gaining rural power. They turned away from the zamindars’ pattern of authority to seek power in the nationalist arena. Social composition of members in these bodies changed. Political background of many of the new members gave rise to apprehension in the government since many new candidates were non-cooperators. In fact, the 1924 district board election showed that the Swarajists did well in those districts where the Non-Cooperation Movement had made a strong impact.

The Swarajists played a very significant role in the local bodies. Most of the studies so far have highlighted the role of the Swarajists in the council. But
in Bihar, the Swarajists, as compared with the council, were more successful in local bodies. Local bodies assumed a different character and role when it came under the Swarajists' control. These bodies became an important platform of nationalist politics. Local bodies often convened and addressed political meetings, presented addresses of welcome to non-cooperators on their visit to their districts and furnished assistance to Swarajist candidates in the election. Local bodies emerged as the main promoters of the constructive programme. Besides, many municipalities and district boards, despite their circumscribed powers, set out to raise, however little, the quality of life of the people and through these local activities tried to widen the nationalist base. Thus, local bodies filled the political void at a time when the national movement was recouping its strength.